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CHINA DAILY

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China, Russia vow to further bolster ties

Xi, Putin exchange congratulations on 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations

By ZHANG YUNBI
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As Wednesday marked the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Russia, President Xi Jinping exchanged congratulatory messages with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, expressing Beijing's hope of future growth of its relationship with Moscow.

Underlining the great importance he attaches to the development of Sino-Russian ties, Xi said he is ready to work with Putin and take the occasion of the 75th anniversary as an opportunity to firmly steer bilateral relations in the right direction.

Xi vowed to continue expanding all-around practical cooperation and jointly promoting the high-quality development and modernization of the two countries.

The goal is to "make fresh contributions to safeguarding world peace and stability, and promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind", he said.

Three-quarters of a century ago, Russia was the first country in the world to recognize the People's Republic of China, and the two nations quickly established a close collaborative relationship.

In his message to Xi, Putin said the close and mutually beneficial ties between Russia and China have stood the test of time.

Hailing the current Russia-China relationship as being in the best shape of all time, Putin said the two sides have earnestly carried out cooperation in areas including politics, trade and economy, and science and technology.

Both countries have efficiently coordinated in international and regional affairs, and worked together to build a just and multipolar world order, he added.

Analysts said the two countries have established systematic and comprehensive mechanisms for high-level exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and their pragmatic cooperation enjoys strong impetus and has huge potential.

Zhang Hanhui, China's ambassador to Russia, said that Xi and Putin have met more than 40 times, establishing close working links and forging a deep friendship.

The two countries' comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era "has set a role model for the international community in terms of shaping a new type of major country relations", Zhang said in a signed article published on Tuesday on the embassy's website.

China has been Russia's top trading partner for 14 consecutive years, while Russia has grown to become China's eighth-largest trading partner. Annual bilateral trade reached \$240.1 billion last year, up 26.3 percent year-on-year, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

On the global stage, the two countries work closely within multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS. This year, Russia holds the rotating presidency of BRICS and China holds the rotating chairmanship of the SCO.

In his message to Putin, Xi noted the shared identities of China and Russia as major countries in the world and key emerging markets, and as each other's largest neighbor.

Over 75 years, the two nations have continuously scaled up bilateral relations based on their fundamental interests and those of their peoples, while adequately drawing lessons from the past, Xi said.

Lasting good-neighborliness, comprehensive strategic coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation have become the most essential features of bilateral ties, he said.

Xi pointed out that in the new era, the two sides have continued to deepen political mutual trust, achieved remarkable results in practical cooperation, and won deep support for enduring friendship.

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Return to safety

Above: A mother-daughter duo evacuated from Lebanon share a tender moment at Limassol Port in Cyprus on Tuesday. They were part of a group of 80 people, including 69 Chinese nationals, who left Lebanon by ship. China has evacuated over 200 of its citizens from Lebanon amid escalating tensions in the Middle East. LI JING / XINHUA

Left: Some Chinese nationals celebrate their return on Wednesday after a chartered plane landed in Beijing with 146 Chinese citizens and five foreigners. ZHAO KAI / CCTV

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EU FACES A TIME OF CHALLENGES

Boosting group's competitiveness, managing relationship with Beijing among major issues ahead

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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When European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen unveiled the next college of commissioners for her second five-year term on Sept 17, she said "the whole college is committed to competitiveness" and "all commissioners must work together".

It came just a day after the abrupt resignation of the powerful French Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton, who openly accused von der Leyen of "questionable governance" and trying to exclude

him from the next commission.

Unlike the departure of former executive vice-president Frans Timmermans, who quit a year ago to run for Dutch prime minister, Breton's public display of discontent has been seen by some as embarrassing for von der Leyen, but also described by others as a victory for von der Leyen in her grip on power.

"From queen to empress," read a recent headline of a story on Politico.eu, a digital news site. Several European news outlets have nicknamed the commission president "Queen Ursula" for the past years.

Von der Leyen was also humiliated when most of the 27 EU member states defied her instruction a few months ago to submit two candidates — one man and one woman — for her to create a fully gender-balanced team of commissioners. After successfully pressing some smaller member states to swap women for men candidates, she claimed that "we were able to improve the balance to 40 percent women and 60 percent men" in contrast to the original 22 percent women candidates.

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President Xi congratulates new Japanese PM Ishiba

By ZHANG YUNBI

President Xi Jinping has extended congratulations to Shigeru Ishiba on his election as Japanese prime minister.

Ishiba, the new leader of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, was officially elected as the country's prime minister on Tuesday after he won a majority of votes in both houses of parliament.

In a congratulatory message sent on Tuesday, Xi noted that China and Japan are close neighbors separated only by a strip of water. He said it serves the fundamental interests of the two peoples to stride on a path of peaceful coexistence, everlasting friendship, mutually beneficial cooperation and common development.

Xi called on Tokyo to work with Beijing toward the same goal and "faithfully honor the principles and consensus established in the four political documents between the two countries".

He expressed the hope that Japan can work together with China to advance the strategic relationship of mutual benefit in an all-around manner and build a constructive and stable Sino-Japanese relationship that meets the requirements of the new era.

Also on Tuesday, Premier Li Qiang sent a congratulatory message to Ishiba. Li said the two countries should work to secure the political foundation of bilateral relations and enhance friendship, mutual trust and cooperation, in order to better benefit the two peoples.

Currently, Japan is China's second-largest trading partner. The annual bilateral trade between the two countries totaled about \$318 billion last year, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Wu Jianguo, China's ambassador to Japan, said the two sides have seen a marked increase in dialogue and exchanges at various levels, have deepened practical cooperation in different fields, and have seen people-to-people exchanges gradually recovering to the level before the COVID-19 pandemic.

China-Japan relations are still facing a fair number of difficulties and challenges, which "require both sides to show their wisdom and commitment", Wu said at a recent reception in Tokyo, adding that the two sides should work together to find ways to manage and solve problems, in order to maintain the right direction in their relationship.

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'Queen Wen', world stars turn center court into holiday attraction

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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Sold-out venues, practice courts swamped with enthusiastic fans and long lines at food and beverage booths — the China Open tennis tournament has emerged as one of Beijing's hottest holiday attractions as the sport's surging popularity takes the Chinese capital by storm.

Call it the "Queen Wen" effect if you will, public admiration for the racquet sport has increased manifold following Chinese women's tennis ace Zheng Qinwen's historic gold-medal finish at the Paris Olympics in August.

Zheng, who has earned the royal sobriquet from her growing legion of fans for her confident and aggressive style of playing, continued to ride her winning momentum on Wednesday to beat Amanda Anisimova of the United States in the fourth round at the China Open to reach her home WTA1000 tournament's quarterfinals for the first time, garnering

enormous public interest.

With her second straight win against Anisimova, a 2019 French Open semifinalist, following her first at the US Open over a month ago, Zheng — the current world No 7 — has won 19 of her past 21 singles matches since her opening-round exit at Wimbledon. Her amazing run includes her successful title defense at a clay tournament in Palermo, Italy, the gold in Paris and a quarterfinal appearance at the US Open.

The new poster girl of Chinese women's tennis, despite a glittering field also including all the available men's stars at the concurrent ATP event, has proved to be the biggest crowd magnet of the combined tournament.

China Open organizers announced that Zheng's second-round win against Russian qualifier Kamilla Rakhimova drew a tournament-record single-day attendance of 39,000 on Saturday, even with three days to go before the National Day holiday break.

A first-come, first-served media ticketing policy, normally reserved only for finals, was activated for the first time for a second-round match on Saturday, due to the high demand from a record number of journalists, photographers and broadcasters — exceeding 400 — covering the event and Zheng in particular.

"The atmosphere was insane. I never thought it will be so full in the center court," Zheng said of the cheering capacity crowd at the 15,000-seat Diamond Court after her second-round win last week. "Honestly when I played last year in China Open, I remember it wasn't that full. Today, I see there's nearly no empty seat. So I enjoy a lot to play back in China Open this year."

The star power of "Queen Wen" is indeed real and happening. On Monday, her third-round win against Argentina's Nadia Podoroska ended up being the most-watched tennis match on TV so far this year, excluding the Olympic programs, with over 24 million



Visitors pose for photos with fun props on Tuesday at the National Tennis Center in Beijing, where the China Open tournament is underway. BAI XUEFEI / XINHUA

viewers tuning in during live broadcasting, according to China Central Television.

The much-improved collective performance in Chinese men's

tennis has also contributed to the once-niche racquet sport's current mainstream status.

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NATION

Xi's National Day speech applauded

Global observers commend vision promoting peace and development

Experts and officials around the world have applauded President Xi Jinping's latest pledge that the Chinese people will make more remarkable achievements and greater contributions to the peace and development of humanity.

"We must always stand firmly on the right side of history and on the side of human civilization and progress, hold high the banner of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, and strive to promote world peace and tranquility and common progress of mankind," said Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission.

He made the remarks at a reception held on Monday at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Xi's speech comprehensively reviewed China's major achievements in national rejuvenation and provided clear strategic guidance for a Chinese modernization drive, said Eduardo Regalado, a senior researcher at the International Policy Research Center of Cuba.

Impressed by how the speech promoted the concept of "putting people first", Regalado said he believes this demonstrates the humanist character of China's development model in the pursuit of collective well-being.

Iranian Vice-President Shima Ansari said China has achieved "great, steady and significant accomplishments" in the past 75 years, benefiting not only its own people but also the international community. She made the remarks in a message to a reception commemorating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC held in Tehran on Saturday.

Fausto Pinato, president of the Brazil-China Parliamentary Front of the Brazilian National Congress, said China's achievements over the past 75 years are the result of Chinese modernization. The Chinese government creates policies based on the people's needs, and the mechanism of Chinese democracy can quickly translate policies into actions and actively respond to various challenges, he said.

China's development has benefited the world, with several Chinese companies sharing the dividends of the country's development overseas. Pinato said that China's development concepts and democratic model have inspired other developing countries.

Yedickol Polevsky, former president and general secretary of Mexico's ruling party National Regeneration Movement (Morena), said: "President Xi's speech is always an inspiration to us. China should be an example to all governments."

He said the speech illustrates how China advocates and supports multilateralism and promotes developing and revitalizing countries in the Global South.

In his speech, Xi repeatedly referred to a crucial idea — putting the people first, and this shows that at the heart of this philosophy is the belief that all policies must put people at the center and at the foundation, said Polevsky, noting that no policy can be effective if it does not address the needs of the people.

This philosophy is also highly consistent with the Mexican government's governing philosophy that politics only makes sense when it serves the people, she said, adding that Latin American countries and people are content with China because the country has always worked alongside the people of Latin America for win-win cooperation.

The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the country's effort to build a community with a shared future for mankind demonstrate that China is not only focused on its own development but is also directly contributing to the successful development of other countries and peoples, Galina Kulikova, first deputy chairperson of the Russia-China Friendship Association, and a recipient of China's Friendship Medal, said on Monday at a photo exhibition opened by Xinhua News Agency in Moscow to showcase China's historical transformation over the past decades.

The international recognition of China's development model serves as a reassurance of China's positive global role.

Mukerrem Miftah, an assistant professor at the Ethiopian Civil Service University, said that China has proposed the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative and actively promotes building a community with a shared future for mankind.

More and more countries have recognized these ideas. China's successful experience is worth learning from for developing countries like Ethiopia, Miftah said.

XINHUA

Ties: Nations advocate equal and orderly world

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By doing so, the two countries "have made important contributions to improving the well-being of the two peoples and to promoting an equal and orderly multipolar world, as well as inclusive economic globalization that benefits all", Xi added.

Putin said he believes the two

sides will fully implement the consensus reached during his meetings with Xi and further consolidate the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era.

He also voiced the hope that the two sides will further promote security and stability in Eurasia and in the world.



Tourists visit Yungang Grottoes in the snow on Tuesday in Datong, Shanxi province. YU ZHANDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Early snow in north as southeast braces for typhoon

By CHENG SI in Beijing and ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan

The city of Datong in North China's Shanxi province received its first snowfall of the season on Tuesday, the start of the weeklong National Day holiday. While the snow caught residents by surprise and travelers off guard, milder conditions can be expected for the remainder of the break, forecasters said.

"The snow was unexpected! I was stunned when I captured the

beautiful view with my camera," said Yu Zhandong, a photographer and native of Datong, who added that the city usually sees its first snowfall around November.

The city, which saw the mercury plummet to 0.3 C on Tuesday morning, has been a sought-after tourism destination for the National Day holiday, which runs until Oct 7.

Datong can be found in several scenes of the recently released and hugely popular video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, which is based on

the Chinese classic novel *Journey to the West*. The city's cultural atmosphere with its Buddhist and Taoist sites has made it an in vogue destination.

Ye Xiaodong, a tourist from Beijing, who was visiting Datong with his girlfriend, was also surprised by the snowfall.

"We checked the weather forecast before we left and prepared some coats, but we never expected such cold weather and even snow," he said, adding that he had to buy a

down jacket after they arrived in the city around Tuesday noon.

While those in Datong have embraced the snow, residents in the country's southern and eastern coastal areas are bracing for Typhoon Krathon — the 18th typhoon of the year.

The National Meteorological Center issued its second-highest alert for the typhoon on Wednesday morning, and estimated it would make landfall between Wednesday evening and Thursday

morning on southwestern Taiwan before weakening.

The center said that Typhoon Krathon would bring strong gales to Taiwan and coastal areas of Zhejiang and Fujian provinces on Wednesday and Thursday.

For the rest of the country, the center reminded travelers to wrap up warm during the holiday as colder conditions are expected.

China's northeastern and southwestern provinces can expect minimum temperatures to drop below zero until Thursday.

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Arctic endeavor

Above: A fleet of Chinese Coast Guard vessels sail in the Arctic Ocean on recent joint patrols with the Russian Coast Guard. The operation marked the first time that Chinese Coast Guard ships have ventured into Arctic waters, China Coast Guard said on Wednesday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: A Chinese coast guard surveys the sea ahead on joint patrols with the Russian Coast Guard. Since Sept 21, Chinese and Russian coast guard fleets have been conducting joint patrols in the Northern Pacific region, further strengthening their maritime partnership.

Hong Kong stocks rally to nearly 2-year high on stimulus tailwind

By LIU YIFAN in Hong Kong

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Hong Kong stocks surged for a sixth day on Wednesday, amid growing optimism that Beijing's sweeping stimulus package could reboot the world's second-largest economy and fix the country's property market.

