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# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2024

## Growth target within reach, economists say

Conducive environment for treasury bond trade promised by central bank, ministry

By OUYANG SHIJIA and ZHOU LANXU

China will likely hit this year's annual growth target of around 5 percent with a projected pickup in fourth-quarter GDP growth, given the recently unveiled, bolder than expected stimulus policy measures and forthcoming incremental policies, economists said.

They also said that the weaker than expected economic indicators in recent months point to persistent challenges stemming from sluggish domestic demand, prompting calls for intensified monetary and fiscal policy support to sustain growth. The key focus should be expanding effective investment, boosting consumption and stabilizing the real estate sector, they added.

The economists' comments came after Premier Li Qiang emphasized on Tuesday the need for faster and more effective implementation of economic policies to achieve China's growth targets for the year, as authorities ramped up measures in recent days to further bolster the world's second-largest economy.

Speaking at a symposium with business leaders and economists, Li called for swift actions to put in place the newly rolled out policies, which are designed to stabilize growth and enhance support for businesses.

Citing a package of incremental policies announced recently, Guo Liyan, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research's Economic Research Institute, said the move aims to address

pressing challenges and pressures faced by the economy, which will significantly boost confidence among investors and consumers.

"In fact, some economic indicators have shown fluctuations since the third quarter, and the economic contribution in the fourth quarter is significant for the entire year," she said. "Implementing a package of incremental policies at this juncture is conducive to strengthening confidence for meeting the annual growth target."

To promote closer monetary and fiscal policy coordination, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, and the Ministry of Finance held their first joint working group meeting on the treasury bond trade, vowing to provide a conducive market environment for treasury bond trade operations, according to a statement released on Wednesday.

In addition, as part of the country's ongoing efforts to meet the annual growth target, the National Development and Reform Commission announced on Tuesday that the country will move ahead to this year part of the investment plans set for 2025.

Raymond Ma, Invesco's chief investment officer for the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, said: "We believe that the NDRC's further confirmation, together with the recently announced supportive monetary and fiscal policies, will bolster the economy. This reinforces our long-term positive outlook on Chinese equities."

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## Strife in the city



A civilian airplane takes off from Beirut airport even as smoke rises in the background after Israeli airstrikes over the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital on Tuesday. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes in Lebanon in recent weeks, as Israel ramped up its attacks on the Hezbollah. UPI / NEWS.COM See story, page 10

## Leaders call for connectivity as ASEAN meet opens

By YANG HAN in Vientiane  
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The 44th and 45th ASEAN Summits began on Wednesday in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, with regional leaders and officials discussing ways to enhance the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' connectivity and resilience amid geopolitical challenges.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Lao President Thongloun Sisolouth said the bloc has made achievements in fostering peace, stability and prosperity across Southeast Asia, providing a favorable environment for socioeconomic development of member states.

As regional and international environments are undergoing rapid and complex changes, Thongloun said ASEAN must continue to uphold its common cause of peace, stability and sustainable development, as well as its commitment to multilateralism based on equality and mutual benefit.

Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, as the ASEAN Chair, underscored the importance of enhancing connectivity and resilience to strengthen ASEAN community building.

Laos has chosen "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience" as the theme for its ASEAN chairmanship this year.

The meeting also discussed the implementation of the five-point consensus the ASEAN leaders reached in 2021 for a peaceful solution to the Myanmar crisis.

Aung Kyaw Moe, permanent secretary of Myanmar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, attended the gathering, becoming the first representative from the country to be present at such a meeting since the military assumed power in 2021.

Prime Minister of Timor-Leste Xanana Gusmao is also attending the summits as ASEAN moves toward granting the country full membership in the near future.

Besides reviewing the achievements made so far and charting out future directions, the meeting also discussed ASEAN's relations with external partners, including its future directions.

"Laos, like other ASEAN members, seeks to reinforce the idea that ASEAN should remain a platform for open dialogue and cooperation, ensuring that no external pressures divide the region," said Souliya Mounnarath, head of the International Cooperation Division, International Relations Office, National University of Laos.

The summit is a reminder that ASEAN's strength lies in its cohesion, resilience and ability to foster constructive engagement between all global powers, Souliya told China Daily.

As Chinese Premier Li Qiang is attending a series of ASEAN-related summit meetings, Souliya said China plays a pivotal role in promoting connectivity and resilience within the region, with the China-Laos rail-

way, a project under the Belt and Road Initiative, exemplifying the type of connectivity that can enhance trade, mobility and regional integration.

The summits hosted by Laos show the enduring nature of the ASEAN Way, which means that ASEAN countries have their own cultural inclinations of avoiding direct confrontations and opt for corridors and low-key diplomacy, said Lim Tai Wei, adjunct senior research fellow of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore.

"The announcement was made that they wish to tackle substantive matters besides symbolic ones," Lim told China Daily, citing issues such as bringing peace to Myanmar.

Noting ASEAN's clout is growing as the regional organization matures, Lim said such solidarity is important in a turbulent world.

The meetings will conclude on Friday, with Laos passing the ASEAN chairmanship to Malaysia.

## Storm after storm



Ted Carlson puts his friend Evan Purcell's cat McKenzie into a pick-up truck on Tuesday along with other important items from Purcell's home ahead of the arrival of Hurricane Milton, in Holmes Beach, Florida, the United States. Debris from damage wrought by the recent Hurricane Helene can be seen on the driveway. REBECCA BLACKWELL / AP See story, page 9.

## TEMPLE EXERCISE HELPS CITY WORKERS RELIEVE STRESS

Serene place of worship in Beijing eases burden on body, mind

By XIN WEN  
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Young white-collar workers in Beijing can easily find themselves frazzled by the pressure of their day-to-day jobs and the fast pace of city life.

A Taoist temple located in the Chi-



nese capital's downtown Xicheng district, however, is providing an oasis of serenity for young residents to relieve their aches and pains, ease

their nerves, and find inner calm.

The multiple courtyards of Baiyun Temple are shaded by towering trees and filled with the aroma of burning incense. Taoist priests can be encountered everywhere at the temple — a living reminder of the historical significance of Taoism in China and its importance to believers.

An exercise known as *baduanjin*, a form of Taoist *qigong* that combines a set of eight traditional Chinese fitness movements with meditation and breathing, has been taught on weekends by priests for many years, attracting enthusiastic trainees.

See **Baduanjin**, page 2

## Canada's tax blow on EVs will only hurt its own interests

In a move that mirrors the actions of its southern neighbor, Canada recently imposed 100 percent tariff on Chinese-made electric vehicles. While the step aims to shield Canada's domestic industry from what is perceived as unfair competition, a closer look reveals that such protectionist policies could backfire.

As with the tariffs imposed by the United States, Canada's new policy might seem like a strong stance against Chinese market practices, but in reality, it could stifle competition, inhibit innovation and make sustainable transportation less accessible for Canadians.

Protectionist measures, such as these tariffs, have historically proven to be counterproductive. Instead of bolstering domestic industries, they often lead to higher prices for consumers and less incentive for local manufacturers to innovate and improve.

In Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, these measures led to an influx of outdated models and a significant drop in investment. The result was a stagnation that left consumers with fewer choices and poor quality products.

A case in point is the Ford Falcon manufactured in Argentina between 1962 and 1991. Argentines bought brand-new, locally

produced Falcons decades after they had gone out of production elsewhere. Protectionism had originally forced Ford to build a new local factory but there was no incentive for the company to bring in newer models or technology. Rather the incentive was to sell as many cars as possible from the same factory.

North American consumers have, for decades, reaped the benefits of China's ability to manufacture high-quality goods efficiently and affordably. Chinese manufacturers have been able to provide products at a fraction of the cost of goods made elsewhere. This translated into a higher quality of life

for North American consumers, who could buy anything from household appliances to electronics while keeping more money in their pockets.

This affordability is particularly crucial for EVs, which are notoriously expensive in North America, with prices far above those of equivalent gas-powered vehicles.

The cheapest EV available in Canada, the Chevrolet Bolt EV LT, costs around C\$38,943 (\$28,925). In contrast, EVs in China can sell for much less, demonstrating the potential for significant savings for consumers.

The argument for imposing

WORLD WATCH  
By Alfred Romann

these tariffs hinges on protecting Canadian jobs and industries. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland voiced concerns over unsubstantiated claims of China's policy of overcapacity, which she argues could cripple the Canadian EV sector.

Even if protection of domestic industries is a valid concern, these measures are more likely to shield existing manufacturers from competition, rather than encourage them to innovate and find more cost-effective ways to produce EVs.

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Newsstand prices: US \$1 Canada C\$1 UK £1 EU €1 Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling Asia Pacific: Thailand 120 THB; Philippines 120 PHP; Myanmar 2000 Kyat; Japan 210 Yen; Dubai 10 Dirham; Pakistan 300 Rupee

PAGE TWO

# BADUANJIN: Ancient workout gives renewal



**Left:** A woman competes during a *baduanjin* competition in Chongqing in August. YANG MIN / FOR CHINA DAILY  
**Right:** A medical worker performs traditional *baduanjin* exercise in Hefei, Anhui province, in August. YUAN BING / FOR CHINA DAILY  
**Below:** A foreign student learns *baduanjin* at a vocational school in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, in November. TAN YUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY

From page 1

Deng Jiayi, 30, is one of the instructors, and has been teaching *baduanjin* since 2017.

"We have found that the physical condition of people today is different from that of the past. Many people now are unable to learn martial arts or tai chi because their physical health is poor," Deng said. "Therefore, our master suggested using some health preservation exercises for the public to learn and improve, and *baduanjin* became the exercise offered as a public welfare class at the temple.

"Our master's wish is to promote our traditional Chinese culture, to let more people know about the profound culture so that they can benefit from it," said Deng.

The *baduanjin* exercise classes, held from 9:30 am to 11:00 am every Saturday and Sunday, offer two courses. They are taught by Taoist instructors who have studied martial arts from an early age at the country's most-sacred site of Taoism, Wudang Mountain in Hubei province.

Initially a set of *qigong* exercises practiced by Chinese folk groups, *baduanjin* has evolved since ancient times. Inferior elements of the exercise were discarded while the remaining ones were refined, leading to the practice of *baduanjin* in its current form.

Different schools and styles of martial arts, as well as *qigong*, have incorporated these techniques into their own systems, further boosting the spread of *baduanjin*.

Deng said the Sanfeng branch of Wudang *baduanjin* focuses on breathing and health preservation, while the Shaolin sect practices a more forceful and externalized style, which emphasizes muscle and internal strength.

Baiyun Temple teaches a style of the exercise derived from the Huashan branch of the Taoist Quanzhen sect, with a focus on the regulation and flow of *qi*, a vital life energy, and blood.

### Improving fitness

Over the past seven years, the *baduanjin* courses offered by Baiyun Temple have changed in their intensity, while interaction with the public has evolved.

Since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, there's been a surge in young people interested in exercises to improve their health, Deng said. This increase has been achieved with the help of government support, he added.

However, some *baduanjin* novices

struggle to complete even one round of training, he said. "During our classes, we noticed students experiencing dizziness, nausea, and difficulty standing up," Deng explained. "To prevent fainting or hypoglycemia, we provide *huoxiangzhengqi* water (a traditional herbal formula) and glucose."

Deng attributed the struggles of novice students to declining overall fitness levels and the teaching methods, which are challenging for newcomers. "We've since adjusted our approach to be less intense," he said.

Deng believes that many urban residents suffer from physical stress brought on by overthinking. But by practicing *baduanjin* they stretch and open up all their joints and limbs, and allow their entire bodies to slowly relax. This can calm their minds and provide them with a much-needed feeling of tranquility, he said.

"During this practice, individuals can engage in self-reflection and gradually reduce stress, discomfort, and excessive mental anxiety," Deng said.

"The things that city residents bring about through social burdens, life and work pressures, can be easily removed through our classes at the temple," Deng said, adding that trainees have been eager to learn and find solutions to relieve their stress.

### Life lessons

Jiang Tianxiao, a 22-year-old from the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, began practicing *baduanjin* in early August after realizing a feeling of unhappiness pervaded her life.

Her first visit to Baiyun Temple was to burn incense and ask for blessings, but she also learned about the course and the possibility they could improve her mental state.

Aspiring to work in the finance industry, Jiang graduated from university in June and started her first job in October.

In August, she spent every Saturday morning practicing *baduanjin* at the temple, and eventually her mood brightened.

"I had an internship that started in June. The salary covered my rent, but the job was not exactly what I wanted," Jiang said, adding she felt disappointed because she couldn't get involved with the core business of the company. "I guess I needed some psychological comfort back then," she said.

In July, a conflict she had with a longtime friend from high school upset her, and exacerbated her feeling of loneliness.

"My friend and I were both at the stage of just having graduated from college and entering internships. We faced the situation of renting an apartment, getting along with colleagues at work, as well as dealing with our own lives in the metropolis," said Jiang.

"She shared with me her discomfort during her internship and I gave her a piece of advice, which might have annoyed her because of my bluntness," she said, adding that small things increased the tension between them.

"I just felt during that period that I couldn't exhale completely," said Jiang. "It felt like I couldn't get a full breath out, and my breath got stuck when I inhaled."

Stretching while practicing *baduanjin* helped her. The teacher always emphasized trainees stretch as far as possible within their comfort zone.

"I've been enjoying the feeling of focusing on practicing at the temple, though it was a bit hard for me in the first stage," she said.

*Baduanjin*, which means "eight-section brocade" in English, is composed of eight individual movements. Jiang said the first three are the most difficult for her to practice, especially the second one.

"The second movement, called 'drawing the bow to shoot the hawk,' involves opening your left and right arms while performing a martial arts squat. It requires balance and coordination to keep up with the rhythm taught by the teacher," she said.

"I'm struggling to coordinate the symmetrical movements, and it makes me feel a bit dizzy," she added.

Jiang created a document to record all the movements that the teacher at Baiyun Temple had taught her. "I sometimes practice at home, and it's pretty exhausting when I follow the teacher's instructions properly."

### Steady progress

Zi You, who is a successor of Wudang Sanfeng martial arts and a

*baduanjin* teacher, believes the younger generation has taken time and effort to come to the Baiyun Temple to learn, proving a strong willingness to practice the traditional exercise.

"Especially after the pandemic, there has been an obvious trend that more young people want to learn *baduanjin*, compared with seniors who previously made up the majority," he said. "The younger generation know their bodies need care, and want to get healthier."

Whenever students start a new workout routine, Zi suggests they begin slowly or with smaller movements, to ensure steady progress.

"For those who have been sedentary for long periods every day, year after year, it might be harmful to suddenly start intense activities like running or jumping," he said.

In such instances, practicing *baduanjin* can be a much healthier alternative.

"I often tell my students that you don't need to worry too much about the quantity of the practice in the beginning. Whenever you have a moment, like during your lunch break on workdays, and feel tension in your shoulders or neck, do a few repetitions," said Zi. "That can be a great starting point, and you will naturally want to keep going once you notice positive changes in your body and overall health."

Zi learned *baduanjin* as part of his martial arts training, which served as a relaxation technique dur-

ing breaks from intense training.

"I'm still in the industry and I believe that if I can help one more person, if the students can understand and practice what I've taught them, and if it's beneficial to their health, I will be extremely happy," he said.

### Places of healing

Temples have played an important role in the capital city's public life since ancient times.

Susan Naquin, professor emerita of history and East Asian studies at Princeton University, highlighted this historical role in her book, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900*.

Beijing's temples were the true center of public life in the city and hosted a wide range of activities including theatrical performances, markets, charitable relief, scholarly gatherings, festive pilgrimages and book fairs, as well as art and leisure activities. All these public activities contributed to Beijing building a shared urban culture, and helped to form a "Beijing citizen" identity shared by people across the city.

Residents with different occupations in Beijing followed their own customs, rules and habits in their daily lives. However, they shared a common need for psychological comfort. Religion, to a great extent, provided them with a place for spiritual solace, according to Naquin.

Deng, the teacher, said that young people in Beijing are under too much pressure from intense competition nowadays, and when their bodies can no longer cope, they develop various ailments.

"Whether they're going on a trip or just going out for fun, many of their tensions or discomfort may be alleviated," he said. "But once they return to their usual surroundings, they find themselves feeling tense again. It's like their old habits, even their walking pace and breathing, might quicken."

The temple provides a kind of retreat, a completely different environment, amid the pressures of living in Beijing.

"Only when a person becomes calm and composed can they truly handle their affairs. It's interesting how problems often seem insurmountable before they happen. But once they've passed, they often appear less significant. This is a natural part of the human experience," said Deng.

"By approaching all matters with a calm demeanor, we can reduce stress and anxiety. Because eventually, everything will pass."



**Left:** Deng Jiayi (front) teaches *baduanjin* at Baiyun Temple in Beijing on Sept 21. **Right:** People attend the *baduanjin* exercise class at the temple on Sept 21. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



## TOP NEWS

## Repatriated treasures



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (second from left) looks at ancient clay tablets that were returned to Iran by the United States in late September, during an unveiling ceremony at the National Museum of Iran in Teheran on Tuesday. The newly unveiled collection consists of 1,100 clay tablets from the Achaemenid Empire period. The exhibition will run through Nov 20. VAHID SALEMI / AP

## Growth: Long-term outlook reinforced

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After a strong rally following stimulus announcements by Chinese authorities, Chinese stocks dropped on Wednesday as the market eagerly awaited bolder moves to revive the economy, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index slumping 6.62 percent to close at 3,258.86 points.

"While achieving the around 5 percent annual growth target may be challenging, the government's newly announced policies are expected to provide substantial stimulation for the economy in 2024 and beyond," Zhu Baoliang, former chief economist of the State Information Center, said, adding that the nation can meet its annual growth target this year.

Du Yue, an associate researcher at the investment research institute of the NDRC, said that it is important to optimize and implement policies aimed at spurring investment as soon as possible.

Du said that the policy of moving to this year the allocation of 200 billion yuan (\$28.3 billion) in investment plans and projects that were set for 2025 will help the country's fixed-asset investment maintain reasonable growth while lifting market expectations.

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## First catering business license issued to robots that cook multiple cuisines

By DU JUAN [dujuan@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:dujuan@chinadaily.com.cn)

Beijing recently issued the first catering business license to a type of robot, pioneering regulation of embodied intelligence application in the country's catering industry amid rapid development in the sector.

Unlike single-task robots, such as pancake-making or noodle-cooking machines, the embodied intelligence robots developed by EncoSmart Technology, a Beijing-based company, can cook different types of cuisine.

The robots, which look like robotic arms, can also keep learning to create new menus and avoid safety risks based on the working environment.

"Artificial intelligence is an inevitable trend in the food and beverage industry," said Xia Pingping, head of the catering department at the Haidian District Market Regulation Bureau, which recently granted EncoSmart the city's first food business license for its embodied intelligence robots.

"Before issuing the license, we rigorously examined the product to ensure it complies with national food safety regulations. The robot design prioritizes safety, from hardware materials to software algorithms," she said.

Tian Yan, head of smart project development at EncoSmart, said: "We've already deployed our first-generation robot offering fried food in certain office buildings in Haidian. By the end of the year, we plan to expand the services to chain restaurants, rolling out robots capable of making ice cream, drinks and salads."

A report issued by the Beijing Municipal Commerce Bureau in April highlighted challenges in the local restaurant industry, including high rents, labor costs and ingredient prices, coupled with low profits.

Tian said she believes that embodied intelligence technology can help reduce costs, streamline food processing, and meet consumer demand for precise and consistent flavors.

"Our goal is to make consumer-grade robots more affordable and accessible," she said. "Safety is the core. Our robots can learn through algorithms to improve heating efficiency in order to make the food more tasty. The sensors on robots can monitor the temperature of oil in order to avoid any kitchen fire risks."

Chen Zhen, CEO of EncoSmart, said the company would tap the overseas market in the following two years, starting with two major robot products aimed at Western catering markets.