The benchmark Hang Seng Index surged 6.2 percent on Wednesday, closing at 22,443.73 points, its highest for the past 20 months.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index rose 7.08 percent. The Hang Seng Property Index, a gauge of the property sector, soared 47 percent, while Hang Seng Tech Index, representing the 30 largest technology firms listed in the city, jumped 8.53 percent.

The rise has brought Hong Kong stocks into bull-market territory underpinned by positive policy signals and combined with previous low valuations, said Yang Delong, chief economist at First Seafont Fund in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

The recent euphoria has presented investors with a key question as to how long the current rally will continue.

Confident, Yang said the policy measures have "completely" reversed global investors' pessimistic outlook toward Chinese equities. China's broader-than-expected policy blitz revealed last week was the most daring in decades. It includes a reduction in the reserve requirement ratio and existing mortgage rates as well as 800 billion yuan (\$114.9 billion) of liquidity support, among other measures. Four first-tier cities also eased homebuying curbs.

Some experts have taken a relatively more cautious tone, saying there's still some room for a short-term rebound, but the market is still watching the nation's fiscal efforts and economic data coming up in the long run.

Jason Chan, a senior investment strategist at East Asia Securities, said that sustained growth needs the policy campaign announced



In particular, home sales will need to recover beyond first-tier cities to show a broad-based recovery."

Gary Ng, a senior economist at French investment bank Natixis

last week to be matched by appropriate follow-up in fiscal policies.

Also, policy packages should lead to improvement in the country's fundamentals, Chan said.

Gary Ng, a senior economist at French investment bank Natixis, said that although the stimulus package is positive in stabilizing the economy and the financial market, a full turnaround depends on "whether household disposable income and corporate profit growth can pick up".

"In particular, home sales will need to recover beyond first-tier cities to show a broad-based recovery. China will need to cut interest rates further and relax

more regulations to make this happen, and sending a strong signal to reduce policy risks is equally vital," Ng said.

On what's next for equities, he added that it is questionable whether the current magnitude of improved outlook can override pressures linked to investors' mindset toward profit-taking or breaking even, especially among those who brought the shares to a high level a few years ago.

A cautious note amid the trading frenzy makes sense as investors have been burned by false starts before. The benchmark had witnessed a surge of more than 20 percent to nearly 20,000 points from April to May — only to have most of those advances wiped away due to the country's slower-than-expected recovery.

According to China International Capital Corporation's research report published last Saturday, long-term investors globally are mostly in a wait-and-see mode. Analysts at the company cited communication with clients, saying that long-term foreign capital is more focused on reducing underweight positions to prevent significant underperformance rather than fundamentally raising allocations.



Pedestrians pass an electronic board showing Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index in Tsim Sha Tsui on Wednesday. The index has soared in the past six days to reach a 20-month high. ANDY CHONG / CHINA DAILY

Tennis: Men's team celebrates major wins

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Having been overshadowed by the success of Chinese women's tennis on the global stage for decades, Chinese men's tennis celebrated a series of impressive runs by young hopefuls at home tournaments this past fortnight.

Last week, teen sensation Shang Juncheng claimed Chinese men's first professional singles title on home soil at the ATP250 Chengdu Open.

Buyunchaokete, 22, another rising star in Chinese men's tennis, kept the momentum going by fighting his way into the final four at the ATP500 level for the first time in Beijing, only to be stopped in the semifinals on Tuesday by world No 1 Jannik Sinner of Italy.

Sinner, as defending champion in Beijing, lost to Spain's four-time major winner Carlos Alcaraz 7-6 (6), 4-6, 6-7 (3) in a seesaw final on Wednesday that lasted for more than three hours.

With a more balanced prowess achieved at the elite level, tournament organizers predict that the tennis boom inspired by retired women's legend Li Na's two major wins at the 2011 French Open and 2014 Australian Open will only grow stronger in the new era.

"It's a huge advantage (a home tournament) for spectators to have a chance to see the Chinese players in action," said Lars Graf, China Open's co-tournament director, before this year's event.

"They're doing very well internationally, and now they're coming home to play. I think that tennis is booming right now in China," added Graf, a former vice-president of the ATP Tour.

COVER

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The 26 commissioners she announced at a news conference in Strasbourg during the European Parliament plenary session are yet to go through a screening and hearing in the parliament, a process that could go well into November or December. In von der Leyen's first term starting in 2019, three nominees for commissioners failed to win approval from the parliament.

Jasna Plevnik, president of the Geoeconomic Forum Croatia, a think tank, said that EU member states must find a way to halt the growing power of the European Commission leadership over the past five years.

"The role of the executive power has increased, and that shift has challenged the balance of governance within the European Union, the EU's global position, and even worse (it has) put America's strategic and economic interests above the EU's," she said, referring to the public criticism that von der Leyen is "vehemently pro-American".

Just a week before von der Leyen's announcement of the new college, Mario Draghi, the former European Central Bank governor, released a roughly 400-page report on the European Union's future competitiveness. It paints a dismal picture of the bloc in terms of technology, innovation and manufacturing.

The report, ordered by von der Leyen, laments that the EU economy has fallen behind the United States while China is inexorably catching up.

Draghi said the EU faces "an existential challenge" and if it does not change, it will be condemned to "a slow agony".

"The EU is weak in the emerging technologies that will drive future growth. Only four of the world's top 50 tech companies are Europeans," he said.

Since 2008, 30 percent of European "unicorns", or startup companies valued at over \$1 billion, have left the bloc for the US, Draghi told reporters at the news conference for the report.

The report calls for closing the innovation gap with the US and China, especially in advanced technologies. It urges improving the bloc's competitiveness through closer cooperation in core areas and massive investment — up to 800 billion euros (\$894 billion) annually, in shared objectives.

The report also calls for developing a joint plan to link the goal of decarbonization with increased competitiveness. It warns that the EU must significantly ramp up joint defense spending to reduce its reliance on the US for security.

"The diagnosis is scathing and the medicine is strong," said Sebastian Maillard, associate fellow of the Europe program at Chatham House, a leading think tank based in the United Kingdom, adding that Draghi's strategy does not just come down to money.

"It advocates a new stance toward cooperation by coordinating policies, cutting red tape and better respecting the principle of subsidiarity so that the EU remains focused on areas where it most adds value," he wrote on the Chatham House website.

The report advocates reforming competition law to facilitate mergers of European corporations, referring to the European Commission's ban in 2019 on Siemens' proposed acquisition of Alstom in the high-speed train sector.

While von der Leyen applauded the report as providing guidance for her second term, Friedrich Merz, the leader of the Christian Democratic Union, the largest party in the German parliament, and a strong contender to be the next German chancellor, immediately voiced his opposition to the permanent issuing of EU joint debt featured in the Draghi report.

Domestic issues

"I want to say this very clearly, now and in the future, I will do everything I can to prevent this European Union from spiraling into debt," he told the parliament, or Bundestag, just two days after the release of the Draghi report.

Germany and France, the EU's two largest economies, are busy coping with domestic political and economic crises. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition government has been greatly weakened in the past year after losing regional elections to not just the Christian Democratic Union, but also the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany party.

The German economy is in poor shape due to high energy costs and



A vessel is docked at a container terminal in Duisburg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, in October last year. The city is a key hub for trade between China and Europe. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Relations: China, EU set for new phase

“In the field of green and climate, I believe that positive EU-China collaboration will not just benefit China and Europe, but also the world as a whole.”

Matic Gajsek, director for Europe at the Europe Asia Center

low export demand. The Bundesbank predicted that the economy will shrink again in the third quarter of the year, after registering negative growth in two of the past three quarters.

The announcement by Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger on Sept 16 to postpone the construction of a 30-billion-euro chip factory in Magdeburg, Germany, for at least two years, could not come at a worse time for both Berlin and Brussels, which bet on the project injecting confidence in reviving the bloc's advanced microchip manufacturing.

Germany has become a headache for the European Commission and angered neighboring Schengen countries by introducing land border checks for six months starting on Sept 16 in a bid to crack down on illegal migration. The new border controls with France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark were in addition to the ones introduced earlier with Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Poland.

Dissatisfaction over the EU's contentious migration policy has been simmering in several other member states, too. The Netherlands has asked for an opt-out of the EU's migration policies. Hungary intends to do the same.

France, the second-largest EU economy, is also mired in a domestic political crisis.

French President Emmanuel Macron, whose allies lost in the European Parliament election in June to far-right parties, named a new government on Sept 21 led by Prime Minister Michel Barnier, a former EU negotiator for Brexit. But opposition politicians from the left quickly announced their plans to undermine the new government with a no-confidence motion in parliament.

Jordan Bardella, leader of the National Rally, condemned the composition of the new government and claimed that it is "a return to Macronism" and has "no future whatsoever".

Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan Uni-



A worker conducts inspections at a China-Europe freight train services center in Shenyang, Liaoning province, in August. ZHANG WENKUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Workers assemble cars at a plant of FAW-Volkswagen in Qingdao, Shandong province, in January last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The Peljesac Bridge is illuminated during its opening ceremony in Komarna, Croatia, in July 2022. It is a flagship project under the Belt and Road Initiative. IGOR KRALJ VIA NEWSCOM

versity, said the major challenges facing the EU are its survival and development.

"The EU is facing many challenges posed by de-globalization, rising populism, resistance to further integration, lack of innovation, an aging population, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the impact of the US containment policy of China and EU's bid for strategic autonomy," Ding said. Lai Suetyi, an associate professor

at the Center for European Studies at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, said that von der Leyen's second term, like the first term, will unlikely be an easy one.

Besides the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict and the rise of right-wing populism, Lai is worried that the pressure of an economic downturn in the EU and globally could mean fewer resources for the bloc's vital green and digital transitions.

"Nevertheless, the track record of the EU has shown deeper and wider integration upon crises, so I am not pessimistic about it," she said.

The European Parliament elections in June saw the European Greens obtaining only 51 seats, down from the 71 in 2019. The new balance of power suggests that the implementation of a European Green Deal may no longer be a top priority for EU citizens amid the rising cost of living, migration and the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict.

While the EU has passed laws to ban the sale of new combustion engine cars by 2035, the European Commission's imposition of provisional tariffs on Chinese EVs, which started in July, is expected to slow down the EU's ambition in green transport transition. The new tariffs on Chinese EVs will hit 35.3 percent on top of the EU's universal 10 percent tariff on all cars.

Chris Aylett, a research associate at the Environment and Society Center of the Chatham House, expressed that imposing tariffs on Chinese EVs will make the EU's low-carbon transition slower and more expensive.

Huge market

"And when it comes to cheap, clean technology, China is the undisputed world leader. Two decades of consistent and targeted industrial policy, combined with the benefits of a huge domestic market, mean that China today produces extremely competitively priced, high-quality, low-carbon goods," he said.

EU member states are divided on the issue, with Scholz recently joining Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in calling for the EU to drop its plan to impose extra tariffs on Chinese EVs.

Many are worried about a potential trade war with China launching anti-dumping probes into pork and brandy from the EU.

The two sides have been engaging with each other trying to solve the issues through negotiations. Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao met with European Commission Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis in Brussels on Sept 19 in a bid to narrow the differences.

While they have not reached any agreement, both sides reaffirmed their political will to pursue and intensify efforts to find a mutually agreeable solution.

The 27 EU member states will vote on the tariffs. They will be implemented by the end of October unless a qualified majority of 15 members representing 65 percent of the EU population votes against the duties.

"In the field of green and climate, I believe that positive EU-China collaboration will not just benefit China and Europe, but also the world as a whole," said Matic Gajsek, director for Europe at the Europe Asia Center, a Brussels-based think tank.

Ding, of Fudan University, agreed that the green transition, artificial intelligence, digital revolution, joint tackling of global hot spot issues and opposing unilateralism and de-globalization present huge opportunities for China-EU collaborations.

He said the biggest challenges facing the bilateral relations remain to be in trade and the lack of mutual trust.

"Based on the current assessment, the second von der Leyen commission's policy on China won't be too much different," Ding said. But he believes the outcome of the 2024 US presidential election on Nov 5 could impact EU policy direction.

The EU has since March 2019 defined China as a cooperation partner, economic competitor and systemic rival. Some EU politicians have increasingly played up the competition factor and a de-risking strategy. China disagrees with the description and instead emphasizes a comprehensive strategic partnership that was set up between China and the EU in 2003.

Call for dialogue

Lai, of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, voiced her concern over the excessive emphasis on competition and security in every field, saying it will hurt bilateral cooperation.

"The current pragmatism should be sustained, and dialogue should continue. The two sides should re-discuss how to exit the sanctions against each other so that the strategic partnership could return to the right track," she said, referring to China's counter-sanctions on EU individuals and entities following EU's sanctions on Chinese individuals and entities in March 2021.

The tit-for-tat sanctions have led to a halt in the European Parliament in ratifying the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment that was reached after seven years of hard talks. The deal promises wider market access in China to EU businesses and investors and assures stronger protection for each other's investment.

China and the EU held their 24th summit in Beijing last December. China and the EU also hold regular high-level dialogues on a range of issues from people-to-people exchanges and environment and climate to economy and trade and digital cooperation.

Plevnik, of the Geoeconomic Forum Croatia, believes that the key factor behind EU-China relations remaining relatively healthy is China's persistent willingness to preserve and repair ties and make friends in Europe.

"China has never run a smear campaign against the EU. It has done more than others to help the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic, while its global agenda is multilateral and supportive to developing countries," she said.

She noted that besides relations at the China-EU level, the bilateral relations at the national level have also played a vital role, citing the facts that governments from France, Germany and Italy have recently stepped up diplomatic efforts with Beijing to improve ties.

Plevnik stressed that the upcoming US election will have a "profound effect" on EU-China relations, and for the EU, the health of China-US relations will have a bigger impact on EU-China relations.

She believes a Kamala Harris administration will most likely continue Joe Biden's policy while a second Donald Trump administration is less likely to press the EU to pivot to the "Indo-Pacific" region, thus helping improve regional stability.

Gajsek, of the Europe Asia Center, believes a Trump victory could reshape EU-China relations.

Given the entire European political establishment views Trump as an unreliable partner, "it may be challenging for them to follow his lead into an escalating Cold War against China," he said.