"The overseas market has great opportunities, but it's also pretty challenging," he said. "It's essential for us to obtain the product certifications and win the trust of the clients there."

To address new challenges facing food safety, the State Administration for Market Regulation revised the measures for the administration of food trade licensing, which now include provisions for automated food service devices. The measures took effect on Dec 1.

Haidian district is leading AI-driven food safety regulation, setting standards for embodied AI in food processing, including basic

safety, system design, food hygiene and operational norms, filling a regulatory gap in the AI-powered catering industry.

AI food safety oversight differs from traditional restaurant regulation, said Duan Xing, head of the market regulation office in Haidian's Huayuanlu subdistrict.

"Our approach focuses on three areas, including process and equipment control to guarantee smooth operation, as well as data control to maintain traceability throughout," Duan said.

A report released at the 2024 Beijing Catering Brand Conference noted that 4,842 new restaurants were registered in the city in the first half of the year, with an average of 26.5 new restaurants opening daily. While overall restaurant consumption remains stable, the industry is undergoing rapid change, requiring businesses to enhance their resilience and quality.

Wang Xinwei, deputy secretary-general of the Beijing Branch of the World Federation of Chinese Catering Industry, said, "The first embodied AI robot food business license signifies that this cutting-edge technology is quickly entering the food and beverage market, allowing for large-scale commercialization and reducing the complexity of recipe replication and chef hiring."

"While the spread of embodied AI robots may increase short-term employment pressure, in the long run, they will drive the restaurant industry toward greater intelligence, creating new jobs," Wang said.

Li Boyu contributed to this story.

## 'Motherland fallacy' of Lai condemned

Leader's rhetoric exposes separatist stance and malicious intent, says spokeswoman

By ZHANG YI [zhangyi@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zhangyi@chinadaily.com.cn)

The Chinese mainland slammed Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te's "motherland fallacy", saying it exposed his steadfast "pro-independence" stance and his intention to escalate hostility across the Taiwan Strait.

Lai, who took office in May, has sparked global concerns with his "two-state" theory on the mainland and Taiwan, leading to doubts about his ability to stabilize the situation in the Strait, experts from both sides of the Taiwan Strait said.

During a recent event in Taipei, Lai made comments about the concept of "motherland". He claimed that "in terms of age, it is impossible for the People's Republic of China to be the motherland of the people of the Republic of China", adding that "the ROC could be considered the motherland for people aged 75 and above in the PRC".

"If anyone in Taiwan wants to say happy birthday to the PRC, please do not call it the motherland," Lai said, after some Taiwan actors had recently expressed birthday wishes for the PRC.

Those included Taiwan actress Annie Yi, who posted on Weibo expressing her immense honor on Oct 1 after attending the 75th-anniversary reception of the PRC in Beijing. She shared her photos and the invitation letter, writing, "My dearest motherland, happy birthday."

Lai's remarks have sparked widespread debate and drawn criticism from various sectors from both sides.

On Tuesday, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said Lai peddled his "two-state" rhetoric by constantly hyping that the two sides are "not subordinate" to each other, which exposes his stubborn separatist stance and malicious intent to escalate hostility and confrontation across the Strait.

Zhu said that while the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have not been fully reunified, China's sovereignty and territorial integrity have never been severed.

On Oct 1, 1949, the PRC was founded, becoming the successor to the ROC, and the Central People's Government became the only legitimate government of the whole of China. As a natural result, the government of the PRC should enjoy and exercise China's full sovereignty, which includes its sovereignty over Taiwan, she said.

"No matter what kind of 'historical paradox' or weird separatist narrative Lai puts forward, he cannot change the fact that both sides of the Strait belong to one China, and nor can he extinguish the sense of motherland among Taiwan compatriots," she added.

Tang Yonghong, a professor of Taiwan studies at Xiamen University, said that Lai and the Democratic Progressive Party persist in

advocating for the "one China, one Taiwan" position in defining cross-Strait relations, and in doing so, they have been attempting to sever the historical and cultural connections between the two sides.

Lai's fallacy on "motherland" clearly stems from his "two-state" theory, and he sought to deceive the people of Taiwan and the international community by using the name of the ROC and aimed to use it to negate United Nations Resolution 2758, which clearly refers to Taiwan as part of China.

Hsiao Hsu-tsen, executive director of the Ma Ying-jeou Foundation, criticized Lai's remarks, saying, "Both the mainland and Taiwan belong to China, and Taiwan people are Chinese. Those who truly love Taiwan would not pursue 'independence'."

Hsiao said that Lai's "two-state" theory has escalated tensions in the Taiwan Strait, leading to widespread international concerns, as highlighted in a report by the International Crisis Group published on Sept 26.

Titled "The Widening Schism across the Taiwan Strait", the report said that Lai's adoption of a more hard-line stance toward the mainland has exacerbated tensions.

Hsiao said that the report specifically pointed out that Lai should restore a more cautious and restrained approach in publicly discussing his own position and cross-Strait relations, which reflected international concerns over the instability in the Taiwan Strait and confirmed the widespread skepticism surrounding Lai.

Ma Ying-jeou, a former leader of Taiwan, also criticized Lai's approach to cross-Strait relations, which he said has raised concerns in the international community, in a speech to Harvard University's Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies in late September.

Lai's "pro-independence" stance has raised concerns within United States political, academic and business circles, leading to "American Institute in Taiwan Chairwoman" Laura Rosenberger visiting the island to express concerns to the DPP authorities.

Ma said the DPP authorities should face reality, emphasizing that no country would sacrifice its own people for Taiwan.

Senior Colonel Wu Qian, a spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, strongly condemned on Wednesday the recent announcement of the US government's approval of military aid worth approximately \$567 million to Taiwan, covering funding for training, anti-armor systems and drones.

The People's Liberation Army will continue to strengthen its combat readiness and enhance its ability to win wars, and resolutely counter separatist activities and external interference, he warned.

## Inside

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## Tariffs: Strategy further intensifies trade tensions

From page 1

As it stands, Chinese EVs, which have proven to be popular in markets like Latin America — where they account for about 20 percent of the market — are cheaper and of comparable quality to their North American counterparts. This affordability and quality have been pivotal in making EVs more accessible to a broader range of consumers, an outcome that these tariffs will undermine.

Furthermore, the environmental implications of such tariffs cannot be ignored.

At current EV prices, it can take several years for buyers to realize any cost savings compared to traditional gas-powered cars. With EVs remaining a high-cost option, many consumers will continue to opt for gas guzzlers, delaying the transition to more environmentally

**Rather than resorting to protectionist measures, Canada should focus on fostering innovation and competitiveness within its EV sector, ensuring that it can thrive on a global scale without relying on punitive tariffs.**

friendly vehicles.

This tariff strategy extends beyond just EVs. Canada is also looking to impose a 25 percent tariff on some Chinese steel and aluminum products, further intensifying trade tensions between the two nations.

China has already criticized these moves, arguing that they violate World Trade Organization rules and could harm global trade.

With high-profile Chinese EV makers like BYD expressing interest in entering the Canadian market and Tesla's Shanghai-made cars already a part of the Canadian landscape, these tariffs may not only limit consumer choice but could also lead to retaliatory measures that further strain trade relations.

This is already at play. On Sept 3, China announced plans to launch an anti-dumping investigation into imports of canola from Canada.

The Canadian government's intent to protect domestic industries is understandable, but imposing a 100 percent tariff on Chinese EVs is likely to do more harm than good. By stifling competition and protecting more

expensive existing offerings, these tariffs will ultimately hurt Canadian consumers, who will face higher prices and fewer choices.

And, by making EVs less accessible, Canada risks slowing down its progress toward environmental sustainability.

Rather than resorting to protectionist measures, Canada should focus on fostering innovation and competitiveness within its EV sector, ensuring that it can thrive on a global scale without relying on punitive tariffs. Only then can Canadians enjoy the full benefits of a dynamic, competitive and environmentally sustainable automotive market.

The author is managing director of Bahati, an editorial services agency based in Hong Kong. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Preparing for the worst



Students take part in a drill in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, on Wednesday, ahead of the 20th anniversary of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami which occurred on Dec 26, Boxing Day. The incident killed over 200,000 people in 14 countries. CHAIDEER MAHYUDDIN / AFP

## CHINA

# Yunnan set to implement green rules

Existing environmental protection law passed in 1992 will be abolished by Nov 1

By HOU LIQIANG  
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Yunnan province in Southwest China will soon implement a fresh set of rules concerning ecological and environmental protection, introducing a dedicated standard on green and low-carbon development and establishing lifelong accountability regarding environmental damages for officials.

The rules are included in Yunnan's regulations on ecological and environmental protection, which were adopted by the provincial legislature in late September and will come into force on Nov 1, according to a media release from Yunnan authorities on Sunday.

The province's current regulations on environmental protection, which were passed in 1992, will be abolished, it added.

A new section on green and low-carbon development is designed to better implement the concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", which is one of the 10 tenets of the Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, according to a statement from the Yunnan legislature released in August, when it started to solicit public opinions for a draft of the new regulations.

The section is also meant to implement the directives of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China to accelerate the green transformation of development methods, and promote green and low-carbon socioeconomic development, the statement noted.

The new regulations mandate that different levels of government in Yunnan should integrate the concept of green and low-carbon development into their socioeconomic development plans.

They must actively work toward the development of green and low-carbon industries, strengthen waste recycling systems, implement incentives to promote green consumption and promote green and low-carbon production modes and lifestyles, as they make efforts to achieve a comprehensive green and low-carbon transformation in

socioeconomic development.

The Yunnan provincial government should establish a mechanism on tackling climate change, according to the regulation.

Participation in the construction of the national carbon trading market and the China Certified Emission Reduction program, a voluntary program in which participants can trade carbon credits, is also compulsory.

The government is also obligated to beef up the carbon absorption capacity of ecosystems and strengthen the ability of the province's natural ecosystems and socioeconomic systems to adapt to climate change.

The new regulations encompass a damage compensation system aimed at safeguarding and enhancing the ecosystem.

Individuals and companies responsible for ecological and environmental harm are required to rectify such damages. In cases where the damages are irreparable, they must provide compensation or undertake alternative restoration measures.

Should the violator proactively fulfill their obligations to compensate for damages, this action will be viewed as a factor warranting leniency, mitigation or exemption from penalties.

Yunnan province will also strengthen environmental assessments and accountability for government officials, according to the regulations.

Governments at and above the county level should integrate the evaluations of their ecological environment statuses and the achievements of their ecological protection goals into the assessment criteria for relevant departments at their respective levels and for lower-level governments, and the results will be made public.

Yunnan will also implement a supervisory system for auditing the natural resource assets when a relevant official leaves office and a lifelong accountability system for ecological and environmental damage responsibility for officials, according to the regulations.

## Golden celebration



A team carrying a golden statue of Mazu, a sea goddess, begins its procession around Meizhou Island from the Mazu Ancestral Temple in Putian, Fujian province, on Wednesday. The five-day event, which officially commenced on Wednesday, is held to commemorate the 1,037th anniversary of Mazu becoming a goddess, and features a series of activities. CAI HAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Agencies warned after data breach

By YANG ZEKUN  
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The Ministry of Ecology and Environment has issued strict warnings to third-party environmental monitoring agencies, emphasizing that falsification of data and fraudulent behavior will lead to severe legal consequences.

On Tuesday, the ministry revealed the cases of two third-party agencies involved in fabricating documents in which criminal penalties were imposed not only on the actual controllers and legal representatives of the agencies, but also on those responsible for sampling, analysis and report approval.

The companies are Shanxi Fangchuang Environmental Testing Company in Shanxi province and Xi'an Kena Testing and Calibration Company in Shaanxi province. They falsified sampling data, tampered with sampling periods, fabricated lab results and swapped analysis samples, disrupting market order and harming the environment, the ministry said.

In October last year, media reports revealed that these agencies were suspected of falsifying environmental monitoring data. This led the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, in collaboration with the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Public Security, to launch a joint investigation and dispatch special teams to oversee the cases.

Task forces from Shanxi and Shaanxi also conducted comprehensive investigations into the illegal activities throughout the companies' entire operational chain, including business acquisition, on-site sampling, lab analysis, report issuance and financial transactions.

The investigation revealed that from March 2021 until their cases were officially filed last year, Fangchuang produced 172 false reports from which it earned about 1.1 million yuan (\$156,600), while Kena issued 222 false reports, earning 762,000 yuan.

Both companies were fined 200,000 yuan, and their illegal gains were confiscated. Additionally, three executives from Fangchuang and six personnel from Kena received prison sentences ranging from nine months to 18 months, along with fines. Their qualifications were revoked, and the nine defendants were banned from working in environmental monitoring or related fields for three years.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment emphasized that anyone falsifying data and engaging in fraudulent practices will face strict legal action. Third-party agencies and practitioners are urged to heed this warning, strengthen their legal awareness and operate with integrity.

Moving forward, the ministry will continue collaborating with other departments to maintain a

high-pressure approach to cracking down on fraud, employing big data and AI-enhanced monitoring to prevent misconduct and foster a healthy and orderly development of the third-party environmental services market.

During a news conference on Sept 25, Vice-Minister of Ecology and Environment Dong Baotong stated that environmental monitoring is foundational to ecological protection. Public concerns about falsified third-party monitoring data highlight the need for stronger oversight and stricter enforcement.

Since 2021, the ministry, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security and the State Administration for Market Regulation have conducted special annual inspections to combat fraud in third-party environmental services. By the end of last year, 2,260 violators had been dealt with, 457 cases had been exposed and 193 criminal cases had been handed over for prosecution.

Additionally, 4,255 cases of falsified self-monitoring by companies had been uncovered, with 930 transferred to law enforcement.

This year, the ministry will further expand the scope of its crackdown, increase penalties, enhance regulatory collaboration and upgrade its monitoring techniques to ensure effective oversight.

## Signing of document to further enhance opening-up

By LUO WEITENG in Hong Kong  
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The Ministry of Commerce and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government on Wednesday signed amendments to further enhance the mainland's level of liberalization of trade in services with Hong Kong under the framework of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement.

The amendments, slated to take effect on March 1, gave finishing touches to a new round of revision consultations on the CEPA among the ministry, relevant departments and the HKSAR government that were initiated by the Ministry of Commerce last year and completed in July.

At the heart of the revision is a whole package of new opening-up measures making it easier for Hong Kong service suppliers and professionals to set up enterprises and develop businesses on the Chinese mainland, with most measures piloted in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to facilitate the regional institutional connectivity before putting it into practice across the nation.

Local sectors such as banking and securities, insurance, film, tourism, television, telecommunication, construction and related engineering are poised to benefit from the removal or relaxation of restrictions on equity shareholding and the scope of business in the establishment of enterprises, as well as the relaxation of qualification requirements for Hong Kong professionals.

"As one of the economic backbones of Hong Kong, the well-established professional services industry is where the city's impeccable strengths lie," Li Yongjie, deputy China international trade representative of the Ministry of Commerce, said at the signing ceremony in Hong Kong on Wednesday.

Li expressed hope that the new amendments would offer staunch support to Hong Kong's pursuit of fundraising and new development, underpin the deepening of bilateral economic and trade cooperation, and make Hong Kong more relevant than ever to the world's second-largest economy and play its due role.

"Since the signing of an amendment to expand the scope of the CEPA back in the challenging year of 2019, Hong Kong has made unremitting efforts to hook onto the next big story unfolding in the country," Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said at the signing ceremony, which was attended by Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu.

As the financial hub looks to better align with the nation's grand development plan, high-level integration and collaboration are the name of the game, and this is where the new amendments come in, Chan noted.

Chan highlighted the institutional innovation and collaboration enhancement as the "pioneering, forward-looking measures" that will help Hong Kong make a difference.

Chan also pointed out that the removal of a three-year period requirement for businesses to operate in Hong Kong "is not only a great boon to Hong Kong startups, but also has what it takes to make the GBA a magnet for promising firms worldwide and foreign investment in their quest for the next growth engine of the global economy."

Over the past two decades, the free trade deal, coupled with various supporting measures, have saved Hong Kong more than HK\$19 billion (\$2.4 billion) in customs duties, helping the city make inroads into the Chinese mainland market, Chan added.

## Atmospheric hub aids climate research

By QIU QUANLIN  
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Workers at the Xinfeng National Atmosphere Background Station are not allowed to cook their meals on-site. Rather, any food they need must be delivered to the station from the foot of Yunji Mountain, which is located in Xinfeng county in Shaoguan, Guangdong province.

"We are not allowed to make fires for cooking at the station, as we need to capture the true essence of the atmosphere to the fullest extent possible," said Chen Jianwen, Party chief of Xinfeng Meteorological Service Bureau.

The station is primarily used to observe atmospheric components closely related to weather, climate, environment and health, including greenhouse gases, aerosols and reactive gases.

The atmospheric observation data collected at the station has provided systematic, continuous and reliable support for research on climate and environmental changes in South China, helping to drive socioeconomic development in the area and meet China's 'dual carbon' goals — to reach its carbon emissions peak by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 — according to Chen.

Selecting the site for the atmospheric background station was very challenging, Chen said.

"Unlike typical ecological monitoring stations, the atmospheric background station observes atmos-

pheric components that must be relatively stable, well-mixed and far from human activities and pollution sources," the Party chief said.

As the eighth national atmospheric background station in the country and the only one in South China, the Xinfeng station began trial operations in October last year, and has since implemented a comprehensive and standardized observation system.

"The choice of this location on Yunji Mountain was mainly due to the superior natural environment and climatic conditions, with no industrial pollution in the surrounding area and minimal human interference, providing strong guarantees for the observation of atmospheric components," Chen said.

Yunji Mountain, with an altitude of about 1,434 meters, lies on the northern edge of the Tropic of Cancer, where the southern sea breeze and northern air currents frequently converge.

Due to the unique nature of the observation targets, the technical methods and equipment used at the station differ from those at general observation stations, according to Yang Tushi, assistant researcher from the Guangzhou Tropical Oceanographic Meteorological Research Institute of the China Meteorological Administration.

The station has a variety of high-tech equipment, including reactive gas online analyzers that are primarily used for taking real-time measurements of the concentrations of

various reactive gases in the atmosphere such as nitrogen oxides and ozone.

"By studying the chemical behavior and interactions of reactive gases in the atmosphere, and identifying and analyzing atmospheric pollution sources, valuable data support can be provided for the real-time monitoring of air quality by ecological and environmental authorities, as well as for the formulation and implementation of environmental policies," Yang said.

China will continue to promote the simultaneous testing, construction and application of 10 new stations to strengthen the national atmospheric background observation network, according to the researcher.

In addition to the establishment of atmospheric background stations, meteorological authorities in Guangdong will optimize meteorological services to help boost local socioeconomic development, focusing more on meteorological disaster prevention and reduction, ecological civilization construction, ecotourism industry development and marine meteorological services.

In Yangjiang, a coastal city in western Guangdong, a meteorological observation station has been built at sea, supporting the nation's disaster prevention efforts.

Data from the station can be used to aid the construction of smart wind farms, maritime traffic management and rescue operations, according to the local meteorological service authorities.

## Bridging the regions



Marking a significant progress in the construction of Baotou-Yinchuan high-speed railway, the final segment of a key bridge over the Yellow River in Wuhai, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, is connected on Wednesday. Designed for a speed of 250 kilometers per hour, the railway will serve as a major transportation artery linking the country's northwest region with the north and northeast region. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA

## CHINA

# Art opens up creativity of Tibetan kids

Education exchange provides students with more development opportunities

By LUO WANGSHU in Garze, Sichuan  
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A school art program introduced in the mountainous Gala township of the Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Sichuan province is fostering the creative development of the students there.

Wu Pengbo, an art teacher from Jinghua Elementary School in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, has spent nearly a month at a Gala boarding school in Yajiang county, revolutionizing the role of art in these students' lives.