"This shift could pave the way for more positive EU-China relations."

In an op-ed on Sept 5, Jorg Rocholl, president of the Berlin-based European School of Management and Technology, said the EU should not be looking at the US election outcome "like a rabbit at a snake, hoping for a seemingly favorable result".

"Instead, it must independently and quickly define and work toward its own goals regardless of the result, even more so given its unpredictability," he said.

"Regardless of the US presidential election's outcome, Europe's interests don't fully align with Washington's. It's time to fully recognize this and draw the right conclusion," he said.

WORLD

Calls grow for restraint in Mideast

UN urges cease-fire as Iran, Israel swap threats after missile barrage

By MIKE GU and JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong

The United Nations has called for a de-escalation in the Middle East, after Iran fired a barrage of missiles at Israel on Tuesday evening in response to previous assassinations of Iranian leaders by Israel and the Israeli offensive in Palestine and Lebanon.

"I condemn the broadening of the Middle East conflict with escalation after escalation," Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said in a statement after Iran launched missiles at Israel on Tuesday evening.

"We absolutely need a cease-fire," Guterres said.

In response, Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz said on Wednesday that he was barring Guterres from entering the country because he had not "unequivocally" condemned Iran's missile attack.

The European Union also called for an immediate cease-fire across the Middle East. Josep Borrell, foreign policy chief of the EU, posted on X, "The dangerous cycle of attacks and retaliation risks ... spiraling out of control. An immediate cease-fire across the region is needed."

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, said the Iranian missile attacks were in retaliation for assassinations carried out by Israel and crimes committed in Palestine and Lebanon.

The IRGC warned Israel of more severe retaliation in case it responds to the attack.

At a cabinet meeting in a secure bunker near Jerusalem in the aftermath of the attack, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Teheran made a "big mistake tonight" and vowed that "it will pay for it," according to The Times of Israel.

China on Wednesday expressed its deep concerns over the turmoil in the Middle East and its opposition to moves that fuel antagonism and escalate tensions, saying it rejected any violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity.

China believes the fighting in Gaza is the root cause of this round of turmoil in the Middle East, the spokesperson said, urging all parties to work toward achieving a comprehensive and enduring cease-fire in Gaza as soon as possible.

Mohammad Khajooei, an Iranian analyst on the Middle East issues, told China Daily that Iran's massive missile strikes against Israel on Tuesday after a long restraint, the second such attack since April, have brought the two longtime foes to the brink of an all-out war.

Khajooei said that after its missile strike on Israel, Iran is in a state of "full vigilance" and is watching very carefully not to fall into an Israeli trap that could drag Teheran into an all-out regional war.

Heavy consequences of the strike are inevitable, he said. Israel has vowed to deliver a strong response to Iran's missile strikes, which will further escalate the already tense situation in the Middle East and push the region closer to all-out war.

Any deterioration in the regional situation could have significant international repercussions, includ-

Chinese citizens moved to safety

More than 200 Chinese citizens have been safely evacuated from Lebanon in two batches as the conflict between Lebanon and Israel escalates.

The first batch comprised 69 Chinese citizens and 11 foreign family members who arrived in Cyprus on Tuesday by boat, while the second batch consisted of 146 Chinese citizens and 5 foreign family members, who arrived in Beijing on a chartered flight early on Wednesday.

Zhang Yang, deputy director-general of the Department of Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that a total of 215 Chinese citizens were evacuated safely, including three residents from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and one from the Taiwan region. Their safe exit was organized by the Chinese government, he said.

Chen Wenfang, who has been in Lebanon for 10 years, was among those evacuated by boat along with her daughter.

"Everyone is very grateful to the Chinese government for organizing the evacuation," Chen told Xinhua News Agency. "Being able to evacuate safely is reassuring," she added.

Zhao Ying, who has lived in Lebanon for 20 years, said the entire process of evacuation was safe and orderly.

PAN JIE

ing a rapid spike in global oil prices and a detrimental impact on world's economy, Khajooei said.

Muslim Imran, director of the Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue in Malaysia, noted that it was clear Iran was thinking strategically following the Israeli aggression and the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. Iran sought to create space for diplomacy in order to persuade Israel to halt its aggression in Gaza, reach an agreement, and initiate a cease-fire, he said.

However, Israel's aggression persisted, and its leadership felt emboldened to launch attacks in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and other regions, Imran said. As a result, Israel ignored calls for diplomacy and a cease-fire, believing it was entitled to escalate its aggression due to the full backing from the United States, Imran said.

"This meant that Iran had to retaliate and carry out a 'surgical operation' against Israeli military sites, and that's what we saw last night," Imran said. It was very clear that Iran was targeting military targets, not civilian infrastructure, he added.

Contact the writers at mikegu@chinadailyhk.com.

Mohammad Reza Manafi, a freelance journalist in Teheran, and Zhao Jia in Beijing contributed to the story.



Workers carry out repairs on Wednesday after a restaurant is damaged in an Iranian missile attack in Tel Aviv, Israel. JACK GUEZ / AFP

Making their voices heard



Dockworkers gather at the Bayport Container Terminal in Seabrook, Texas, on Tuesday. Officials at 14 ports along the US East and Gulf Coasts were making last-minute preparations on Monday for a likely labor strike that could drag on the US economy just ahead of a presidential election. MARK FELIX / AFP

UN envoy: In 75 years, China has risen from sufferings to strength

By MINGMEILI in New York

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"Diligence, innovation, opening-up and responsibility" was how China's envoy to the UN Secretariat, permanent representatives of various countries to the UN, and guests gathered at the Permanent Mission of China to the UN on Tuesday night to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

"In just 75 years, the Chinese nation has risen from past sufferings to prosperity and strength. Such historic progress is created by none other than the hard-working Chinese people," said Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN.

"We have always put the people front and center and found a development path suited to our national conditions," he said. "The relentless efforts by the Chinese people have brought about two miracles of our times: one of rapid economic growth and one of enduring social stability."

Over the past 75 years, China has contributed more than 30 percent to global economic growth, which is driven by the Chinese people's commitment to innovation and high-quality development, Fu said.

"China has made continuous progress in lunar and deep space

exploration, pushing the boundaries of humanity's reach well beyond planet Earth. In the meantime, here on our planet, facing the emergence of artificial intelligence, China is committed to its safe and inclusive development.

"We are also making unique contributions to the green transformation of the world economy with our new energy vehicles, batteries and PV (photovoltaic) industries," he said.

China has been consistently advancing Belt and Road Initiative cooperation and making good use of various platforms to facilitate trade and share development opportunities with the rest of the world, the ambassador said.

Among major developing countries and the world's top economies, China is the first to reduce tariffs to zero for all goods from least developed countries, Fu said.

"China's door to the outside world, once opened, will not be closed again. It can only be opened even wider," said Fu.

Facing a changing global landscape, China remains committed to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and actively participates in global governance and its reforms, said Fu, adding that China is taking on more responsibility.

"We uphold fairness and justice and play a constructive role in promoting political settlement of hot spot issues. We resolutely safeguard the common interests of developing countries and stand shoulder to

shoulder with the Global South," he said.

Also, China is ready to come together with countries around the world under the UN flag to champion an equal and orderly multipolar world and to promote economic globalization to make it more inclusive and work for all, he said.

Philémon Yang, president of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, told reporters at the reception that China's development achievements serve as examples for developing countries. He said he looks forward to China continuing to deepen cooperation with developing countries.

United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé said that China has achieved remarkable success in various fields of development while playing a key role in maintaining world peace and stability.

He said he hopes to see China's continuing support of the UN and multilateralism and its cooperation on the Global Civilization Initiative.

Dima Al-Khatib, director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, said China plays an "impactful" role in partnership with her office and also the China-Africa summit.

"This is a very promising collaboration that will help a lot of countries that are either least developed and landlocked ... benefit from the expertise of China," she said.

Leaders send greetings on China's 75th anniversary

Leaders of many Latin American and Asia-Pacific countries have sent messages or letters of congratulations to Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said that Brazil-China relations extend beyond the bilateral ties and share extensive common values and common interests, serving as an example of stability for a turbulent and conflict-ridden world. He noted that Brazil is willing to work with China to push for in-depth development of bilateral relations and continuously consolidate bilateral friendship.

Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni said that Cambodia-China cooperation has become a model for the Belt and Road cooperation and laid a solid foundation for jointly building a high-quality, high-level and high-standard Cambodia-China community with a shared future in the new era.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen, president of the Cambodian People's Party, said that the Cambodian side is willing to continue to develop Cambodia-China comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and build a Cambodia-China community with a shared future.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said that over the past 10 years, Indonesia-China comprehensive strategic partnership has been developing continuously. Indonesia cherishes the friendly relations between the two countries based on mutual respect, mutual understanding, and sincere friendship, and is willing to continuously deepen strategic mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Indian President Droupadi Murmu said that India and China, two major neighbors, face many common development challenges and share common regional interests, adding that it is very important to develop peaceful and stable bilateral relations and that India is willing to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with China.

Singaporean President Tharman Shanmugaratnam said that China has made remarkable achievements in its modernization drive and made important global contributions, noting that Singapore and China enjoy close economic ties, diversified areas of cooperation and close cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Governor-General of Papua New Guinea Bob Dadae said that PNG will firmly uphold the one-China principle and looks forward to continuing to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with China, so as to jointly build a closer China-Pacific island countries community with a shared future.

Fijian President Ratu Wiliame Katonivere said that Fiji and China enjoy a solid friendship, and that Fiji will continue to be committed to Fiji-China friendship and promote cooperation between the two nations.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said that China has become an important guarantee for preserving lasting peace and stability in the world and a pioneer in promoting equal and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Venezuela will firmly uphold the one-China principle, unswervingly support China on issues concerning China's core interests, and actively participate in China-proposed initiatives, including a community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road cooperation, he noted.

Argentine President Javier Milei said that Argentina-China relations are based on respect and cooperation, and Argentina hopes to further strengthen high-level exchanges with China, promote economic, trade and investment cooperation and cultural and people-to-people exchanges with China, continuously expand the common interests between the two countries, and strengthen Argentina-China comprehensive strategic partnership.

The Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele said the world has witnessed Chinese path to modernization with its own national conditions, and that the Solomon Islands is willing to join hands with China to build a community with a shared future for mankind.



Making history

Claudia Sheinbaum was sworn in on Tuesday as Mexico's first woman serving the presidency. President Xi Jinping's special envoy Tie Ning attended the inauguration ceremony. Tie is vice-chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature. FRANCISCO CANEDO / XINHUA

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PEOPLE

An American guide for a Chinese museum

Long before smartphones and WeChat, Liangzhu's people were 'posting their moments' on pots, revealing the UNESCO Heritage place's rich and interesting past

Emma Chen (extreme left) talks about the stories behind the ring-footed black pottery jar with 12 symbols to visitors in the Liangzhu Museum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



By ZHAO JIA
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The Liangzhu Museum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, houses a treasure trove of jade, lacquerware and myriad artifacts, but what has impressed Emma Chen, a volunteer there, the most is its black pottery collection, which sports unique symbols that some scholars think are inscriptions from another era. She passionately explains to visitors that long before smartphones, the Liangzhu people were possibly "posting their moments" on pottery like people today do on WeChat.

Located on the outskirts of Hangzhou, Liangzhu Museum, established in 2005, showcases the archaeological findings from the Liangzhu ruins.

What has caught Chen's attention the most is a ring-footed black pottery jar that bears 12 symbols. Some scholars feel it tells a story. "One version is that it says that a man caught a tiger with a net," Chen said. "There are many different explanations, but they were probably depicting specific scenes or events, inscribing on a

pot what had happened earlier that day, the way people these days post moments on WeChat," she said.

Though she has a partially Chinese name and speaks fluent Mandarin, Chen is from the United States, making her an unlikely guide for China's ancient past.

Her knowledge of museums is extensive and her enthusiasm bridges centuries. Chen has the knack of captivating visitors by making the ancient feel familiar.

She even quizzes visitors, asking them if they thought a wooden well, unearthed in Liangzhu and dating back over 5,000 years, was real.

Looking at it many of them say it can't be authentic as the wood would have decayed long ago. But Chen corrects them.

"That's what we learn from archaeology, that objects submerged under water are often better preserved," she said, adding that the well stood as an example of how the ancient Liangzhu people knew about water conservancy.

Her passion for Chinese history precedes the time when she was majoring in Oriental studies. She

“Instead of what books said, I wanted to see a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China with my own eyes.”

Emma Chen, a US volunteer in the Liangzhu Museum

learned Chinese during her college days in the US, and the interest ultimately propelled her across the Pacific Ocean.

"In addition, instead of what books said, I wanted to see a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China with my own eyes," she said.

Coming to China in early 2015 after graduating, she became a member of the museum's volunteer team in 2022. Chen said her frequent visits to the museum led to them mak-

ing an offer. "I remembered a staff member coming up to me and asking if I wanted to do the job. I had always wanted to do it, so I agreed without hesitation," she said. "I just happened to be at the right place at the right time."

And since then she has clocked 232 hours of volunteering experience, which is not surprising given her passion.

Being a bilingual volunteer guide is not without its share of challenges though. Chen has diligently read numerous books on Chinese history and visited many museums in China to overcome problems.

"What helped me the most was the volunteering team at the museum. Through a series of training sessions, I learned more about Liangzhu's civilization, how to tailor my presentations to cater to different cultural backgrounds of audiences and accurately and vividly explain the stories behind each cultural relic," she said.

For Chen, Liangzhu Museum has become "a big family" that gives her a sense of belonging. "What fascinates me even more is that the

museum itself is inclusive," she said. "People sometimes ask me, 'As a foreigner, why do you want to be a volunteer in a Chinese museum?' My answer is quite simple. Because I think the museum is inclusive. It opens its arms, welcoming everyone who comes here, regardless of their background. I hope everyone can walk into museums and get a glimpse of the rich and profound history behind the cultural relics."

"I will continue to dedicate myself to promoting the ancient Liangzhu culture among both Chinese and international visitors," she said. In September, Chen went to Zhejiang University to study museology and learn Chinese history. Looking ahead, she said, "I am always ready and will continue to volunteer as a guide as long as there is a need."

Being a guide enables her to interact with people from all walks of life. "We once received the president of a prestigious university in the US. I was nervous at first, but soon engaged in an interesting conversation, learning a lot from the interaction. The president asked me a lot about Liangzhu culture," she said.