Wu, 36, arrived with the intent to support and enhance art education at the school as it had previously lacked a dedicated art teacher.

"I thought my presence could provide much-needed support," he said. In fact, the experience has turned out to be mutually transformative.

"Art doesn't need to be taught; it's an innate ability. My role is to provide materials and create an environment," he said.

Upon his arrival, Wu quickly revitalized the school's underutilized art classroom, which actually had better facilities than his own in Hangzhou.

"The school has an excellent art room with all the necessary equipment. Before I arrived, no one was using these materials. Since my arrival, teachers have introduced me and the art room to the students, encouraging them to use it during free time," Wu said.

He established an art club, inviting enthusiastic students to the art room during their free time and on weekends.

"Since they are boarders, they have about an hour of free time every afternoon, which many students use to visit the art room," Wu said.

Currently, around 30 students visit the art room daily, and over 100 come on weekends, with the room often filled to capacity.

## Enriching lives of boarders

The school, with 1,314 students of which about 600 are boarders, has seen a remarkable shift in student engagement.

"Wu's presence has greatly supported our art education and enriched the lives of our boarding students," said Mao Chengjun, the school principal.

Wu takes only Sunday mornings off to gather inspiration outdoors. By 2 pm, he returns to school and informs the students that they can come to the art room to paint starting at 3 pm, according to the principal.

A graduate of oil painting, Wu believes his primary role is to guide and inspire.

"I encourage students to draw confidently as many haven't had professional



Top: Students work in class at a boarding school in Gala township of Yajiang, Sichuan province, last year. WANG PENG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE. Above: Wu Pengbo sorts through paintings in the art room at the school. XU BINGJIE / XINHUA. Right, above: The storage room is stocked full of art supplies. XU BINGJIE / XINHUA

guidance before and aren't familiar with many art tools," he said.

He has started providing sketching lessons to 12 students, observing notable progress in their work. One student, he highlighted, showed remarkable improvement after just three attempts at drawing basic shapes. "This is a very talented student," he said.

Wu's approach goes beyond mere instruction, as he aims to foster self-confidence among teachers who previously lacked professional training in art.

"Art is innate, and many teachers here understand beauty but lack confidence. I hope to convey this idea and encourage them to inspire their students to create," he said.

Principal Mao supports Wu's vision, recognizing the impact of having a professional art educator. "Students have shared how

Wu has taught them not just to appreciate art but also how to start creating it. We hope to continue utilizing the art room effectively even after his departure," he added.

## Aid initiative

As part of the support initiative between Shangcheng district in Hangzhou and Garze, Wu will spend two months at this school.

Although his time is brief, he hopes to make the most of it by helping the school utilize the art room effectively and encouraging students to manage the room independently. "Students who truly love painting will come to the room during their free time," he said.

Wu wants to convey two key messages to the students: that painting can be beneficial for their future, such as for higher education, and that painting is a joyful activity.

In the art room, he has divided the space into two areas — one for free drawing and one for sketching instruction.

The art room is well-equipped with plaster busts for basic sketching, as well as an assortment of painting tools and supplies in the adjacent storage room.

Wu believes that art can transform individuals and is already seeing changes in his students.

"The students are eager to come and are very happy," he said, adding that the students follow classroom rules willingly and require no disciplinary intervention.

Despite most students having no prior foundation in art — 80 percent of whom have never drawn under professional guidance — Wu believes they can reach the same level as students in Hangzhou.

"The children here are very imaginative. I hope that even after I leave, they will continue to find joy in painting," he said.

Samdrup Lhamo, a 13-year-old sixth grader, is particularly fond of the art room. Her home is about 150 kilometers from the school, a four-hour drive away, so she spends most weekends at school.

"I really like going to the art room. Painting is a happy thing," she said.

"Previously, the school had no dedicated art teacher, and other teachers, who were not professionally trained but substituted for art teachers, sometimes lacked confidence," principal Mao said.

He plans to have those teachers learn art education from Wu so they can continue guiding students after he leaves.

"All students have one art class per week. I also support Wu's suggestion to let students manage the art room themselves," the principal said.

Mao noted that students have expressed their fondness for Wu and their enjoyment of painting.

Wu's arrival in Garze is part of China's educational aid policy for the Xizang autonomous region and other Tibetan prefectures in the provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan, aiming to boost quality education and close gaps with Xizang and neighboring provinces with other parts of China.

The head of the Education Bureau of Shangcheng District, Xiang Haigang, said that they have sent their best teachers for educational support.

"I have never considered art education as a secondary subject. In the journey toward modernizing education in China, art, sports and labor education are all extremely



ly important. Deploying our outstanding teachers to relatively underdeveloped areas brings significant improvements and meets fundamental needs for comprehensive development," he said.

In developing areas, there is often a shortage of teachers for so-called secondary subjects. Such education allows children to experience and discover beauty, and helps them understand what constitutes a good life in the future, which is crucial in the educational process, he said.

He also believes that art teachers can help Tibetan students better record and pass on their ethnic culture through art. "Additionally, it helps children recognize that Tibetan culture is also a part of Chinese culture," he said.

Xiong Bingqi, director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute, noted that art education is lacking in underdeveloped areas in China, with a shortage of teachers and insufficient attention from local governments.

Having teachers provide support in these areas is beneficial, but the extent of its effectiveness depends on how the teachers approach their work, Xiong said.

## One family

Though Wu has been at the school for less than a month, he has forged strong bonds with the students and teachers.

"I have gained immensely from this experience. I am very happy here, not only with the achievements in art but also in my interactions with colleagues and students. They are genuinely wonderful people, and spending time with them has been very joyful," he said.

Wu has also found inspiration for his own artwork. "I have always been interested in Tibetan culture. Although I had lived in Tibetan areas before, this was my first time in a school setting. My understanding has deepened significantly, which has been very helpful for my painting. I am creating works related to this experience, and the biggest realization is that we are very similar. Han and Tibetan people truly are one family; there is no real difference. Even in terms of appearance, I feel quite similar to them now, and communication is smooth without any barriers," he added.

# Mountain soccer matches inspire pupils on pitch

By LUO WANGSHU in Luqu, Gansu  
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Every weekend, the athletic field at Luqu Tibetan Middle School bursts with vibrant energy as students engage in lively soccer matches.

Located in the Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Northwest China's Gansu province, this boarding school has made sports, especially soccer, a fundamental part of its educational philosophy.

The school, located at the altitude of 3,200 meters, has a standard soccer field. During the games, which typically take place in the afternoons, the air is filled with cheers and excitement. Students from grades seven through 12 gather to support their classmates, turning the field into a hub of spirited activity.

This enthusiasm underscores the school's commitment to using sports as a tool for holistic education. The soccer leagues, featuring both boys' and girls' teams from middle and high school, have become integral to student life. The program not only enhances physical fitness but also imparts essential life skills such as

resilience, teamwork and passion.

"Students here have a deep passion for sports," said vice-principal Lhamokyab.

"They particularly excel at soccer and basketball. Our athletic students often become stars among their peers," he said, adding that the school's focus on sports is more than just a pastime; it's a strategic effort to nurture qualities that will benefit students throughout their lives.

To maximize student engagement, the school has established a class soccer league. "Student participation is extremely high," said Jing Yaocheng, a member of the school's leadership team.

"Every weekend, students come out to cheer for their classmates and enjoy the matches," added physical education teacher Ren Zhonglin. With over 2,500 students, the league operates in a round-robin format throughout the year, ensuring every student has the chance to participate and support their team, except for students at senior grades who usually miss the fun and games to devote themselves to studying for high school and college entrance exams.

"Being a boarding school, students can't go home often, so we use the soccer games to balance their lives and keep them engaged," Jing said.

In addition to the league, the school offers various sports clubs, including a dedicated soccer club. Approximately 900 students participate in sports-related clubs, with training sessions held every afternoon.

"Our students have a great enthusiasm for sports. Whether between classes or during lunch and dinner breaks, they love engaging in various physical activities," PE teacher Ren said.

On the field, students can be seen participating in sports — some practicing on parallel bars, others playing basketball, and many simply running and chasing each other just for fun.

The most talented players are selected for the school's four soccer teams — two for middle school and two for high school, divided by gender.

Professional soccer coaches are brought in from outside the school to train both the club members and the school teams. "Our students have excellent physical fitness, largely due to their enthusiasm for

sports, especially soccer," said another PE teacher Tashi Dondrup.

"Regardless of gender, our students have a great love for the game," he added.

Tashi Dondrup, a school alumnus and former team member, now returns to share his passion for sports with the current students.

"I scout for talent during elementary school leagues and keep an eye out for promising players. If they come to our school, I recruit them for the team," Tashi Dondrup said. He believes that soccer training not only enhances students' physical abilities but also motivates them to excel academically.

"I tell my team members that if their grades are not up to standard, they cannot remain on the team. This approach ensures they stay focused on their studies."

Among the students, 17-year-old Gonpo Dondrup stands out. Having started soccer training in seventh grade, Gonpo Dondrup now plays as a winger on the school's team.

Despite the intense sunlight and demanding practice sessions, he remains dedicated to the sport. "I love playing soccer. If I miss a day, I



Girls from the soccer team of Luqu Tibetan Middle School hold up their trophies after a win in 2021. CHEN BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

don't feel right," Gonpo Dondrup said. His passion for the game has helped him forge many friendships, and he enjoys both the camaraderie and competition.

Gonpo Dondrup competes weekly, finding joy in both victories and setbacks. "Winning makes me very happy, and losing motivates me to work harder for the next match," he said. He aspires to attend a sports university and pursue a lifelong career in soccer,

inspired by his mentor, Tashi Dondrup. The school's innovative approach to using soccer is about more than just physical health. It's about preparing students for future success by teaching them valuable life skills and fostering a strong sense of community. As students cheer for their teams and celebrate their achievements, it's clear that soccer is more than just a game — it's a vital part of their journey toward a brighter future.

## CHINA



From left: Workers pack sticky bean buns on the production line of Shuangsheng Ecological Agricultural Products in Qinglong Manchu autonomous county, Hebei province. ZHANG MINGYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY A variety of grains is growing at a plantation in Qinglong. MENG XIANFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Qinglong grain growers gain growing customers

County's sticky bean buns prove popular at home and abroad

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang  
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*Niandoubao*, or sticky bean buns, have been one of the favorite foods for residents in Qinglong Manchu autonomous county, Hebei province, since they were introduced during the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Locals use glutinous rice to make dough, then wrap red beans or other fillings inside. After being steamed, it becomes a delicious snack.

Relying on customs and local natural advantages, this simple folk food has spread from the local dining tables to countless households

nationwide and overseas.

Located at the foot of North China's Yanshan Mountains, the county is a typical place for mountainous agriculture with abundant sunlight, large temperature differences between night and day and soil that's rich in minerals, making it a prime location for high-quality crops such as millet, sorghum and buckwheat, according to Jia Guozhong, head of the county's bureau of agriculture and rural affairs.

Historical records show that the millet produced in Qinglong was once presented in tribute to the imperial court during the Qing Dynasty and became known as "tribute millet".

"The various grains in Qinglong are of superior quality, benefiting from a combination of natural endowments and local people's hard work," Jia said, adding that the planting area for grain in the county has reached 8,000 hectares.

He said that the soil in these areas is neutral and sandy with a high organic matter content, which is beneficial for the growth of grain and the accumulation of nutrients.

Thanks to the natural advantages, Qinglong boasts a long history of growing grain, with a well-established agricultural development model.

Farmers in the county are skilled in the cultivation of grains, and also enjoy using it to make delicious food. Among them, two locals — Zhang Shengli and Zhang Quanli in the county's Longwangmiao town — spotted a business opportunity in 2013. They founded Shuangsheng Ecological Agricultural Products, dedicated to the production of the traditional Manchu delicacy.

The company has produced a variety of foods, including the sticky bean buns, as well as chestnut buns, and date and chestnut steamed buns. Their success has come with the help

of strong support from local policies. Currently, the company produces 72 product lines, with an annual production of over 5,000 metric tons, according to Zhang Minghui, the company's deputy general manager.

As more people choose to eat healthy food with no additives, the company's production has gradually expanded.

Its products are sold in many places across the country, including the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and provinces in Northeast and Southwest China, according to Zhang.

"We have established nearly 40 branches nationwide and exported our products to 19 countries and regions, including the United Kingdom, the United States, South Korea and Canada," Zhang said.

Qinglong has more than 30 manufacturers producing healthy grain foods. The county yields about 22,000 tons of grain annually, engaging over 80 professional cooperatives and family farms.

"I know that buns or noodles with local characteristics can help foster a major industry. With so many high-quality agricultural products of our own, we cannot always be content with the role of raw material suppliers," said Li Yaobin, the county's Party secretary.

Zhang Bao contributed to this story.

## Miniseries brings story of Long March to young viewers

By CHINA DAILY

A time-warping miniseries shot into public view on social media over the recent National Day holiday — a tale depicting modern youth contributing to the remarkable Long March of 1934-36.

The army of the Communist Party of China left its base in southeastern China to evade its foe, winding its way 12,500 kilometers to the north. The epic journey took two years but ultimately meant the army's survival and victory for the Chinese nation.

Now it has captured the hearts of the Chinese youth who wish they had been part of it. The miniseries — *I Opened a Supermarket on the Long March* — went viral on social media during the National Day holiday, capturing imaginations and rekindling the patriotic spirit.

The five-episode series tells the time-traveling story of Su Meimei, who finds herself magically back in the Long March era with her supermarket. She uses a game-like "system" to complete tasks and earn rewards, providing food and supplies to Red Army soldiers who are facing severe shortages.

Going back in time, combined with the historical theme of forming a nation, have resonated with a young-

eraudience, many of whom fantasize about returning to revolutionary times to make a difference.

Zhang Yihan, a 22-year-old viewer, commented on social media: "If only the Red Army had such a supermarket back then. We all wish we could have contributed something to those who fought for the revolution."

Related topics have been trending on Chinese social media, drawing tens of millions of views, such as "If I had a ton of penicillin during World War II, how could I support the revolution?" The drama brings such fantasies to life, exploring what one might do if it were possible to return to the era of the Long March.

The drama found immediate success, reaching 10 million views within seven hours of its release. In 24 hours, the total view count had doubled to 20 million across multiple platforms.

Unlike previous Long March-themed works, which often rely on grand storytelling, *I Opened a Supermarket on the Long March* focuses on personal stories and relatable characters.

The series features three stories set in the magical supermarket, each inspired by real historical figures and events.

Zhang was particularly moved by

the moment when the soldiers left the safety of the supermarket to march through the snow. "The detailed and realistic plot resonated deeply with me," he said.

Yi Mingrui, a university student in Beijing, was struck by one character, a cook.

Despite the cook following a strict revolutionary rule — "Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the people" — Yi shared the cook's love of noodles and ham sausages.

"I felt a strong sense of connection," he said. "Although the drama has its flaws, its vivid expressions of patriotism are truly moving. I hope to see more works featuring such real, vibrant characters."

Developed by Beijing Shiyue Media, the series is interwoven with elements of supermarket management, and what it manages to deliver to its audience is a fresh and captivating narrative.

The series has already surpassed 100 million views and created 500 million discussion posts, news outlet ThePaper.cn reported.

The story's protagonist, Su Meimei, a modern university graduate, offers a rich tale from her unique perspective. The storyline not only highlights the courage and challenges of the soldiers but also makes history

vivid and relatable through a contemporary lens.

In discussions about the target for the series, executive producer Ling Ling emphasized the desire to resonate with a diverse young audience.

Rather than creating a sense of detachment, the series — through meticulous character portrayals — breathes life into actual historical figures. Each character transcends being a mere symbol of bravery and sacrifice to become a whole, vibrant person laden with emotions and a sense of duty.

As each of the 5-episode miniseries airs, increasing numbers of viewers have engaged in robust discussions to make their points and express their emotions — many on Douyin, Chinese version of TikTok. One college student said: "I feel like crying. It would be wonderful if those Long March soldiers could witness present-day China."

Middle-aged viewers contributed their perspectives as well, emphasizing the educational value of the series. One remarked: "It should be mandatory viewing in every school for our children. I want my kids to watch it."

Liu Boqian and Zhang Wei contributed to this story.

## Smart irrigation fuels bumper cotton yields

URUMQI — Although close to the desert, a cotton field on the outskirts of Shihezi city in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region has become a high-yield field full of vitality thanks to an advanced intelligent agricultural system.

The system, featuring integrated irrigation of water and liquid fertilizer, is one of the major factors in Xinjiang becoming China's main cotton-producing base and a leader in modern agricultural development.

The system adds more than 1,500 kilograms per hectare in yield to the cotton field, which covers more than 20 hectares.

"The system forms a network by collecting data such as moisture and humidity, and agricultural decisions are all determined based on the data," said Xie Xingguang, director of agriculture department in Shihezi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

The system's most important function is to realize smart water-saving drip irrigation in Xinjiang, reducing irrigation water volume to 5,250 cubic meters per hectare. In the 1950s, it was 10,500 cu m per hectare.

The irrigation network can reach the roots of every plant through shallow-buried pipelines and effectively channel water and fertilizer into them, said Ma Zhandong, an agricultural engineer at Xinjiang-based Tianye Group, a State-owned enterprise affiliated to Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

Since its establishment in 1996, Tianye has developed into a large-scale enterprise involving the chemical industry, modern agriculture, mining and other fields. Its water-saving drip irrigation products are sold at home and abroad.

Water resources are among the most critical factors restricting agricultural development in Xinjiang. Thanks to the transformation from "watering the land" to "irrigating the crops", irrigation efficiency has greatly improved and crop planting areas have grown.

Last year, Xinjiang's cotton output reached 5.11 million metric tons, accounting for over 90 percent of the country's total. Its grain output exceeded 20 million tons, increasing by over 3 million tons, accounting for more than 30 percent of the country's total.

In the meantime, some enterprises have focused on developing high-level agricultural machinery suitable for Xinjiang's geographical environment and agricultural needs, which is also

The system forms a network by collecting data such as moisture and humidity, and agricultural decisions are all determined based on the data.

Xie Xingguang, director of agriculture department in Shihezi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region

a key factor in the development of modern agriculture in a vast and sparsely populated region like Xinjiang.

Based on the production features of cotton and other crops, Xinjiang urgently needs to develop agricultural machines that can realize precision sowing and picking.

Chen Xuegeng, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and leader of a mulching machine development team under Shihezi University, developed a series of machines in 2003 that integrate mulching and cotton sowing in Xinjiang. The efficiency of such a machine is equivalent to the work of 300 people.

The continuous efforts of local enterprises, multifunctional tractors, modernized irrigation systems and unmanned seeders equipped with Beidou navigation systems have turned more deserts into farmland in Xinjiang while freeing more people from hard farm work.

Last year, nearly 7,000 cotton pickers were used in mechanized harvesting in Xinjiang, and the mechanization rate increased to over 85 percent from 35 percent in 2014.

More than a dozen agriculture-related listed companies have been fostered in Xinjiang, covering agricultural machinery and equipment manufacturing, animal husbandry, deep processing of agricultural products and other fields.

Modern farms have mushroomed in northwestern China's vast deserts in Xinjiang, making it an advanced region for developing large-scale, intensive, mechanized and intelligent modern agriculture.

XINHUA



A cotton picker harvests a field in Shihezi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Sept 24. CAI ZENGLE / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Tourists savor 'wine town' during National Day holiday

YINCHUAN — Nestled at the eastern foothill of the Helan Mountains in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Dulaan Holiday Wine Stroll is bustling with tourists during the just-concluded seven-day National Day holiday.

There is much to keep wine buffs busy, from meandering through vineyards or exploring the well-stocked cellars, to — of course — savoring a glass, or two, of the local wine. For the adventurous, cycling through the mountains offers encounters with blue sheep or red deer. Overnight guests can also stargaze under astronomers' guidance, adding a touch of education to their leisure.