She was deeply touched by a Chinese father who came with some children to the museum in August last year. "He told me that he had made a lot of preparations before visiting, such as watching documentaries and reading books to better learn about Liangzhu culture," she said. "I really appreciated this attitude. We need more people like him."

Chen has visited many museums in China, such as the Yinxu Museum in Henan province and the Sanxingdui Museum in Sichuan province. But in her eyes, Liangzhu Museum is an invaluable treasure that cannot be replaced because she believes every word that is written on a wall in the hall of the museum, that "Liangzhu is the most concrete testimony of 5,000 years of Chinese civilization".

In 2019, the Liangzhu ruins made it to the UNESCO World Heritage List. According to UNESCO, the city "provides unparalleled evidence for concepts of cultural identity, social and political organization, and the development of society and culture in the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age in China and the region".

Fujian raftsmen making life more than just staying afloat

By ZHOU JIN
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Drifting down the Shangqing Stream in Southeast China's Fujian province on a bamboo raft is no less than a treat, both to the eyes as well as the ears. Apart from breathtaking views of the Danxia landform, lush forests and tranquil streams, visitors are also captivated by raftsmen Huang Shengteng's melodious singing, humorous observations and enthusiastic conversation.

As Huang and his wife take turns to skillfully steer the raft with bamboo poles, Huang chats to the tourists on board, sharing local anecdotes, geological knowledge and even discussing with them the latest domestic and international news.

"The standard tour guide script was rather boring, so I started incorporating what I had learned. Over time, I developed my own lively and humorous style of connecting with the guests," the 55-year-old said.

Occasionally, when interacting with foreign visitors, he throws in a few English words or phrases. "Sometimes we host international guests, and speaking a bit of English helps," Huang said, adding that a sincere and warm smile and body language are useful as communication tools.

Rafting on the Shangqing Stream is not an easy task. It usually takes one and a half hours to finish the whole journey as the stream —

located in northeast Taining county, Sanming city — stretches over 16 kilometers, requiring rafters to have great physical stamina.

Each trip down the stream requires Huang to push the bamboo pole over 10,000 times. During the peak summer tourist season, on some days the surge of visitors is such that it requires him to make three or four trips.

Huang still remembers guiding famous Chinese television host Zhu Xun on a sunset trip down the stream, during which the two discussed Taining's history and culture.

"Zhu said she was very happy to chat with me and after the trip, while shaking hands with me, was surprised to notice I had so many calluses on my hands," Huang said.

The calluses are testimony to the physical labor he does. "Farmers create everything with their bare hands," Huang told her.

Born in a small village called Changxing, Huang grew up in a poor family that relied on farming, earning only about 2,000 yuan (\$280) a year.

Life was hard and opportunities rare for Huang at that time. After he graduated from high school and failed his college entrance exams in 1988, Huang worked as a farmer and occasionally did odd jobs in the county, earning a meager daily wage of 10 yuan.

Huang recalled that in the early 1990s, when Shangqing Stream was just an abandoned waterway, tourism was a distant concept.

His life saw opportunities for change when Taining county decided to develop the stream as a tourist destination in 1994.

With its special scenery, the stream offers a perfect spot for bamboo rafting, an activity that soon became a hallmark of local tourism.

At that time, the pay for rafters was quite high — 25 yuan for one trip down the stream, while regular labor jobs paid around 25 yuan for an entire day, Huang said.

"On days when there were more tourists, it was possible to do one or two trips, so the income was attractive. I was really keen to get this job."

However, Huang's entry into the profession was far from smooth. When the local authorities began recruiting raft workers, he applied but was not selected because he could not swim, which is a must for the job. "You have to know how to swim, in order to be able to rescue yourself and the passengers in the event of an accident," Huang said.

He was quite depressed and spent six months learning to swim. In 1999, his determination and efforts paid off, and he finally secured the position of a rafter.

During the peak tourist season, a typical day in Huang's life starts before dawn and ends after dusk. "We only have 10 to 15 minutes to have some food and rest while the bamboo rafts are being taken to the dock in the upper reaches of the stream, from where the rafting trips begin, to prepare for the next trip."

"One or two trips are manageable, but by the third or fourth, fatigue sets in. By the time I am done for the day and return home, I'm so exhausted that I can barely lift my chopsticks to eat," Huang said.

He added that there's no rest for him and his wife throughout the year as they have to balance rafting with farming. "I don't even have time to visit the county town for leisure."

A single trip down the stream earns him 50 yuan now. During the off-season, the couple supplements their earnings by farming, primarily growing tobacco and rice, and they can earn around 150,000 yuan a year.

Despite the physical toll, Huang has stuck with the job for 25 years. "Looking back, it feels like time has flown by, and all the hardships seem like distant memories."

Over the past 25 years, Huang has also witnessed the efforts made by local authorities for ecological protection and improvements in the local environment.

"The mountains are greener, the water is clearer, and such an environment provides visitors with a more comfortable experience," he said.

Clean streets, eco-friendly farming practices, and a growing number of businesses reflect the positive changes that tourism has brought to the region, he said.

Huang said that the excellent ecological environment has attracted more tourists, which has



Raftsmen Huang Shengteng (left) guides tourists on the Shangqing Stream in Sanming, Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

not only increased demand for rafters but also boosted the county's tourism and other related industries.

"Many young people no longer need to leave their hometowns for work, they can find a job right at their doorstep," he said, adding that from running guesthouses to offering transportation services, locals have found new ways to earn a living.

Tourism is the county's pillar industry. Last year, Taining's total tourism revenue reached nearly 7.6 billion yuan, and attracted nearly 9 million visitors, according to local statistics.

Currently, nearly one-fifth of the county's population is involved in the tourism industry, with the tertiary industry, dominated by tourism, accounting for more than one-third of the county's GDP, Rao

Xiujian, deputy head of Taining county, said earlier.

Huang's outstanding performance at work has also won him prestigious titles, including "Champion-Level Raftsmen" and "Gold Medal Guide". He was also honored as a national model worker.

"Actually I'm an ordinary person and I haven't made any grand accomplishments. I'm just trying to do my best at my job. And through the platform of tourism, I've been able to realize my own sense of purpose and value in life," he said.

"These honors spurred me to continue improving and providing better services. I hope to encourage more raft workers and villagers to learn from the spirit of model workers, and strive for excellence, which I think will help further elevate the quality of tourism in Taining."

READ

F&B packaging births new generation of collectors

Big brands collaborating with popular IPs motivate consumers to upcycle, creating one-of-a-kind pieces, **Cao Yin** reports.

In a world where most people keep photos and stamps in albums, Lin Mengxi stands out as she gathers packaging from milk tea and coffee products to create her own collection.

Whenever she encounters visually appealing designs or logos on food or drink packaging, the Beijing native meticulously cuts them out and places them in her album. Sometimes she repurposes them as bookmarks.

"These paper coffee cupholders and milk tea bags, though seemingly cheap, trivial and meaningless to others, have immense value to me because they are my way to unwind from the pressures of daily work and life," said the 31-year-old who works at a Shanghai-based media company.

"The joy these items bring far outweighs the allure of luxury purchases, offering eco-friendliness and a touch of style," she added.

While occasionally flipping through the album, she shares her latest collections and handmade creations with like-minded colleagues in a WeChat group and posts them on Xiaohongshu, a popular Chinese lifestyle-sharing platform, to engage with a wider audience to discuss the hobby.

"I even exchange items with others online after finding the packaging I've wanted but never obtained," she said, using it as a way for social interaction derived from a new consumption pattern.

Since Chinese food and beverage makers began teaming up with intellectual property owners of popular shows to launch co-branded campaigns in recent years, consumers like Lin have embraced the trend of collecting and transforming the packaging into resonant accessories, such as tote bags and tissue boxes.

Priceless joy

In June, domestic coffee brand Luckin Coffee teamed up with the acclaimed TV series *The Tale of Rose* starring Chinese actress Liu Yifei to promote its yellow rose latte.

Lin spent 31.9 yuan (\$4.5) buying the themed coffee set, which contains two cups of yellow rose latte and a keychain featuring its main character "because I was drawn to the packaging bag and I also like the drama," she said.

The packaging bag features an elegant girl with long curly hair wearing a yellow dress and a dark green background that makes it appear as if she is standing in a forest.

"The coffee set was not expensive but I got such a beautiful bag while enjoying the drink. That's a win-win situation," she recalled.

In October last year, thanks to a coupon, she spent just 9.9 yuan purchasing a cup of cheese-flavored coffee co-branded between Luckin Coffee and *Tom and Jerry*, a United States animated cartoon series.

As a fan of the old cartoon, she cut out the image on the packaging and put it in her cherished album. She also turned the paper cupholder into a bookmark for reuse.

"The coffee price was quite cheap but the joy I got was priceless," she said.

"Although the packaging and holders may not be worth much money, the beautiful, interesting and nostalgic items always make me happy," she added. "Happiness is the most important thing. That's my attitude towards life."

Eco-friendly and stylish

One of Lin's colleagues, whose surname is Li, said that the reason she is addicted to collecting milk tea bags is not just because they look lovely but also because some of the materials used are waterproof, which holds great potential for handicrafting and recycling.

"Large-sized waterproof bags are perfect for rainy days or during business trips, as they are good for storing wet umbrellas or placing slippers in a suitcase," she explained.

"Even more ingenious is that

some high-quality two-cup milk tea bags have a divider in the middle, just enough to put a shoe in each side," she said with a grin. "By simply modifying or transforming the bags for storage, it makes things organized, clean and tidy."

Compared with the past practice of discarding packaging, upcycling

or DIY modifications, in her opinion, is a new trend. "I want to be an environmentally friendly and stylish person. I don't want to be out of date," she added.

When China Daily searched Xiaohongshu for content related to the transformation of food and drink packaging at the end of September, millions of posts with transformed

items or handmade tutorials could be found.

As of Sept 17, for example, more than 20,000 posts have the hashtag "milk tea bag upcycled into handbags" on the platform, with many users sharing tutorials or even selling their decorated handmade products such as cardboard boxes and pen holders online.

Similar posts have also been frequently viewed and discussed on Douyin, a popular short-video service provider. On March 2, a 14-second video demonstrating how to use milk tea packaging to make book covers received about 1.83 million thumbs-ups and was forwarded almost 2.74 million times.

One internet user, whose nickname is Gao Gao, recently posted her transformed packaging of Chagee, a Chinese milk tea brand, on Xiaohongshu, "because as a cat person, it's difficult for me to say no to anything with cat elements, so when I saw that Chagee released a bag with a cat pattern several weeks ago, I immediately made a purchase," said the 26-year-old who works in Zhejiang province.

To make the bag last longer, she took three days to transform it into a tote bag. After sharing the finished product and an online tutorial on how to make it, she received a thumbs-up from many strangers, "which gave me a great sense of fulfillment," she added.

Another Xiaohongshu user nicknamed Xiaogezi found joy after upcycling Chagee's cat-patterned bag into a handbag by adding some material.

"I carried the one-of-a-kind bag into a Chagee shop, attracting the attention of many customers. Some asked me where I bought the bag and some even expressed their will to buy it at a high price," she added.

Business success

In August, milk tea brand Naixue joined hands with the *Harry Potter* movie series to promote a themed beverage with packaging featuring scenes and characters from the films.

After seeing the co-branded promotion, a woman from Guangdong province, 25, who calls herself Qiu, bought the drink and "immediately decided to transform the brown, plaid-patterned packaging with the Harry Potter English logo into a handbag for one of my friends, who is a Harry Potter fan," she said.

"I didn't want to waste such fabulous and high-quality packaging. It deserves to be further developed to become more useful," she said.

Harry Potter-related products, such as toys and water bottles, can be pricey. "But the handcrafted upcycled bag from the co-branded business was affordable and met the preference and needs of my friend," she said.

In other words, co-branded promotions have provided fans of IPs with easier channels to collect IP-related products while stimulating consumer spending, she added.

"It's a successful business," said Xiaogezi. "Milk tea by itself is not considered important, as many consumers desire co-branded packaging with logos or designs, and relevant gifts such as cotton bags, keychains and stickers."

According to Kamen, a media portal focusing on China's beverage sector, 231 co-branded marketing campaigns took place among 22 mainstream beverage brands in 2023.

Specifically, cartoon-related co-branding promotions took up the largest share with 61 percent, while TV drama and computer game co-branding tied for second with 17 percent each.

The IPs that brands select, along with emotional value or chemistry stimulated by co-branding, have become critical factors for consumers' purchasing decisions, effectively promoting sales growth, Kamen said.

Naming co-branding a norm in the market, it noted that the strategy has also become a golden channel for many brands to awaken dormant users and expand potential ones.

Zhu Danpeng, an independent food and beverage analyst based in Guangzhou, once lauded the co-branding campaigns, saying, "It's a good marketing strategy and an inevitable trend, especially among younger generations."

However, he emphasized that regardless of the business promotions, the essence of catering consumption should always be the products and services themselves.

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LIANG LUWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left and right: Bookmarks made from cup sleeves of milk tea beverages.
LIN MENGXI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Handicrafts build strong familial bond

Painting and handicrafting during my leisure time is not just a brief escape from busy work, but also a long-standing means of communication between my mom and me.

My mom is skilled at handicrafts and knitted most of my sweaters when I was a child. In my memory, whenever we sat on the sofa watching TV, she was always



Cao Yin
Reporter's
Log

knitting. Even during the summer, she always had her knitting needles and colorful yarn to ensure that I could have unique sweaters to wear when winter came back around.

I remember when she knitted a sweater for me with a Mickey Mouse pattern, alternating red, black and yellow wool. When I wore it to school, many classmates thought it was store-bought. After learning that it was handmade, they were surprised and envious.

In recent months, my mom has taken a liking to upcycling outdat-

ed or ill-fitting denim jeans. She cuts different colored denim fabric and then pieces them together to make satchels and makeup pouches.

Whether in childhood or now, I have always been proud to receive her handmade creations. But what brings me even more joy is watching or listening to her narrate the process of making them.

This process makes me feel a simple joy toward my mom and I realize that doing what you love or having a hobby is an outlet for

relieving the great pressures of work and life.

Therefore, nowadays, I like sharing with my mom and others my own paintings and the transformed daily accessories I have created, such as tissue or storage boxes upcycled from milk tea bags.

If the sweaters knitted by my mom were her way of showing care, making the young me feel warm in the old days, then as we grow older, these handicrafts and artworks shared between us have become the

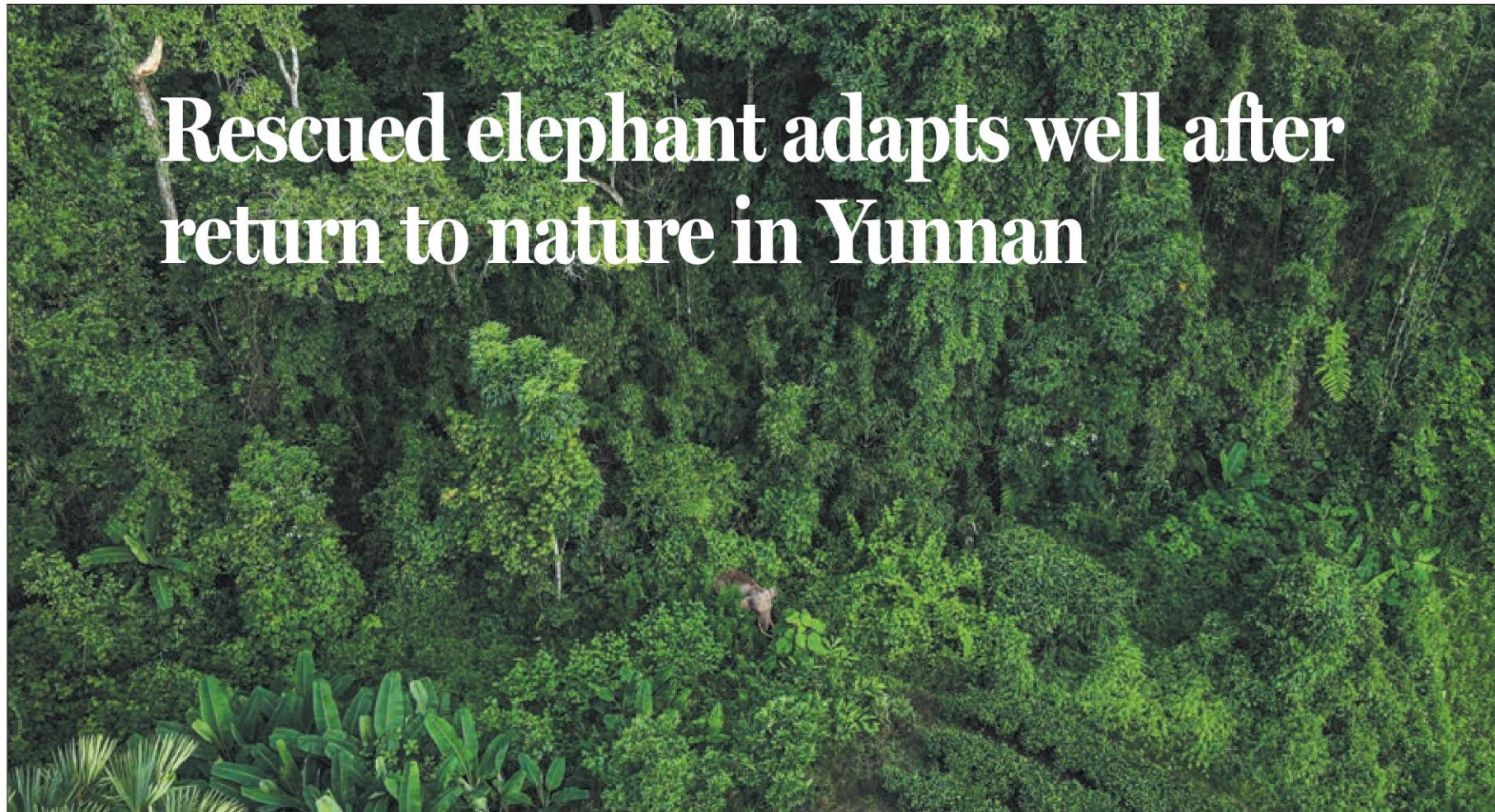
medium through which we express love mutually, bringing happiness to both of us.

More importantly, during the exchange process, we are simply ourselves, temporarily forgetting the roles of mother and daughter. We objectively evaluate each other's works and appreciate each other. That's the kind of equal relationship I aspire to have with all my family.

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IMAGE

Rescued elephant adapts well after return to nature in Yunnan



A drone photo shows Asian elephant A'Bao roaming in the Mengyang area of the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve in Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Southwest China's Yunnan province, on July 26, 2024. XISHUANGBANNA ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT CENTER / FOR CHINA DAILY



Elephant monitor Pu Zhongqiang adjusts an infrared camera in Dadugang town of Jinghong, Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, on Sep 14, 2024. HU CHAO / XINHUA



Elephant monitor Yang Jun (right) and his colleague operate a drone to trace elephant A'Bao in Xishuangbanna on Aug 10, 2024. HU CHAO / XINHUA

The successful reintroduction of Asian elephant A'Bao into the wild in Southwest China's Yunnan province marks a milestone in China's elephant reintroduction experiment.

In 2018, then 12-year-old A'Bao was rescued when lingering in the crowded downtown area of Pu'er city of Yunnan, away from herd.

A pilot project of returning A'Bao into the wild started in July 2022 after years of behavior and re-wilding training at Xishuangbanna Asian Elephant Rescuing and Breeding Center in Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture in Yunnan.

Chen Yubin was assigned to train A'Bao to forage and live in a natural environment, restoring the elephant's nature and viability to live in the wild.

A'Bao was solely trained in the wilderness zone from April 14 until May 17 when it was finally released into the wild.

According to the Xishuangbanna Asian Elephant Conservation Management Center, monitors discov-

ered A'Bao in the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve, wearing the tracking collar, drinking and bathing with 34 wild elephants in the Wild Elephant Valley, and returning to the rainforest in the evening. This behavior is a sign that A'Bao has successfully integrated into an elephant herd.

"He looks stronger and more vigilant," said Bao Mingwei, a veterinarian at the rescuing and breeding center.

Fecal analysis showed that A'Bao eats over 100 types of food, the same as an adult wild elephant.

"This is the first time in China that a rescued wild elephant has been reintroduced into the wild after training," said Wang Bin, head of the management center. The center will continue monitoring the situation of A'Bao to evaluate the reintroduction and develop a systematic, scientific, and replicable process for the reintroduction of Asian elephants.



Asian elephant A'Bao moves with a wild elephant herd in the Wild Elephant Valley in the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve on Sep 5, 2024. XISHUANGBANNA ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT CENTER / FOR CHINA DAILY



Elephant monitor Li Hongjiang (left) and Pu Zhongqiang ground monitor Asian elephant A'Bao in Dadugang on Sep 14, 2024. HU CHAO / XINHUA



A drone photo shows a corn field eaten by the Asian elephant A'Bao in Dadugang on Aug 10, 2024. HU CHAO / XINHUA



Elephant monitor Li Hongjiang (right) reminds a tea grower to watch out when he monitors A'Bao in Dadugang on Sep 14, 2024. HU CHAO / XINHUA

TREND

At 3 pm on Oct 1, 1949, Chairman of the Communist Party of China Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic of China from the tower of Beijing's Tian'anmen Gate, joined by other prominent figures who would form the core of the country's leadership. More than 300,000 people filled Tian'anmen Square to watch the announcement.

"For 75 years, this moment has been viewed by generations of Chinese as a deeply emotional milestone in contemporary Chinese history. Yet not many are aware of the fact that almost all who had turned up at the tower that day, including Chairman Mao himself, was wearing a special type of formal suit known in China as the Zhongshan suit," says Liu Wei, a professor from the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, one of China's top fashion colleges.

For those unfamiliar with the history, Zhongshan is the name of Sun Zhongshan, more commonly known as Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), a Chinese revolutionary widely revered for his instrumental role in the 1911 Revolution, which overthrew the rule of China's last feudal dynasty — Qing (1644-1911).

With its stand-up collar and buttoned-up design, the Zhongshan suit (Chinese tunic suit), combining traditional Chinese aesthetics with a Western cut, endeared itself to Sun and his progressively minded countrymen who wore the design proudly, partly as a call for change.

"The suit got its name not from Sun himself but from his followers and admirers, including Mao, who decided to continue what he started," says Liu, who has researched and written extensively about the history of Chinese fashion.

According to Liu, Chinese fashion in the 1950s and 60s was characterized by uniformity and practicality, due to the dominant social ideology and the era's economic situation. Somber, muted colors like "army green" and "police officer blue" reigned. Functionality was prioritized; and a straight cut was favored for its minimal use of material.

"The need to feed and clothe everyone was pressing. And it was against this background that the Huadong Institute of Textile Science and Technology, the very first of its kind, was founded in Shanghai in 1951," says Liu. "Huadong" means East China, where Shanghai is located.

This was followed eight years later by the founding of the Beijing Institute of Textile Science and Technology, which changed its name in 1961 to the Beijing Institute of Synthetic Fiber Engineering, and again in 1988 to the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, or BIFT.

"The name changes were reflective of the larger trends both within the industry and across society," says Liu, pointing to a type of polyester fabric whose durability and wrinkle resistance had made it so popular among Chinese between the 1960s and 70s

Historical opening-up paves way for fashion revolution

From the Zhongshan suit to Guangdong's textile trade, self-expression through clothing brings sense of pride, **Zhao Xu** discovers.



A scene from China International Fashion Week in September last year. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

that it was effectively dubbed "*dí que liang*," meaning "really good".

In the case of the second name change, the decision was made a decade after the official start of China's reform and opening-up in 1978. Spearheaded by Deng Xiaoping, whom many today regard as the initiative's "chief architect," the reform focused on transitioning Chinese economy into a more market-oriented one and making the country more connected to the rest of the world.

The message was sent out, first and foremost, by top Chinese leaders donning Western suits, which had been absent from view for the previous decade as China weathered the tumultuous "cultural revolution" (1966-76).

One Chinese city to feel the immediate effects of Deng's reform measures was Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, whose historic name "Canton" was familiar to those working in trade between China and the West during the 18th and 19th centuries. Adjacent to Hong Kong, the port city became a bridge between the



Left: The first generation of Chinese models walked onto the stage after the country's reform and opening-up was officially launched in 1978. Right: The Zhongshan suit worn by Chairman Mao Zedong on Oct 1, 1949. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese mainland and the global fashion and textile markets, and in that process transformed itself into China's first fashion hub.

"With preferential treatment for

investors, many of whom were from Hong Kong and Taiwan, the factories in Guangdong started to manufacture at an unprecedented scale, mostly with materials and samples



provided by whoever placed the order," says Liu. "Many who had placed orders were European fashion companies who decided not to deal with the Guangdong factories

directly but instead through their business partners in Hong Kong. But it didn't take long before they switched, as Guangdong rose in prominence as "the world's factory".

It's no coincidence that the very first joint venture between the mainland and Hong Kong was a factory located in Guangdong's Dongguan city that produced sample-based handbags. From Guangdong, the influence of Western fashion started to spread throughout the rest of China, first in trickles then in waves.

By the time Yang Jie, Liu's colleague at BIFT, was in middle school in the mid-1990s, the cultural impacts of opening up were fully felt. "Film, music, fashion, hairstyles ... they were all one package," says the 42-year-old. For him and many of his peers back then, Hong Kong entertainment stars, whose images flooded TV screens, were indisputable fashion icons.

"Those were the days when young people dressed up like hippies and danced to loud rock music pouring out of cassette players," continues Yang, who remembers vividly wearing a leather jacket to school before anyone else and was gently reprimanded by the head teacher to put his studies first. "The economic reform had led to a substantial improvement in living standards for the average Chinese, which led to an explosion of ideas and a newfound need for self-expression, which the younger generation reveled in. Fashion allowed them to make bold statements, not completely unlike the way the revolutionaries did with the Zhongshan suit."

"And you know what's so great about that moment? The internet had yet to appear, which meant we didn't have many references while trying to interpret fashion. As a result, people came up with their own answers, which sometimes resulted in raw creativity," Yang says.

The leather jacket, which Yang wore with great panache — so he thought — was given to him by his mother who belongs to China's Miao ethnic group, whose members were known as gifted singers and dancers and whose traditional clothing often features intricate, colorful embroidery.

"Unlike most of my older family members who would often dress up from head to toe in ethnic attire, my mother loves to deck out her traditional looks with a few modern pieces. She instilled in me an idiosyncratic sense of fashion long before I studied it, first at BIFT and then at a fashion institute in Milan," says Yang.

In 2006, Yang opened BIFT's first menswear courses after returning from Italy. "What I have come up with as a designer today represents everything I've been through — physically, emotionally and aesthetically," he says. "I believe it's the same for Chinese fashion."

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By ZHAO XU

In November 1978, French fashion designer Pierre Cardin (1922-2020) visited China, the first of any Western fashion designers to do so since 1949. His trip marked not only the beginning of his influence on the Chinese fashion scene, which came to a peak in the 1980s and early 90s, but also a significant moment in Chinese fashion history at a time when the country was on the cusp of change.

"Cardin wasted no time entering the Chinese market upon the country's reform and opening-up, following the end of the 'cultural revolution' (1966-76)," says Liu Wei, who taught at Beijing's Fashion Institute of Technology.

While the French designer had foreseen the immense buying power about to be unleashed by hundreds of millions of Chinese consumers, he was also poised to shock audiences with his first-ever fashion show in the chilly spring of 1979.

Held on a makeshift stage inside Beijing's Cultural Palace of Nationalities, the show saw a parade of French and Japanese models in front of a packed audience, which hosted news agencies and reporters holding cameras, all left flabbergasted.

For his Chinese viewers, Cardin's bold, futuristic looks were mind-blowing, to say the least, but the event had a motivating effect. By the end of 1980, China published its first fashion magazine and debuted its first modeling team under the publicly-owned Shanghai Municipal Fashion Company, whose 19 members were chosen from 30,000 candidates.

"The 1979 show generated intense interest for the brand that Cardin introduced to China, ever so clever-

ly, through licensing," says Liu, referring to an arrangement whereby all Cardin fashion items sold on the Chinese mainland were locally designed and manufactured under strict quality control.