"I was pleasantly surprised by this quaint 'wine town'! It's incredibly relaxing," exclaimed Lu Di, a resident of Yinchuan, the regional capital. Here, she indulged in wine tasting



Visitors enjoy the scenery at Dulaan Holiday Wine Stroll in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region on Oct 4. MAO ZHU / XINHUA

and afternoon tea with her husband, bathed in the golden hour light of the Helan Mountains, enjoyed a bike ride with her son, and even found

time to feed some alpacas.

The eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains, with its dry climate and abundant sunshine, has

been called a "golden zone" for grape cultivation and premium wine production. A collection of vineyards and wineries has created a "wine corridor" in the foothills, which are also home to several renowned scenic spots.

Leveraging these advantages, Dulaan Holiday Wine Stroll was established in December last year, with its affiliated hotel welcoming visitors starting this June. Combining grape cultivation, winemaking, culture, arts and sightseeing, it has attracted over 50,000 tourists in just four months.

Yang Ziyun, an employee at the affiliated hotel, said that they had curated a variety of activities to enhance the National Day holiday experience, including painting, bamboo weaving, wine therapy and mountainside night concerts.

Ningxia produced its first bottle

of wine in 1984. Today it is one of China's major wine-producing regions and is gaining prominence on the global stage.

In recent years, culture-themed towns have flourished in China, offering a novel experience for tourists. Each is rooted in the unique local culture, offering a quick, yet profound, understanding of their own region.

Ten kilometers away, Seeing Helan Performance Town is also abuzz, especially at night. As its name suggests, it features performances that celebrate the culture of the Helan Mountains and Ningxia. The town is awash with the festive glow of red lanterns under the eaves of traditional buildings, creating a warm, welcoming ambience.

Street performers dressed as historical, mythical or legendary figures from Ningxia, roam the town or star in awe-inspiring shows, and are a highlight for many, particularly the younger generation.

During the just-concluded holiday, the town not only hosted dances but also invited tourists to sing songs, dance and enjoy barbecues. "Tourists from across the country can immerse themselves in the festive atmosphere, local Ningxia culture and the charm of night tours," said Pan Chunhui, marketing director of Seeing Helan Performance Town.

Pan added that the town received more than 80,000 visitors during the first six days of the holiday.

Daily bookings for inbound travel on Trip.com Group, a leading Chinese online travel agency, reached a record during the holiday, the company said on Monday.

A significant number of young people are developing a keen interest in tourism at the county level, leading to a 40 percent year-on-year increase in daily bookings for county tourism, said the report.

XINHUA

## ACROSS ASIA

## Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.

**E**nergy transitions are unfolding everywhere but the stakes for Indonesia's shift are particularly important as it is the world's fourth-most populous country, sixth-biggest emitter of CO2 and top exporter of coal.

Coal accounts for more than 62 percent of Indonesia's power generation, while renewable energy makes up 14 percent. Wind and solar power comprise around 0.2 percent of that mix, far from the global average of 10 percent. The rest of Indonesia's renewable energy comes from hydropower, biofuels and waste-to-energy.

The Indonesian government has reiterated that it will pursue the energy transition at its own pace and in ways that match the country's economic goals and fiscal ability, stressing that the strategies of developed economies will not work for developing countries.

Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan said that the economies of developing countries must still grow, while they pursued emissions reduction.

"We need to avoid being dogmatic about one technology in carbon emissions reduction," Luhut said during the Indonesia International Sustainability Forum, or IISF, in Jakarta in September.

Luhut said that Indonesia would involve the development of the green economy as part of its push toward energy transition.

He cited cooperation with Singapore in developing a solar panel manufacturing industry in exchange for exporting low-emission electricity to the city-state.

Singapore has approved the import of 3.4 gigawatts of electricity from Indonesia.

Luhut also boasted of the country's push into electric vehicle manufacturing and EV adoption among Indonesians.

Moreover, he is eyeing boosting the country's biofuel production, particularly from existing sources of crude palm oil and later exploring the use of seaweed, which it has in abundance.

The Indonesian Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry's new renewable energy and energy conservation director-general, Eniya Listiani Dewi, said that Indonesia would require \$55 billion in investment to push its energy transition for the next five years. She said that next year the country would



**Above:** A man walks on a pier on Karampuang Island, where electricity supply relies on solar power plants, in West Sulawesi, Indonesia, on Dec 22, 2022. DITA ALANGKARA / AP **Right:** Workers carry out maintenance work on solar panels that provide partial electrical power to Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta on March 29, 2023. TATAN SYUFLANA / AP

already need its first \$14 billion.

She added that establishing a stable grid to effectively manage large shares of intermittent renewable energy sources like solar and wind power remained one of the major challenges to the energy transition in the country.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said during his remarks on Sept 5 that Indonesia had over 3,600 GW of renewable energy potential and 3.3 million hectares of mangroves that could absorb up to 12 times the amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by tropical rainforests.

He said none of this would yield much if developed countries "don't

have the courage to make investments, share their technology and provide affordable financing for developing countries".

Putra Adhiguna, managing director at the Energy Shift Institute, said that the government should focus on expanding renewable energy capacity and improving inter-island interconnections because electricity demand in Indonesia will continue to increase.

During the IISF, Indonesian state-owned electricity group Perusahaan Listrik Negara through two of its subsidiaries and Saudi utility developer ACWA Power signed a hydrogen purchase agreement with state-

owned fertilizer company Pupuk Indonesia.

Last year, the companies signed an agreement to develop the largest green hydrogen facility of its kind, powered by 600 megawatts of solar and wind power, which is expected to start commercial operations in 2026. The project will enable 150,000 metric tons of green ammonia production annually.

Institute for Essential Services Reform Executive Director Fabby Tumiwa, however, cautioned that despite the many hydrogen developments in Indonesia, the government is planning for most of it to be exported.

He said that the country has yet to see an upward trend of hydrogen use domestically.

State-owned oil and gas company Pertamina also signed an agreement to jointly study the potential development of carbon capture and storage with partners, including Pupuk Indonesia and South Korean steel giant POSCO, at the IISF in September.

Rachmat Kaimuddin, undersecretary for transportation and infrastructure at the Office of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime and Investment Affairs, reiterated during the IISF the country's commitment to

fighting pollution in its cities, especially Jakarta.

Rachmat said the government hoped it could soon introduce "much cleaner" gasoline in the first quarter next year and biodiesel before the end of this year.

He acknowledged that Indonesia had been lagging behind on determining emissions standards for its coal plants but he gave an assurance that the government was working to improve its capability in this area.

THE JAKARTA POST, INDONESIA

## Bangladesh plastic bag ban fuels mixed reactions



Workers dry plastic bags for recycling in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, on Sept 8. MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / AFP

Bangladesh is banning polythene and polypropylene bags across all major stores starting Oct 1 but the major green move is fueling mixed reactions.

The initiative encourages using greener jute and cloth bags to promote sustainable practices, with public awareness efforts and alternative bag supplies viewed as key to the transition.

A salesman at the store said: "This isn't new for us; we have avoided polybags for a while. But with the government's renewed directive, we have reminded customers and encouraged them to bring bags from home."

He pointed to jute bags for sale as an alternative, adding, "We offer these at a minimal cost, but customers aren't happy with the price so far." Across the supermarkets visited, alternative bags made from jute or paper were priced between \$0.05 to \$0.25. Some shoppers were not happy about it as polythene bags were previously free.

Shopper Md Salah Uddin said: "Banning polythene is positive, but what are the practical alternatives? It would be better if these were free."

Another shopper expressed concerns about carrying perishable items, asking, "How will we carry fish and meat in paper or jute bags? We used to get polythene for this, but what's the alternative now?"

At a store of the Agora retail chain in the Shewrapara area of Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, a loudspeaker informed shoppers of the plastic bag ban and urged them to bring eco-friendly bags.

Store branch manager Saurav said: "We have to use this amount of plastic to keep food fresh. Currently, there's no alternative."

Hasan Ali, a senior salesman at Meena Bazar, said, "Many customers praised the decision, but some got into arguments with our staff because we couldn't provide bags for free."

On Sept 24, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change of Bangladesh, launched a "Clean-Up" campaign at the Mohammadpur town hall market area to implement the ban.

She said supermarkets would be the first focus of the ban, starting from Oct 1, and from Nov 1, fresh food markets would follow.

Raids on polythene-producing factories and legal measures are planned as part of the crackdown.

Rizwana also visited several supermarkets in Dhanmondi to monitor compliance with the new policy.

THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH

## South Korean AI textbook 'bubble' could burst

South Korea is set to introduce artificial intelligence-powered textbooks into its schools starting in March next year in a move toward digital education, with some people saying it is a true "education transformation" and others seeing it simply as a new tool.

The initiative will begin with third and fourth graders in elementary schools and first-year students in middle and high schools.

Neil Selwyn, a professor at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, and a researcher on the intersection of digital technology and education, warned that the excitement around AI textbooks might be a part of a larger "hype bubble" that could eventually burst.

It could leave behind unsolved challenges, he said in a recent interview with The Korea Herald in Seoul.

South Korea's latest digital project is ambitious. It involves a \$70 million investment in digital infrastructure and AI textbooks, in part with an initiative dubbed the "classroom revolution", which in whole was allocated over \$276 million in the budget for school digitalization.

The government's goals are clear: to create a more personalized learning experience, collect data to improve educational outcomes and establish South Korea as a global leader in AI education.

While South Korea's vision is ambitious, Selwyn questioned whether it marks a true revolution or just updates the tools for traditional learning.

"We're at the top of the hype cycle," he said. He suggested that schools are unlikely to be transformed by AI.

"Students will still come into a school, sit behind a desk, and have a 50-minute lesson about maths or English. The only difference is they'll be sat in front of a computer

... It's surface-level digitization."

Selwyn said what schools need is a better environment, not a revolution. "There's nothing wrong with keeping schools as they are," he said. "They just need to be better places, more inclusive, and less stressful for both students and teachers. If technology can help achieve that, then it's doing its job."

The AI boom brings realistic challenges, he emphasized. Ensuring sufficient equipment and stable networks in schools is one aspect, but the inequality AI can perpetuate in education is another.

If not designed carefully, AI may worsen existing inequalities as technologies often reflect societal divisions. For instance, AI systems trained on biased historical data may favor privileged students, such as those from elite groups, while disadvantaging marginalized students.

Selwyn noted that AI tools for grading or admissions can carry biases, leading to discriminatory outcomes. He cited findings showing that AI systems detecting cheating are twice as likely to wrongly accuse black students compared to white students in the United States.

The current excitement around AI in education could be just another tech bubble, similar to past trends like the metaverse or massive open online courses, which failed to live up to their transformative promises, he said.

### Persuasion needed

Hurdles remain for the government to persuade parents as well. In a petition posted on the South Korean National Assembly's online platform in May, one request asked for the AI digital textbook implementation plan to be shelved, citing numerous negative effects of smart devices and calling for more research to ensure the change benefits students

not just academically but in terms of their overall development.

The petition was formally submitted to the assembly's education committee on June 26 after garnering public support from 56,505 people within a month.

Teachers have also voiced concerns as they have yet to see the actual digital textbooks that are to be put into practice within just six months.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Seoul Teachers' Union of 1,794 teachers who attended the AI textbook training session, 94 percent of respondents disagreed on the need to introduce AI textbooks.

A bill has been proposed for the AI digital textbooks to be utilized as "educational materials" rather than "textbooks". While textbooks are mandatory for schools to use, schools can decide at their discretion whether or not to utilize educational materials.

Representative Ko Min-jung introduced a bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to upgrade the definition and scope of textbooks from a presidential decree to a law, and to define "learning support software using intelligent information technology (AI digital textbooks)" as "educational materials" that can be used by school principals after deliberation by the school management committee, rather than as textbooks.

"AI textbooks that have not been tested for effectiveness should not be used in schools immediately," said Ko, emphasizing that the amendment should be passed in the current session of the National Assembly as a minimum safeguard to prevent the chaos and aftermath of introducing AI textbooks.

THE KOREA HERALD, SOUTH KOREA

# BUSINESS

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## Nation's housing market sizzles on policy measures

By WANG YING in Shanghai  
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Optimization measures rolled out by China's central government as well as major cities, along with large-scale promotional activities by real estate developers, have led to a better-than-expected housing market performance during the weeklong National Day holiday, industry experts said on Wednesday.

To seize market opportunities brought on by favorable policies, property developers are looking to strengthen their competitiveness by enhancing quality and branding instead of resorting to price wars, experts said.

Despite a conventional low season for home transactions, the just-concluded National Day holiday saw greater transaction volumes for new homes in several Chinese cities, according to Chen Wenjing, director of research at the China Index Academy.

"The conditions are more evident in first-tier cities. In Guangzhou and Shenzhen of South China's Guangdong province, new home transaction volumes of projects monitored by China Index Academy are double that from the whole of September, and the number of deals inked during the same period surpassed that of September in Beijing and Shanghai," Chen said.

"It is worth noting that similar hot sales took place in second-tier cities including Chengdu of Sichuan province and Hangzhou of Zhejiang province," she said, attributing it to the bigger discounts that helped activate the real estate market.

During the first seven days of October, new home transactions in the key 22 cities tracked by China Real Estate Information Corp soared 26 percent in terms of space year-on-year, and that of Beijing, Shenzhen and Guangzhou surged 42 percent, according to

"The positive figures indicated that the home market confidence is steadily recovering."

Ding Zuyu,  
CEO of E-House (China)  
Enterprise Holdings Ltd

Ding Zuyu, CEO of E-House (China) Enterprise Holdings Ltd.

Along with the improved new home trade volumes, major real estate developers also reported outstanding sales. Some of the top 20 developers saw their sales grow between 60 percent and 150 percent, Ding said.

"The positive figures indicated that the home market confidence is steadily recovering," said Ding.

Policies announced by the central and local governments to stabilize the home market have played a great role in boosting market confidence. Meanwhile, significant promotions by real estate developers have also contributed to the market performance, said Li Yujia, a researcher on residential policy in Guangdong province.

According to Li, several residential projects resorted to offering gold, new energy vehicles and huge discounts to homebuyers, but regardless of the appealing gifts or discounts, the bestselling projects are always the ones with reasonable prices and high quality under big-name developers.

With the home market entering its conventional peak season, some developers are adjusting their pricing strategy, which is also in line with the central government's call for market stabilization, according to local news portal ThePaper.cn.



A view of a property project under construction in Fuzhou, Fujian province. ZHANG BIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

### Briefly

#### China Post tops global postal operators

China Post ranked first among global postal operators by both revenue and profits in the 2024 Fortune Global 500 list, according to company sources on Wednesday. China Post has established an extensive delivery network, operating 120,000 delivery trucks and 42 cargo aircraft. The State-owned postal service provider maintained stable operation in the first eight months of this year, with revenue of 472.17 billion yuan (\$66.9 billion) and profits of 70.48 billion yuan.

#### Central bank conducts reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 61 billion yuan (\$8.64 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.5 percent on Wednesday. The move aims to keep liquidity in the banking system reasonable and ample, the People's Bank of

China said. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

#### Renminbi strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 141 pips to 7.0568 against the US dollar on Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY



China-made products on display during a recent expo in Los Angeles. ZENG HUI / XINHUA

## China calls on US to lift sanctions

Stable biz ties would contribute to security of industrial supply chains

By ZHONG NAN  
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Stable China-United States business ties would contribute to the security and stability of global industrial supply chains, fostering a favorable policy environment for collaboration between companies from both sides, said market watchers and business executives on Wednesday.

China's Ministry of Commerce said on Tuesday that China has called on the US to promptly lift sanctions on Chinese companies and enhance the business environment for its firms operating in the US.

During a phone call with US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo on the same day, China's Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao expressed serious concerns over US policies on semiconductors, targeting China, and restrictions on Chinese intelligent connected vehicles.

It is necessary to clarify national security boundaries in the economic and trade fields, as it is conducive to maintaining the security and stability of global industrial supply chains and creating a favorable policy environment for cooperation between the business communities from the two countries, Wang stressed.

This conversation was part of the institutional communication arrangement between the commerce authorities of both countries, said the Ministry of Commerce.

As many global industries, such as electronics, automotive and pharmaceuticals, rely on components and materials sourced from both China and the US, a stable relationship can minimize disruptions and prevent production delays and supply shortages in many business areas, said Wang Zhongmei, a researcher at the Institute of World Economy of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

Zhang Yongjun, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, warned that given various factors such as the upcoming US election in early November, it is critical to view Sino-US economic and trade relations with caution.

In the short term, there will be challenges, but in the long run, the trend of mutually beneficial cooperation between China and the US remains unchangeable, said Zhang.

"For US companies, China is an indispensable market," he added. "If trade tensions escalate, these companies may once again urge the US government to adopt a more proactive and balanced economic and trade policy. Business needs can, to a certain extent, influence government actions."

According to the 2024 Kearney FDI (foreign direct investment) Confidence Index, reflecting investors' expectations for FDI over the next three years, China's global ranking has risen from seventh to third place.

"Multinational companies ini-

tially looked at China as a supplier and then as a huge market. But now, increasingly, we are looking at China as an innovation center," said Andrew Wu, general manager of the China branch of US-based commercial data and analytics firm Dun & Bradstreet.

Also viewing China as crucial to its global business strategy, Willie Tan, CEO of Skechers China, South Korea and Southeast Asia, said that despite external challenges, China remains a crucial market for global brands. Its vast consumer base, strategic importance in global supply chains and ongoing commitment to reform and innovation create significant opportunities.

With over 3,500 stores in China, the US footwear brand plans to continue market expansion in the coming years.

Mark Jaffe, CEO of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce, said that no one wants to halt cooperation and exchange between the two countries. China and the US have already established long-term partnerships in fields such as artificial intelligence and pharmaceuticals.

In the face of increasingly intense global competition, Jaffe said it will be necessary for the two sides to further expand and deepen trade relations in the future.

In the first eight months of 2024, the US remained China's third-largest trading partner, with the total trade value between the two countries reaching 3.15 trillion yuan (\$446.21 billion), up 4.4 percent year-on-year and accounting for 11 percent of China's total foreign trade value, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

## Tableware maker charts new growth path

By HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou and  
ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou

After more than 30 years of growth in East China's Fujian province, Lin Chi-te, chairman of Zhengshi Tableware Co Ltd, wants to build his company into a century-old enterprise and pass it down to future generations.

Lin, 56, said his family and friends are very optimistic about the vast mainland market that has a population of more than 1.4 billion.

"In my opinion, there is probably no better investment environment in the world than here on the mainland," he said in an interview with China Daily. "The potential for the knives market on the mainland is enormous."

Chinese mainland has set no threshold for investors from outside, and there also is no preferential treatment for investors from outside the mainland, Lin said.

Lin, together with his wife and children, followed his father Lin Kuo-chung in settling down in Zhangzhou's Changtai district, Fujian, in 1993. He has been working and living in Fujian for more than three decades ever since his father established the company in Changtai that year.

"At the time, the country had introduced many preferential policies to attract offshore investment and the local investment climate was very attractive and had broad development prospects, although the area surrounding the company was covered with dirt tracks, and chickens and ducks were seen running around, creating a very primitive picture," Lin recalled.

After decades of development, Lin's company, which has more than 200 employees, grew from a small workshop into a modern enterprise with sufficient production capacity and scale.

The company now has industrial land area of more than 20,000 square meters as well as a standard factory and office building space of more than 15,000 sq m.

About 55 percent of its products are sold on the mainland and about 40 percent in Taiwan province, while the rest are exported to Japan, the United States, Europe and Southeast Asia, according to Lin.

Last year, a Taiwanese investor friend in the mainland asked Lin for help in repairing a cutting tool, he said.

"The handle of the knife had been broken, but he was still using it. He asked me to help weld and sharpen it," Lin said.

"When I saw it, it turned out to be a knife we had produced in Taiwan province 40 years ago. This also strengthened our determination and confidence to become a century-old enterprise," he said.

For decades, Lin said his company had persisted in using unique manufacturing processes. Special kitchen knives that professional chefs use are usually produced with special, manual forging techniques that are favored by a large number of consumers worldwide, he said.

Lin, who learned the nuances of the business and management from his father, witnessed the company's first kitchen knife being produced. After graduating from university, he inherited the business and engaged in the production of stainless steel cutting tools and tableware.

Lin said he will further promote and develop the company despite fierce competition.

To this end, the company has imported automatic and semi-automatic production equipment from Taiwan and Japan to ensure quality and expand production.

Lin was elected president of the association of Taiwan investment enterprises in Changtai district in September 2022.

The association helps investors from the island province understand the mainland's policy guidelines, changes in its economic policies and grasp future development trends, he said.

Yang Jie contributed to this story.

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## Shenzhen reports strong home sales

By CHAI HUA in Shenzhen,  
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Encouraged by policy stimulations, the real estate market in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, showed positive signals during the weeklong National Day holiday.

From Oct 1 to 7, a total of 1,841 new homes in the city were subscribed, marking a six-fold increase compared to the same period last year, a local newspaper reported citing data from the housing and construction bureau of Shenzhen.

Daily inquiries and transactions of pre-owned homes by leading real estate agencies also soared. For instance, the real estate agency Centaline Property received millions of daily visits to its websites and more than 5,000 inquiries on average during the seven days, with transaction volume of new and pre-owned homes surging more than 10 times and 270 percent, respectively, year-on-year.

Leyoujia, another realty agency, said its transaction volume of new

houses rocketed by 10 times as well from Sept 30 to Oct 6. On Oct 6 alone, it sold more than 600 houses, which has been "rare" during the past three years.

"During the National Day holiday, I didn't take a day off because I've been busy showing properties to clients every day. I'm almost catching up to the total sales record I had made in the entire previous quarter," said a real estate agent surnamed Chen.

The real estate boom has been empowered by the relaxation of key policies that came into effect in Shenzhen on Oct 1. Purchase curbs in some districts were removed, allowing non-local homebuyers to enter the market, and the down payment ratio was also reduced.

Research by Leyoujia indicates that non-local customers accounted for about 20 percent of some projects in Bao'an and Longhua districts, where a Shenzhen household registration, or hukou, is no longer required to buy a house. In the boomtown, about 70 percent of

its residents don't have a local hukou.

Moreover, potential buyers outside the city were also keen to jump on the bandwagon. Xiao Xiaoping, director of Beike Research Institute, a property information and analysis platform, said the number of inquiries from non-locals has rapidly increased. "Some are interested in investing in a property here, while others are looking to purchase a property for their children's future development in Shenzhen," Xiao said.

Midland Realty states its transaction volume of new homes surged tenfold year-on-year during the "Golden Week", and that of second-hand homes increased sixfold, both reaching a new high since 2019. Additionally, it also welcomed groups of clients from Hong Kong for property viewings in Shenzhen.

Jiang Xianliang, general manager of Midland Realty Property in Shenzhen, expected the market to further accelerate its return to normalcy, under the stimulation of a series of national policies.

## WORLD

# Chinese modernization offers lessons for Africa

Industrialization, poverty reduction efforts can inspire continent: Experts

By EDITH MUTETHYA  
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As China commits itself to basically realizing socialist modernization by 2035 as resolved during the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, African experts are of the view that modernization of the Asian powerhouse is important for Africa.

Carlos Lopes, an honorary professor at the University of Cape Town's Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, said Chinese modernization represents a blueprint that can inspire Africa in its own development trajectory.

He said China's remarkable rise, especially in industrialization, infrastructure development and poverty reduction, offers valuable lessons for African countries that have long been marginalized in global value chains, often confined to the colonial model of commodities exporter.

Chinese modernization illustrates the importance of long-term strategic planning and an emphasis on infrastructure as a foundation for economic growth, he said.

China's development is different from the traditional Western development paradigm, he said, offering Africa "an alternative model that emphasizes autonomy and partnership on more equitable terms".

To benefit fully from the Chinese

modernization agenda, Lopes said African countries need to be strategic in their engagement with China.

He said they must focus on aligning national development plans with key sectors where China excels, such as infrastructure, manufacturing, and technology transfer.

"Clear regulatory frameworks, stronger institutions and consistent policies will be key in managing these complex relationships, ensuring Africa's industrialization ambitions align with China's modernization agenda," he said.

He said one of the key lessons the continent can learn from China on modernization is the importance of a development-oriented government.

## 'Not accidental'

China's success, he said, was not accidental; it involved well-coordinated industrial policies, long-term planning, and the creation of special economic zones to attract foreign investment.

Lopes said Africa can replicate this by focusing on strategic sectors and ensuring alignment between government policies, private sector initiatives and regional integration efforts.

"Africa should embrace China's approach to leverage global value chains while gradually upgrading its industrial capabilities," he said.

"The need for sequencing policies, as noted in African development discussions, is another critical takeaway: moving from raw materi-

al production to more value-added manufacturing over time."

Cavince Adhere, a Kenyan expert on international relations, said Chinese modernization is important for Africa because a stronger Chinese economy would mean Africa has a stronger partner who would support its development programs, including Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

As China looks to modernize fully, he said its partnership with Africa could deliver value for the continent as well, especially in the areas that China is currently targeting, such as high-end innovation-led industries using technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, robotics and space sciences.

He said China has also been a strong learning point for African countries in managing their economy and championing socioeconomic transformation such as poverty alleviation.

Another key lesson is on how China views its national development priorities, allocates resources and then puts in place a strong framework for monitoring and evaluation to ensure the programs are implemented.

Justus Thuthi Wanjiru, director of the Corporate Center at the Africa Policy Institute, said China is open to sharing its modernization concept with Africa, which is a great opportunity for the continent.

"China emphasizes development with your own possibilities. Don't borrow that which cannot fit in your own society. African countries should also study what fits and works for them," he said.

## Fruitful harvest



Farmworkers harvest cranberries at the Weston Cranberry Corporation Farm in Carver, Massachusetts, the United States, on Tuesday. Cranberries reach their peak of color and flavor from mid-September until mid-November in North America and are ready for harvesting. JOSEPH PREZIOSO / AFP

## China still largest source of Thai tourism

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok  
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China has been the top source of foreign tourists to Thailand during the Golden Week holiday thanks to the multiple stimulating measures, as the numbers have risen sharply, bringing an estimated revenue of nearly 5 billion baht (\$149 million), the Thai tourism authority has revealed.

More than 160,000 travelers from China chose Thailand as their holiday destination during the National Day Golden Week, a nearly 34 percent increase compared with the previous week, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, or TAT, said.

After China, Malaysia, India, South Korea and Laos have been top sources for the kingdom's inbound tourism between Sept 30 and Oct 6, Thai Minister of Tourism and Sports Sorawong Thienthong said on Tuesday.

"The recovery of inbound tourism in Thailand can be attributed to multiple stimulating measures, such as preferential visa policy, improved logistics and also increase in the international flights," he said.

"We welcome more Chinese tourists and also worldwide tourists to visit Thailand," TAT governor Thapanee Kiatphabool said.

During the National Day Golden Week, the number of direct flights — a total of 1,097 from China to Thailand — has improved by 70 percent compared with the same period last year, according to TAT.

Meanwhile, the number of flight bookings from China to Thailand during the holiday period has increased 250 percent year-on-year, according to travel



Chinese tourists visit the Grand Palace in Bangkok on Oct 3. XINHUA

data firm ForwardKeys.

Of the 43 Chinese cities offering direct flights to the kingdom, Shanghai ranks top in terms of numbers, followed by Guangzhou, Chengdu, Kunming and Beijing.

"We will keep encouraging airlines to increase flights between China and Thailand, providing more convenience to travelers from different regions of China to visit Thailand. This will also help to bring more Thai tourists to China at the same time," said Thapanee.

## Visa policy boost

Since the implementation of the mutual visa exemption policy between China and Thailand from March 1, people-to-people exchanges have been boosted over the past months. As of Sept 22, more than 5.1 million Chinese tourists had visited Thailand this year.

As the Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports is revising its 2025 plan to improve the competitiveness of

its tourism industry, experts are calling for more proactive measures to stimulate tourism in the long term, given that unexpected events such as the recent flood may impact the industry.

"The government should make flexible plans to tackle these changes and work closely with the private sector and companies for sharing ideas. A mechanism should be established for a regular gathering of decision-makers and representatives from the industry, revising plans to prevent loss of markets," said Chamnan Srisawat, president of the Tourism Council of Thailand.

He also said that Thailand should be able to attract more high-spending tourists, focusing on wellness and medical tourism. The government should also ensure access to funding for small tourist operators as this group has been slow in recovering compared with the bigger players.

## 'Catastrophic' hurricane heads to Florida

WASHINGTON — Hurricane Milton tore toward the Gulf Coast on Wednesday, leaving residents with one final day to evacuate or hunker down before the "catastrophic" storm is predicted to hit, triggering a life-threatening storm surge.

With more than 1 million people in coastal areas under evacuation orders, those fleeing to higher ground clogged highways on Tuesday, and gas stations ran out of fuel in a region still recovering from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Helene less than two weeks ago.

The storm was on a collision course for the Tampa Bay metropolitan area, home to more than 3 million people, though forecasters said the path could vary before the storm makes landfall late Wednesday night or early Thursday.

The US National Hurricane Center,

or NHC, described Milton as a "catastrophic" and "dangerous" major hurricane, packing maximum sustained winds of 260 kilometers per hour, putting it at the highest level on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale.

The storm is on a rare west-to-east path through the Gulf of Mexico and is likely to bring a deadly storm surge of 3 meters or more of flooding to much of Florida's Gulf Coast.

While wind speeds dropped early on Wednesday and downgraded Milton to Category 4, the size of the storm was growing, putting ever more coastal areas in danger.

In its advisory on Wednesday, the NHC said Milton was expected to turn to the east-northeast on Thursday and Friday. It was expected to maintain hurricane strength as it crosses the Florida peninsula, posing storm surge danger on the

state's Atlantic Coast as well.

US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he is postponing a planned trip to Germany and Angola to stay at the White House to monitor Milton, which he warned "could be one of the worst storms in 100 years to hit Florida".

Milton became the third-fastest intensifying storm on record in the Atlantic, growing from a Category 1 to a Category 5 in less than 24 hours.

About 2.8 percent of US gross domestic product is in the direct path of Milton, said Ryan Sweet, chief US economist at Oxford Economics. Airlines, energy firms and a Universal Studios theme park were among the companies beginning to halt their Florida operations as they braced for disruptions.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## FRIENDS AFAR

**Editor's note:** China Daily presents the series Friends Afar to tell the stories of people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries. Through the vivid narration of the people in the stories, readers can get a better understanding of a country that is boosting openness.

## Latter-day Marco Polo relishes his 'lucky exploration'

By YANG RAN  
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Alessandro Martini has spent about eight years in China, a sojourn he often compares to that of his compatriot Marco Polo, the Italian who lifted the veil from China for the West.

Polo, the 700th anniversary of whose death was marked in January, was drawn to the Orient by his father, uncle and the scent of commercial opportunities. Martini was drawn to China for more cerebral reasons, a fascination with the Chinese language.

While such a specialized pursuit may seem rather narrow for some, Martini insists that it turned China into a giant lucky dip of exploration for him, what the Chinese call a *manghe*, or blind box.

It was purely his interest in the language that drew him to China, and he "had no preconceived notions about the country", he said.

"It was the complexity of Chinese that intrigued me. I've always had a knack for languages. I could speak English, French and Spanish pretty well, so I was determined to master Chinese, to enjoy the sense of satisfaction of achieving what was beyond others.

"Most Westerners find the tones of Chinese and the written language challenging, but the characters have a beauty of their own. Their historical depth captivated me."

In fact, in the characters, with their sometimes mesmerizing collection of horizontal and vertical strokes as well as dots, he gained an inkling of the complexities and wonder of Chinese culture, taking him back to tales of wonder that he had heard as a child.

"Few Westerners are aware that Chinese characters were once used on oracle bones for divination," he said. "There's something magical about that."

In 2016, when he was 20, his fascination led him to the Beijing Language and Culture University to study Chinese. Since then his life has become ever more enmeshed with China, he said. Beyond mastering the language he has thrown himself into trying to understand all there is to understand about Chinese culture, to the point that he reckons he is now as close to being Chinese as one could be without being Chinese.

"In living in China, the greatest benefit for me hasn't been learning the language per se, but in understanding and appreciating the culture."

One element of that learning has been living in a Beijing *hutong*, a traditional alley, where he has gained invaluable insights into the complexity of Chinese society and the local lifestyle, as well as experiencing firsthand the warmth of Chinese people.

"First and foremost, living in a *hutong* means living close to others in a tightly-knit community. It's just one dimension of Chinese society that contrasts starkly with the fast-paced life of Beijing's expansive, modern avenues."

He fondly recalls his landlord, an elderly gent who, for him, embodied the community spirit of a *hutong*.

"Any time I was about to fly back to Italy on holiday I always paid the rent in advance, and he'd deduct a bit from it and ask me to use it to buy gifts for my parents. The uncles and aunts in the *hutong* also treated me with great warmth and friendliness."

## Content creator

Martini's life took an unexpected turn in 2019 after a speech he gave about his life in a *hutong* led to his appearance on the Chinese television talk show *Feizhengshi Huitan* (Informal Talks). Almost overnight he became a celebrity in China, and when the pandemic broke out the following year, he began to look

at social media as a way of letting others know about his expertise and experience with Chinese and Italian cultures.

"Creating content on social media wasn't my original plan, but once I started doing it full-time, I found that I enjoyed writing scripts, which also allows me to use the Chinese I have learned in college."

Now, he has more than a million followers across Chinese social platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Weibo and Bilibili.

"Chinese audiences are unique. They take pride in their culture. When I express my genuine appreciation for aspects of Chinese culture, such as Peking Opera, something that may not even gel with a lot of young Chinese, people are pleasantly surprised."

"They're also curious about another culture and willing to embrace it."

In his four years or so as a content creator he has had many touching moments, he said.

"Once a follower sent me a lengthy article expressing his love for Italian culture and art. I was moved by the effort he made just to share his appreciation with me. I translated the message and posted it on Instagram for my Italian friends



Alessandro Martini goes for a walk dressed in a traditional Chinese *mianlanqun*, or horse-face skirt, in Milan in March. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

to see. The positive response from Italians, who were proud to see their culture appreciated, was also heartwarming."

Such mutual appreciation for diverse cultures is something Martini said he continues to cherish and promote through his work.

This year, as China and Italy commemorate the 700th anniversary of Marco Polo's death, Martini took part in a play portraying Polo, further aligning his odyssey with that of the historical figure.

"While many Italians are learning Chinese, there's still a vast majority

who are unaware of what China is truly like. There's potential for collaboration between Italy and China in areas such as infrastructure and beyond. I hope Western countries are more open to learning from China and working with it."

Martini said he is eager to delve deeper into China's traditional culture and help international audiences appreciate it.

"Most foreign content creators focus on China's development and modernization. These topics are important and visually appealing for viewers, but I reckon China's art and architecture, all kinds of landscapes, from mountains to beaches merit more attention."

As Martini reflects on the broader impact of expatriates like him who have lived in China for a long time, he exudes optimism.

"In 20 or 30 years the full effect of our experiences here will become apparent. It's about what all these young foreigners, who have been nurtured by their time here, will become," he said.

One way in which Martini cannot yet match Marco Polo is the time he has spent in China. Compared with Martini's eight years in the country, Polo spent 17 years in China before heading back to his homeland. Yet Martini said he is so comfortable living in the country that he can see himself living here for many more years to come.

## WORLD

## On the edge



Buildings stand precariously on the edge of a massive crater created by a landslide in Manacapuru, Brazil's Amazonas State, on Tuesday. Authorities estimate about 200 people could be buried beneath the rubble. The cause of the landslide remains unclear, but officials warn that the severe drought in the Amazon region might destabilize riverbanks, leading to further natural disasters. BRUNO KELLY / REUTERS

## Healthcare opening-up to create opportunities

China's allowing of more foreign investment in sector viewed as mutually beneficial

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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China's recent moves to further open its economy to foreign investment in the healthcare sector has been viewed as mutually beneficial — driving domestic innovation and growth while expanding opportunities for US companies to explore the vast market.

China's Ministry of Commerce announced plans last month to expand foreign investment access to the nation's healthcare sector, including establishing wholly foreign-owned hospitals and conducting research and development in life science technologies.

"Healthcare is just one of the markets where foreign companies have wanted to invest more, so lifting the restrictions will certainly be welcome," Ker Gibbs, an executive in residence with the China Business Studies Initiative at the University of San Francisco, told China Daily.

"Living in China for the last 20 years, I have seen how much healthcare has improved, and foreign companies have played a large part in that," said Gibbs, who served as former president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai.

The measures are expected to not only improve the medical services in China but also expand opportunities for US companies with the vast potential of the Chinese market.

"China is the second-largest economy in the world and hence, the second-largest healthcare market. The opportunity to explore this market is vast, and foreign firms would be excited to participate if China has the open and liberal policy to allow

foreign investors to participate and compete in this market," Kenneth Fong, founder and chairman of Silicon Valley-based venture capital firm Kenson Ventures, told China Daily.

Fong, whose firm focuses on biotech startups, further highlighted the potential benefits of increased competition and collaboration between Silicon Valley and China.

"Competition will bring in innovation and the best business practice that would eventually benefit the Chinese healthcare industry and the foreign participants," he said. "Greater opportunities will arise if successful companies emerge from the fruitful collaboration between Silicon Valley and China. Successful companies breed greater success if there is a solid synergy between the two places."

In recent years, China has implemented a series of reforms in the healthcare sector aimed at boosting foreign investment, streamlining drug approvals and registration, and improving market access, said an analysis published by the law firm Morgan Lewis last month.

These reforms include "significant changes" to China's Drug Administration Law and corresponding legislation, including the nationwide Market Authorization Holder system, the analysis said.

In July 2023, China's State Council released a new set of opinions on boosting foreign direct investment in China. Among these, it emphasized the support of foreign investment in the life science sector, encouraging foreign-invested enterprises to carry out clinical trials of overseas marketed cell and gene therapy drugs.

The country continues to deepen

its push to open up the healthcare sector. The plans announced by the Commerce Ministry last month will allow foreign entities to set up wholly foreign-owned hospitals in several major cities and provinces, including Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, as well as Guangdong, Jiangsu, Fujian and Hainan provinces.

Foreign-invested enterprises can now research and develop technologies focused on human stem cells, gene diagnosis and treatment in pilot free trade zones in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province, and the Hainan Free Trade Port.

They also can apply for market registration and mass-production licenses in China for their products and those approved can be used nationwide, according to the ministry.

"In general, opening the market to more foreign investment is a positive step, but investors will still be looking for good visibility and transparency around future regulations as well as the ability to do effective due diligence," said Gibbs, adding that certain challenges remain for foreign investors, such as the "volume-based pricing model".

"Silicon Valley companies are eager to collaborate and get exposure to the large market in China, but there is nervousness, especially among smaller firms, which is where a lot of the innovation takes place," he added.

The challenges are echoed in the findings of a recent survey by the US-China Business Council, a nonprofit organization representing more than 270 American companies doing business in China.

Despite the challenges, the survey emphasized that the majority of US companies "still identify China as a top priority in their company's global investment planning, and most companies would be less competitive globally without their China operations."