"Apart from bringing down costs, this practice also allowed the brand to adapt to local preferences, which, at that time, were nowhere near the geometric and structural creations Cardin was known for. In a sense, Cardin's business acumen was even more inspiring for a generation of Chinese designers who were awakening to the power of fashion branding, me included," continues Liu, who worked for the Beijing-based Chinese brand Botao between the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In 1998, Botao held a grand runway show inside a historical building in Beijing that once served as the imperial ancestral temple between the 15th and early 20th century, with models milling about in heavy makeup, fanciful hairstyles and vibrant, body-conscious designs constructed on Western sartorial principles, yet radiated a clear Chinese stylistic influence.

"The location choice and the clothes themselves hinted at an effort to maintain the brand's cultural roots, yet Western influence was obvious," says Liu, who would travel to Paris during its iconic fashion weeks.

Among the notoriously hard-to-get-in shows Liu attended were John Galliano for Dior and Alexander McQueen for Givenchy, stunning him for "the kind of creative extremes they were willing to pursue in order to shape an image for the brand".

For those who couldn't behold the spectacles in the French fashion

Powering today's emerging designers



Left: A woman dressed up in *hanfu* at a cultural event in Beijing on Sept 22. Right: Pierre Cardin's fashion show in Beijing in the spring of 1979. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

capital, there was a hunger for the images, which spawned a business. "There were 'image-vendors' in those days who were able to buy show pictures from fashion photographers before selling them to us, at a price that was anything but cheap," recalls Liu.

He had a throwback while visiting the Botao office not long ago, where a shelf lining the wall was filled with video cassette tapes, one labeled "Chanel," another "Dior." They contain transcribed show footage from the fashion weeks in Paris, London, Milan and New York," says Liu.

Partly to fulfill that longing for information, in 1995, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, which had been promoting Hong Kong designers on the Chinese mainland through fashion shows and other events, set up a fashion library inside the Beijing institute in



partnership with the college and the China Fashion Association, the latter founded in 1993.

In 1997, the association hosted the first China International Fashion Week in Beijing, followed by the first edition of Shanghai Fashion Week six years later, which have become major platforms for Chinese designers.

Back in the early 2000s, Yang Jie was a fashion student who had frequented the library. He now teaches at the college. "To get the card for this particular library, one needed to pay a 200 yuan (\$28.35) deposit. The books, which included imported fashion magazines, were not only expensive but also precious — they allowed me my first glimpses into international fashion," he says.

But change was already in the air. A little more than a year after Yang entered the institute as an undergraduate in 2000, China joined the

World Trade Organization on Dec 11, 2001. The accession opened international markets for Chinese fashion and textile products. At the same time, the influx of global fashion brands meant more exposure to international trends and more competition for both domestic fashion companies and foreign brands already established, including Pierre Cardin.

"Since the early 2000s, the Cardin brand continued to lose its cachet with Chinese customers who, having seen for themselves the world's top fashion brands, were no longer content with buying licensed designs," says Liu.

In 2001, Shanghai, the rising fashion hub, hosted the 9th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting. Participants of the event, which signaled the country's increasing prominence on the global stage,

were required to wear a tailor-made Tang suit, named for the Tang Dynasty (618-907), a period of social prosperity and inclusivity. Made of fine silk and characterized by its distinctive standing collar and knotted buttons, the suit was widely seen as a symbol of cultural diplomacy — China's way to showcase its rich fashion heritage.

"For the next two decades, that heritage has managed to capture the imagination of China's younger generation who entertain themselves with historic attire that often includes multilayered flowing robes with wide sleeves," says Liu.

"Behind the phenomenon, there's a fascination with beauty and a growing cultural confidence, as well as a desire to stand out rather than blend in as their parents and grandparents often preferred to do," he continues.

Yang recently flew to Milan Fashion Week for the spring/summer 2025 season held from Sept 17 to 23. "Approximately 50 kilometers north of Milan there is a small city called Como, well-known among international travelers for its stunning lake views, historic architecture and silk production, which can be traced back to the 15th century," he says. "Many of the workshops and archives in Como hold historical collections, which include samples of ancient silk fabrics. Some of the samples came from China via the Ancient Silk Road, which was first established in the 2nd century BC and reached its height during the Tang Dynasty," he continues.

"Vision and history — what's behind the success story of Chinese silk is what's needed today for Chinese fashion to really emerge and thrive globally."

BIZ LIFE

Hami attracting large-scale projects

Xinjiang city's rich natural resources get close attention from investors

By LI JIAYING in Beijing and MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi

As a number of high-tech and large-scale projects in emerging sectors are taking shape, Hami in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is harnessing its abundant natural resources to spearhead an industrial transformation driven by new growth engines.

Situated in the foothills of the eastern Tianshan Mountains, Hami boasts abundant wind and solar resources. However, despite its status as a key new energy hub in eastern Xinjiang, the region lacked a photovoltaic silicon industry until recently, as a monocrystalline silicon wafer production project has entered the commissioning phase.

With an annual production capacity of 60,000 metric tons of industrial silicon already established, the first phase of the monocrystalline silicon wafer production project, which includes 10 gigawatts of production capacity, is currently in trial operations, said Qingdian Silicon Industry Co Ltd, the project's operator.

Once fully operational, the project is expected to have an annual production capacity of 60 GW of photovoltaic silicon wafers, which are essential materials for solar panels, and the final products will be supplied both within Xinjiang and across China, the manufacturer said.

Monocrystalline silicon products sit upstream in the photovoltaic industrial chain. By employing state-of-the-art monocrystalline furnace technology to process silicon materials — including melting, crystallization, slicing and cleaning — the end result is the production of solar cells, which are then assembled into photovoltaic panels of various specifications.

An integrated silicon-based industrial chain is a development target in Hami, which extends from raw material production — such as silicon rods and wafers — to photovoltaic cells and modules. With accelerated efforts to capitalize on its abundant wind and solar energy resources, the city aims to turn its energy advantage into a manufacturing edge.

"Xinjiang's rich natural resources and electricity cost advantages have enabled us to establish a complete silicon-based industrial chain here," said Qin Xiandong, senior manager at Qingdian Silicon's R&D department.

"We've completed the installation and testing of 456 monocrystalline furnaces, with a total of 800 units to be in place by the end of the year. By 2026, we aim to reach an annual capacity of 40 GW with 3,000 furnaces," Qin said.

Hami will continue to accelerate development of the new materials industry by advancing major project construction, driving full-chain development through leading enterprises, and upgrading existing manufacturing technologies and processes, said Dou Rencai, deputy director of Hami's bureau of industry and information technology.



An employee operates a production line of monocrystalline silicon rods at a Qingdian Silicon Industry Co Ltd plant in Hami, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in August. LI JIAYING / CHINA DAILY



A technician inspects the operation of an integrated computing center in Hami. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Our goal is to establish Xinjiang's major new materials industrial cluster here," Dou said.

Silicon is not the only new material that Hami is betting its future development on. Rich in mineral resources, the city ranks first in Xinjiang in terms of reserves of copper, nickel, titanium, magnesium, vanadium and molybdenum. Among

them, the estimated 2 billion tons of vanadium-titanium magnetite places the city third nationwide and makes it the only complete titanium industrial chain in Xinjiang.

Since its establishment in 2013, Hami-based Xinjiang Xiangrun New Material Technology Co Ltd has built a comprehensive titanium industrial chain, covering titanium ore, titanium sponge, titanium pro-

cessing and relevant finished products. In 2023, it produced over 33,000 tons of titanium sponge and about 19,500 tons of titanium materials, both placing it second in the country.

The company's new 30,000-ton titanium and titanium alloy project is expected to begin production by the end of this year. Once fully operational, its annual capacity for tita-

anium sponge will exceed 100,000 tons, and for titanium and titanium alloys, it will surpass 50,000 tons, said Liu Honggui, the company's deputy general manager.

"It is expected to make us the world's largest titanium producer by then," Liu said.

Hami Vice-Mayor Li Jianyong highlighted the city's strategy to capitalize on its abundant local resources, saying that the city has already developed annual capacities of 20,000 tons of titanium and titanium alloy, 35,000 tons of magnesium and 60,000 tons of industrial silicon.

"Moving forward, we will focus on integrating new materials with green electricity consumption, aiming to build a new materials industry cluster worth over 30 billion yuan (\$4.26 billion), centering around titanium, magnesium, silicon and copper," Li said.

Li added that the city will also attach more importance to other new growth drivers such as computing prowess for high-quality development.

Hami's integrated computing center in Yiwu county has established a landmark breakthrough for the region, he said. Its computing project has created a computing power network connecting Zhengzhou in Henan province, Qingyang in Gansu province and Hami, representing "a leap from zero to one" for the city's computational capabilities.

To date, the center has built eight

intelligent computing servers, 100 general-purpose computing servers and 80 supercomputing nodes, with a total computing power of approximately 150 petaflops. It has also established cross-regional data transmission networks connecting Hami with Urumqi, Zhengzhou, Beijing and Chongqing. More than 10 domestic enterprises and research institutes are now using the high-speed computing infrastructure for artificial intelligence training, according to the center's data.

Computing power and electricity are symbiotic industries. Hami's vast wind and solar energy resources allow it to provide competitively priced green electricity. Given that electricity costs account for over half of computing companies' operational expenses, Hami's energy advantage has enabled it to cultivate a competitive edge in the computing power industry, said Li Chao, executive director of Hami's energy-computing power fusion research institute.

"We're converting Xinjiang's renewable energy advantage into affordable electricity prices, which in turn fuels computing power development," Li said, adding that a slew of State-owned enterprises, tech firms and investors are flocking into Xinjiang to invest in renewable energy and computing power.

"The green computing power produced here is expected to serve businesses across China and international partners," he said.

With a total infrastructure investment of 765 million yuan, the second phase will feature computing power facilities tailored to diverse sectors such as large model inference, energy sector and smart city operations. These developments will support smart governance, digital economy growth, and cross-regional data backup services for cities in Central and East China, Li added.

"The county is working full steam ahead on our computing power economy park, which will house two buildings covering 35,000 square meters and include 2,650 server racks. With expected full completion by the end of the year, Yiwu is poised to become Xinjiang's most competitive computing power base," said Peng Peng, head of the county's Party committee.

Dou of Hami's bureau of industry and information technology further elaborated on the city's plans.

"We will deepen our cooperation with cities like Chongqing, Zhengzhou and Beijing to enhance computing power dispatch and testing, and at the same time, expedite the expansion of computing applications into sectors such as culture, transportation, education and healthcare. The aim is to foster coordinated development by promoting the computing industry with real-world applications."

Wang Xinran contributed to this story.

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Northwest region embracing wind power advantages

By LI JIAYING in Beijing and MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi

With rapidly expanding wind manufacturing capacity backed by abundant natural resources, Hami in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is poised to become a cornerstone in China's renewable energy landscape.

At Sany Renewable Energy's megawatt-grade smart wind power equipment industry park in Barkol Kazakh autonomous county, Hami, two high-capacity production lines run at full speed. This year, the park's newly launched facility began producing the region's longest onshore wind turbine blades, marking a milestone for the local manufacturing and solidifying Hami's status as a key hub for Xinjiang's wind energy sector.

Spanning 675 mu (45 hectares) and with a total investment of 1 billion yuan (\$142 million), the park primarily produces onshore wind turbines and ultra-long blades, which are destined for local wind power projects across Xinjiang.

With construction completed at

the end of last year, the plant's blade production base is designed for an annual capacity of 1,200 units, and operations commencing in July, with 28 wind turbine blades already completed so far.

"We currently have two blade production lines operating, producing 112-meter and 95-meter blades," said Zhang Tengfei, a manufacturing management specialist at the company.

As turbine blades become larger and more diverse in design, the company is focusing on process innovation, particularly in key technologies such as material preforming, component prefabrication and assembly tasks, Zhang said, adding that research and development efforts have helped drive some 10 pioneering manufacturing techniques, improving the overall efficiency and quality of blade production.

Similarly, at Hami CRCC New Energy Motor Co Ltd's production line, manufacturing of advanced wind turbine components is in full swing. Since setting up operations in Hami in 2015, the company has seen rapid growth, continually

upgrading its product portfolio through innovation.

"We've evolved from small-megawatt turbines to producing large-scale 6 MW and 10 MW units," said Tang Lanhai, deputy general manager of the company.

"In August, we completed production of Xinjiang's first 10 MW doubly-fed wind turbine drivetrain, and by the end of this year, the production line is expected to fulfill an order of 170 units," Tang said.

Tang added that by leveraging the region's well-developed industrial supply chain, the company now handles more than 400 orders annually.

"The wind turbines produced here are shipped to regions such as Gansu province, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Qinghai province. We also have export orders to Central Asia, underscoring the region's expanding global reach in wind energy manufacturing," he said.

In recent years, Hami, often referred to as Xinjiang's "eastern gateway," has emerged as a major player in wind power equipment manufacturing. The city's bureau of

industry and information technology said it is now home to 14 large-scale equipment manufacturers, including major industry players like Goldwind, China State Shipbuilding Corp, CRRC Corp and Sany Group.

The manufacturing cluster has helped put Hami as Xinjiang's largest and most comprehensive wind power equipment manufacturing base, with a localization rate of over 70 percent. It is now recognized as China's sixth-largest wind power manufacturing hub and the most complete one in the country's northwestern region, said Dou Rencai, deputy director of Hami's bureau of industry and information technology.

Hami's natural wind resources have played a crucial role in driving the region's wind power boom. As one of China's most resource-rich areas for wind and solar energy, Hami's wind zones cover 66.3 percent of Xinjiang's land area, with a technically exploitable wind energy potential of 303 million kilowatts — accounting for 6 percent of the nation's total onshore wind resources.

Backed by bountiful wind resour-



A view of the Shisanjianfang wind farm in Hami, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. MAO WEIHUA / CHINA DAILY

ces, Hami is positioning itself as a leader in wind energy development by focusing on building, strengthening and extending its industrial chain, Dou said.

"Hami aims to become a research, manufacturing and distribution center for energy equipment, not only for Xinjiang, but for all of the western part of China. Our goal is to

establish a national-level innovation platform for the renewable energy manufacturing industry here," he said.

Wang Xinran contributed to this story.

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TRAVEL



In the Amboseli National Park in southern Kenya, a herd of elephants walks in the dawn light with the highest mountain in Africa, Tanzania's Mount Kilimanjaro, topped with snow and glaciers in the background. BEN CURTIS / AP

It takes a team to reach summit of Kilimanjaro

By OTIATO OPALI in Moshi, Tanzania
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In 2021, Renick Odede, a 35-year-old Kenyan who lives in Nairobi, got interested in climbing mountains after watching a documentary about the sport. He started by climbing the Ngong Hills near his home and began to prepare to climb Mount Kenya, the country's highest mountain, and Africa's second highest, which rises to a height of 5,199 meters.

Nobody mentioned the dangers of altitude sickness. Odede was just told that climbing was a case of following the orders of the mountain guides. He remembers feeling on top of the world when he made it to the summit of Mount Kenya in March 2022, where he promised himself that his next challenge would be to climb Tanzania's Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain.

"At the time, I did not know when I would go to Tanzania to make the climb because the trip costs money, and I had to work to raise the funds," said Odede, who works at a bank in Nairobi, Kenya's capital.

He was encouraged by a fellow climber who had hiked Mount Kenya with him, and they decided to use the time before the Kilimanjaro climb to train, research the mountain, and organize the trip.

Over a period of a year, they trained hard, undertaking numerous nature walks while researching different routes up Kilimanjaro in order to decide on the most manageable and most interesting way to reach the summit.

Finally, this May, Odede and his friend were ready to take on the challenge for which they had been preparing.

Visitors can either fly into the Kilimanjaro International Airport which is about 50 kilometers from the peak, or use public transport, like Odede and his colleague did, by taking a shuttle bus from Nairobi to Arusha in Tanzania, before getting on a bus to Kilimanjaro.

"I am fortunate to have a relative from Kenya who relocated to Tanzania and does business near the mountain in the town of Moshi. Because he lives there, he has contacts in the Kilimanjaro tourist business, so he helped us arrange our

trip by linking us up with a reputable tour guide company for a negotiated price," Odede said.

At 5,895 meters, Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest single free-standing mountain in the world, meaning that it is not part of a range. Other than its fame as the highest mountain in Africa, it is known for having a permanent, though shrinking icecap, which is unusual given the mountain's tropical location and warm year round climate.

Every year around 50,000 visitors from around the world come for the climb. The time it takes varies. The ascent can be completed in as little as five days or as many as nine, depending on the route.

According to mountain guides, a typical day's hike is only 4-6 hours at a slow pace. The reason for such gradual progress is to slowly gain altitude so the body can adjust to decreasing oxygen levels. However, the final push to the summit and subsequent descent results in a very long day, which takes between 10-14 hours.

Popular route

Odede said that the research they did before traveling to Tanzania to climb Kilimanjaro came in handy because it alerted them to the fact that the difficulty of the climb depends on the route chosen. For his ascent, Odede chose both the cheapest and what is considered the easiest route, the Marangu Route, which takes five days, and is popular with tourists.

"We arrived in Kilimanjaro to nice warm weather of around 30 C, but 6 days later when we were at the summit, the temperature up there must have been at least -5 C to -10 C, and there was a small snow storm," Odede said.

He said that the air at the summit contains 50 percent less oxygen than at the start of the trip. On summit night, the climb from the final base camp is just over a kilometer, but the trail zigzags up, so it is a 6-km hike that takes around seven hours. The group climbing with the tour company Odede had booked was 20-strong, with an additional 10 support staff from the company.

"As we climbed the mountain, there were areas and days when

Inflow of visitors generates major revenues for locals in Tanzania



The entrance to the Mount Kilimanjaro National Park, which leads to the Marangu climbing route. The mountain, the highest in Africa, has several routes of varying duration and difficulty. OTIATO OPALI / CHINA DAILY



Tourists arrive at Mount Kilimanjaro's Marangu gate located at 1,860 meters to begin preparations for their five-day climb. The mountain rises to a height of 5,895 meters. OTIATO OPALI / CHINA DAILY

"The night we climbed to the summit was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but it was also the most amazing thing I have ever done."

Renick Odede, a 35-year-old Kenyan who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain, in May

terrain could best be described as rocky, sparse and elephant gray in color as far as the eye could see. This gave a prehistoric feel to the mountain, especially when the mist set in across the vast landscapes with little vegetation," Odede said.

He said the stony ground and uneven surface meant it was very important to keep a sharp eye trained on the path ahead to avoid a fall.

Bernard Chaga, a tour guide on the Marangu Route used by Odede's team during their ascent said that there are seven major routes to the summit. These are the Marangu, Machame, Umbwe, Rongai, Shira, Lemosho, and the Northern Circuit routes.

"It is important to choose the right route according to difficulty level. That is why it is a requirement for anyone climbing Kilimanjaro to be in the company of a guide who is licensed by the Kilimanjaro National Park. Most of the visitors who climb the mountain have a team consisting of a lead guide, assistant guide, cook and porters," Chaga said.

Prices for the climb vary according to the route taken. The most popular 8-day Lemosho Route costs around \$3,300 per person.

Chaga said that park fees alone account for the biggest portion of the price, on top of which are fees for the tour guides and staff. He added that it is good to research companies as there are those offering the service from as little as \$2300, all the way to luxury companies that can charge as much as \$5,000.

The guide runs a souvenir shop at the start of the Marangu Route which also hires out climbing gear to visitors, and said that the best operators should be able to provide professional staff, equipment, food, and service. Visitors should also ensure their guides are medically trained to handle emergencies.

Economic uplift

Having grown up near the mountain, Chaga said that one of the most significant benefits Kilimanjaro provides to Tanzania and its citizens is economic uplift. The constant inflow of visitors from international and domestic destinations generates substantial reve-

nues for tour guides and businessmen like him, which is crucial to the local economy.

This revenue is generated around tourist activities linked to the mountain, including park entrance fees, guided tours, accommodation, transportation, and other services. It helps fund local infrastructure projects and community development initiatives, fostering overall economic growth in the region.

"The growth of tourism around Mount Kilimanjaro has led to significant improvements in infrastructure to the benefit of those of us living here," Chaga said.

"We have seen roads, communication networks, healthcare facilities, and other essential services built, driven by the need to cater to tourists. These developments benefit not only visitors but also the local population, improving our quality of life and access to essential services."

For people planning to climb Kilimanjaro, the guide recommends carrying plenty of water since remaining properly hydrated helps defend against altitude sickness. He also advises climbers to bring the right gear because even if they have the best physical training and mental preparation possible, without the right walking boots or warm clothes, the experience can be harrowing.

He advises that at a minimum, visitors bring thermal layers, two pairs of gloves, a hat, a scarf, a down jacket and a heavy-duty sleeping bag.

Odede says that one of the most interesting aspects of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro is the opportunity to make friends from all over the world, as climbers need other people to help them reach the summit, not just to look out for them, but also to keep them motivated during the arduous journey.

"The night we climbed to the summit was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but it was also the most amazing thing I have ever done. That is why you need to be prepared and also be part of a team that helps you maintain the right mindset," Odede said.

"I was so tired on that last day, and was almost falling asleep as I walked, but my teammates and the guides and porters were there to help in case I needed assistance."

East Africa presents a trekker's dreamland of stunning mountains

By OTIATO OPALI in Moshi, Tanzania

Famed as the home of the breathtaking Rift Valley, which runs through 12 countries, East Africa presents boundless opportunities for mountain trekking and highland climbing. From gentle hill walks in Kenya's Ngong Hills or endurance trials on Mount Kenya, to hiking the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, East Africa offers rocky summits, mountain forests, and pristine jungles.

Thanks to the endless trails, mountains, and volcanoes dotting the region, East Africa is one of the best places on earth to enjoy

incredible hikes. Its soaring hills and mountains with accessible summits, snaking forest trails, and flatland Savannah have made it the home of trekking experiences to suit most time-frames and fitness levels.

Roughly 68 kilometers from Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa's highest mountain, is the 4,565-meter Mount Meru. Located in the Arusha National Park, Meru is widely considered to be an excellent alternative to its bigger neighbor.

As Tanzania's second highest mountain, Mount Meru is often used as a practice acclimatization run for Kilimanjaro.

Trekking up to the summit of the volcano takes between 3-4 days and as they approach the summit, climbers are treated to the sight of lush ancient rainforests of fig trees, which give way higher up to heather, and rocky moors. The trail also passes through the habitats of a number of wild animals including buffaloes, baboons and giraffes, as well as hundreds of species of birds.

On the border of Kenya and Uganda, climbing enthusiasts will find Mount Elgon, which is perched high in the misty hills that stretch from Kenya into Uganda. The towering volcanic giant is home to labyrinthine caves, beautiful valleys and several streams. Visitors can also explore nearby forests, visit elephant caves, and enjoy biking and hiking. At 4,321 meters, Mount Elgon is the eighth-highest mountain in Africa.

For hikers who do not want to undergo the rigors of summiting challenging peaks like Kilimanjaro or Kenya, Tanzania's Usambara Mountain Range offers a great alternative. Unlike many of the hikes that require permits and the company of park rangers, Tanzania's Usambara Mountains are

Biodiversity hotspot

casual, idyllic, and easily accessible. At 2,440 meters, Usambara Mountain is home to over 3,000 plant species and over 600 tree species. The Usambara Mountain Range is part of the Eastern Arc Mountains, which run parallel to the Tanzanian coast and extend into the Taita Hills in Kenya. They are recognized as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Other climbing destinations in the region include the Rwenzori Mountains in Western Uganda, which reach a height of 5,109 meters and run across the border into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is also Ol Doinyo

Lengai in Tanzania, which rises to a height of 2,962 meters. Referred to as the "Mountain of God", it is sacred to the Maasai people that live in its vicinity.

Most hiking sites in East Africa can provide communal equipment like tents, food and cooking ingredients. However, hikers are responsible for bringing personal gear and equipment.

Drinking water is essential during hikes, but most parks in the region do not allow the entry of plastic water bottles. Visitors are advised to carry their water in Nalgene bottles, water bladders, or other similar devices.

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SPORTS

OLYMPICS

DROPPING THE BEAT

Team China diver Long Daoyi's leap from hip-hop to Olympic triumph



The two lives of Long Daoyi: Performing as hip-hop artist Dragon One (left), and competing as an Olympic champion springboard diver alongside his partner Wang Zongyuan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY AND XINHUA

By XING WEN

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In the world of hip-hop, gold chains have long been a symbol of success, cultural pride and personal expression.

Such bold accessories add to a rapper's presence, both on and off stage.

In July, a hip-hop artist going by the stage name Dragon One released an original track, boasting in his lyrics, "I'll wear the gold medal like a gold chain".

It seemed like a typical case of bravado — the kind the genre is known for — until Dragon One put his money where his mouth is.

Less than a month later in Paris, performing under his real name, Long Daoyi, the 21-year-old Olympic debutant claimed gold in the men's synchronized 3m springboard diving event alongside his teammate Wang Zongyuan.

After turning his lyrical swagger into reality, Long began writing another hip-hop track titled *Champion*, describing the bond between him and his partner Wang, as well as his emotions after achieving their dream in Paris.

The lyrics — "Just woke up from a dream, with a gold medal in my left hand; Just woke up from a dream, with a mic in my right hand" — illustrate his dual identity as both diver and hip-hop artist.

Throughout the grueling and monotonous hours of training far from home, "music has provided me with great spiritual support," Long confided.

He starts his day with soothing melodies and turns to more energetic tracks during intense training.

"Before my Olympic debut in Paris, I listened to a particularly energizing track called *Cute Pinch* to ignite my fierce spirit," he recalled.

Long's path to Olympic glory from the springboard began in 2010, when, as a seven-year-old, he was spotted running about in a sports stadium in Rongjiang county, Qiongzhusi Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture of Southwest China's Guizhou province.

He caught the eye of Cao Liye, a coach for the Hebei provincial diving team, who offered a direction in which the child could focus his boundless energy.

"From a tender age, he fearlessly imitated fellow athletes on the one-meter board, daring to attempt somersaults and rotations, despite his lack of foundational diving skills. Although his execution was imperfect, his exceptional ability for self-control in the air impressed me," Cao said.

Among his fellow divers, Long often insisted on being the first to jump.

"Back then, I found diving to be exciting and thrilling," Long recalled.

"I was considered one of the better trainees among my peers, which boosted my confidence," he said.

As he began to win some prizes at competitions, he felt a strong desire to become a better diver.

"I started dreaming of one day competing alongside the top divers in the national team," he said.



Clockwise from top: Long Daoyi celebrates winning his Olympic gold in Paris; Long works on some music in his dorm room at the diving training center; Long poses for a publicity picture. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY AND XINHUA

Seizing the opportunity

In 2016, 13-year-old Long was selected from Hebei's provincial diving team to join in training with the national diving team.

However, after three months, while the three female teammates who went with him stayed, Long was sent back.

"Back then, I felt young and unburdened, still confident in continuing my training," he recalled. However, the same frustrating situation recurred in 2019, 2020 and 2022.

In March 2023, after Long won third place in the men's individual 3m springboard at a national diving championships held in Shanghai, he received a fifth invitation from the national diving training team.

Despite feeling somewhat disheartened, he was determined to "seize the chance".

He was paired with Wang, who was an Olympic medalist at Tokyo 2020.

The duo trained together for less than a month and went on to win the gold in the

men's synchronized 3m springboard event at the World Aquatics Diving World Cup 2023 Super Final in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, in April last year.

Subsequently, at the 2024 World Aquatics Championships, World Aquatics Diving World Cup 2024 and other international events, the pair was consistently climbing to the top step of the medal podium.

Long describes Wang as a "great" person who helped him better understand

his responsibilities.

"My skills are inferior to his, but over a year of training and competition, he continued to believe in me, leading me forward. There is much for me to learn from him," said Long.

Long's knack for seizing opportunities is also evident in his passion for music.

As he was constantly listening to music, an idea sprouted in his mind: "One day, I want to write my own song."

In 2020, at the age of 17, he had a crush on a girl. "I wanted to express my feelings with a song I had written myself," Long explained.

Melodies popped into his head, prompting him to hum and record each melody using voice messages on WeChat. He then started writing lyrics.

"It was quite challenging at first. I didn't know how to use lyrics to describe 'wind' and 'rain', or how to express the emotions of liking someone."

Despite enduring intense training during the day, his musical creation kept him awake for two days and nights.