## China's UN envoy: 'Death and hunger' in Gaza can't be accepted

By MINLU ZHANG  
at the United Nations  
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China's envoy to the United Nations on Wednesday urged Israel to stop "weaponizing humanitarian assistance", lift the blockade of Gaza and the restrictions on access and cooperate fully with the UN and other humanitarian agencies.

It cannot be accepted that "death and hunger have become the new normal in Gaza", nor can the conflict be allowed to drag on and expand while the marginalization of the Security Council is being ignored, Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, said at a UN Security Council briefing on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Since October last year, the Gaza conflict and the situation in the Middle East have been at the forefront of the council's work, Fu noted, adding that the situation has not improved but rather has continued to deteriorate.

"The authority of international law seems to exist in name only for certain states, and the bottom line of international humanitarian law has been repeatedly shattered," he said.

The role of UNRWA, the UN

relief agency for Palestinians, is "indispensable and irreplaceable", said Fu.

"China firmly opposes Israel's smearing and suppression of UNRWA and is gravely concerned about the relevant Knesset bills targeting the agency," he said.

Fu emphasized that the international community cannot "just sit back and watch the entire Middle East plunging into an all-out war". "The harsh reality has proved that winning a war does not necessarily mean having peace; military might alone cannot guarantee lasting security; and the obsession with force only creates more killings and hatred," he said.

He called on Israel to "cease all military operations in Gaza and put an end to the collective punishment of the people in Gaza", and said, "Lebanon must not become the next Gaza."

Israel's air force carried out more than 230 airstrikes in Lebanon and Gaza over the past day, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Wednesday. The death toll from Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon on Tuesday has risen to 22, with 80 others wounded, Lebanon's health ministry reported on Wednesday.

Israeli airstrikes have displaced more than 600,000 people within

Lebanon, while over 300,000 others have fled the country in the past month, according to the UN.

"China calls on all parties to exercise restraint and achieve a cease-fire. We urge Israel in particular to stop taking actions that would further escalate the situation," he said.

The Security Council in June adopted a resolution proposed by the US aimed at reaching a comprehensive cease-fire deal in three phases to end the war in Gaza.

"However, over the past five months, the so-called diplomatic efforts seemed to be going in circles, and more time and patience have led to greater civilian casualties and more reckless military adventurism," Fu said.

He reiterated that Security Council resolutions are binding for all states, as stipulated in the UN Charter, and there is no room for distortion or interpretation.

"In this regard, the implementation of international humanitarian law is a non-negotiable obligation and cannot be used as a bargaining chip. The principles of international law are universally applicable to all states.

"Double standards and selective application would set a terrible precedent with wide-ranging negative consequences," he said.

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These materials are distributed by China Daily

Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily  
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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0746-6154) is published daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 - No.1433

## More aid urged for refugees in Syria

DAMASCUS — The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, called on Tuesday for additional resources to aid Lebanese and Syrian families seeking refuge in Syria.

"We need more resources; we don't have enough," Grandi told Xinhua News Agency, highlighting the strain on local Syrian communities already grappling with severe challenges after years of conflict in the country.

The UN reports that the long-simmering conflict in Syria has left 16.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 7.5 million children and 7.24 million internally displaced people.

"You must remember that many people in Syria were already facing hardships even before this crisis because of the long conflict and the socioeconomic situation of the country, which is very dire and diffi-

cult," said Grandi, who concluded a two-day visit to Syria on Tuesday.

During his visit to the capital Damascus, Grandi met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and other senior officials. He also visited a key route between Syria and Lebanon, witnessing families braving dangerous conditions and destroyed roads as they sought refuge in Syria.

"Several hundred thousand people have crossed the border into Syria — about 30 percent are Lebanese and 70 percent are Syrian refugees who have been living in Lebanon and are now returning under very exceptional circumstances," he said.

The UN Refugee Agency reports that more than 1.2 million people have been displaced in Lebanon, with more than 250,000 having crossed into Syria since Sept 23, when the Israeli army began conducting intensive attacks on Lebanon in the escalating conflict with Hezbollah.

"People are arriving and are often hosted by Syrian families, and everybody needs help," Grandi said. "The international community needs to do more to help Syria in these difficult circumstances."

Grandi also called for urgent support from donors to assist the UN and NGOs working in coordination with the Syrian government to provide aid.

"I appeal to all donors to support the response that the United Nations and NGOs are leading to help the people arriving in coordination with the Syrian government," he said.

The displaced people need food, healthcare, blankets, mattresses and water — the basics, he said. "They need to be helped in their journey from the border to their destination."

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PUBLIC INTEREST AD: 0096

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Strengthening friendly Sino-ASEAN ties and close partnership benefits all in region

China and the ASEAN member states have everything to gain from continuously injecting fresh momentum into their cooperation as their relationship holds boundless potential.

Thanks to the determined efforts of both sides, relations between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have witnessed tremendous progress in recent years. Two-way trade has surged, connectivity has been enhanced, and economic, people-to-people and other exchanges have flourished. The burgeoning cooperation has brought tangible benefits to the people on both sides and helped promote broader regional development and integration.

China has remained ASEAN's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, while ASEAN has been China's top trading partner for four consecutive years. Statistics indicate that in the first seven months of this year two-way trade reached \$552 billion, up 7.7 percent year-on-year, accounting for about one-sixth of China's overall trade volume in the same period.

Such flourishing trade relations would not have been fostered if both sides had not shared a commitment to the vision of creating an integrated regional market, building connectivity, optimizing the allocation of resources and leveraging each other's strengths for mutual benefit.

The thriving China-ASEAN ties have also benefited hugely from their active participation and collaboration in the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which have enhanced trade and investment liberalization and facilitation between the two sides.

The strong development of China-ASEAN ties is one of the reasons why the Asia-Pacific region has been able to maintain overall peace, stability and prosperity in recent years, despite the various turbulences unsettling the international landscape.

As a trustworthy friend and reliable partner, China has always supported the centrality of ASEAN in the region and the bloc's vision of building an ASEAN community. Obviously, there is a strong synergy between ASEAN community building and Beijing's efforts to build a China-ASEAN community with a shared future, which points the way for their future collaboration.

Premier Li Qiang's visit to Southeast Asia this week underscores China's commitment to deepening ties with ASEAN, strengthening cooperation with regional countries and injecting fresh impetus into the development and prosperity of the region.

During his visit, Li will attend the 27th China-ASEAN Summit, the 27th ASEAN Plus Three Summit and the 19th East Asia Summit to be held in Vientiane, Laos, and pay an official visit to Laos and Vietnam. These provide fresh opportunities for China and its regional partners to forge consensus on other issues, deepen mutual trust and open new horizons for their reciprocal cooperation.

Amid the sluggish global economic recovery, China's economy has continued to display its resilience. Its share of the world economy has increased from 12.3 percent to more than 18 percent over the past decade. China's further high-quality development will therefore create new opportunities for ASEAN countries.

In an increasingly turbulent world, Southeast Asia, due to its special position in world economic and strategic terrain, has inevitably been influenced by some undesirable factors and from time to time even been pushed to the forefront of big power competition.

Hence, it is heartening to see many ASEAN member states demonstrating their strong resolve to stay true to an open and inclusive regional cooperation architecture, uphold the regional order, practice real multilateralism, and reject bloc confrontation. As long as this positive trend prevails, China-ASEAN ties can steer clear of any challenges and any outside interference aimed at driving a wedge between them and embrace an even brighter future.

It is to be hoped that the two sides take the opportunities of the meetings to further leverage their complementary advantages, accelerate coordinated development, and jointly foster exchanges in all areas to inject renewed impetus into their cooperative relations. In doing so, both sides will not only reap direct development benefits but also those brought about by the guarantee of regional peace and stability.

## It's time US woke up and smelled the coffee

That Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao held a "candid, in-depth and pragmatic" conversation on bilateral trade and economic ties with US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo on the phone on Tuesday shows the two sides are maintaining close contact on different levels under the Sino-US communication mechanism agreed to by the two heads of state during their meeting in San Francisco in November.

Although the full details of the conversation are not known, Wang said progress has been made in deepening cooperation, managing differences and addressing the concerns of enterprises through such exchanges, indicating trade and economic relations could improve.

As Wang said, China is willing to work with the US on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation to implement the consensus reached by the two leaders in San Francisco, and put Sino-US relations back on track.

Yet the fact remains that despite China's willingness to rebuild healthy bilateral trade relations, Washington has not eased its de facto embargo on export of advanced semiconductors to China or lifted the punitive tariffs on Chinese products such as electric vehicles and green energy products. The US side should make clear what exactly are its national security concerns in the economic and trade field, because a favorable policy environment for cooperation could be created and bilateral trade relations stabilized by addressing those concerns. This is particularly important for the US people, who, along with their counterparts in some US ally states, have been footing the bill for Washington's protectionist, coercive and bullying trade policies.

Also, the US has failed to thwart the progress of China's high-tech sector or contain the country's overall development by imposing those punitive tariffs. By addressing the concerns of Chinese enterprises, lifting sanctions on Chinese entities, and improving the business environment for Chinese companies in the US, the administration will not only earn substantial benefits but also create the necessary conditions for normalizing the most consequential bilateral ties of the 21st century, while strengthening cooperation in the fight against issues of global concern such as climate change and nuclear proliferation.

But that depends on whether Washington can see China for what it is, a developing partner, not a strategic challenger or a threat to the US. That, however, is not what the US side has been doing. While US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrote in an article published in the Foreign Affairs magazine recently that China is the only country with the intent and means to reshape the international system, US President Joe Biden said the US would treat China as its "pacing challenge", its most consequential long-term strategic competitor.

By portraying China as a "strategic challenger" to the US, American politicians may be able to misguide some people and garner their votes, but they would be doing a great disservice to the US and global economies by stymieing free trade and consequently global economic growth.

As Mao Ning, spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said, the US views the international landscape and its relations with China through the lens of strategic competition, which shows it is obstinately clinging on to the Cold War mentality. The fact that the Biden administration sees China as its long-term strategic competitor and a "pacing challenge" shows how the US imposes its own hegemony on other countries.

The US' gross misjudgment of China and Sino-US relations does not serve the interests of the two peoples or meet the expectations of the international community.

It's time the US woke up and smelled the coffee, and worked together to normalize Sino-US relations, especially trade relations. After all, the two economies are still structurally complementary and stand to gain much through cooperation.

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Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Prevent China-EU trade relations from reaching a point of no return

A trade war does more harm than good to both sides. Which is why China has always advocated the use of dialogue and negotiation to resolve economic and trade disputes. However, China is unshakable in its determination to safeguard its rights and interests and those of its enterprises, and will resolutely take countermeasures against those who persist in going down the wrong road.

The Ministry of Commerce announced on Tuesday that it will impose temporary antidumping measures on brandy originating from the European Union while conducting antidumping investigations into certain pork and pig by-products imported from the EU and an antisubsidy

probe into certain dairy products imported from the EU. China is also exploring the possibility of increasing tariffs on imported fuel-powered cars with large-displacement engines.

All these moves came days after a sufficient number of EU member states voted to impose additional tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on top of the existing 10 percent levy on electric vehicles made in China.

Trade relations between China and the EU have remained strained since the European Commission proposed higher tariffs on Chinese-made EVs in October last year. While France claims this will allow the EU to maintain "more independent and stronger economic and strategic autonomy", many industries in France, particularly the alcohol industry,

disagree. Shares of French spirits producers took a hit after the ministry's announcement, with Remy Cointreau shares falling more than 8 percent.

China and the EU are mutually beneficial trading partners. China has always regarded the trade relationship with the EU as the basis for win-win cooperation between the two sides.

Unilaterally imposing tariffs won't solve any problems, and whether China-EU trade relations can be turned around depends entirely on the EU. The bloc should avoid politicizing its economic and trade relations with China, and explore all possible avenues before the situation reaches a point of no return.

- WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

## Here's why computer scientists got Nobel for physics

After the Nobel Prize in physics went to John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton "for foundational discoveries and inventions that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks", many asked why a prize for physics has gone to computer scientists for what is also an achievement in computer science.

Even Hinton, a winner of the 2018 Turing Award and one of the "godfathers of AI", was "extremely surprised" at receiving the call telling him he had got the Nobel Prize in physics, while the other recipient Hopfield said, "It was just astounding."

Actually, the artificial neural net-

work research has a lot to do with physics. Most notably, Hopfield replicated the functioning of the human brain by using the self-rotation of single molecules as if they were neurons and linking them together into a network, which is what the Hopfield neural network is about. In the process, Hopfield used two physical equations. Similarly, Hinton made Hopfield's approach the basis for a more sophisticated artificial neural network called the Boltzmann machine, which can catch and correct computational errors.

The two steps have helped in forming a net that can act like a human

brain and compute. The neural networks today can learn from their own mistakes and constantly improve, thus being able to solve complicated problems for humanity. For example, the Large Language Model, which is the basis of the various GPT technologies people use today, dates back to the early days when Hopfield and Hinton formed and improved their network.

Instead of weakening the role of physics, giving the Nobel for achievements in neural networks strengthens it by revealing to the world the role physics, or fundamental science as a whole, plays in sharpening technology.

- ZHANG ZHOULIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Lai's make-believe on a hiding to nothing

It is "absolutely impossible" for the People's Republic of China ruled by the Communist Party of China since 1949 to become Taiwan's motherland because the island's government is older, Taiwan's secessionist-minded Lai Ching-te said on Saturday in a carefully timed speech that underscores the intense historical rivalry between the two.

Lai made the remarks at a concert in Taipei on Saturday during the National Day holiday of the Chinese mainland with the intent of infuriating Beijing by alleging that Taiwan is already a "sovereign and independent country", whose government ruled the Chinese mainland for decades before relocating to Taiwan when the CPC came to power.

"If anyone in Taiwan wants to say happy birthday to the PRC, please do not call it the motherland," Lai made the comments after some Taiwan actors recently said happy birthday to the PRC, which celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding on Oct 1.

That the Democratic Progress-

sive Party leader's provocative comments immediately drew criticism from compatriots on the island, including the Kuomintang, for needlessly stoking tensions with the mainland indicates the residents of Taiwan have seen through the secessionist nature of his "motherland fallacy".

As State Council Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian said, no matter what kind of "historical paradox" or "Taiwan independence" narrative Lai puts forward, he cannot change the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, nor can he extinguish the sense of motherland among Taiwan compatriots.

Lai's rhetoric distorts concepts and confuses right and wrong. By attempting to highlight the political differences across the Taiwan Strait, Lai is deliberately trying to sever the historical connections between the mainland and the island, and peddle the "two-state" rhetoric by constantly hyping that the two sides are "not subordinate" to each other, which exposes his stubborn "Taiwan independence" stance and the malicious intent to

escalate hostility and confrontation.

Although the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have yet to be reunified, China's sovereignty and territory have never been severed and cannot be severed, and the fact that the mainland and Taiwan both belong to one China has never changed and cannot be changed.

On Oct 1, 1949, the PRC was founded, becoming the successor to the Republic of China (1912-49), and the Central People's Government became the only legitimate government of the whole of China. The government of the PRC therefore exercises full sovereignty over the whole of China, which includes sovereignty over Taiwan.

That Taiwan is China's territory is an incontrovertible historical and jurisprudential fact. Zhu said, it is hoped that the vast number of Taiwan compatriots will recognize the tactics of Lai and the DPP authorities in pursuing "independence", resolutely oppose "Taiwan independence" and external interference, firmly safeguard the common homeland of the Chinese nation, and strive to maintain peace and stability.

- LI YIYANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

Maya Majueran

## US hypocrisy on Taiwan hurts world order

Lai Ching-te's recent comments on "the motherland" can be seen as a veiled form of "Taiwan independence" theory, which will no doubt escalate cross-strait tensions.

Taiwan has been an integral part of China's territory since ancient times. Separated from the Chinese mainland by the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan's status as part of China has not changed despite the sordid efforts of the "Taiwan independence" forces on the island and some Western powers' attempts to sow discord across the Strait.

This position is backed by international law, including United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 which was adopted by an overwhelming majority on Oct 25, 1971. The resolution recognizes the People's Republic of China as the only legitimate government of China and affirms that Taiwan is an integral part of China. Consequently, the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole representative of China in the UN, and the Taiwan island has no status as a separate entity.

The UN and its affiliated bodies have consistently upheld this resolution, rejecting any claims of Taiwan's international representation.

Key historical documents such as the 1943 Cairo Declaration and the 1945 Potsdam Proclamation also confirm Taiwan's status as part of China's territory. These declarations, which are legally binding and integral to the post-World War II international order, mandated that the Taiwan island, seized by Japan during its imperialist expansion, should be returned to China.

Given these historical and legal precedents, Taiwan has no legal standing to participate in the UN or any other global or regional organization exclusive to sovereign states. In spite of these facts, the United States continues to challenge international law and norms by covertly promoting Taiwan's efforts to be admitted as a member to UN bodies, if not the UN



**The Taiwan question is an internal affair of China, and any external interference in it is a breach of international norms. The US must respect the legal and historical realities of Taiwan's status and cease its provocative actions that threaten regional stability.**

itself, and spreading misleading information on the Taiwan question.

As a founding member of the UN, a permanent member of the Security Council, and a signatory to the Cairo Declaration and Potsdam Proclamation, the US should have been fully aware of Taiwan's legal status.

Yet disregarding its responsibilities

and commitments, the US has adopted policies and laws that undermine China's sovereignty, such as the "Taiwan Relations Act", which contravenes the three Sino-US joint communiqués that form the basis of diplomatic ties between China and the US.

The "Taiwan Relations Act", enacted in 1979, not only violates international law but also contradicts the US' own recognition of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China. It has been a primary driver of continued tensions across the Taiwan Strait, enabling the US to maintain unofficial relations with the Taiwan island, and sell weapons and military equipment to the island. The US' attempts to interfere in the Taiwan question have disrupted peace in the region.

The US' actions expose its double standard. While Washington publicly acknowledges the one-China principle, it simultaneously provokes Beijing with arms sales and high-profile visits by US politicians to the island. The claim that Washington's version of the one-China principle is different from Beijing's is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to justify its interference in China's internal affairs.

China has been left with no choice but to respond with legal measures against the separatist activities on the island,

including criminal penalties for those advocating for "Taiwan independence". This reflects Beijing's firm stance on protecting its territorial integrity and opposing any form of foreign meddling.

There are those in Taiwan, and the US who benefit from pushing the two sides of the Strait toward conflict. For decades, Beijing has maintained its commitment to reunifying Taiwan with the motherland through peaceful means. The central government has repeatedly emphasized dialogue, economic integration and cultural exchanges as the preferred path to resolving the Taiwan question. However, the rhetoric and actions of certain political actors in the US and Taiwan are complicating this approach.

The Taiwan question is an internal affair of China, and any external interference in it is a breach of international norms. The US must respect the legal and historical realities of Taiwan's status and cease its provocative actions that threaten regional stability. Only by adhering to international law can the US help maintain global peace and order.

*The author is a director of BRISL, an independent and pioneering Sri Lankan-led organization, with strong expertise in BRI advice and support.*

*The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Lars-Hendrik Röller

## Raise 'cranes of cooperation' to develop common ground

When I recently visited Shenzhen of Guangdong province with a Berlin Global Dialogue delegation, many of my colleagues found it hard to believe that 40 years ago, this sprawling metropolis had just a little more than 300,000 residents. To me, few places embody the rise of China as much as Shenzhen, which has transformed from a remote fishing village into a global technology hub in only a few decades.

Since the late 1970s, China has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty — an accomplishment that has not only benefited the country itself, but also can contribute to the economic development of many other regions, provided China uses its increased influence benevolently, and adheres to common international rules.

The past years have seen a worrying rise in tensions between China and the West driven by fear and restrictive economic policy against one another. Particularly in the context of security policy and geostrategic priorities, the rifts between the West and China are becoming wider — a development I view with great concern.

In the Western world, those who engage with China are becoming increasingly divided into two groups: China doves, who are considered to have an overly friendly and perhaps ingenuous attitude, and China hawks, who are committed to "being tough" and prepared to "fight back". Both approaches oversimplify the intricacies of our complex and often interdependent relationship.

When I picture the relationship between China and the West, a very different bird comes to mind: the crane, which has long symbolized wisdom in both cultures. I strongly believe that a stable relationship between China and the West based on international rules is key to ensuring our collective peace and prosperity.

So how can we raise "cranes of cooperation" despite our many differences? I believe doing so requires cultivating a new approach to dialogue:

First, we must deepen our understanding of each other's economic, political, and social circumstances. This needs to include a knowledge of and an appreciation for each other's history and culture to better understand current political and economic developments. It also means creating an equal playing field for all actors involved.

Second, we need to expand existing political platforms, such as the G20, so they better reflect and addresses the realities of today's multipolar world. Including the African Union in the G20 was an important step in the right direction. In the long run, however, we need to reform institutions of global governance, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which requires both appropriate financing and fair representation.

In short, China and the West need to work together to maintain a global governance system rather than creating separate and fragmented institutions.

Third, we need to create new forums for political and economic dialogue that allow for informal conversations between the East and the West at all levels and at the eye level. We need to build common ground, focusing on areas where cooperation is possible — even between competitors or adversaries — such as implementing effective solutions in the fight against climate change.

A famous proponent of dialogue is Chinese philosopher Laozi, who is often depicted with cranes in paintings and on statues. He once said: "If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading." More than 2,000 years later, his words ring truer than ever. China and the West both have the responsibility to ensure that we are heading toward dialogue, not a collision course.

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**In short, China and the West need to work together to maintain a global governance system rather than creating separate and fragmented institutions.**



LIMIN / CHINA DAILY

Zhang Yuan

## Middle East conflict cycle should be stopped

Israel's continued brutal assault on the Gaza Strip, and the spillover of the conflict in the region have raised the alarm across the world. After Iran launched major missile attacks on Israel on Oct 1 in response to the killings of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah by Israeli missiles, observers feared that Israel's possible retaliatory attacks on Iran's energy facilities would send the global oil market in a tizzy and impact the global economy.

On the first anniversary of the Gaza crisis, Iran canceled all flights from 9 pm on Oct 6 to 6 am on Oct 7, which was interpreted by the international community as a precautionary measure against possible retaliatory Israeli airstrikes. Although Israel didn't launch any airstrikes, the fear of a full-scale war in the Middle East has not dissipated.

Israel is the representative of US power in the Middle East. Due to the military, political and economic support provided by the United States, Israel has for long regarded Iran and the Iran-supported "Axis of Resistance" as its enemies. No wonder one of the key strategies of the US and Iran is to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon with the aim of weakening Iran.

Since the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, the Middle East has been embroiled in recurring cycles of confrontation and conflict. While Palestinians condemn Israel's military actions as invasion, occupation and genocide, Israel has labeled the leadership and polity of Palestine as evil, and their actions as terrorism, rather than acts of

**The governments of Middle East countries need lasting peace, but the people in the region need it even more. Only lasting peace can enable the people in the Middle East to pursue economic development and improve their lives.**

self-defense. In particular, Israel has been destroying the Palestinian defense forces' operational capability and cutting off their supply lines.

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Palestine conflict in October 2023, Israeli missiles have killed Ismail Haniyeh, Hassan Nasrallah and Hezbollah "brigadier general" Abbas Nilforoushan, forcing Iran to retaliate, lest it be seen as a weak player in the region.

Unfortunately, the conflict is dragging on — in fact, it seems to be intensifying — because powerful external forces have been pulling the strings of the conflicting parties instead of trying to persuade the conflicting sides to agree to a cease-fire. Over the past year, the US has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to support Israel's "right to self-defense", regardless of how the conflict evolves. US politicians have called for a cease-fire and warned of the dangers of the Middle East sliding into

a wider regional conflict but have simultaneously backed Israel's "right to self-defense", with Washington providing Tel Aviv with material and political support.

It is always the ordinary people who bear the brunt of war. War breeds more hatred, planting the seeds of another war, with the vicious circle becoming a perpetual reality to the despair of all.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been trying to involve the US in the conflict by targeting Iranian assets and Iran-backed forces in the region in a way that instigates Tehran to retaliate, so it can use it to not only justify its actions in Gaza and Lebanon but also to show the US that it's under attack from "evil forces".

US President Joe Biden's criticism of Netanyahu for not signing a peace deal may stem from the latter's hope that the conflict would influence the US presidential election on Nov 5. Netanyahu and his far-right coalition are not willing to stop the assault on Gaza or the attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon. Without the enormous pressure of war on Israel, Netanyahu's legal problems at home could soon impact his political life. Netanyahu is prolonging the crisis in Gaza by trying to draw Iran into a larger conflict in order to get "Iranophobic" countries to support Israel.

Compared with the Biden administration, which disapproves of Israel striking Iran's nuclear facilities, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump recklessly declared that Israel should do that. This means peace in the region could become more elusive if Trump wins the presidential election.

To promote peace in the Middle East and end the Israeli atrocities in Gaza, major powers need to act responsibly. They should learn from China's successful efforts to mediate a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March 2023 in order to broker peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. China has consistently advocated for peace by urging all sides to return to the negotiation table.

The policies of the major powers to restore peace in the region should be consistent and transcend ideologies and prejudice. Irrespective of whether US Vice-President Kamala Harris or former president Trump wins the election, the US should stop fueling the conflict in the Middle East and respect the United Nations resolutions.

The root cause of the Israel-Palestine conflict is the failure of the international community to guarantee the Palestinian people the right to establish an independent Palestinian state. And the implementation of the two-state solution is the only viable way to resolve all the Middle East issues.

The governments of Middle East countries need lasting peace, but the people in the region need it even more. Only lasting peace can enable the people in the Middle East to pursue economic development and improve their lives.

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# GLOBAL VIEWS

MWANGI WACHIRA

## No strings attached

The China-Africa engagement has grown precisely because it addresses issues that are central to African hopes and aspirations

The upbeat tempo at the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in Beijing from Sept 4 to 6 was a sign that both sides have shaken the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have resumed the task of modernization to improve the quality of life, in spite of some challenges.



For China, the challenges include continuing efforts to make domestic consumption the primary driver of the economy, breathing life into a still sluggish property sector, and expanding markets overseas in the face of trade tensions with Europe and North America.

For the 53 African countries, the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic, sharp rises in the cost of food arising from the Ukraine crisis, the ravages of extreme climate changes and crushing debt burdens weigh heavily on leaders.

Nevertheless, the FOCAC 2024 ministerial summit, the plenary sessions and bilateral meetings on the sidelines, arrived at agreements that have far-reaching implications for China-Africa engagement.

At FOCAC 2024, bilateral relations between China and all African countries having diplomatic ties with China were elevated to the level of strategic relations, and the overall characterization of China-Africa relations was elevated to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era. Clearly, all of them believe that Africa and China have a long-term partnership.

Under the banner of "small and beautiful", agreements were reached with various countries on a cluster of projects in "soft infrastructure". These include agriculture, education, health, technology and communications, sustainable energy, cultural exchange and media sharing. They also include the all-important trade, this time focusing on currency swaps and export agreements.

Turning to "hard infrastructure", the forum saw the signing of agreements with Kenya on rural roads, resumption of discussions on completing Kenya's Standard Gauge Railway, the rehabilitation of the Tazara railway in Tanzania and Zambia, airport construction in Chad, high-speed rail networks in Morocco, and the modernizing of airports and seaports in Sudan. All these agreements were months in preparation. They show the breadth of cooperation between China and African nations.

In the end, the 2024 FOCAC proposed the highest total investment in many years. In a 10-point initiative, China pledged nearly \$50.7 billion in financing Africa, higher than the \$40 billion in 2021 and close to the \$60 billion in 2018. It includes \$30 billion in credit lines, more than triple the credit amount from the previous conference in 2021, \$10 billion for Chinese firms to invest in Africa, and about \$10 billion through unspecified projects. This is a resounding approval of the partnership at a time of global tensions.

Besides a super charged resumption of the drive for modernization, FOCAC 2024 introduced three important changes.

First, in a departure from the past, FOCAC 2024 diversified coop-



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

eration beyond hard-infrastructure Belt and Road Initiative projects. It prioritized "software for development" as envisaged in the Global Development Initiative, which was launched in 2021.

In practice that means focusing on "small and beautiful" projects. For the next three years, the China-Africa engagement will roll out projects on food security (\$140 million), defense (\$140 million), green energy (30 projects), 30 joint laboratories on satellite and space technology, 30 interconnectivity projects, 25 research centers, 20 "digitization" projects, and 20 health projects. It will also send 500 agricultural experts and 2,000 medical staff members to Africa, train 6,000 military personnel and

1,000 law enforcement officers as well as 1,000 government officials.

After more than 20 years of FOCAC, it is time to get down to the details of modernization. Seen against the backdrop of upgrading relations, this is an important step in the evolution of the engagement.

China did not offer debt relief or restructuring, as some African leaders had hoped. But in the second important change China removed tariffs on all goods from the 34 least developed African countries, and signed bilateral agreements with 19 countries to make it easier to export various products to China by the end of 2023. This might chip away at, but not resolve, the imbalance in trade, a long-standing challenge to both sides.

In the third and perhaps landmark change, for the first time China will disburse all its FOCAC funding using the renminbi instead of the US dollar. In the same vein, China signed currency swap agreements with Ethiopia and Mauritania. Some African countries have been expecting disbursements using the renminbi; others have been seeking currency swap agreements. Taken together, these are new openings. They will increase the options for financing development or trade.

Perhaps some of the African policymakers left FOCAC 2024 challenged by the scale of the work over the next three years. But all were highly appreciative of the strategy of "Joining Hands to Advance Mod-

ernization and Build a High-Level China-Africa Community with a Shared Future." African analysts will welcome the invigorated engagement with its sense of purpose and urgency, especially in light of the current challenges across the continent.

Therefore, one is hesitant to introduce a cautionary note.

The three-year work program which came out of FOCAC 2024 consists of "software for development" packaged in "small and beautiful" projects. However, "hard infrastructure" projects, the hardware of modernization, are crucial in creating modernity in the first place. Deficits in hardware are still the bottleneck in Africa's drive for modernization through industrialization. Hopefully, hard infrastructure projects will get more attention as soon as current challenges facing both lender and borrower have diminished, as they eventually will.

This cautionary note also has a corollary.

The China-Africa engagement has grown precisely because it addresses issues that are central to African hopes and aspirations, the root causes of low levels of modernization. These challenges have been self-evident for generations, but Africa lacked the resources needed to address them and others simply would not engage. It is China's focus on hard infrastructure which brought 53 African countries to FOCAC 2024, as it has since 2000. The hope is that the slight shift to "soft infrastructure" will not serve as a pretext for others to increase pressure on China to attach conditionalities to FOCAC projects. The absence of conditionalities is something of great value to many African policymakers.

In the meantime, both sides are warming up enthusiastically to implement their three-year work program.

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ZHOU YUYUAN

## Coordinated approach

African nations are prioritizing corridors that promote regional industry and value chains, and achieve coordinated development

Infrastructure is a priority for China-Africa cooperation. The 10 partnership actions between the two sides were proposed at the 2024 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Among them, according to the Partnership Action for Connectivity, China will support 30 infrastructure



connectivity projects in Africa, work with African countries to promote the high-quality construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, build a China-Africa network featuring land-sea links and coordinated development, support the continent's Free Trade Area construction, deepen logistics and financial cooperation, and help Africa's cross-regional development. This indicates that regional connectivity and cross-regional coordinated development are important directions for China-Africa ties. As a spatial development initiative and carrier of regional integration, the African development corridors are presenting new and important opportunities.

Building development corridors is a key lever and priority agenda for African regional organizations and nations to achieve integration and national transformation. Since the Maputo Corridor was proposed by the Southern African Development Community in 1996, African nations have been committed to regional integration and national growth through spatial development and regional connectivity.

At the 2021 African Union summit, African heads of state decided to adopt an integrated corridor approach. Unlike traditional infrastructure corridors, this approach emphasizes collaborative development across infrastructure, regions, and sectors. It is committed to sustainable growth and development through the construction of "inclusive, sustainable, and world-class infrastructure" proposed in the AU's Agenda 2063.

According to the African Development Corridors Database and the AU's assessment, 79 major development corridors in Africa with 184 projects, accounting for 73 percent

of the projects' total, have made substantial progress.

The African development corridors are often key resource corridors, strategic gateways, and regional links, thus playing a significant role in regional cooperation, national development, supply chain security, and global strategic security.

The United States and European countries are utilizing the "Global Gateway" program, Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, Just Energy Transition Partnership, and the Minerals Security Partnership, to advance new strategies toward Africa, focusing on the African development corridors, especially key corridors, to advance cooperation with Africa. The 2022 EU-AU summit identified the construction of strategic corridors as a key direction for EU-Africa cooperation, proposing plans for 11 strategic corridors. The US is advancing the construction of the Lobito Corridor, corridors in East Africa, and the US-Democratic Republic of the Congo-Zambia electronic vehicle batteries value chain, with a focus on critical minerals. Japan has launched a 2.0 version of the development corridor paradigm and the "smart corridors" concept, continuing to invest in the Northern Corridor, the Nacala Corridor, and the West Africa Growth Ring.

The US and European countries are increasing their investment in



YANG MEINI / FOR CHINA DAILY

African development corridors, providing new options for African nations. However, it is evident that their actions are driven by their own strategic interests such as geopolitical competition, great power rivalry, and supply chain security. Particularly, they seek to strengthen competition with China and other nations in Africa, emphasizing that their cooperation model is a "better choice" compared to other countries. This not only exaggerates the differences in international cooperation pattern with Africa, but also

intensifies the politicization of international development cooperation with Africa.

China is actively promoting the alignment of the BRI with the AU's Agenda 2063, thereby substantially engaging in the construction of the African development corridors and playing an important role in African integration and development transformation.

China has become the largest bilateral official financier of African infrastructure, providing financing for one-fifth of intercontinental and

regional infrastructure projects in Africa, and participating in one-third of the projects. Especially in East Africa and Central Africa, the infrastructure financed by China has reached 54.7 percent and 38.5 percent respectively, and its participation in construction projects exceeds one-fourth.

China's financing support for Africa's infrastructure mainly focuses on transportation, energy, electricity, communications. After the BRI was put forward, China has increased its support for Africa's regional connectivity infrastructure. In September, the FOCAC Beijing summit further proposed new ideas and plans for aligning China and Africa's development strategies and boosting cross-regional cooperation, including a China-Africa network featuring land-sea links and coordinated development, alignment and mutual recognition of rules and standards, mutually beneficial cooperation in the whole chain of infrastructure construction, operations, services, and support to the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development to implement connectivity projects in five subregions of Africa. This provides a new direction for cooperation in the China-Africa development corridors.

First, cooperation in the China-Africa development corridors should prioritize strategic planning and coordinated development. China and Africa have carried out many economic activities in infra-

structure, trade, investment, industrial development, experience and technology transfer. It should become the core direction of China-Africa development corridor cooperation to integrate these relatively scattered sectors into coordinated and planned cooperation and drive the development corridors to create significant economic and social benefits. The two sides should strengthen the alignment between the Belt and Road cooperation and the AU's Agenda 2063, and take the opportunity of collaborative development corridor cooperation to constantly improve the general coordination and implementation of the plan.

Second, high-quality and high-standards should be the fundamental principles of the China-Africa development corridors cooperation. As a systematic program, the development corridors are not only infrastructure projects, but also a new model that includes the construction of industry chains, value chains, and supply chains. A successful project should drive national development and integration, and high quality and high standards are prerequisites for this goal.

Third, inclusiveness and accessibility should be the core goals of China-Africa development corridors cooperation. The corridor program features cross-regional, cross-industry, cross-cultural, and cross-departmental coordination, and diversity may bring challenges, but it is also the value of the African development corridors. By driving growth along the routes, attracting more diverse participation, and benefiting more people, the development corridors will ultimately contribute to China-Africa partnership and provide new experiences for international development cooperation.

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE



Across the span of human history, many great thinkers have shone like bright stars, profoundly shaping civilization. Confucius is one of them. Throughout the millennia since his time around the 5th century BC, the school of thought he founded and the Confucianism that developed from it has continued to offer inspiration for people, not only in China.

A new exhibition at the Palace Museum in Beijing opened on the National Day holiday to demonstrate the lasting legacy of the sage through 380 cultural relics on loan from nearly 30 institutions from home and abroad. It will run for more than three months.

In the Meridian Gate Galleries, above the southern entry of the former Chinese imperial palace also known as the Forbidden City, *When the Great Way Prevails: Special Exhibition of Confucian Culture* launches a time travel spectacle resonating with ancient ritual and wisdom.

Through the objects on display, this exhibition aims to illustrate the historical context, core concepts, and far-reaching influence of Confucian culture.

"The agricultural civilization of China shaped the nation's cultural genes: order, stability, humility and peace as the core values," says Da Weijia, deputy director of department of objects and decorative arts of the Palace Museum, who is in charge of organizing the exhibition.

"From these, Confucianism developed, and continually influenced people's values, ways of thinking and behavioral norms, producing a distinctive Confucian culture," she says. "It still resonates with our modern life today."

Exhibited ceremonial musical instruments and ritual bronze wares, showing the hierarchical social status from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC) to Confucius' time, display his lofty pursuit.

The authority of Zhou kings declined as feudal lords vied for supremacy, bringing devastating damage to the ritual system.

Confucius decided that his mission was to revive the rituals in the hope of reestablishing the social order, Da explains. "At that time, many schools of thought put forward their ideas in response to the disorder and division. These greatly expanded the breath and depth of people's thinking."

By "interpreting rituals with benevolence," Confucius, a pioneering educator who also first initiated private schools in China, established an all-encompassing moral code that was closely tied to human nature.

More than 300 years later, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), who ruled a unified country of vast territory, supported Confucian thought, with Confucius' teachings as its key exemplar, to become the official orthodoxy.

Exhibits ranging from figure paintings to various editions of Confucian classics show how Confucianism has been a vital source of spiritual nourishment for the Chinese nation in its continuous growth. "This culture has kept pace with the times and evolved in response to historical changes," Da says.

On a Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) hanging scroll, *Confucius Giving a Lecture*, a romantic imagination on how the educator inspired his disciples was featured. In China, Confucius deserves his reputation as an exemplary teacher of any age for the moral principles and love of learning he set.

A Tang Dynasty (618-907) portrait of centenarian Fu Sheng, whose long life spanned the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC, urges visitors to remember this brave scholar, who spent his lifetime protecting Confucianism during a time of war and social upheaval. This precious painting, on loan from Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, is often credited to Tang poet Wang Wei, a household name for Chinese people.

Confucian classics engraved on stones, across several dynasties, demonstrated their status as the official guiding thoughts.



Visitors examine ritual bronze ware artifacts at *When the Great Way Prevails: Special Exhibition of Confucian Culture* held at the Palace Museum in Beijing. PHOTOS BY WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## Tracing the origins of Confucian inspiration

Exhibition delves into the very essence of his teachings and how they shaped a nation, **Wang Kaihao** reports.



Clockwise from above left: A Tang Dynasty (618-907) portrait of centenarian Fu Sheng, a brave scholar who spent his lifetime protecting Confucianism around the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC. A Three Kingdoms (220-280) stone fragment, with Confucian teachings engraved. A group of Edo-era animal-shaped bronze vessels used for Confucius-honoring ceremonies on loan from Tokyo National Museum.



This physical evidence may have fallen into fragments but the highlighted wisdom they recorded seem to have lasted much longer.

"Confucianism advocates fulfilling responsibilities to the family and the state, extending moral conduct from cultivating the self and regulating the family to rightly governing the state, bringing peace to all under heaven," Wang Guangyao, a researcher with the Palace Museum and a curator of the exhibition, explains.

Calligraphic works left by iconic Confucian philosophers, such as Wang Shouren, also known as Wang Yangming from the Ming Dynasty, demonstrated how generations of Chinese literati pursued the ideals portrayed by the ancient sages. *For the Common Good*, a handwritten scroll by last century's revolutionary pioneer Sun Yat-sen demonstrating his signature slogan, probably reflects Confucian mindset in national governance in a modern context.

Archaeological findings also help to further record ancient people's Confucian practices in detail. A group of displayed bamboo slips that were unearthed from a Han Dynasty tomb in Wuwei, Gansu province, usher modern people to review how those who lived in ancient times respected the elderly.

This was a cornerstone of Confucian moral codes. In Confucianism, a goal is "to build a society where the elderly have a place to live, the strong have a place to work, the young have a place to grow, and the widowed, the orphaned, the disabled, and the sick are all taken care of."

As the exhibition also shows, Confucian culture has spread far and wide. In the East, Confucianism had its deep impact on neighboring Asian countries. In the West, Confucianism even inspired Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire with its humanist and rationalist spirit.

Sacrificial bronze wares from the Temple of Confucius in Qufu, Shandong province, also the sage's hometown, and a group of Edo-era animal-shaped bronze vessels used for Confucius-honoring ceremonies from Tokyo National Museum are jointly displayed to provide a glimpse of a shared cultural circle.

A Joseon Dynasty edition of ancient Chinese Confucian classic *Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* and a screen with Chinese characters promoting core values of Confucian virtues, both from the National Folk Museum of Korea in Seoul also reflect significance of Confucianism in people's daily life on the Korean Peninsula.

"To this day, the profound wisdom, ideals and moral standards of Confucian culture continue to inspire people from different civilizations around the world to understand each other and learn from each other," Wang Guangyao says.

This curator wants to create not only width, but also a long lineage in this review of Confucianism. That is why the time span of displayed relics started from a period much earlier than Confucius' time. A section of the exhibition is particularly designed for many milestone relics from Neolithic period to trace the roots of the rites and ceremonies that were admired by Confucius.

Jiahu bone flute, dating back 9,000 years, and ceremonial jade artifacts, more than 5,000 years old, may belong to different eras than Confucius; but the ritual system and shared cultural community they contributed to build may create a foundation for his school of thought.

"Confucius' philosophies didn't suddenly pop out," Wang Guangyao explains. "These relics reflect our ancestors' concern for virtues and order, and they explain how a united China chose Confucianism as a guiding mindset in national governance."

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## Findings at new site unlock stories of Xia Dynasty

By **WANG KAIHAO**

For archaeologists who are dedicated to decoding the early stages of how a nation was formed in China, looking for clues of the Xia Dynasty (c. 21st century-16th century BC) has been a focal point.

As the first hereditary dynasty with a central kingship recorded in Chinese history, Xia has not yielded any written documentation of its time.

Nonetheless, continuous excavations on the massive Erlitou Site in Luoyang, Central China's Henan province, in the past decades have edged toward unwrapping the long-awaited answer for where the Xia capital was. Unearthed ritual relics and architectural ruins there reveal an aura of kings, and its location, time, and landscape echo historical recordings.

Now, new findings on another key site, more than 200 kilometers to the south of Erlitou, may further enrich people's understanding on this foundational dynasty that shaped the course of social development in ancient China.

In Fangcheng county, Nanyang, also in Henan province, the Baliqiao Site spreads across over 1.35 square kilometers, nearly half of the area of the Erlitou Site that has survived to date.

Since 2022, scholars from the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology and Nanyang Institute for the

Preservation of Cultural Heritage have conducted systematic excavations of the Baliqiao Site.

According to Wu Zhiqiang, an associate researcher with the Henan provincial institute, some key findings of urban infrastructure will help identify a high-level settlement that was inhabited around 1700 to 1600 BC, almost perfectly matching the time span of the Erlitou Site.

Rammed earthen foundations and city walls, roads, moats as well as other facilities jointly portray a city that may have enjoyed the status of regional core, Wu notes.

The length of a large-scale architectural foundation reached 50 meters, indicating a key building. Archaeologists named it the No. 1 foundation ruins. Spanning 12 meters from south to north and 31 meters east to west, this 372-square-meter house inspires researchers to imagine its exceptional role in the city.

"It was found to be surrounded by corridors, and it also had a courtyard," Wu says, as he excitedly recalls the discovery.

An approximately 190-meter-long southern section of city wall was found, for instance. The main part of the wall was 4.5 to 5 meters wide, and the surviving part was 1.5 meters high.

Some unearthed artifacts echo previous findings on Erlitou, which may further suggest links between the two sites.

For example, turquoise and bronze wares



Some of the turquoise objects excavated from the Baliqiao Site in Fangcheng county, Nanyang, Henan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

are two types of signature objects of the Erlitou Site — the bronze turquoise dragon-shaped artifact and bronze bells reveal a highly developed ritual system. In Baliqiao, researchers also found related clues.

Baliqiao has yielded 63 turquoise objects. Most of them are slices but some are also decorative beads.

"The presence of a small amount of turquoise waste indicates the possibility of a workshop at the site," Wu explains.

In the excavation of a section of wall, a significant amount of fired clay blocks with

bronze residue was found. Preliminary observations suggest that these blocks may be remnants of furnace walls.

"The bronze residue, including lead-tin-copper alloy, indicates that a workshop for smelting and casting bronze artifacts probably existed at the site," Wu says.

Other than that, almost all the types of pottery unearthed at the Erlitou Site can also be found on Baliqiao. Wu and his colleagues have also discovered similar grid-shaped urban layout at both places.

"All highlight the high social productivity

and status of the Baliqiao Site, making it an important settlement in the southern region of the Xia territory," Wu says.

He speculates that the site was used to fortify the safety of the capital city and ensure the logistics of crucial resources, such as copper ore and turquoise.

"If we want to understand Erlitou, it's not enough to only see Erlitou," says Xu Liang-gao, a researcher with the Institute of Archaeology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"We need to study settlements of different tiers other than a capital city," he says. "Baliqiao Site, which is at the crossroads of cultural communications between northern and southern parts of China, just provided a key reference."

In the south of Henan province, recent studies on a series of sites from the Erlitou era have gradually portrayed a panorama of society — barns, military fortifications, and stone-processing plants.

Dai Xiangming, a professor at the Capital Normal University, considers that new findings on Baliqiao help to offer an example of national governance in its early stages, and has a huge potential as only a small portion of the site has been unveiled.

"It's still premature to come to conclusions," Dai says.

"We may unearth more significant findings after we make clear the boundaries of the site."

LIFE

CULTURAL JOURNEY

# Guizhou is an adventurer's paradise

Deep in the province's natural landscapes, visitors can discover parks and resorts giving adrenaline seekers a run for their money along with a chance to relax, **Felix Bachand** reports in Guiyang.



The China Storyteller Partnerships tour of Guizhou brings guests on an unforgettable journey through the natural wonders of Guizhou province.

Starting with an exhilarating rafting adventure on the Maling River followed by thrilling outdoor escapades at the Funmix-Anlong Limestone Resort and a visit to the mystical Wanfenglin Scenic Area, the tour promises a blend of adventure, culture and breathtaking landscapes in this diverse, culturally rich province.

Bring your adventurous spirit to Xingyi, where visitors can participate in the thrill of river rafting. Guided by experts, you will navigate the clear waters of the Maling River, pass cascading waterfalls, towering cliffs and the ancient remnants of a 500-year-old Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) bridge. Witness friendly villagers immersed in their daily fishing rituals along the riverbanks, adding an authentic touch to your journey.

The Maling River Canyon stretches 80 kilometers within a 200-meter-deep canyon, forming a breathtaking limestone waterfall cluster into the valley where some waterfalls exceed 100 meters in height. The expedition offers a secure 15-km voyage with the intensity of white-water rapids.

Go deeper into Guizhou's unique, rugged landscapes and find yourself at the Funmix-Anlong Limestone Resort, a hub of thrilling outdoor activities. With kayaking, mountain biking, off-road vehicles, hiking and cave exploration, and a heart-pounding 600-meter Via Ferrata course — adrenaline seekers will find no shortage of excitement.



Top: A birds-eye-view of Wanfenglin Scenic Area in Guizhou province on Sept 26, where unique and rare karst landscapes are attracting numerous visitors. PHOTO BY FELIX BACHAND / CHINA DAILY Above: Rafting along the Maling River in the province includes passing cascading waterfalls as shown on Sept 25. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The resort's executive director Wu Bin highlights that the park offers almost 30 outdoor sports and leisure areas and top-notch supporting facilities like tourist service centers, hotels and scenery-viewing platforms.

"The resort is open year-round and is China's first mountain outdoor

sports park awarded by the General Administration of Sport of China," Wu says.

The resort operates throughout the year, but peak season is from May to October when the average temperature hovers around 23 degrees Celsius, making it ideal for outdoor activities

like Via Ferrata, a type of mountaineering, and off-road vehicles, Wu adds.

Accommodation at the resort includes the Cliff Hotel with 11 viewing rooms, the Luxury Tent offering five opulent suites, and the Bush Lodge featuring 18 high-quality cabin-style suites. The park caters to diverse interests

and age groups, making it a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers.

Conclude your day at the resort's luxurious Cliff Hotel overlooking a mesmerizing infinity pool. You can soak in the beauty of the sunset, making a perfect end to a day of exploration. In 2018, the hotel won the American Architect A+ Award, one of the most influential architecture awards in the world. In 2024, the interior design won the gold medal of the Japan IDPA AWARD International Pioneer Design Award.

Wanfenglin, known as the Forest of Ten Thousands Peaks, is about 7 km from Xingyi. It is a must-visit when traveling to Guizhou as the scenic area showcases unique and rare karst landscapes and represents a significant geological museum within China.

This landscape, covering over 2,000 square kilometers, pays homage to the region's natural beauty and the enduring traditions of the Bouyei ethnic group. Recognized as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage, the area is filled with intrigue and allure.

Guizhou, with its 39 million inhabitants and 17 ethnic groups, stands as one of China's most diverse and culturally rich provinces. Its mountainous terrain has preserved unique traditions, making every step in Guizhou a revelation of adventure and history.

Pack your bags, set your sights on Xingyi and embark on a journey that promises to unveil the beauty and magic of Guizhou.

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## Technology opens up new realm to experience ancient town

By **ERIK NILSSON** in Guiyang, Guizhou  
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A Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) military post in rural Guizhou may not be a place you'd expect to board a 4D army tank ride to battle virtual reality-generated flying skulls, snapping crocodiles and striking cobras. Or to walk through an art installation simulating outer space where strings of lights of various colors and shapes dangle in rooms with mirrors on the walls, ceilings and floors, summoning a sense of cosmic infinity.

You can't help but walk into these suspended "heavenly bodies," putting miniature multiverses into motion at the Starry Sky Art Museum.

But travelers who explore Qingyan ancient town in Guizhou province's capital Guiyang will discover that this small, centuries-old settlement offers many digitally generated activities that appeal to vast worlds beyond its borders and our planet — and much more.

Yet the six-century-old cobblestone settlement still sustains traditions from previous eras.

Ethnic Miao artisans hammer ornate silver teapots, bracelets and bowls into shape on stumps along the street sides.

Eateries serve local specialties,



The six-century-old town of Qingyan on the outskirts of Guiyang, Guizhou province, is a small military outpost that today serves as a major tourism destination which welcomes mass incursions by visitors from far beyond its borders. PHOTOS BY ERIK NILSSON / CHINA DAILY

such as ethnic Miao-style tofu balls, stewed pig trotters, rice jelly and the namesake Qingyan tofu, washed down with red bayberry juice.

Travelers can stroll through ancient manors belonging to military leaders and temples honoring Confucius and Wenchang — the deity of literature — and stand atop the parapet-studded and canon-laden

city wall. Qingyan, throughout various periods, was home to Taoists, Buddhists, Catholics and Protestants. Today, it hosts nine monasteries, eight temples, five pavilions and two ancestral halls that testify to its evolution since its initial construction in 1378.

The garrison continued to serve its military functions

through the 20th century.

It was integral in extinguishing two major uprisings during the Ming Dynasty, in 1458 and 1622 and the Taiping Rebellion in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911); it contributed to the revolution against China's last emperor, which ended feudal rule in China; and, during the War of Liberation (1946-49), it served as a decoy

target for the Red Army, who feigned an assault on Guiyang and covertly rerouted to Yunnan.

The Zhao Ancestral Hall displays weapons, equipment, wax figures and photos from the numerous battles Qingyan sustained over the centuries.

Life-size replicas of ancient warships drift across a lotus pond just outside the city walls, reminding

visitors of the martial legacy that could hardly be forgotten by the descendants of soldiers who inhabit this peaceful place forged by war.



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## LIFE

## Exhibit chronicles doctor's dedication to China

Austrian flees to Shanghai during WWII, obtains citizenship and CPC membership, **Zhang Kun** reports.

**R**ichard Frey (1920-2004), formerly Richard Stein, escaped Nazi persecution in Austria as part of a refugee exodus to Shanghai during World War II. A former member of the Communist Party in Austria, he immersed himself in China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the world's movement against fascism. Embracing a new chapter in his life, he became a member of the Communist Party of China, choosing to stay in the country post-war, acquiring Chinese citizenship and adopting the name Fu Lai.

An ongoing exhibition at the Shanghai History Museum till Sunday, *A Proud Communist, No Regrets — Dr Frey's Dedication to China* shares Frey's life as a medical doctor who devoted most of his life to the welfare of the people in China.

Since 2019, Frey's widow Jiang Guozhen donated 171 objects, including his manuscripts, photographs and correspondence, to the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, co-organizer of the exhibition. "I hope more people can learn about Frey and many other international friends who stayed and devoted their lives to China," Jiang said at the exhibition opening.

"With the showcase of carefully selected objects from Jiang's collection, we created this exhibition about Frey, who was greatly attached to the Chinese people and relentlessly worked for the Chinese revolution, construction and reform for most of his life."

Known famously by his Chinese name Fu Lai, Dr Frey was born in Vienna in 1920. He left Austria after the country's annexation to Nazi Germany in 1938. "At just 18 years old, he fled from Nazi persecution and found refuge in Shanghai, a city that became a haven for thousands of European Jews," says Teresa Marie Bauer, deputy consul general at the Austrian Consulate General in Shanghai. "In a time of great uncertainty and hardship, Richard Frey demonstrated extraordinary courage and determination. ... During his work as a doctor, he was a significant support not only to the Jewish community but also to Chinese people. His work in healthcare, especially caring for the poor and sick during difficult times, is a shining example of humanitarianism, commitment and solidarity."

In China, he worked in Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing and participated in medical rescue against Japanese invaders during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. In 1941, he arrived at the CPC-led Jin-Cha-Ji anti-Japanese operations base, where he took the name Frey and worked as a



**Clockwise from top:** An ongoing exhibition at the Shanghai History Museum highlights the life of Richard Frey; Chen Jian (left), Jiang Guozhen (middle) and Michael Crook, chairman of the International Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives, at the event; a photograph of Frey treating a Chinese soldier. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



His (Richard Frey's) story is a symbol of courage, resistance against oppression and the ability to be a bridge between cultures."

**Teresa Marie Bauer**, deputy consul general at the Austrian Consulate General in Shanghai

faculty member at the medical school founded by Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune. Jin-Cha-Ji is the area joining Shanxi and Hebei provinces and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. Recommended by Marshal Nie Rongzhen, Frey joined the Communist Party of China in 1944.

In 1945, Frey established a biochemistry laboratory in Yan'an, Shaanxi province, a CPC revolution base, together with two assistants. They successfully produced crude penicillin for the first time in China, saving the lives of Chinese soldiers with infected wounds.

In 1953, Frey obtained Chinese citizenship. "After the war, I could have returned to Austria to further my medical studies. When I visited my family there, they and my friends advised me to stay. I knew that staying in Austria might have made me richer but where could I find the genuine friendship and love I had built during the hard times of the past in China?" Frey said in a documentary.

He returned to work in China, compiling the *People's Health History*, the first monograph on this subject in China, and established the first large-scale medical literature computer retrieval system in the country.

In addition to his medical and scientific work, Frey consistently sought to introduce the new China to the outside world by establishing connections with his homeland, as well as other Western countries, according to Bauer.

"This exhibition reminds us of the close ties between Austria and China forged through the lives and work of individuals like doctor Richard Frey. His story is a symbol of courage, resistance against oppression and the ability to be a bridge between cultures," she says. "Today, as the world faces new challenges, it is more important than ever to learn from the lessons of the past."

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## US travel agents explore tourism opportunities

SHANGHAI — During her first visit to China, Jennifer Chernay, a travel consultant from the United States, posed for photos on a bench along the winding corridor of the Yuyuan Garden in Shanghai, holding a stuffed panda.

The garden Chernay visited has many attractions, including traditional Chinese pavilions, greenery, ponds and views of the skyscrapers in Shanghai's financial zone.

"Yuyuan Garden is a place where tradition meets modernity. I like it," says Chernay, who works at Kahala Travel.

From Sept 9 to 20, she and more than 10 other travel agents from the US, many of whom were visiting China for the first time, explored cities such as Beijing, Xi'an in Shaanxi province, Chongqing and Shanghai, riding the "China Travel" wave, which has become a popular trend on social media.

"I think it would be a great experience for my clients to taste China's spicy Sichuan food or Beijing duck and meet friendly Chinese people," Chernay says.

She says that Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum in Xi'an, where the tour delegation viewed the Terracotta Warriors and experienced making



**Left:** Jennifer Chernay, a travel consultant from the United States, poses for photos at Yuyuan Garden in Shanghai last month.



**Right:** A Chinese tour guide (left) shows around travel agents from the US. PHOTOS BY CHEN AIPING / XINHUA

warrior models, had left a deep impression on her.

The group found it difficult to make the little Terracotta Warrior figurines, so it was "mind-blowing" to think that ancient Chinese people built the life-size ones by hand, she says, noting that she was impressed by their wisdom.

Gabriel Valeriano, a marketing assistant at California-based Elite

Voyages, says: "In China, there are high-speed trains from one city to another and many places have subways and buses. Public transportation is easy and we do not always need to rent a car."

Valeriano says that in-depth tourist routes connecting cities like Beijing, Xi'an, Chongqing and Shanghai would be attractive to his clients. "People should see the

past, present and future of China," he adds.

He says that traveling to Asia has become more popular as the country has gained increasing exposure on social media in recent years. China's 144-hour visa-free transit policy has also benefited the development of Asia cruise tours.

"We are designing cruise tours of over 10 days to Asia, which con-

nect countries including China, Japan and the Republic of Korea," he says, adding that tourists can stay in each country for a few days and experience different cultures.

China Tourism Group Travel Service employee Bo Lin says that the travel agent tour aimed to boost travel from the US to China and reinforce the outcomes of the

14th China-US Tourism Leadership Summit in Xi'an in May. CTG Travel is one of the organizers of the trip.

"We showcased China's rich tourism resources, from ancient architecture and traditional culture to the modern life of residents, to our US friends," Bo says, adding that the tour also allowed the travel agents to learn about China's latest efforts to promote convenience in inbound tourism.

In the first seven months of this year, the number of foreign visitors to China soared 129.9 percent year-on-year to 17.25 million, according to the National Immigration Administration.

China has been continuously optimizing its visa-free transit policy and enhancing its mobile payment systems. This month, Shanghai updated its guide for inbound travelers. The comprehensive guide in English covers communication, payments, transportation, hotline numbers, visas, tax refunds and emergency assistance, among other topics.

"I think there is a lot of potential and great growth points for China's tourism market," Chernay says.

XINHUA