With the help of some simple editing and synthesizer software, he completed a song titled *Good Night* and uploaded it onto the NetEase Cloud Music platform.

Two years later, he purchased some proper music recording equipment and set it up in his dorm at the diving training center.

"I really wanted to meet friends in the music industry who could help me create better songs. I wanted to learn the songwriting process."

One night, in August 2022, he attended a gig at a live house in Qinhuangdao featuring local rappers. "As I stood in the audience, I thought, 'if I were to perform, what kind of music style would I choose?'"

After the show, again, he seized his opportunity, approaching the performers, expressing his desire to learn music creation from them. They added him on WeChat and invited him to join a group chat for music lovers.

"One day, one of the members in the group shared a demo of a song she had written, hoping to get some feedback. When I listened to it, I thought her singing was great. I was surprised to discover that there were people in the group who were seriously involved in making and singing songs," Long said.

Consequently, he began to meet more musically inclined friends, collaborating with them on recordings, or seeking help with developing musical arrangements.

So far, he has six songs uploaded on NetEase Cloud Music.

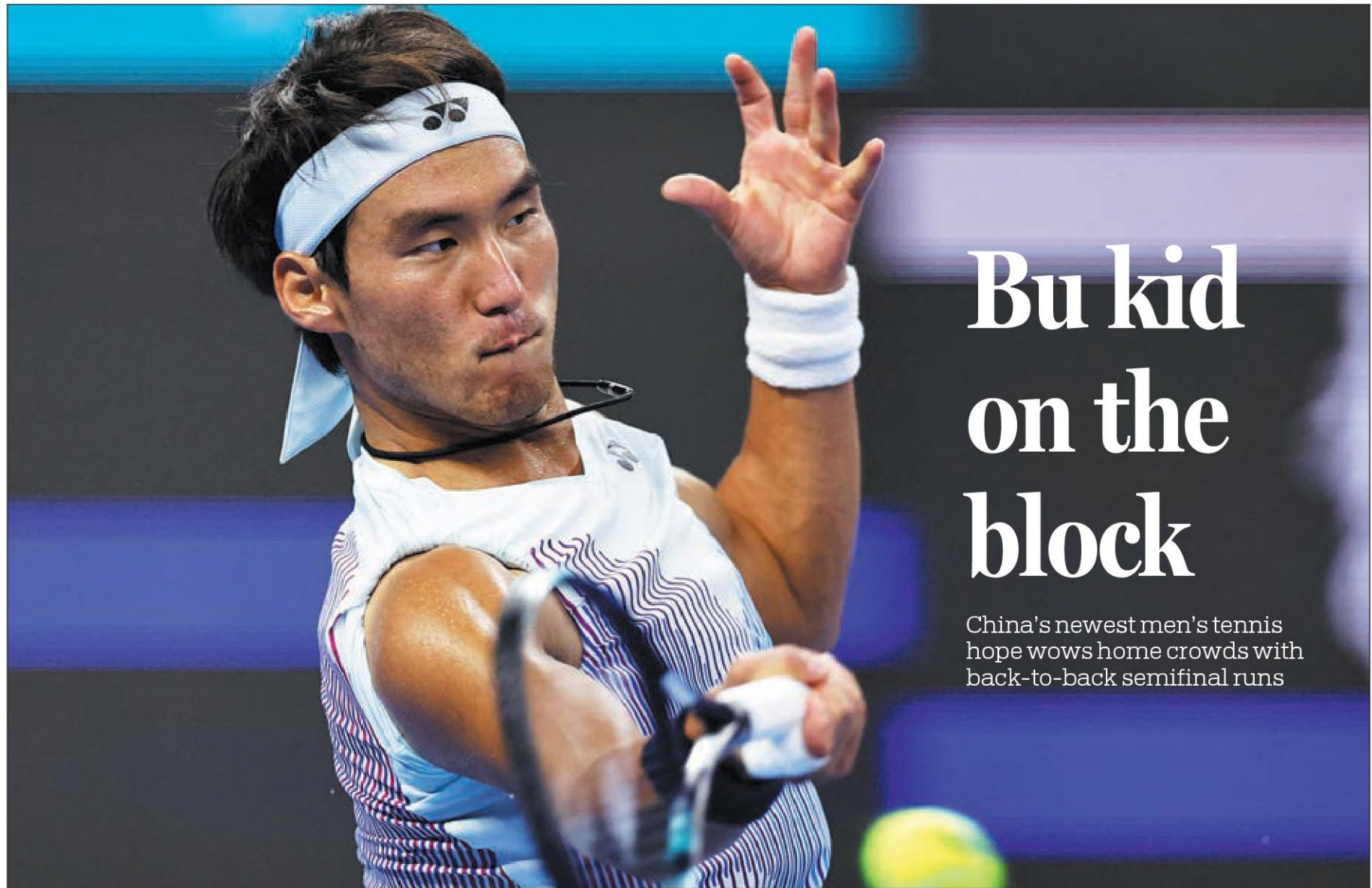
In late August, Long returned to his hometown in Rongjiang county to perform an original hip-hop track and participate in China's hugely popular Village Super League soccer tournament, an event with its roots in his home county.

Then, on Sept 22, he performed at the Greater Bay Area Film Concert in Macao, alongside popular Chinese actor and singer Huang Zihongfan.

"In the future, I hope to have more opportunities to perform and to interact with everyone through music," he said.

SPORTS

TENNIS



Bu kid on the block

China's newest men's tennis hope wows home crowds with back-to-back semifinal runs

China's Buyunchaokete hits a forehand return to Italy's Jannik Sinner during a China Open semifinal match at the National Tennis Center in Beijing, on Tuesday. REUTERS

By SUN XIAOCHEN

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Not once, but twice — Buyunchaokete's recent back-to-back ATP semifinal runs have proved his huge potential as yet another emerging Chinese contender at the top of men's tennis.

Everyone close to him had predicted a bright future, yet a series of health issues bogged him down, leaving his promising career on the pro circuit on uncertain ground. However, Buyunchaokete proved his doubters wrong, big time, with two showstopping deep runs at home tournaments over the past two weeks.

The 22-year-old, hailing from China's Mongolian ethnic group, has fought his way from obscurity to stardom with two straight semifinal appearances on the ATP Tour, first in Hangzhou on Sept 23, and again in Beijing on Tuesday.

His surprising, second consecutive deep run — which was stopped by two-time major winner and world No 1 Jannik Sinner in Beijing — made Buyunchaokete, known as Bu to his growing legion of fans, the first Chinese man to enter the final-four at the ATP500 China Open, and the first to reach that stage at back-to-back ATP tournaments.

This year's Hangzhou Open was only his second ATP Tour event, fol-

lowing last year's wild-card entry at the Shanghai Masters. At the major level, he only managed to make his Grand Slam main-draw debut at the US Open in late August, after starting the season ranked as far back as 171st in the world.

From now on, though, it will be a whole new ball game for the ambitious and tenacious young man.

"I am quite tired today, feeling like I've run out of gas, and my serve was probably the worst (it has been this week)," Bu said of his brave 6-3, 7-6 (3) loss to Sinner in the semifinals on Tuesday — a match which coincided with China's National Day celebrations.

"Still, he only managed to break me once, and I put him under a lot of pressure on the baseline. I think I did a good job."

He sure did.

The daring underdog, cheered on enthusiastically by the partisan crowd at the packed Diamond Court, pushed the defending champion almost to the limit with a resilient game, especially in the second set, when Sinner had to step up an extra gear to outlast the home favorite in long rallies.

The Italian star, who is one year Bu's senior, joined the clapping crowd to acknowledge his opponent when Bu left the court to a standing ovation.

"I felt like he's an all-around, very



Buyunchaokete hits autographed tennis balls into the stands after beating Andrey Rublev of Russia in a China Open quarterfinal match on Monday. XINHUA

good player. It's tough to play against him," Sinner said of Bu's game at the post-match news conference.

"He's a very solid player. He kept his level throughout the whole match, which is also sometimes tough to see ... He doesn't really have any big weaknesses. Forehand, backhand, good serve, also the return game is very good. You have to earn every point you play. Physically he's good."

"Obviously, there are things he can, and will for sure, improve. He's making his breakthrough a little bit

this year, the last couple of months, and hopefully he keeps going.

"He's obviously also very, very young. I have the feeling that we will see him more and more on the biggest stages."

Unlikely pathway

Born into underprivileged circumstances in the remote Bortala Mongolian autonomous prefecture in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Bu learned how to ride horses long before he even had any clue of what

tennis was. But his talent for the sport was discovered by Luo Yong, a junior tennis coach from Zhejiang province, who met the five-year-old Bu for the first time at an SOS children's village in Urumqi.

A three-year junior program at a club in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, saw Bu's innate gift flourish under the disciplined tutelage and caring support of Luo, who became an adopted father-figure, until the provincial team, overseen by his current coach Yu Jinxing, brought him into a more serious, full-time training program in 2011.

From there, Bu's evolving game and commitment to training began to convince his coaches, friends, and even opponents, that the prodigy would have a bright future on the pro circuit. This was evidenced by his strong junior performances, including an under-14 title he won at the prestigious Orange Bowl junior championships, and a second-round upset of Danish former world No 4 Holger Rune at the 2019 Australian Open boys' tournament.

"He always has a high standard himself for training and competition, asking even more of himself than what I would normally ask of him," coach Yu said of Bu's progress during the Hangzhou Open.

"He's strict with himself, always trying to achieve perfection. When-

ever he doesn't reach his own standards, he starts over again. He's committed to achieving his goals."

The arrival of the pandemic, however, derailed Bu during his critical transition from junior events and the entry-level ITF adult circuit to the competitive ATP Tour, with a series of injuries also putting his rise on hold.

Adversity, however, only fueled him to make a sharper climb up the pro ranks when, returning to action healthy and motivated in 2023, he collected three entry-level ATP Challenger titles, all paving the way to stealing the show at the start of this year's China swing.

"I've never felt so confident in myself, having exceeded my own expectations so far. Yet, I knew I had to stay focused and take care of business on a daily basis," Bu said after defeating Russian world No 6 Andrey Rublev in the quarterfinals at the China Open on Monday.

The straight-sets upset of Rublev, who holds 16 ATP singles titles, was Bu's first career win over a top-10 opponent and built quickly on his first defeat of a top-20 opponent, Italy's 18th-ranked Lorenzo Musetti, in the second round.

"Perhaps it's time for me to re-adjust my goals and set a higher target," said Bu, who had climbed to No 69 on ATP's live rankings by the end of his China Open campaign.

SOCCER

Enrique's Dembele gamble backfires against the Gunners

Luis Enrique had taken a big gamble by leaving Ousmane Dembele out of his squad for what was arguably PSG's biggest game of the season against Arsenal in the Champions League.

It backfired Tuesday night. Badly. Dembele was fit and in form, but the PSG coach sanctioned the France forward because of a perceived lack of commitment, deciding he could do without his services against one of the best sides on the continent.

"If someone does not comply with the requirements from the team, it means that they are not ready," PSG coach Enrique said before the game. To fill the big void left by the prolific forward — Dembele has already scored four goals and delivered three assists in the French league this season — Enrique fielded Desire Doue and Lee Kang-in up front alongside Bradley Barcola.

Facing an Arsenal back-four playing at its best, PSG's attacking players were largely non-existent at the Emirates Stadium, where the buoyant PSG fans did a better job than their players, who eventually fell 2-0 to the Gunners in the second round of the revamped tournament's league phase.

Mikel Arteta's side looked a far more mature outfit and outclassed the French league champion, with Kai Havertz and Bukayo Saka scoring in the first half for the host.

Despite PSG's struggles, Enrique took time to try and adjust his lineup, making his first substitutions in the 64th minute when Randal Kolo Muani and Fabian Ruiz came on. PSG played better afterward but it was too little, too late.

"It's easy to say after the match that one player has to play, and that another should have not," Luis

Enrique said.

With PSG keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma seemingly at fault on both goals, the coach took the blame for the stinging loss.

"I'm responsible for the defeat," Enrique said. "Their defenders always anticipated what our forwards were doing, and our forwards never managed to anticipate their defenders."

It was Arsenal's first win in the competition, after the London side drew its opener against Atalanta last month. PSG, which was unbeaten in all competitions, and started with a win against Girona, slumped to its first loss.

Recruited from Rennes for 50 million euros (\$55 million) during the summer as part of PSG's post-Kylian Mbappe era rebuild, the highly rated Doue was preferred to the experienced Kolo Muani, despite just

returning from an injury. He came into the spotlight this summer at the Paris Olympics, scoring a goal and delivering an assist, as France finished with a silver medal.

He did not seem ready in north London, while Lee was a marked man throughout and struggled to find space.

Arteta — an admirer of Enrique — had named an unchanged team from the 4-2 victory against Leicester over the weekend in the Premier League, and it worked well.

PSG and Arsenal are both chasing an elusive first Champions League title.

Arsenal enjoyed possession, dictated the tempo, won most of the duels and opened the scoring within 20 minutes.

"The Champions League brings different demands, really different to the Premier League, but I think we

dealt with it really well," Arteta said.

Up front, the Arsenal pair of Leandro Trossard and Havertz was lethal, as PSG's center-halves struggled to follow their pace and connections. Trossard delivered the cross into the box that led to the opening goal, when Havertz was faster than Donnarumma to the ball and headed it home.

"It's a big step for me," Havertz said, after scoring his third goal in the space of a week. "Back in the day, I wasn't a player who liked the duels, but now I just love it. If we win against teams like this it gives us a big boost."

Some rare satisfaction for the visitors came from right-back Achraf Hakimi, who caused some problems down the right flank with his speed, but he was well muzzled by Riccardo Calafiori.

PSG had a chance to level the

game, when a shot from Nuno Mendes clipped the post, only for Arsenal to double its lead in the 35th minute, when Saka curled in a low free kick that surprised the whole PSG defense.

A beautiful collective move of fast-flowing soccer from Arsenal just after halftime saw Gabriel Martinelli test Donnarumma with a good effort, but this time the PSG keeper had the last word. PSG's best chance in the second half came when Joao Neves had an effort parried away onto the woodwork by Arsenal keeper David Raya.

"Mikel Arteta has been managing Arsenal for the fifth year, I have been with my team for one year and two months," Enrique said. "I have a clear idea where I want to be, but I don't know how long it will take."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA