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# CHINA DAILY

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Premier Li Qiang (fifth from right) and leaders of Japan, the Republic of Korea and member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations pose for a group photo ahead of the 27th ASEAN Plus Three Summit in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, on Thursday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## China, ASEAN announce progress in CAFTA 3.0

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations announced on Thursday the substantial conclusion of negotiations on the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, as Premier Li Qiang and leaders of the 10-member regional grouping met for an annual meeting in Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

China and ASEAN agreed that the latest progress demonstrates that the two sides are steadfast in upholding a rules-based trade environment and are committed to deepening economic integration and pragmatic cooperation amid the complex international landscape, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Addressing the 27th China-ASEAN Summit, Li said this important outcome provides institutional safeguards for China and ASEAN, two major markets with over 1.4 billion and 600 million people, respectively, to build their super-sized markets together.

"The super-sized markets are the greatest underpinning for our economic prosperity, and strengthening market connectivity is an important direction for our further cooperation," Li said.

As weak global demand

The super-sized markets are the greatest underpinning for our economic prosperity, and strengthening market connectivity is an important direction for our further cooperation."

Premier Li Qiang

becomes more pronounced, the market has become the most scarce resource in economic development today, Li said, noting that the CAFTA 3.0 is a significant step in spearheading East Asian economic integration.

He expressed Beijing's readiness to work with ASEAN in creating a multidimensional connectivity network to enable unimpeded development for Asia.

China would like to enhance railway, port and other infrastructure cooperation with ASEAN, expedite the signing and implementation of

the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, and strengthen linkage among cross-border payment systems, among others, Li said.

The premier also called on the two sides to expand cooperation in emerging industries to enhance the sustainability of growth for Asia.

"China would like to join hands with ASEAN to seize the opportunities of the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, and tap the cooperation potential in such areas as the digital economy and green development," he said.

With the creation of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area in 2010 and its upgrade to CAFTA 2.0 in 2019, the two sides have witnessed a significant increase in two-way trade, with the figure totaling \$552 billion in the first seven months of this year.

China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, and ASEAN became China's top trading partner in 2020.

Negotiations for CAFTA 3.0 began in November 2022, focusing on fields such as reducing nontariff barriers, increasing connectivity, and promoting both the digital and green economies.

At a time when the world economy stagnates and China-US trade frictions continue, CAFTA 3.0 will enable East Asia to gain more initiative in

international economic cooperation and even set an example for regional economic integration and global governance reform, experts said.

Li Guanghui, dean of academic affairs with the China-ASEAN School of Economics at Guangxi University, said that the cooperation in the areas involved in CAFTA 3.0 such as the digital economy, the green economy, supply chain connectivity and high-tech, will help promote new developments in mutual trade, investment and service trade between China and ASEAN.

The Chinese premier also attended an annual leaders' meeting between ASEAN and China, Japan and the Republic of Korea on Thursday where he called for the need to strengthen the Asian consciousness.

Addressing the 27th ASEAN Plus Three Summit in Vientiane, Li said Asian countries value independence and the affairs of Asia should be handled through consultation by the people of Asia, and Asia's fate must be in its own hands.

China is ready to work with ASEAN, Japan, the ROK and other Asian countries to uphold the Asian consciousness, carry forward Oriental wisdom, and steadily move forward toward building an Asia of peace and tranquility, common prosperity, openness and interconnectivity.

## Draft law seen as key to boost private sector

Public opinion being solicited until Nov 8 on implementation of new legislation

By OUYANG SHIJIA and ZHOU LANXU

China's long-awaited legislation on promoting the private economy made decisive progress on Thursday as authorities started soliciting public opinion on a draft law, marking a major step forward in reinvigorating a sector key to the growth of the nation, experts said.

They said the move reflects the government's emphasis on and support for the private economy, which will not only provide legal protection for private enterprises, but also clarify the government's responsibilities in promoting the healthy development of the private sector.

The draft law, jointly released by the Ministry of Justice and the National Development and Reform Commission, will be open for public comments until Nov 8.

"The draft law not only confirms the key role of the private economy, but also provides institutional guarantees and support through legislation," said Liu Dian, a researcher at Fudan University's China Institute.

"It marks the country's latest push for improving the market economy system. Once implemented, it will effectively stimu-

late the vitality of private enterprises and encourage them to participate in competition and cooperation across a broader range of sectors, thereby promoting overall economic growth in the long run," he added.

According to experts, the draft law marks China's very first basic legislation regarding the development of the private economy, and it aims to create a better environment that fosters fair competition, facilitates private investment, supports technological innovation, and protects the legal rights and interests of private businesses.

In a statement posted on its official website on Thursday, the NDRC said the move will help stabilize market expectations and boost business confidence, reflecting China's commitment to ensuring long-term, high-quality growth of the private economy.

Comprising 77 articles across nine chapters, the draft law seeks to codify into a legal framework key policies and practices aimed at fostering the development of the private economy. It underscores equal treatment and protection for private enterprises while promoting their regulated and healthy growth.

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## Floating art



Visitors tour a digital exhibition called "Wonderland Ocean" on Wednesday at the site of what was once a gas plant in Dortmund, Germany. In 2023, Culturespaces created an immersive art centre at the Phoenix Halle. NA FASSBENDER / AFP

## YOUNG AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURS EAGER FOR CHINESE KNOWLEDGE

Two-week learning tour inspires, develops continent's emerging business lions

By YANG FEIYUE yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Jan de Graaf from Rwanda jumped at the chance to take part in a two-week learning tour in China that started in mid-August.

The trip took him to several major cities, including Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Hangzhou and Yiwu in Zhejiang province, and Beijing, where he learned from and interacted with big Chinese companies such as tech giant Tencent and e-commerce heavyweights Alibaba and JD.

Thirteen years ago, Graaf studied for a semester at Tsinghua University under a student exchange



program run in conjunction with National University of Singapore. "So, I was curious about how things are now," said Graaf, who co-founded and has run the Rwanda-based clean cooking fuel company BioMasters since 2020.

The company turns biomass waste into pellet fuel and supplies environmentally friendly stoves to help reduce emissions along with the cost of household cooking.

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## West does not always know what's best

When certain Latin American and Middle Eastern ambassadors ask: "What about America's arming of Israel in Gaza?", they are not, it seems, motivated by profound concern or deep anger. They are simply stirred by resentment directed at the United States, which "China stands ready to exploit". This is one of the several curious claims made in the final column written by the departing Beijing bureau chief of The Economist.

David Rennie is leaving China after over six years. He has, he explains, written over 220 "Chaguan" columns "from all but one mainland province or region". His final contribution as Chaguan, which his journal featured prominently, is written as a farewell. He claims China's attitude divided the world, while completely ignoring the two-trunk elephant in the room. The US has, with its baked-in martial disposition, multi-trillion dollar wars and 700-plus span of global military bases, been incandescently swaggering and dividing for over seven decades.

### WORLD WATCH

By Richard Cullen

Chaguan agrees that the US has contributed to the "collapse" of Sino-American relations, adding that "logic guides each side". His observations contrast with those of another leading (US) commentator, Fareed Zakaria. In March last year, Zakaria openly called for the US to step firmly away from a foreign policy "forged out of paranoia, hysteria and above all, fears of being branded as soft".

The piece is permeated by a fundamental message that, though China has major achievements to its credit, it is apparently not living up to Western good governance standards. Moreover, it is a country "increasingly unwilling to accept foreign scrutiny".

Foreign scrutiny, here, essentially means scrutiny by the US-led Global West. Not mentioned, naturally, is how the US and its allies have progressively

shredded their scrutiny legitimacy through, for example, involvement in those ruinous, trillion-dollar wars, willful provocations dating back 30 years which have led to the war in Ukraine, and the compounding failure of leadership in the US and beyond. Whatever remained of this claimed standing to scrutinize has, more recently, been incinerated by the appalling US and allied complicity in creating today's Gaza hellscapes.

It is still interesting, though, to consider what this article tells us about the worldview which underpins it.

During the colonial era, a divinely-ordained civilizing role was regularly argued to support the expansion of various European empires around the globe. Drawing on established methods of written language interpretation, we can see how this approach elevated European governance and organizational norms into a dominant global role while isolating alternative,

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Graaf's faith in green and renewable energy was reinforced by the transformation he witnessed in Beijing's air quality. "I'm comparing it to 13 years ago, and I see enormous changes, it's almost unbelievable," said Graaf, who is aged in his 30s and was born in Rwanda, and grew up in the Netherlands.

Graaf recalled that when he was a student in Beijing and played football, it was difficult for him to run on some days because of the smog.

"But now it's (the air) perfect. I've seen in the data that there is a huge decline in air pollution, so it gives me hope for the rest of the world; that we can also have a big change very fast," he added.

Indoor air pollution, mainly from cooking with traditional fuels such as wood or charcoal, is a major problem in Rwanda, so Graaf wants to address the issue through his business.

In recent years, BioMassters has made several orders for green cooking stoves from China to supply its 5,000 customers.

During his visit, Graaf met with existing suppliers and explored potential ones with whom he hopes to create partnerships to expand his business.

"I noticed several of the companies that we visited see Africa as an emerging market, with a lot of potential for its big and growing population. And, several of the people that I met are really open for partnerships. They need people with expertise on the market in Africa, the right licenses, the right understanding of the culture," he said.

"Of course, China can bring in a lot of expertise, technology, and resources," he added.

**Success breeds success**

Graaf was among more than 20 young entrepreneurs from 12 countries, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Kenya, who joined the learning tour that was part of the African Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program (C-STAR) funded by China Merchants Foundation, and established by the State-owned China Merchants Group.

The C-STAR program aims to empower young people from Africa and around the world through innovation and entrepreneurship by leveraging China's industrial incubation and venture capital resources. This enables them to work together to promote the high-quality co-construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, according to the Hong Kong-based merchants group.

In September, the nonprofit program was included in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2025-27).

The program has been held for two years as part of efforts to carry out the Belt and Road Initiative, said Li Yao, deputy general manager of the overseas development division of China Merchants Shekou Industrial Zone Holdings, the CMG's urban development operation in Shenzhen.

By participating in the program, young entrepreneurs have not only gained in-depth knowledge about China's advanced technologies and experience, but also accumulated valuable resources and networks.

"They have actively engaged with potential investors, partners, and suppliers seeking opportunities to localize China's successful models," Li said.

"These entrepreneurs understand that the African market presents unique development opportunities and challenges, requiring a deep understanding of local needs, culture, and business models. They hope to learn from China's success, and explore innovative paths that suit the local market," he added.

To date, more than 500 young people from Africa have joined the program and received leadership and entrepreneurship training in Djibouti. Candidates who performed strongly were then chosen to visit well-known enterprises and higher learning institutions in China to exchange ideas and explore business opportunities.

"In the global wave of innovation and entrepreneurship, African youth are demonstrating unprecedented enthusiasm and vitality, and they seek self-fulfillment and social change through entrepreneurship," Li noted.

"Despite challenges such as limited experience, scarce resources, and an underdeveloped support system, their entrepreneurial spirit and determination are commendable and deserve support," he added.

The educational backgrounds of the participants are diverse. Some were educated at community schools in Djibouti, a few pursued further studies in China, while others are graduates of top universities like Harvard University in the United States, and Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

"Their entrepreneurial journeys also vary. Some are refining their first business plans with the help of the C-STAR program, while others are seasoned serial entrepreneurs who have built unicorn companies in Africa," Li said.

He admires the courage of some of the young entrepreneurs who left high-paying positions at Wall Street investment banks or internet giants to follow their business dreams. Others have embarked on their entrepreneurial path by chance, whether it was due to a family matter, the challenges of motherhood, or witnessing the



Young African entrepreneurs and Chinese personnel take a group photo at Tsinghua University in Beijing after finishing the learning tour in China. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Program: Cooperative way to boost African businesses



Left: African students visit the history museum of the China Merchants Group in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. Right: The students have drone operations explained to them at a commercial center in Yiwu, Zhejiang province.



hardships of visually impaired people in their communities.

"These experiences fueled their determination and drove them to change the status quo," he added.

**Building bridges**

Kelvin Umechukwu from Nigeria joined this year's learning tour with the aim of building more bridges between China and Africa.

With a mechanical and programming background, Umechukwu set up Bumpa in 2021. The company helps small African businesses run and expand their operations through a business-focused app and

"China has shown me that many things are possible, and I hope to lead this transformation and innovation, and drive it in my own country and continent."

Kelvin Umechukwu, founder of Bumpa in Nigeria

e-commerce services. "My parents used to run a small business, which had extremely low efficiency," he said.

During the pandemic, Bumpa received an increasing number of requests for assistance from local companies unable to directly do business.

Umechukwu said a key issue his company is now trying to address is trade fragmentation.

"As a business owner in Nigeria and Africa, you are likely using multiple sales channels. The problem with this approach is that you don't have a centralized place to manage all your inventory, orders, and customers, so, we want to bring every-

thing together in one place," he explained.

"On the other hand, many local businesses still do not use any digital tools today, and Bumpa tries to leverage technology to manage and grow businesses, and enhance business efficiency," he said.

Umechukwu said he was inspired by Tencent's development of payment systems and cloud infrastructure.

"We are currently exploring the cloud for retail. What I have learned from Tencent is that there are already tools specifically designed for my industry, such as using artificial intelligence for fraud detection and various available payment methods," he said.

Umechukwu was particularly impressed by the sheer volume of orders he saw at JD.

"They have this board that shows you how many orders have been received in real time. When we got there at 10 in the morning the number had gotten to 9.1 million," he said.

"I think it has given me a glimpse into how enterprise and trade can help a country build prosperity," he added.

Umechukwu said he wants to keep in touch with personnel from Chinese companies like Alibaba.

"I know that many of my clients, such as those in Nigeria, have sourced their goods from China, and there is significant trade between China and Africa, with considerable development in logistics. My goal is to engage with and learn from Chinese companies in the fields of communication and e-commerce, while also seeking partnerships to fundamentally help more Nigerian clients," he said.

"China has shown me that many things are possible, and I hope to lead this transformation and innovation, and drive it in my own country and continent."

**Rich in resources**

Xu Huiying, executive vice president of the Shenzhen Electronic Chamber of Commerce, said she was deeply impressed by the strong drive she saw in the young African entrepreneurs, as well as their innovative thinking, resilience, and desire to change their continent.

"Africa boasts rich cultural diversity and abundant natural resources, and it's remarkable that these young entrepreneurs can transform these advantages into innovative business models," she said.

Xu was "blown away" by Nigerian entrepreneur Amanda Etuk during the learning tour. Etuk co-founded Messenger, which is building a "last-mile logistics" platform in Africa and has been labeled a game-changer in Nigeria.

"It not only solves the last-mile delivery issue and creates more job opportunities locally, but also offers motorcycle loans to riders. It's a great example of synergy and a bold initiative — this is how business works," Xu said.

Dozens of members from the Shenzhen chamber established connections with the African participants during the tour, she said.

"In the future, our chamber and the C-STAR project team could regularly organize online exchange meetings, giving member companies and C-STAR participants the opportunities to exchange ideas and share experiences on a regular basis. This would help C-STAR participants enter the Chinese market and would also benefit the chamber's member companies looking to enter the African market, fostering potential collaborations," she said.

Xu said the program is a big platform that offers comprehensive support for young African entrepreneurs in commerce, culture, education and international cooperation.

"This is of great significance for their future in seeking partners, expanding business, and accessing resources," Xu said. "At the same time, by participating in such international innovation and entrepreneurship programs, young entrepreneurs can feel our support and recognition, which helps boost their confidence and motivation to pursue their entrepreneurial endeavors," she added.

Babagana Wakil, charge d'affaires ad interim of Nigeria's Embassy in China, spoke of the profound influence of the C-STAR program. He believes the current era is being shaped by the creativity, resilience, and the ambition of young people. Fostering and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship among young people is essential for national economic growth, job creation, and addressing social challenges, he said.

Wakil believes young people will have a profound impact on future industrial innovation and business strategies.

Graaf from Rwanda said his biggest takeaway from the learning trip is that he can achieve big things with his Chinese counterparts.

He met with a Chinese delegation during the August trip, which he hopes will help him materialize an even bigger dream. "Originally, my goal was to build four clean fuel and stove factories, but the delegation is willing to help with related machines, technology and other resources," he said.

As a result, Graaf has set his sights on building 10 factories in Rwanda and other African countries.

"The way China has managed to get rid of the air pollution, that's what I want to achieve in the kitchens in Africa," he said.



African students experience traditional Chinese dragon dance and martial art at Tsinghua University in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

## Stable, mature bilateral ties urged at meet

Premier Li holds constructive talks with Japanese, Australian PMs in Vientiane

By CAO DESHENG  
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Premier Li Qiang and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba reaffirmed on Thursday their commitment to comprehensively advancing the strategic and mutually beneficial relations between China and Japan.

During their talks in Vientiane, Laos, on the sidelines of the leaders' meetings on East Asia cooperation, they agreed that both countries should strive to jointly build a constructive and stable China-Japan relationship that meets the demands of the new era.

This was the first meeting between Li and Ishiba since the new Japanese prime minister took office earlier this month.

Li emphasized that the development of China and Japan is an important opportunity for each other, not a challenge.

He urged Japan to stay committed to the principles and consensus stipulated in the four political documents between the two nations, and work together with China to set the right course for the development of bilateral ties and uphold the political foundation of their relations.

China is ready to work with Japan to further leverage their respective comparative advantages, explore more new growth drivers of cooperation, and jointly safeguard the stability and smooth flow of industrial and supply chains as well as the global free trade system, Li said.

He underlined the need for both sides to increase support for exchanges in subnational, cultural, sports, youth and other fields to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

China is willing to strengthen multilateral coordination and cooperation with Japan to jointly promote regional peace, stability and prosperity, Li added.

Ishiba said that Japan is willing to work with China to look to the future and promote the steady development of bilateral ties. Japan has no intention of decoupling from or cutting supply chains with China, and wants to deepen pragmatic cooperation in various fields, he said.

Ishiba assured the Chinese premier that Japan adheres to its position on the Taiwan question as stated in the Japan-China Joint Statement signed in 1972, which remains unchanged.

On Thursday, Li also met with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Vientiane. They both acknowledged the steady improvement in China-Australia ties, and expressed the countries' commitment to jointly safeguard peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Li said that China is willing to further enhance mutual understanding with Australia and continue to work hand in hand to build a more mature, stable and fruitful comprehensive strategic partnership.

Noting that Sino-Australian relations are essentially characterized by mutual benefit and win-win results, he said that China is ready to share development opportunities with Australia.

Li expressed Beijing's readiness to continue to strengthen exchanges with Canberra on macroeconomic policies, and expand cooperation in trade and investment, green development, scientific and technological innovation and other fields, in order to boost bilateral ties.

He highlighted that a peaceful, stable and prosperous Asia-Pacific serves the common interests of China, Australia and other countries in the region.

China has been Australia's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, with bilateral trade reaching around \$230 billion last year.

Bilateral relations were severely damaged in the past due to the negative China policies adopted by the previous Australian government. The two countries broke the ice in 2022 when Albanese took office.

Albanese told Li that his country is willing to further strengthen high-level dialogue and cooperation with China in various fields, and engage in candid communication.

Australia adheres to the one-China policy, and is willing to strengthen coordination with China, he added.

## Revolutionizing farming



People visit the kiosk of a Chinese company at the Agrosalon-2024 exhibition in Moscow, Russia, on Wednesday. The four-day exhibition features a wide range of products and innovative solutions for the agricultural sector from all over the world. BAI XUEQI / XINHUA

## Mainland denounces Taiwan leader Lai's fallacy

By ZHANG YI  
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The Chinese mainland denounced on Thursday the advocacy by Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te of the "two-state" fallacy in a speech, saying the stance would exacerbate tensions across the Taiwan Strait and seriously undermine peace in the Strait.

In a speech at an event on Thursday, Lai reiterated his "pro-independence" stance that the two sides of the Strait are separate countries, with more deceitful rhetoric that challenges cross-Strait relations, experts said.

Chen Binhua, a spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said that Lai's speech was filled with confrontational thinking and provocations, exacerbated tensions across the Strait, and will severely undermine peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Lai is scheming to piece together justifications for splitting the country, Chen said, adding that "his separatist provocations are the root cause of turmoil and instability in the Taiwan Strait, which will bring disaster to the people of Taiwan."

"The current struggle against 'Taiwan independence' separatism is not a matter of systems, but a battle

“His separatist provocations are the root cause of turmoil and instability in the Taiwan Strait, which will bring disaster to the people of Taiwan.”

Chen Binhua, a spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office

between unity and division," Chen said. Regardless of what Lai said, it cannot change the legal status of Taiwan as part of China and the fact that both sides belong to one China, he added.

Former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou condemned Lai's advocacy of the "two-state" theory, saying that Lai's pursuit of a separatist path seriously violated the "constitutional provisions" and caused tensions across the Strait, which also led Ma to decide not to attend the event on Thursday.

"He is truly a troublemaker," Ma

said, adding that there are growing global concerns about Lai's approach, including criticism from international media and survey reports suggesting that Lai's provocations exceed those of his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen.

Ma sternly urged Lai to reconsider his stance, prioritize the well-being of all Taiwan residents, abandon the "two-state" theory, and avoid putting Taiwan people in jeopardy.

Li Zhenguang, a professor of Taiwan studies at Beijing Union University, said that in Lai's speech, there was a clear sense of hostility toward the mainland's system, society and even its future development. Lai's statement in his speech that "the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China are not subordinate to each other" was a typical expression of the "two-state" theory and even sounded somewhat hysterical, Li said.

Regarding Lai's remark that "the PRC has no right to represent Taiwan", Li said that United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758, adopted in 1971, resolved the issue of China's representation, making clear that the People's Republic of China represents the whole of China, including Taiwan, in the international community. While Lai emphasized the need for peace across the Strait,

his promotion of the "two-state" theory is evidently "poison" to cross-Strait peace, and is a path toward confrontation, not a solution to problems, the professor said.

Zheng Jian, a professor of Taiwan research at Xiamen University, said that under the guise of so-called "peace, democracy and goodwill", Lai's speech employed even more insidious and deceitful rhetoric in promoting the "two-state" theory.

Just five months into his term, Lai's words and actions indicate that he is firmly set on a path toward war, Zheng said.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Thursday that "the one-China principle is a fundamental norm of international relations and a consensus of the international community."

"Taiwan has never been a country and can never become one, so the so-called 'sovereignty' does not exist, Mao said. She urged foreign politicians who visited Taiwan to correct their wrong words and actions, stop interfering in China's internal affairs, and stop indulging and supporting "Taiwan separatism".

## Inside

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## Celebrating seniors



A photographer takes pictures of an elderly couple for free at a community in Yantai, Shandong province, on Thursday, a day ahead of the traditional Chinese Chongyang Festival, or Double Ninth Festival, a day for people to pay their respects to the elderly. SUN WENTAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Legislation: Steps will encourage enterprises, expert says

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According to the draft law, in areas outside the negative list, all types of market entities including private enterprises are legally allowed equal market access. It also calls for the promotion of fair participation by private enterprises in market competition and their equal access to production factors.

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the draft law highlights comprehensive coverage of all

aspects related to promoting the development of the private economy.

There are "clear provisions" in the draft law, "from ensuring the correct direction of development to specific implementation measures", he said.

Citing specific measures to improve the investment and financing environment for private businesses and support their technological innovations, Hong said that such steps will help reduce operational costs and encourage these enterprises to participate in technological advancements and industrial upgrades.

Under provisions included in the draft law, China will encourage private enterprises to play an active role in the development of new quality productive forces, ensure their legal involvement in setting standards as well as in the development and use of public data resources, and strengthen the protection of their intellectual property rights.

Shen Bing, director-general and senior research fellow at the Market and Price Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said that implementing a private economy promotion law is

essential for ensuring fair competition among enterprises of different ownership structures, as it helps provide an enabling business environment.

Efforts to implement the law will work with other ongoing policy thrusts, such as improving relevant regulations to guarantee payments to small and medium-sized enterprises, in easing the burden on enterprises, improving their operational conditions and vitalizing the broader economy.

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## Politics: Alternative systems of governance always looked down upon by West

From page 1

non-European normative systems outside of this pivotal, ideological power circle. In its most audacious form, this divided the world into a troika of civilized, semicivilized and uncivilized segments.

Today, of course, leadership elites, the media and NGOs in the Global West have largely moved beyond any references to divine ordination as a basis for projec-

ting a preferred worldview.

Now, we are accustomed to massive official, NGO and media marketing of universal Western values stressing the mandatory importance of Western-style democracy and legalized individual rights. These exhortations could be well-intentioned. But they are also frequently motivated by a mission to sustain and amplify Western geopolitical ascendancy. Meanwhile, the central importance of intimately linked, profitable

Western investment opportunities is less stridently voiced.

Governance systems and norms that do not comply with this secularized, geopolitical blueprint are, once more, grouped outside of a refreshed, Western, pivotal circle of power, by the gatekeepers of that very circle. Noncomplying alternative systems are regularly categorized as "authoritarian" (in days past, the term "pagan" was used to note — and denigrate — non-Christian religions). Inexcusably,

horrific Western Gaza genocide complicity has scarcely interrupted these political morality lectures.

As one reads the final Chaguan article attentively, one can see how this embedded political power framework has shaped it. To his credit, Rennie implicitly makes this clear. For example, he quotes a recent Pew Research Centre global survey of views on China, noting how there is "just one rich country [Singapore] where most adults

approve of China — but views of China are much warmer in low and middle-income countries". Next, he quotes a senior Chinese government official telling him that: "Western countries talking about universal values are like colonial-era missionaries telling other countries which god to pray to."

This departing dispatch is articulate, as one would expect. And it is clear the last six years have left a deep impression. They might have

prompted thoughtful reflection on what the West could learn from China. But in this case, they have not. This final column confirms that, despite an extended stay, Chaguan's need of understanding has barely moved from the West-knows-best end of the dial.

The author is an adjunct professor at the Faculty of Law, Hong Kong University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA



**Clockwise from top:** A technician checks on South American white shrimp raised at a breeding base in Alaer city, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. The shrimp cultivated at the base have been well received in the market. More than 5,000 grouper have been raised at the base. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

## Xinjiang fishery helps meet growing demand for seafood

Inland breeding base able to produce quality grouper and white shrimp

By ZHANG WEI in Alaer, Xinjiang and CHEN MEILING

The saline-alkali land found in Alaer city of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is being used to raise fish and shrimp, feeding the demand for seafood in China and reducing the country's dependence on imported products.

At a breeding base in Jinyang town in Alaer, Huang Guang, an agricultural technician, checks South American white shrimp and grouper at the pond.

"The pH level of the saline-alkaline water is around 8.0, which is suitable for the growth of sea fish and shrimp. We also added trace elements into the water to make the environment more similar to that of the ocean," he said, adding that the elements are edible and pose no harm to human health.

In March last year, Huang and his colleagues succeeded in raising South American white shrimp at the base and began trials for breeding grouper in May this year.

"Our shrimp sells especially well. The taste and quality are similar to seafood from the ocean," he said.

Huang said he was initially unaware of Xinjiang's high-quality saline-alkaline water and doubted the feasibility of fish and shrimp farming there.

The results have surpassed their expectations, he added.

Saline-alkaline land is considered less productive in growing crops, and the breeding base can make better use of the land and boost local incomes, according to Huang.

He added they recycle water and don't release used water elsewhere for environmental protection.

The fertilizer produced during breeding can also be reused, which is a sustainable development model.

Looking toward the future, Huang believes inland fish and shrimp farming can benefit all.

"I hold high hopes for Xinjiang to enhance its production of superior seafood in the years to come."

The base, with a total investment from Longda Aquaculture Farmers Cooperative of 10 million yuan (\$1.41 million), has raised more than 5,000 pearl gentian grouper and 2.3 million prawn.

With an area of 9.8 hectares, it

has 15 greenhouses with 360 ponds inside.

The program receives scientific support from Tarim University in Alaer and Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Peng Renkai, who is in charge of the cooperative, said it takes 3 months for South American white shrimp to reach a marketable size, and 6 months for grouper.

Currently, the shrimp sells for 120 yuan per kilogram, while grouper goes for 150 yuan per kg.

From January to September, approximately 30 metric tons of shrimp and 10 tons of grouper were sold, he said.

Shu Miao'an, an aquaculture expert from Zhejiang University, said the saline-alkali water there lacks certain trace elements, which are supplemented as needed. The cost of adding these elements — mainly calcium, magnesium and potassium ions — is not high.

"Xinjiang's saline-alkali land has a composition different from other saline-alkali lands," he said.

He added the main focus is expanding the scale of breeding. Now they mainly sell in Aksu area.

"The goal is for Xinjiang to become a significant region for future seafood aquaculture. Xinjiang has great development prospects in this regard," he said.

Though far from the ocean, Xinjiang's locally produced seafood is gaining traction, with many areas developing the industry.

The town is located at the northwestern edge of the Taklimakan Desert. There are 286 hectares of saline-alkali waters that belong to a national protected area.

Last year, the town started developing aquaculture in saline-alkali water. They experimented with farming tilapia, perch and prawn.

Currently, there are six aquatic farming cooperatives and enterprises. They have already released 414,000 fish of eight species, 305,000 green crabs and 4.8 million South American white shrimp, with 15 tons of shrimp already on the market.

Mao Weihua contributed to this story.

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## Tai chi activities spread Chinese culture overseas

By SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou shibaoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

When 24-year-old Peter Onyango arrived in Chenjiagou village in Henan province, he encountered a 75-year-old woman who challenged him to push her with all his might.

Despite his hesitation, to his surprise the young man failed to move her. "People you see in Chenjiagou engage in exercises frequently, a sight I've never witnessed elsewhere. It truly inspired me to practice tai chi more," he said.

Onyango, from Kenya, was one of 31 participants who recently took part in on-site instruction, seminars and interactive sessions in Chenjiagou, the birthplace of tai chi. He expressed gratitude for the immersive experience in Henan.

Organized by the Ministry of Commerce and hosted by Henan University of Technology, the program was designed to cater to developing countries such as Ethiopia, Burundi, Kenya and Sierra Leone from Aug 22 to Sept 11. It offered participants first-hand experience of tai chi's captivating charm.

Chen Bing, president of Chenjiagou Tai Chi Boxing Association, said most participants are dedicated martial arts enthusiasts and could quickly and earnestly grasp the teachings.

"We are showcasing our culture to them. Tai chi is inclusive, emphasizing the balance between *yin* and *yang*, hardness and softness, inspiring individuals," Chen said.

"Not only can they learn martial arts and tai chi movements, but I also hope they can get traditional Chinese culture and wisdom to enrich their training," Chen added.

Iva Kufri, a 61-year-old from the Czech Republic, said it was a new and positive experience, especially since it was her first visit to Henan. "Even though I have been practicing tai chi for more than 25 years, I got innumerable new



People you see in Chenjiagou engage in exercises frequently, a sight I've never witnessed elsewhere."

Peter Onyango, tai chi enthusiast from Kenya

information from here," she said. She said that her visit to the Tai Chi Museum in Chenjiagou was an "unforgettable experience and permanent source of information" for her.

"And our master is very good, he knows what is important for our improvement. He is a great inspiration for me as a teacher, and I am sure I will follow some of his teaching methods and communication in my future teaching life," she added.

Liu Kefei, dean of the School of Education and Training of Henan University of Technology, highlighted Henan's abundant cultural heritage. After returning to their own countries, many participants like to focus on establishing wushu associations and clubs to promote and spread traditional Chinese martial arts culture.

Also as director of the Henan Foreign Aid Training Center, Liu said that the center has successfully conducted 58 sessions for traditional martial arts culture-themed training. Approximately 1,700 sports officials, athletes and coaches from foreign countries have immersed themselves in and experienced traditional Chinese culture.

"We have also forged enduring friendships with individuals worldwide, expanding the circle of friends in the countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative," Liu added.

Qi Xin in Zhengzhou contributed to this story.



Participants in a tai chi cultural exchange program practice the martial arts at a park in Chenjiagou, Henan province. PHOTOS BY XU HONGXING / FOR CHINA DAILY



Tai chi master Chen Bing coaches a participant at the park.

## Small specks of dust a big threat to lunar missions

China has initiated the landing phase of its manned lunar exploration program, with a plan to complete a manned landing by 2030. Among all the challenges faced by scientists and engineers working on the program, lunar dust is very small in size, but potentially a big threat to successful missions.

However, Chinese researchers have found a simple, fast and promising way to build a dust-repellent surface via laser etching, according to a paper published in the journal ACS Applied Materials & Interfaces.

### Lunar dust threat

Lunar dust consists of tiny silicate

particles, which are formed from lunar rocks after long-term exposure to micrometeorite impacts, solar winds and cosmic radiation. From tens to hundreds of microns in size, these particles are almost invisible to the naked eye.

Despite their small size, such particles pose a significant risk, as high temperatures generated by meteorite impacts make them sharp and electrically charged. This means they tend to stick to exploration equipment and spacesuits.

According to Wang Xiao, an author of the paper and a member of the research team from Xidian University, lunar dust can infiltrate gaps and bearings of

mechanical equipment and accumulate there, leading to increased friction, intensified wear and other difficulties in equipment operation.

Lunar dust can also cover critical parts like radiators, preventing effective heat radiation and making the equipment either too cold or too hot.

In addition, lunar dust can stick to optical lenses or solar panels, causing a decline in image quality and the accuracy of data collection, and can block the absorption of sunlight by solar panels, leading to insufficient power supply.

### Nanosecond laser etching

According to Wang Weidong,

leader of the Xidian University team, there is active and passive anti-lunar dust technology. Active protection relies on external energy sources. Due to limited lunar energy resources and the high cost of energy generation and storage, such active technology is seldom used.

Passive technology, in contrast, can protect equipment from lunar dust by altering the surface structure, selecting materials with self-cleaning properties, or applying a dust-resistant coating to equipment. This has become an important approach due to its high efficiency, long-term reliability and energy independence.

Wang's team opted for alumi-

num as their chosen material, as it is lightweight, high-strength and corrosion-resistant, and then used nanosecond laser etching to prepare multi-level and micro-structure surfaces with different structural parameters.

Nanosecond laser etching utilizes ultra-short pulse lasers with a duration measured in nanoseconds, or billionths of a second.

The team achieved multi-level, micro- and nano-structures by adjusting parameters including laser energy density, pulse frequency and duration, as well as scanning speed.

### Anti-dust impact

The study found that the adhesion of lunar dust to the aluminum surface etched by nanosecond lasers was 52 percent lower than the adhesion to an

untreated surface.

Dust coverage on the surface etched by the laser was about 85 percent less than on the untreated surface, and was easily cleaned up by a combination of flipping and gravity.

Wang Xiao revealed that the team will conduct extensive engineering tests and assessments, hoping that this technology could become one of the options used for spacecraft surface protection.

If proven effective, this technology could be applied to the surfaces of lunar rovers, thermal control equipment, mechanical structures and solar panels to achieve low adhesion of lunar dust, resulting in greater convenience and safety for human exploration efforts on the moon, he added.

XINHUA

## CHINA

By ZHENG JINRAN, PENG CHAO,  
LI YINGQING and DANG HE  
in Kunming

The nine lakes that dot the plateau in Yunnan province, Southwest China, that provide a crucial ecological barrier and water conservation area in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, have been pulled back from the brink of environmental disaster due to years of rapid industrialization and urbanization.

For many of the lakes, each covering more than 30 square kilometers, they'd suffered from years of industrial and agriculture runoff, with even raw sewage making its way into their waters as China embraced high-speed economic development from the 1980s.

Dianchi Lake — the largest freshwater lake in Yunnan — became one of China's most polluted lakes in the 1990s with its water quality falling below Grade V, the lowest water quality in the national five-tier grading system for surface water.

"Various types of garbage and large quantities of blue-green algae were floating on the water surface. The water turned murky and gave off a strong foul smell. Many fish died," recalled Li Yunli, a 60-year-old local who grew up by the lake.

"This really broke our hearts since we had lived by the lake for generations," she said.

Erhai Lake, the second largest lake in Yunnan and a popular scenic spot, suffered a near-fatal blow to its ecosystem at that time with farms, real estate projects and hotels releasing too many pollutants into the water.

"The nine lakes are all located on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. Compared with other water bodies, plateau lakes are relatively isolated and their water replacement period is longer, which means that they lack the ability for effective self-purification," said Liu Xiaoyong, deputy director of the development research center of the Ministry of Water Resources.

"Plateau lakes also have relatively fewer species and their ecosystems are fragile. Once damaged, it can be very difficult to restore them," he said.

In order to save these lakes, government departments, institutions and local residents have worked together and taken a series of actions, exploring a greener development path for harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

### Restoration efforts

From the early 2000s, to ease the pressure on these lakes caused by population concentration and excessive development, Yunnan formulated special regulations to guide the gradual withdrawal of the population and industries from lakeside areas.

Since 2008, Kunming, the provincial capital, has been clearing farmland, fish ponds and structures within 200 meters of Dianchi's shoreline. A total of 58 wetlands covering 3,047 hectares have been restored.

In 2018, the city of Dali completed the demolition of 1,806 households and homestays on the shores of Erhai Lake. The shoreline was then transformed into an ecological corridor to intercept and purify polluted water and reduce the impact of human activities.

"An important measure to manage and protect the lake is to control pollution at the source," said Yuan Tingju, director of Kunming's Dianchi Lake administration bureau.

Yuan said the city has implemented



A farmer cleans out weeds from a wetland area in Eryuan county, Yunnan province, last month. The county is named for being the source of Erhai Lake. PENG CHAO / CHINA DAILY

a project to separate rainwater and sewage, which includes the construction and reconstruction of over 200 km of drainage pipes. It has also built 29 urban sewage and rainwater treatment plants in the Dianchi Lake basin, with an annual sewage treatment capacity of 700 million cubic meters.

"To accelerate the lake's water circulation, we have been diverting water from the Niulan River and only discharging high-standard purified wastewater from treatment plants," he said.

A total of 1.06 billion cubic meters of water from the Niulan River and 1.82 billion cubic meters of purified wastewater have been discharged into the lake, which is the equivalent of replacing all the water in Dianchi twice, he added.

Xiong Hua, deputy director of the Kunming Dianchi National Tourism Resort's water management bureau, said rainwater from the drainage network, river water and purified wastewater stay in the wetlands for five to seven days before entering the lake.

"This process further reduces pollutants and breaks down excess nutrients, to ensure the quality of the water that flows into the lake," he said.

Similar measures have also been taken in the Erhai Lake basin. Eryuan county, the main water source for Erhai Lake, has preserved 2,013 hectares of natural wetlands and created 2,573 hectares of artificial wetlands, said Yang Chunbing, director of the county's wetland protection and management center.

"Tests conducted by professional agencies show that the wetland purification process can improve water quality from Grade IV to Grade III or even Grade II," he said.

A total of 25 livestock and poultry manure collection stations have been built in the basin. The local government provides a subsidy of 80 yuan (\$11.2) per metric ton to enterprises that collect and turn organic waste into fertilizer or biogas.

# Green shift provides lifeline for Yunnan's lakes

Unbridled industrialization from 1980s onwards severely harmed local water quality

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Top: Farmers harvest haicai (*Ottelia acuminata*) in Eryuan in June. The edible plant is very sensitive to changes in water quality, making it a barometer of the lake's health. LUO XINCAI / XINHUA

Above: Tourists have fun at Haiyan village by the Dianchi Lake in Kunming, Yunnan province, in July. LIANG PINYAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Liu Fei, executive deputy general manager of Yunnan Shunfeng Erhai Environmental Technology Co, said his company collects nearly 2,000 tons of organic waste every day from the basin, and transforms it into organic fertilizers and biogas.

### Species revival

The province's efforts to clean up the lakes are starting to pay off. Since 2018, the water quality in

Dianchi Lake has stabilized at Grade IV, while that of Erhai Lake fluctuates between Grade II and Grade III, data from the authorities show.

Statistics from Kunming's ecology and environment bureau show that vegetation coverage in the wetlands around Dianchi has increased from 13.1 percent in 2007 to 81 percent. The number of bird species spotted in the area during the same period has risen from 89 to 175.

Li Yunli, who used to be a fisherman, said that she's noticed many fish species that had disappeared from the lake long ago have returned.

One of them is the golden-line barbel, an endangered fish species that had been absent from the lake since the 1980s.

Wang Xiaoli, a senior engineer at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Kunming Institute of Zoology, said since 2009, the institute has released over 3 million artificially bred golden-line barbels into the Dianchi Lake basin.

"According to our monitoring, these fish have formed a stable adult population of 400 to 500 for a decade in the Panlong River, a major river that flows into Dianchi Lake," she said.

Yang Chunbing, director of Eryuan's wetland protection and management bureau, said many rare bird species have returned to the county's wetlands for winter.

"Last year, national first- and second-class protected birds — the oriental white stork, the black stork, the glossy ibis and the greylag goose — were found wintering here for the first time," he said.

Yang said the improved water quality has provided the foundation for large-scale plantation of *Ottelia acuminata*, an edible aquatic plant endemic to Southwest China.

"Planting *Ottelia acuminata* in the wetlands will not only help absorb and eliminate harmful pollutants in the water such as nitrogen and phosphorus, but also generate economic benefits," he said, noting that it will promote the coordinated development of wetland conservation and the local economy.

Duan Conggu, an environmental protection engineer in charge of the Eryuan *Ottelia acuminata* industry research base, said the plant cannot survive in water that is not clean enough or even slightly polluted, which makes it an eco-friendly food. "The *Ottelia acuminata* offers

greater economic benefits than common crops like corn and rice," said Rui Longjia, Party chief of Songqu village in Eryuan. "Its cultivation, weeding and harvesting can create many job opportunities as these processes all rely on manual labor."

According to Eryuan's development plan for its *Ottelia acuminata* industry, the planting area of the aquatic plant will reach 1,333 hectares by 2028, generating an output value of 600 million yuan. Farmers involved in the industry are expected to have an average annual income of over 40,000 yuan.

### Eco-tourism circle

The Dianchi and Erhai lakes have seen a resurgence in tourism thanks to the significant improvement in their ecological environment.

Miao Ruiqi, who works at the company that built the Erhai Ecological Corridor project, said that this summer, a peak average of about 120,000 tourists visited the corridor each day.

"Cycling along the ecological corridor has become a popular thing to do and has been promoted heavily online," he said.

Kunming Dianchi National Tourism Resort received 23.68 million visits last year, generating a revenue of 26.2 billion yuan, an increase of 45.58 percent year-on-year, said Yang Peng, chief economist at the resort.

Yang said the emphasis of development around Dianchi used to be real estate and commercial industries, but now the focus has shifted to more eco-friendly industries such as tourism, culture, sports, wellness and health.

Ren Xizhong, deputy director of Kunming's agriculture and rural affairs bureau, said the local government launched a project in February last year to transform and upgrade villages around the lake, aiming to realize rural revitalization through the development of eco-tourism.

"We are developing 46 villages based on their own unique historical and cultural characteristics to create a diverse, well-equipped and distinctive rural eco-tourism circle," he said.

Haiyan, a 600-year-old fishing village, has become an "internet famous" destination for tourists to capture what is touted as "the most beautiful sunset".

Li Tie, Party chief of the working committee of the Dayu subdistrict, said the village is already home to more than 100 businesses, including restaurants, homestays, coffee shops and art studios. These businesses have created more than 300 jobs that pay an average salary of more than 3,000 yuan per month.

Around 98 households in the village rent out their houses, increasing their annual income by an average of more than 100,000 yuan, he said.

Local Xiao Yuan quit her job at a real estate company and joined her mother in running their own store that mainly sells a pea flour dish, which is a specialty in Yunnan.

"We sell about 100 bowls a day on weekdays. On weekends and holidays we can sell up to 300 bowls a day," Xiao said, adding that a bowl sells for 8 yuan.

Yang Ran contributed to this story.

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Online  
Watch the video  
by scanning  
the code.

## Province contributes to global biodiversity conservation

By YANG RAN and ZHENG JINRAN  
in Kunming

Yunnan, China's most biologically diverse province, has a wealth of experience in cataloging and conserving its plant and animal species, which it is sharing with partners around the globe in international cooperations and initiatives.

The southwestern province, which borders Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, is home to more than 18,000 high plant species and 1,836 vertebrate species, accounting for more than half of China's total in both categories, according to an article published in science journal Springer.

Among these plant and animal species are a vast array of others that are endangered and protected, which has meant Yunnan has been tasked with protecting its biodiversity over the years from dangers such as human activities and exploitation.

Utilizing its wealth of experience, Yunnan has reached out to others to work collaboratively in biodiversity conservation.

One such example is the China-

Laos cross-border Asian elephant conservation collaboration project.

Asian elephants, a first-class nationally protected species in China, are found in about a dozen countries. In China, their numbers have increased from around 150 in the 1960s to approximately 300 today, according to Xiong Chaoyong, deputy director of the Asian Elephant Conservation Management Center in Yunnan's Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture.

He noted that some wild Asian elephants living near the China-Laos border frequently cross between the two countries, which necessitates a joint conservation approach. "The government of China initiated joint conservation efforts with the Lao government in 2006," Xiong said, adding that they have collaborated to protect these elephants with China providing technical support, equipment and funds.

This partnership has established a 200,000-hectare joint Asian elephant protection area and implemented over 40 conservation measures, allowing elephants to safely



From left: Xiong Chaoyong explains Asian elephant conservation work in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province. YANG RAN / CHINA DAILY

Wang Bo, a conservationist, guides a rescued elephant during the animal's rewilding training in August. HU CHAO / XINHUA

ly travel between the two countries.

"The ability of Asian elephants to freely traverse the border indicates excellent ecological protection in the region. Also, cross-border conservation is crucial for protecting species, ensuring natural interactions between Asian elephants in Yunnan, China, and Laos, and preventing genetic degradation," said Chen Fei, director of the Asian Elephant Research Center at the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.



"Our team has conducted surveys and monitoring of populations and habitats in the cross-border area, which shows a healthy and growing elephant population and improving habitat quality," Chen said. "Our next step is to expand the joint protection area and strengthen the collaboration efforts."

Yunnan's commitment to biodiversity extends beyond animal conservation. In plant conservation, Yunnan collaborates with countries involved in

the Belt and Road Initiative, offering financial and technical support to tackle biodiversity challenges together.

The China-Uzbekistan Global Allium Garden Kunming Center serves as a prime example of how Yunnan is using its own resources to support global biodiversity conservation.

"The commonly known scallions and onions are just a small part of the allium genus. There are nearly 1,000 species of allium worldwide, some of which are highly ornamental and produce large flowers. Additionally, we can extract valuable compounds from these plants," said Niu Yang, deputy director of the Kunming Botanical Garden at the Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"Central Asia and southwestern China have a rich diversity of allium species. Establishing the Global Allium Garden in China and Uzbekistan leverages our unique geographical advantages," said Niu.

The China-Uzbekistan Global Allium Garden has two centers — the Kunming Center at the Kunming Botanical Garden, and the Tashkent Center at the Institute of Botany of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences. The Kunming Center opened in April 2018, and the Tashkent Center began construction in May 2018.

In April 2019, at a State Council Information Office conference, the construction of the China-Uzbekistan Global Allium Garden was highlighted as an important demonstration platform for technological support in the Belt and Road Initiative.

According to Niu, the two centers have collected and conserved around 200 allium species, making the garden a crucial base for the conservation and research of allium species, particularly wild ones.

Beyond specific projects, Yunnan is collaborating with Southeast Asian nations to help them assess their local biodiversity resources and train local professionals, boosting regional biodiversity research.

The Southeast Asia Biodiversity Research Institute was established in 2015 at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, CAS. So far, it has conducted many joint scientific expeditions with Southeast Asian nations, discovering over 800 new species of plants and animals in the region.

From 2016 to last year, it had enrolled 143 students from Southeast Asia, helping these nations boost their capability in biodiversity research.

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# CCICED urged to deepen ecological reform

By HOU LIQIANG  
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Minister of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu has called for even greater contributions from the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development to deepen the reform of China's ecological civilization system and further advance the global environmental governance system.

Huang, who is also the executive vice-chairperson of CCICED, a high-level international advisory body established for the Chinese government, made the remarks at the opening ceremony for the annual general meeting of the council on Thursday.

The minister spoke highly of CCICED's work in the past year, saying it "has not only effectively served China's environmental and developmental causes, but has also contributed Chinese solutions to global sustainable development".

With the enthusiastic involvement of all council members, special advisers and more than 300 experts from home and abroad, as well as robust support from its partners, the council has engaged in collaborative research over the past year on a wide array of topics, including carbon neutrality pathways, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation and South-South cooperation, he said.

More than 30 specialized reports have been produced through these efforts, he noted. And the council has also submitted to the State Council, China's Cabinet, its annual policy recommendations under the theme of maintaining the strategic determination for dual carbon goals, exploring innovative pathways for multiple-goal synergy and

High-level international advisory body holds its annual general meeting in Beijing



Huang Runqiu, minister of ecology and environment, delivers a keynote speech at the opening ceremony for the annual general meeting of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development in Beijing on Thursday. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

accelerating the promotion of green, low-carbon and high-quality development.

China aims to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and realize carbon neutrality before 2060, which are often referred to as the country's dual carbon goals.

Huang said that additionally, the council held over 30 important online and offline meetings and events, and also organized investigation tours both in China and abroad.

Recalling the significant achievement China has made in promoting the construction of ecological civilization, the minister expressed sincere hopes that CCICED will play a bigger role as China strives to strengthen global environmental governance cooperation and work together with the international community to address global environmental risks and challenges, as well as build a clean and beautiful world.

Huang expressed his anticipation

for CCICED, with improving the basic systems for ecological civilization as one of its key focuses, to conduct strategic, fundamental and comprehensive research to offer decision-making guidance and intellectual backing for shaping China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) on ecological and environmental protection, as well as furthering the advancement of a sustainable and beautiful China.

Emphasizing that connecting China and the world stands as a

unique advantage of CCICED, he said he expects the council to engage in more extensive dialogue and exchanges that are aimed at building trust, dispelling doubts and consolidating consensus.

He pointed out the formulation of Nationally Determined Contributions tailored to national conditions, the building of an international energy cooperation system that balances security and cleanliness, and the construction of sustainable global renewable ener-

gy supply chains as potential focuses of the dialogue and exchanges.

United Nations Development Program Administrator Achim Steiner also underscored the pivotal role that CCICED can play.

He stated that the council, known for its lengthy history of contributing through policy recommendations, special policy studies and analysis, as well as for gathering best practices, and also for being, in some respects, a creator of the next generation of policies, has a significantly crucial role to fulfill.

It is a privilege to have such a body, he emphasized, adding "For me, it is as much about coming to China as it is also to come for a moment to reflect on what is happening in the world at large, because all the central questions that you have addressed ... are indeed also questions that every nation, every community across the globe is facing now, even though in very different contexts and realities."

Addressing the opening ceremony via a video link, Inger Andersen, executive director of the UN Environment Programme, underlined CCICED as "a unique platform that gathers experts from around the world to share recommendations on critical policy issues".

The council's 2024 policy recommendations focus on issues at the heart of tackling the triple planetary crisis — climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution — she said, adding its work can inform actions to address environmental challenges in China, regionally and globally.

"I'm immensely grateful for China's leadership, for the role that we play in CCICED and for the strong collaboration that we enjoy with our Chinese partners," she said.

## Experts praise platform for tackling challenges

By HOU LIQIANG

The China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development has evolved from a platform generally dominated by foreign experience into a dynamic one where experts from home and abroad collaborate to tackle environmental challenges, CCICED council members said.

They also noted that the council, a high-level international advisory body for the Chinese government, also serves as a vital conduit for disseminating China's environmental management practices to the global community.

The council members made the remarks in the lead-up to the annual general meeting of the council being held in Beijing from Thursday to Saturday.

CCICED Vice-Chairperson Kristin Halvorsen said she is highly impressed by how Chinese authorities have embraced the platform's suggestions.

"In CCICED, we don't make individual recommendations, although we take initiatives for recommendation proposals. I firmly stand behind the CCICED recommendations going forward to the State Council, and my impression is that surprisingly many of these are followed up — if not immediately, then after some time," she said.

Halvorsen, who is also director of the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo, Norway, said she is particularly pleased with the progress made in matters related to climate change, an issue China has aggressively worked to cope with.

She also endorsed the observation that the council has transitioned into a platform where Chinese and foreign members collaborate on environmental issues. Previously, CCICED primarily centered on foreign council members bringing their international experiences to address China's environmental challenges.

"It is now much more of a two-way exchange of experiences between Chinese and international experts," she emphasized.

CCICED has closely followed the greening of the Belt and Road



Conference attendees exchange ideas before the opening ceremony of the annual general meeting of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development in Beijing on Thursday. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Initiative and has also provided some recommendations on how this work should be carried out. The platform's work on climate change has focused on global governance issues, showing the importance CCICED places on China's impact in a global context, Halvorsen said.

"We all recognize China's immense importance in global challenges like climate change, both as a source of the problem and as a provider of solutions to the challenges," she said, adding she believes there are several international problems that cannot be solved without China, and CCICED is eager to play its role in enabling China to contribute to finding solutions.

"China is arguably the world's leader in providing green technical solutions at a reasonable cost. My hope is that the international community will embrace these important Chinese contributions to facilitate global solutions," she said.

Ani Dasgupta, president and CEO of the World Resources Institute, became a CCICED council member in 2021, with several of his predecessors at the institute holding the same position for many years.

"We have partnered with CCICED on various initiatives, including research supporting biodiversity finance, sustainable agriculture systems, trade and sustainable supply chains, etc. Work like this has brought together many critical stakeholders and has created meaningful frameworks for joint action and policy," he said.

He has also observed the transition that has happened in the council. CCICED has been a critical knowledge-sharing platform. When members come together in China, sharing and bringing unique perspectives and experi-

ences to the table, more innovative and comprehensive solutions have emerged, he said.

Dasgupta said CCICED is not only collecting best practices to address China's domestic environmental concerns, but is also considering how the lessons learned in China can be applied in other countries and markets as well. "I believe the existence and evolution of CCICED embodies China's increasing capabilities and strong sense of shared global responsibility in tackling climate change and biodiversity loss," the council member said.

He said his experiences as a council member have made it clear to him how eager and ready China is to implement effective policies. When the WRI partnered with CCICED on research examining the role of the Belt and Road Initiative in soft commodity supply chains, the conversation broadened to the huge role China could play in safeguarding trees in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, Dasgupta added.

As China is the world's largest consumer of soy products, its policies could shift demand in the supply chain toward deforestation-free soy. "And because CCICED had already brought the right people into the room, we were able to help bring WRI's evidence and research into policy exploration in less than a year," he said. "China is now working closely with Brazil in a wonderful example of a bilateral — rather than unilateral — trade agreement."

"As China's influence has grown on the world stage, CCICED council members have increasingly recognized China's role as both a critical player and leader in addressing international climate and sustainability issues, particularly in areas like green finance, renewable energy and biodiversity conservation."

## Chinese presidency sets tone for COP16

By HOU LIQIANG

Recognizing China's notable contributions to the global biodiversity process throughout its presidency tenure at the COP15 United Nations biodiversity conference, experts have highlighted China's potential to pave the way for a successful COP16 in Colombia.

They made the remarks in the lead-up to the annual general meeting of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development. Established in 1992, the platform serves as a high-level international advisory body that provides policy advice to the Chinese government.

In October 2021, China officially assumed the presidency for COP15, which is officially known as the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The nation will hand over the presidency at the upcoming COP16, which is slated to be held in Cali, Colombia, from Oct 21 to Nov 1.

Marco Lambertini, a CCICED council member and the convener of the Nature Positive Initiative, eloquently portrayed the COVID-19 pandemic-induced disruptions to COP15, drawing from his firsthand involvement in the conference's unfolding narrative.

"I still remember the morning of the first negotiation meeting of the post-2020 biodiversity framework in February 2020 in Rome when suddenly every delegate was met by Italian police staff wearing masks and testing everyone's body temperature. The pandemic had exploded," he said.

The key task of COP15 is to elaborate on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and identify global biodiversity protection goals up to 2030.

Despite the inevitable disruption from the pandemic, the Chinese presidency showed uncompromising determination, stressed Lambertini, who is also the former director-general of WWF International.

China's decision to hold the first part of COP15, albeit virtually, sent a strong political signal about the importance of not being derailed in reaching an international agreement on biodiversity and provided impetus to the continuation of the negotiations, he noted.

The first part of COP15 — which was held in Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan province, in October 2021 — included an opening ceremony, speeches by leaders and the issuance of the "Kunming Declaration". For the second part, parties met in Montreal, Canada, from Dec 5 to 17 to conclude negotiations and decide on the post-2020 framework.

China's presidency of COP15 is poised to set the stage for a successful COP16 in Cali by showcasing its commitment to biodiversity conservation."

Linda Krueger, director of Biodiversity and Infrastructure Policy for The Nature Conservancy

Lambertini lauded the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework parties reached under the Chinese presidency as one "without any doubts the most comprehensive and measurable plan for biodiversity we ever had".

The framework, which includes measurable targets on conservation, restoration, reduction of harmful subsidies and increased funding for biodiversity, has dramatically increased clarity, accountability and opportunities for recognition of governments and the private sector, he said.

The framework has 23 action-oriented global goals slated to be fulfilled during this decade. For instance, it aims to reduce incentives, including subsidies, for acts that harm biodiversity by at least \$500 billion per year by 2030.

"Target measurability is key," Lambertini said. "The only target nearly achieved in the previous Aichi agreement a decade earlier was the only truly measurable one of achieving 15 percent and 10 percent of terrestrial and marine protected area coverage."

China's contribution to addressing the global biodiversity crisis in leading the world to adopt the framework has been outstanding and unparalleled.

"It has elevated the 'silent crisis' of biodiversity to a global priority as a dangerous threat the world cannot any longer ignore and must address urgently and decisively," he underscored.

Linda Krueger, director of Biodiversity and Infrastructure Policy for The Nature Conservancy, as well as co-lead of CCICED's Special Policy Study titled "Biodiversity Conservation and Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Framework", said the framework has set out an ambitious road map for achieving a world where people live in harmony with nature.

Target 3 of the framework, which proposes to protect at least 30 per-

cent of the land and sea by 2030, reflects ambition and a sense of urgency for biodiversity conservation, representing a significant upgrade in ambition from previous targets laid out by the Convention on Biological Diversity and undoubtedly provides new impetus and direction for global biodiversity conservation, Krueger noted.

"Even more ambitious are the targets related to mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and industrial activities such as energy, mining and infrastructure," she said.

The financial components of the framework are also critical to its ultimate success and extremely ambitious, she emphasized. Developing countries will need a lot of financial and technical support to implement the 23 targets of the framework, and even wealthier countries will struggle to transform sectors to be more supportive of positive biodiversity outcomes.

Krueger also spoke highly of China's contribution of funds and support to the global biodiversity conservation process, especially the conservation efforts in developing nations.

"China has become the largest donor to the core budget of the CBD and its protocols, and the largest developing country contributor to the Global Environment Facility," she said.

In the first part of COP15, China took the lead by announcing plans to invest 1.5 billion yuan (\$212 million) to establish the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, which was officially launched in May.

The fund is a vital initiative, demonstrating the responsibility of the Chinese government and providing important financial and technical support for global biodiversity conservation, Krueger stressed.

Looking into the future, Krueger said she hopes China will continue to play a proactive role in the global biodiversity conservation process.

"The Kunming-Montreal framework provides a blueprint for turning nature's fortunes around in this make-or-break decade," she said.

China's efforts and commitments have not only demonstrated its leadership in biodiversity conservation, but also injected fresh impetus into global environmental governance, promoting international cooperation and action on biodiversity conservation, she said.

"China's presidency of COP15 is poised to set the stage for a successful COP16 in Cali by showcasing its commitment to biodiversity conservation. I can see that the Chinese government and all sectors are committed to implementing agreements from COP16," she noted.

# GLOBAL LENS



A mobile desalination station is set up on the shore in Beddouza in western Morocco on July 23, amid efforts to fight drought in the country in northwestern Africa. AFP

## WATER SOLUTION

Morocco turns to the sea to quench thirst in drought-hit remote areas



A shepherd watches over his sheep while sitting on cracked earth at the Al-Massira dam about 140 kilometers south of Casablanca, Morocco, on March 6. FADEL SENNA / AFP

In the small fishing village of Beddouza in western Morocco, locals are looking to the Atlantic to plug their water gaps, using mobile desalination stations to combat the kingdom's persistent drought.

Since 2023, Morocco has built some 44 of these "monobloc" desalination stations — compact, transportable units that have come as a boon against the increasingly tangible effects of climate change.

The potable water is distributed with tanker trucks to remote areas in the country, currently grappling with its worst drought in nearly 40 years.

"We heard about desalinated water in other villages, but we never expected to have it here," said Karim, a 27-year-old fisherman who did not give his last name, as he gathered among dozens with jerrycans to collect his share of water.

Hassan Kheir, 74, another villager, described the mobile stations as a godsend, as groundwater in the region "has dried up."

Some 45,000 people now have access to drinking water directly from the ocean in Beddouza, about 180 kilometers northwest

of Marrakesh, as a result of three monobloc stations.

These units can potentially cover a radius of up to 180 km, according to Yassine Maliari, an official in charge of local water distribution.

With nearly depleted dams and bone-dry water tables, some 3 million people in rural Morocco urgently need drinking water, according to official figures, and the kingdom has promised to build 219 more desalination stations.

Monobloc stations can produce up to 3,600 cubic meters of drinking water a day and are "the best possible solution" given the ease of distributing them, Maliari said.

For cities with greater needs, like Casablanca, larger desalination plants are also under construction, adding to 12 existing national plants with a total capacity of nearly 180 million cu m of drinking water a year.

### Facing shortages

By 2040, Morocco is poised to face "extremely high" water stress, a dire predic-



Residents walk toward a tank distributing distilled seawater in Safi, Morocco, on Aug 23. AFP



People fill their containers from a tank distributing distilled seawater in Safi on Aug 23. AFP



A man returns home with containers filled with distilled seawater in Safi on Aug 23. AFP



A worker fills a tank with water treated in a mobile desalination station in Beddouza, Morocco, on July 23. AFP



A nomad pours water for his sheep near Tinghir, Morocco, on Nov 28, 2022, with a drought forcing him to rely on government handouts of fodder. MOSA'AB ELSHAMY / AP

tion from the World Resources Institute, a nonprofit research organization.

With coasts on both the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, the northwestern African country has banked on desalination for water security.

In Beddouza, the population is relatively better off than those in remote areas farther inland.

About 200 km east, in Al-Massira, the country's second-largest dam has nearly dried up.

The dam has filled up to an alarmingly meager 0.4 percent, compared to 75 percent in 2017, according to Abdelghani Ait Bahssou, a desalination plant manager in the coastal city of Safi.

The country's overall dam fill rates currently average 28 percent but are feared to shrink by 2050 as drought is expected to persist, according to the agriculture ministry. Over that same period, official figures project an 11 percent drop in rainfall and a rise in temperatures of 1.3 degrees.

As the country grapples with the increasingly volatile effects of climate change, King

Mohammed VI has pledged that desalination will provide more than 1.7 billion cu m a year and cover more than half of the country's drinking water needs by 2030.

The lack of water also threatens Morocco's vital agriculture sector, which employs about one-third of the working age population and accounts for 14 percent of exports.

Cultivated areas across the kingdom are expected to shrink to 2.5 million hectares in 2024 compared with 3.7 million last year, according to official figures.

In 2023, 25 percent of desalinated water was allotted to agriculture, which consumes more than 80 percent of the country's water resources.

Against this backdrop, the authorities in Safi were in a "race against time" to build a regular desalination plant which now serves all of its 400,000 residents, Bahssou said.

The plant is set to be expanded to also provide water by 2026 for Marrakesh and its 1.4 million residents, some 150 km east of Safi, Bahssou said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



A technician works at a desalination plant and checks on the filters in Morocco's coastal city of Safi on July 23. AFP



A technician checks on equipment inside a desalination station in Beddouza, Morocco, on July 23. AFP

## BUSINESS

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# New monetary tool to support capital market

The 500-billion-yuan swap facility was launched by central bank

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
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China's first capital market-targeted monetary tool officially launched on Thursday. Together with the recently introduced economic stimulus policies and more of the kind in the pipeline, such moves will help to further improve market liquidity while boosting investors' confidence, which is conducive to the market stabilization in the long run, said experts.

Their comments were made on Thursday, when the 500-billion-yuan (\$71 billion) Securities, Funds and Insurance Companies Swap Facility (SFISF) was officially launched by the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank.

The SFISF will allow qualified securities brokers, fund companies and insurers to use their assets including bonds, stock exchange traded funds and holdings in the constituents of the benchmark CSI 300 Index as collateral in exchange for highly liquid assets such as treasury bonds and central bank bills, the PBOC said in a statement.

Application for the swap program started on Thursday, and while the initial phase of the program is set at 500 billion yuan, it can be further expanded depending on the situation, according to the statement.

PBOC's governor Pan Gongsheng announced the plan to launch the swap program in late September, adding that the move would "significantly enhance firms' ability to access funds to buy stocks".

Zhu Hualei, senior investment consultant of Jufeng Investment Information, explained that the SFISF will help to usher in more capital inflow into the A-share market and avoid drastic market fluctuations, including panic selling.

This swap program will also revitalize the existing assets held by securities, fund and insurance companies, providing more liquidity to these financial service providers. This is of great importance to further consolidating A-share investors' confidence and stabilizing market performance, he said.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index gained 1.32 percent to close at 3301.93 points on Thursday, while the Shenzhen Component Index slid 0.82 percent.

Trading remained active, with the combined trading value at the Shanghai and Shenzhen

exchanges exceeding 2.1 trillion yuan. A large number of State-backed enterprises trading at the technology-focused ChiNext in Shenzhen, including China Railway Prefabricated Construction and COFCO Technology & Industry, touched the daily price increase limit of 20 percent on Thursday.

Xu Zhong, deputy director of National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors, stressed that the SFISF cannot be understood as the central bank entering the stock market as the monetary base is not increased and the central bank's balance sheet is not expanded while implementing the swap program.

The SFISF is similar to the Term Securities Lending Facility once introduced by the US Federal Reserve, the latter of which helped to improve liquidity by exchanging equities for treasury bonds, said Xu.

The Fed launched the TSLF in 2008, when the capital market was hit by the global financial crisis. The TSLF allowed primary dealers to borrow treasury bonds with higher liquidity by using the less liquid securities they held as collaterals.

The SFISF, the first phase 300-billion-yuan special reloan announced in late September to support public companies' buybacks and increased holdings, as well as the recently announced batch of incremental stimulus packages, have significantly boosted the market confidence in China, said Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley.

Describing the SFISF as "unprecedented", Xiong Yi, chief China economist at Deutsche Bank, said that the market appetite picked up immediately when the plan to launch the program was announced, proven by the rising benchmark indexes and surging trading value lately.

At a news conference scheduled for Saturday, Finance Minister Lan Fo'an is expected to introduce plans aimed at "intensifying counter-cyclical adjustment of fiscal policy to promote high-quality economic development".

Industry experts estimate that the scale of incremental fiscal policies to be released within the year may not be less than 2 trillion yuan. They may include raising the deficit ratio, issuing special treasury bonds and ultra-long-term special treasury bonds, and expanding special bonds' scope of use.



Vessels under construction at a shipyard in Rongcheng, East China's Shandong province.  
LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## China gets most orders for green ships

By ZHONG NAN  
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China captured over 70 percent of global orders for green vessels and achieved full coverage across all mainstream ship types during the first three quarters of 2024, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology on Thursday.

Propelled by advancements in green technologies and innovation, Chinese shipyards saw new orders surge 51.9 percent year-on-year to 87.11 million deadweight tons between January and September, accounting for 74.7 percent of the global total, the MIIT data showed.

Meanwhile, the country's shipbuilding output reached 36.34 million dwt, up 18.2 percent on a yearly basis, making up 55.1 percent of the world's total.

Hu Tieniu, a researcher at the Marine Design & Research Institute of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, said that the notable growth underscores China's commitment to advancing sustainable shipbuilding practices, catering to an increasing global demand for eco-friendly vessels.

Chinese shipbuilders have made significant strides in incorporating green technologies, enhancing the industry's competitiveness and solidifying the nation's position as a leading shipbuilding powerhouse on the world stage, said Yu Mengsa, a researcher at China Ship Scientific Research Center in Wuxi, East China's Jiangsu province.

The latest data also revealed that among 18 major ship types, such as container ships and oil tankers, China ranked first in new orders with 14

of them during the nine-month period. Shipyards across the country have already surpassed their business targets for the year, driven by a surge in market demand.

For example, Shanghai-based Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding (Group) Co Ltd, a subsidiary of China State Shipbuilding Corp, or CSSC, delivered 17 commercial vessels from January to September, with a record-breaking delivery of eight liquefied natural gas carriers anticipated by the end of this year.

"With 34 new ship orders secured, we have reached 200 percent of the annual target for this year, and our production schedules are now projected to extend through to around 2030," said Weng Hongbing, the group's president.

Cao Bo, deputy director at the statistics and information department of the Beijing-based China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry, said that in response to changes in the new supply and demand environment, green transformation has become a core trend in the global shipbuilding industry.

"Confronted with new requirements for emission reductions, shipping companies, leading shipyards and major energy companies have begun to lead, provide, or invest in a variety of solutions," said Cao.

Energy-efficient, environmentally friendly vessel designs and a range of power options, including methanol, ammonia and hybrid systems, are gradually maturing or rapidly progressing toward commercialization, he added.

China's shipbuilding industry accelerated its green transformation in 2023. Orders for LNG- and

methanol-powered green vessels have grown rapidly, with breakthroughs also achieved in zero-carbon vessel orders, including ships equipped with electric and hybrid systems or powered by hydrogen fuel. New orders for green-powered ships accounted for 57 percent of the global market share, data from the MIIT showed.

Fueled by green technologies and high value-added vessels, Jiangsu province exported a diverse range of vessels valued at 69.27 billion yuan (\$9.78 billion) in the first eight months of this year, achieving a 75.1 percent year-on-year increase, data from Nanjing Customs shows.

Early this week, models of five 40,000-metric ton self-unloading bulk carriers were unveiled at the research and development unit of CSSC Chengxi Shipyard Co Ltd in Jiangyin, Jiangsu province, providing a design and manufacturing foundation for upcoming new builds.

Huang Gang, a manager of the company's sales unit, said that self-unloading bulk carriers differ from conventional bulk carriers as they are high-value, customized vessels that offer exceptional unloading efficiency and adaptability to various ports and sea conditions. Equipped with built-in unloading arms, these ships can extend and unload autonomously.

For instance, a single unloading system can achieve a discharge rate of over 5,500 tons per hour, meaning a 26,000-ton self-unloading bulk carrier can be unloaded within five hours, while a standard bulk carrier would typically require two to three days to complete the same task.

### Briefly

#### Central bank conducts reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 150 billion yuan (\$21.2 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.5 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity in the banking system reasonable and

ample, the People's Bank of China said.

#### Renminbi weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 174 pips to 7.0742

against the US dollar on Thursday, 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.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

## More manufacturers in WEF Global Lighthouse Network

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan  
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Three manufacturers in Qingdao, Shandong province, have been selected as new members of the Global Lighthouse Network by the World Economic Forum, taking the city's total to seven such lighthouses and making it, alongside Suzhou, Jiangsu province, one of the two cities in China with the most lighthouse factories.

This, experts said, showcases the growing manufacturing capabilities of the coastal city and reflects the pursuit of cutting-edge technologies and sustainable development by Chinese industries.

Hisense Hitachi Air-conditioning Systems Co Ltd in Qingdao implemented more than 40 use cases of the Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies, boosting the speed of product development by 37 percent, increasing labor productivity by 49 percent and reducing manufacturing costs by 35

percent, according to a report on the WEF's official site.

From pioneering unmanned heat exchangers to automated welding, Hisense Hitachi has created over 40 advanced application scenarios, with more than 20 technologies being industry firsts.

"This not only provides a competitive edge in the market but also injects new vitality and momentum into high-quality industrial development," said Zhuang Junjie, director of the automation division for assembly line at Hisense Hitachi.

The company has developed over 40 sets of adaptive automated welding equipment, which are widely used across various welding scenarios within the factory.

"In multiple stages, we have implemented unmanned inspections, packaging, and critical quality testing. Our overall efficiency is approximately 23 percent higher than the industry average," said Zhuang.

Meanwhile, led by intelligent

digitalization, Tsingtao Brewery has earned recognition as the world's first "sustainability lighthouse" in the food and beverage industry, according to the brewery.

By enhancing the integration of technologies like industrial internet and IoT, the century-old factory has effectively addressed production constraints and improved overall resource utilization, energy consumption, and ecological performance, it said.

According to the WEF report, industrial beer brewing is traditionally high-energy and carbon-intensive. Tsingtao Brewery leveraged advanced algorithms and IoT to deploy 25 use cases aimed at reducing energy and carbon intensity in beer production. The factory has achieved a 25 percent reduction in unit energy consumption.

In addition, Qingdao Haier (Jiaozhou) Air Conditioner Co Ltd has also been shortlisted in the



The production line of Hisense Hitachi Air-conditioning Systems Co Ltd in Qingdao, Shandong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

GLN, making global brand Haier the Chinese company with the largest number of lighthouse factories worldwide, according to the company.

Exporting products to 130 countries and regions, the factory has

not only met surging global demand, but also leveraged big data and advanced algorithms to resolve issues related to delayed responses in research and development, delivery, and after-sales service.

## Public data potential set to be unleashed

By FAN FEIFEI  
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China's latest push to accelerate the development and utilization of public data resources is expected to fully unleash the potential of public data elements, help cultivate new competitive advantages and inject fresh impetus into high-quality economic growth, officials and experts said.

Their comments came following a guideline released jointly by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council on Wednesday.

The country will take steps to expand the supply of public data resources and promote the opening of public data in an orderly manner, while encouraging and exploring the authorization and operation of public data, according to the guideline.

The guideline focuses on removing institutional barriers that affect the development and utilization of data resources, and serves as a significant link in building the basic systems for data, said Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration, at a news conference in Beijing on Thursday.

Liu emphasized that it will give full play to the role of data in empowering the real economy, expanding consumer demand and investment space, as well as improving governance capacity.

Meanwhile, the guideline is conducive to bolstering the utilization of public data resources, facilitating the development of a digital economy and giving a strong boost to the data industry, Liu added.

He said the administration will soon roll out supportive documents regarding the registration, authorization, operation and pricing mechanism of public data resources.

Looking ahead, more efforts will be made to deepen reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data elements and improve the basic systems for data, Liu said.

By 2025, the system and rules for the development and utilization of public data resources will be initially established, the supply quantity and quality of data resources will be significantly improved, and a number of data elements enterprises will be cultivated, according to the guideline.

By 2030, a comprehensive system for the development and utilization of public data resources will be set up, with compliant and efficient data circulation and use. The guideline also encourages innovative application to promote the healthy development of the data industry.

"The launch of the guideline marks an important step in propelling the development and utilization of public data resources in China," said Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy.

The move, Zhu said, will help improve the supply scale and quality of data, enrich data products and services, and promote the efficient utilization of public data resources in key industries and regions.

Zhu noted that the country's accelerated layout in the data element market will provide solid support for the sustainable and healthy development of the digital economy, generate new business forms, models and services that are based on data, create more job opportunities and inject new momentum into economic growth.

Statistics from the National Data Administration showed that China's total data output reached 32.85 zettabytes in 2023, up 22.4 percent year-on-year, while the added value of core digital economy industries accounted for 10 percent of GDP.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at the Central University of Finance and Economics, said unleashing the value of public data resources is conducive to propelling the digital transformation and high-quality development, as well as speeding up the establishment of a national unified data elements market.

## WORLD

# Tariffs on Chinese EVs to 'backfire on Europe'

Cooperation, knowledge exchange with China best solution for EU, experts say

BRUSSELS — The European Union should seek cooperation with China instead of imposing punitive tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, experts say.

Through collaboration and knowledge exchange with China, Europe can develop more technologically advanced electric vehicles, Mladen Pleše, a Croatian expert on China and Asia, said in an interview with Xinhua.

"Cooperation with China is not only the best solution but also the only viable one, and the EU will continue to stagnate if it does not seek cooperation," Pleše said.

High tariffs on Chinese EVs will not benefit the European EV industry, Pleše warned, adding that European consumers will be "harmed most".

"The EU decision is harmful, above all, for Europe," Pleše said.

The European Commission

announced on Oct 4 that it passed a vote to impose punitive tariffs on Chinese battery electric vehicles, sparking criticism from several European countries and auto industries which warned the move could boomerang on EU competitiveness.

Though the Commission said it had secured necessary support from member states, 12 EU members abstained from the vote and five voted against the decision.

Pleše, former editor-in-chief of Croatia's mainstream daily newspaper Jutarnji List, said the tariffs will not be able to slow down the development of Chinese EVs.

Pleše described the EU's decision as "political" and criticized it for disregarding the interests of the European industry and economy. He pointed out that leaders of several major European automakers, including BMW, Mercedes and Volkswagen, have called for a negotiated solution.

"These are the people who lead the automotive industry in Germany and Europe. The EU should listen to them, as the policy of imposing the tariffs will ultimately backfire on Europe," Pleše warned.

Imposing tariffs on Chinese-made electric cars is detrimental to Europe's auto industry and overall economic growth, said Stephan Ossenkopp, an independent political analyst and a research fellow at the Germany-based think tank Schiller Institute.

## Burden for consumers

These tariffs will negatively impact European consumers by driving up prices, Ossenkopp said. Not only the cost of purchasing EVs imported from China will increase for EU buyers, but other automakers might also seize the opportunity to hike their prices to boost profits.

"Ultimately, European consumers will bear the financial burden of such protectionist measures," he said.

Healthy competition is essential for innovation and technological



Customers look at electric vehicles at a BYD showroom in Berlin, Germany, on June 18. LIESA JOHANNSEN VIA GETTY IMAGES

advancement, Ossenkopp said. Although the tariffs might temporarily create a "comfort zone" for European automakers by reducing competition in the market, they would eventually disrupt the electric vehicle supply chain and exacerbate the challenges faced by European automakers, because these companies benefit greatly from collaboration in EV supply chains and joint research and development initiatives with their Chinese counterparts.

The punitive tariffs "will harm EU citizens more than help them, and they will actually backfire on the European automotive industry," the Brussels-based economic think tank Bruegel said in a recent report.

The tariffs will insulate European producers from global competitive pressures and discourage them from developing integrated value chains with Chinese partners, the report said.

Furthermore, the tariffs represent another step toward the fragmentation of world trade, which will accrue economic costs and create uncertainties that will not spare the EU.

Trade disputes also tend to have spillover effects, and such disputes between the EU and China will strain the overall bilateral relations, the report said, noting it's not too late for the EU to change its mind.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

# Beijing to sanction 3 US military enterprises

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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The Chinese Foreign Ministry announced its decision on Thursday to sanction three enterprises and 10 senior executives with the United States military industry, following Washington's recent announcement offering arms assistance to China's Taiwan region.

Last month, US President Joe Biden approved \$567 million in defense support for Taiwan, including "defense articles and services of the Department of Defense, and military education and training", according to a White House statement.

"This move seriously violates the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, seriously interferes in China's internal affairs and seriously damages China's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

The three sanctioned US companies are Edge Autonomy Operations LLC, Huntington Ingalls Industries Inc and Skydio Inc.

China will freeze these companies' movable, immovable and other kinds of property in China, and "prohibits organizations and individuals in China from conducting relevant transactions, cooperation and other activities with them", the ministry said.

As for the 10 sanctioned senior executives, including Steven Roger Rudder, founder of Stick Rudder Enterprises, China will freeze their movable, immovable and other kinds of property within the country's territory.

In addition, the sanction prohibits organizations and individuals in China from engaging in transactions, cooperation and other activities with these individuals, and denies them visas and entry into China, including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Macao Special Administrative Region.

The sanctions are based on the provisions of the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law of the People's Republic of China, and they come into effect from Thursday, the ministry said.

# S. Korean author wins Nobel Prize in literature

By EARLE GALE in London  
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The South Korean author Han Kang has won the Nobel Prize in literature "for her intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life".

The Nobel Committee at the Swedish Academy said on Thursday the writer, who was born in 1970 in the southern city of Gwangju before moving to Seoul, has devoted herself to her writing, and also to art and music, which "is reflected throughout her entire literary production".

Anders Olsson, chairman of the academy's Nobel Committee, said: "She has a unique awareness of the connections between body and soul, the living and the dead, and in her poetic and experimental style has become an innovator in contemporary prose."

The Nobel Prize in literature has been criticized in the recent past for its apparent focus on European and North American writers and its favoring of the English language, although last year's winner, Norwegian writer Jon Fosse, was tapped for the award despite writing in Nynorsk, which is one of Norway's two offi-

cial written languages.

As of 2023, the award had been presented 29 times to English-speaking laureates, 16 times to French speakers, 14 times to writers who communicate in German and 11 times to authors who write in Spanish.

Against that backdrop, John Self, The Guardian newspaper's book critic, said before this year's unveiling of Han as the winner that he thought the time was right for Chinese writer Can Xue to win the accolade.

"Can Xue is a solid bet," Self said. "Also a win for her would help the academy overcome its weakness for European men."

Previous winners of the award have included the singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, British politician and historian Winston Churchill, and United States novelist and editor Toni Morrison.

The literature prize has also been criticized for having been male-dominated since its inception in 1901, with only 18 women being named among the 120 laureates over the years.

Nobel Prize winners will be presented with a medal and cash awards of 11 million Swedish krona (\$1.06 million) at a ceremony on Dec 10.

# Making waves



People take photos of the spray from waves crashing against the Malecon seawall, brought by the passing of Hurricane Milton in the Gulf of Mexico, in Havana, Cuba, on Wednesday. Milton drew power from exceedingly warm Gulf of Mexico waters, twice reaching Category 5 status. It barreled into the Atlantic Ocean on Thursday after plowing across Florida, causing at least four deaths. RAMON ESPINOSA / AP

# Wildlife populations plunge 73% since 1970: WWF

PARIS — Wild populations of monitored animal species have plummeted more than 70 percent in the last half-century, according to the latest edition of a landmark assessment by the World Wildlife Fund published on Thursday.

Featuring data from 35,000 populations of more than 5,000 species of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish, the WWF Living Planet Index shows accelerating declines across the globe.

In biodiversity-rich regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, the figure for animal population loss is as high as 95 percent.

The report tracks trends in the abundance of a large number of species, not individual animal numbers.

It found that populations under review had fallen 73 percent since 1970, mostly due to human pressures.

The index has become an international reference and arrives just ahead of the next UN summit on biodiversity, which will spotlight the issue when it opens in Colombia later this month.

"The picture we are painting is incredibly concerning," said Kirsten Schuijt, Director-General of WWF International, at a news briefing.

"This is not just about wildlife, it's about the essential ecosystems that sustain human life," said Daudi Sumba, chief conservation officer at WWF.

The report reiterates the need to simultaneously confront the "interconnected" crises of climate change and nature destruction and warned of major "tipping points" approaching certain ecosystems.

## Irreversible changes

"The changes could be irreversible, with devastating consequences for humanity," he said, using the example of deforestation in the Amazon, which could "shift this critical ecosystem from a carbon sink to a carbon source".

"Habitat degradation and loss, driven primarily by our food system, is the most reported threat in each region, followed by overexploitation,

invasive species and disease," the report said.

Other threats include climate change, in particular in Latin America and the Caribbean, and pollution, notably in North America, Asia and the Pacific.

The biggest decline is found in populations of freshwater species, followed by terrestrial and marine vertebrates.

"We have emptied the oceans of 40 percent of their biomass," said Yann Laurans of WWF France.

Continued by continent, the average decline reached 95 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by Africa, down 76 percent, and then Asia and the Pacific, which declined 60 percent.

The reduction in populations is "less spectacular" in Europe, Central Asia and North America.

Some populations have stabilized or even expanded thanks to conservation efforts and the reintroduction of species, the report said.

The European bison, for example, disappeared in the wild in 1927 but

in 2020 numbered 6,800 thanks to large-scale breeding and successful reintroduction, mainly in protected areas.

"While calling the overall picture 'incredibly concerning,' Schuijt added: "The good news is that we're not yet past the point of no return."

She pointed to global efforts including a breakthrough pact landed at the last UN meeting on biodiversity in 2022 to protect 30 percent of the planet by 2030 from pollution, degradation and climate change.

But she warned, "All of these agreements have checkpoints in 2030 that are in danger of being missed."

Several scientific studies published by the journal Nature have accused the WWF of methodological biases in its index that lead to an exaggerated extent of the decline of animals.

"We remain really confident of its robustness," said Andrew Terry of the Zoological Society of London at a news briefing.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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# Universities continue to climb up world rankings

By WANG MINGJIE in London  
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Chinese universities continue to rise in global rankings, making significant strides in the Times Higher Education, or THE, World University Rankings 2025, which was released on Wednesday.

Tsinghua University remains the top-ranked institution from the Chinese mainland, holding steady in 12th place, while Peking University climbs one spot in the

latest rankings, to 13th.

This marks the seventh consecutive year that Tsinghua University has led the rankings for the Chinese mainland.

Meanwhile, Fudan University, now joint 36th (up from 44th), and Zhejiang University, rising to joint 47th (up from joint 55th), have surpassed Shanghai Jiao Tong University, which has dropped to 52nd place from 46th. For the first time, Zhejiang University joins the global top 50.

In Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong retains its 35th position and remains the highest-ranked institution in the region, while the Chinese University of Hong Kong jumps from 53rd to 44th.

The Chinese mainland now boasts two universities in the global top 20, four in the top 50, seven in the top 100, and 13 in the top 200. By contrast, in 2018, it had only two universities in the top 100.

In the past five years, universities from the Chinese mainland have

shown the most significant improvement globally.

While Tsinghua and Peking Universities receive the most attention, for nearing the global top 10, other leading Chinese institutions, including Fudan University, Zhejiang University and the University of Science and Technology of China have all made substantial progress in recent years.

Phil Baty, THE's chief global affairs officer, said: "The vast majority of mainland Chinese universities

have made yet more progress up the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, which is a phenomenal achievement given this is our biggest ranking ever.

"Our most comprehensive and rigorous data shows the Chinese mainland is a remarkable case study of exceptional consistent improvement backed by strong political will and a commitment of generous funding over many years. It is a science and research powerhouse, with universities attracting the world's talent."

The Chinese government plans to increase spending on science and technology by 10 percent this year,

to 370 billion yuan (\$52.7 billion) to increase self-reliance in science and technology.

Funding for research will increase by 13 percent to 98 billion yuan to promote the development of high-level research universities, with experts predicting further success in the rankings for the Chinese mainland.

At the top of the global rankings, the United Kingdom's University of Oxford remains the world's best university for a record ninth consecutive year, followed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the second place, and Harvard University in the third.

## WORLD

## China condemns attack on UN peacekeepers

Middle East conflict intensifies in Lebanon as Israeli tank fires on watchtower

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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The Israel-Hamas war that has spilled into Lebanon intensified on Thursday as a UN peacekeeping mission said that it was fired on by Israeli forces, while a senior Hezbollah official reportedly avoided an assassination attempt in the country.

The United Nations' peacekeeping force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, said two of its personnel were injured when an Israeli tank fired at a watchtower on Thursday at the force's main headquarters in Ras al-Naqoura, hitting the tower and causing the peacekeepers to fall. There were no casualties, a UN source said.

"This is highly concerning, not only because the peacekeepers are there, but because this was done by, you know, most probably a deliberate attack against our troops, which is a violation or a grave violation of international humanitarian law," UNIFIL spokesperson Andrea Tenenti said.

Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, voiced "grave concerns" about the situation in Lebanon at a UN Security Council briefing Thursday.

"Recent weeks have witnessed a sharp rise in tensions between Lebanon and Israel. A few hours ago, the IDF attacked UNIFIL positions and an observation tower, causing injuries to UNIFIL personnel," he said.

"China expresses grave concerns and strong condemnation. UNIFIL carries out its peacekeeping tasks under the mandate from the Security Council resolution. Any deliberate attacks on peacekeepers constitute



People gather in front of destroyed buildings hit by an Israeli airstrike in central Beirut, Lebanon, on Thursday. BILAL HUSSEIN / AP

a severe violation of international humanitarian law and Security Council Resolution 1701. Such acts must stop immediately.

"We demand that these attacks be investigated and those responsible be held to account. Measures must be taken to prevent any recurrence," Fu said. "We reiterate that all parties to the conflict must effectively guarantee the safety and security of all UN personnel and assets, including UNIFIL."

Fu said that "the gravity of the current situation is clear, as is the right direction to de-escalation" as he detailed three points of emphasis: "First, since October last year, the series of destabilizing events that

have taken place in the Middle East have resulted in more than 100,000 civilian casualties and left millions of people displaced. The cleanup work will take a decade or so," Fu said. "What's more, the trauma brought by conflicts will be a lingering nightmare for generations to come. The Middle East cannot afford a full-scale war. The conflict cannot continue to expand.

"All parties must keep in mind the interest of maintaining regional peace and stability, deal with the current situation in a calm, rational, and responsible manner, and make sincere efforts towards breaking the cycle of violence," he said.

"Second, achieving a cease-fire

must be an overarching priority. We note that all parties in Lebanon have already made a unanimous call for an immediate cease-fire," he said. "The Arab League has also issued an explicit appeal. It is clear who holds the key to ending this crisis. We urge Israel to set aside its obsession with the use of force, make the right political decision, stop violating Lebanon's sovereignty and territory integrity, and end its adventurous behavior that could drag the region into a new catastrophe.

Finally, Fu said: "Third, there is no time to lose for the council to act. The vast majority of council members have long since reached a broad consensus on deescalating

the conflict, achieving a cease-fire, stopping the violence and seeking a diplomatic solution.

"We urge a certain country to stop its passive procrastination, cover-up, and connivance. Instead, it should act responsibly and play a constructive role in order to prevent further destabilization of the situation," he said.

The White House said the United States was deeply concerned by reports that Israeli forces fired on UN positions and was pressing Israel for details.

Israel's military said in a statement its troops operated in the Naqoura area, "next to a UNIFIL base."

"Accordingly, the IDF instructed the UN forces in the area to remain in protected spaces, following which the forces opened fire in the area," Israel's statement said, adding that it maintains routine communication with UNIFIL.

In New York, Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon said the country was focused on fighting Hezbollah and recommended UNIFIL relocate 5 kilometers (3 miles) north "to avoid danger as fighting intensifies."

Danon said "Israel has no desire to be in Lebanon, but it will do what is necessary" to drive Hezbollah from its northern border so 70,000 displaced residents can return to their homes in northern Israel.

The UN has more than 10,400 peacekeepers in Lebanon.

Israeli strikes have killed at least 2,169 people in Lebanon over the last year, the Lebanese government said in its daily update. The majority have been killed since Sept 27, when Israel expanded its military campaign.

Hezbollah cross-border fire at Israel has killed 53 people over the same period, more than half of them civilians, according to Israeli authorities.

Also, a senior Hezbollah official eluded an Israeli assassination attempt on Thursday in Beirut, three

security sources said.

Wafiq Safa, who heads Hezbollah's liaison and coordination unit responsible for working with Lebanese security agencies, was targeted by Israel on Thursday night but survived, the security sources said.

Earlier on Thursday, a Lebanese security source told Reuters that Israeli airstrikes on central Beirut targeted at least one senior official in Iran-backed Hezbollah.

The Israeli strikes hit a densely packed residential neighborhood of apartment buildings and shops in the heart of Beirut. Israel had not previously struck the area, which is removed from Beirut's southern suburbs where Israel has repeatedly bombed Hezbollah's headquarters.

The number of casualties rose quickly, and as midnight approached the Lebanese Health Ministry reported 22 people killed and 117 wounded. Among the dead was a family of eight, including three children, who had evacuated from the south, according to a security source.

Meanwhile, in Gaza, at least 28 people including women and children, were killed Thursday in an Israeli airstrike on a school sheltering displaced people in central Gaza, while three hospitals in the north were told to evacuate, putting patients' lives at risk, medics said.

The strike in Gaza occurred in the city of Deir Al-Balah, where a million people have taken shelter after fleeing fighting elsewhere after more than a year of war.

The Israeli military said on Thursday it had carried out a "precise strike on terrorists" who had a command-and-control center embedded in a school.

The Palestinian militant group denied the accusations. Medics said 54 other people were injured at the school.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## EU states approve \$38b loan for Ukraine

BRUSSELS — EU states on Wednesday approved a plan to give Ukraine up to 35 billion euros (\$38 billion) as part of the bloc's share in a larger planned loan from the G7 nations backed by frozen Russian assets, diplomats said.

Kyiv is desperate for funds as it seeks to prop up its economy, equip its military and keep its electricity grid functioning this winter after intense fighting with Russia.

The EU's loan, which was signed off by a majority of ambassadors at a meeting in Brussels, is part of a bigger \$50 billion initiative agreed by G7 powers in June.

The bloc is the first of the G7 powers to announce how much it is putting forward as its share of the plan and is still waiting for others to do their part.

EU officials said the size of the bloc's loan was up to 35 billion euros, but could decrease if other G7 members decided to contribute more.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and NATO chief Mark Rutte in London on Thursday, as he embarked on a whistle-stop tour of European capitals aimed at securing military aid.

Starmer told Rutte during the trilateral meeting that he and Zelensky had been discussing Ukraine's "plan for victory" in its fight with Russia.

Zelensky said his country desperately needs more aid to tip the balance of the conflict and secure victory on the battlefield as Russia captures dozens of small towns in the east.

On the ground, questions are growing among Ukrainian soldiers about the long-term strategy of the offensive into Russia's Kursk region, given Russia's push in the eastern front.

"If this is a short-term operation, it will strengthen us," Bogdan, a serviceman sitting at a cafe in Druzhkivka, near Kramatorsk, told AFP.

"If it's a long-term operation and we plan to stay in Kursk, it will deplete our main resources."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## At UN, Chinese official urges 'world free of nuclear weapons'

By MINLU ZHANG  
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A Chinese arms control official on Thursday urged the international community to "abandon a Cold War mentality and power politics" and establish "a world free of nuclear weapons."

Sun Xiaobo, head of the Chinese delegation and director-general of the department of arms control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that in today's world, "no one can stay immune or enjoy security alone."

"A certain country sticks to a Cold War mentality, develops military capabilities in all domains and seeks absolute security at the cost of other countries' security, leading to the increasingly severe international security environment and the difficulty of the international security governance," he said.

Sun spoke at the General Assembly of the United Nations Disarmament and International Security Committee, the First

Committee of the 79th UN General Assembly.

"Only through advocating an equal and orderly multipolar world and a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, can we maintain international peace and security effectively," said Sun.

He urged "the complete prohibition and total destruction of nuclear weapons, the establishment of a world free of nuclear arms", and the elimination of threats posed by nuclear weapons and nuclear war, which he said serves the common interests of humanity and represents a shared aspiration of all nations.

"China calls on the implementation of the Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Race, and all relevant parties should make sincere efforts to this end. As the coordinator of the P5 Mechanism, China will continue to make unremitting efforts in this regard," Sun said.

Nuclear disarmament should follow the principles of "maintaining global strategic stability" and "undiminished security for all" and take a step-by-step approach, he emphasized, adding that countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals should "assume special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament and continue to make drastic and substantive reductions in their nuclear arsenals, so as to create necessary conditions for general and complete nuclear disarmament."

Countries with nuclear weapons should negotiate and conclude a treaty on "mutual no-first-use of nuclear weapons" or issue a political statement in that regard, in order to prevent a nuclear arms race and reduce strategic risks, Sun said.

All nuclear-weapon countries should "unconditionally commit themselves not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones, pending the complete

elimination of nuclear weapons", Sun said.

In September 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States announced a trilateral security pact known as AUKUS. The pact's primary focus is to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines. Those submarines will be built using American and British technology, a move to enhance Australia's military capabilities, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

"China urges relevant countries to cease the development and deployment of the global missile defense system and cease the forward deployment of the land-based intermediate-range missiles outside their own territories against other nuclear-weapon states," Sun said.

China pursues a self-defense nuclear strategy and is highly transparent in terms of its nuclear policy and intention, Sun said. He noted that 60 years ago, China made a solemn declaration to the world that it undertakes not to be the first to use nuclear

weapons at any time and under any circumstances.

"China unconditionally commits itself not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones," Sun said. "China has always kept its nuclear force at the minimum level required for national security."

"China has no intention of pursuing an arms race or providing a nuclear umbrella and deploying nuclear weapons in other countries. China will never seek hegemony with nuclear weapons, nor bully or intimidate non-nuclear-weapon states," Sun said.

Regarding emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, Sun said that politicizing their governance, applying ideological biases, and decoupling or creating exclusive groups with high barriers will only weaken the global community's ability to tackle risks and challenges collectively. He called on the international community to reject such negative trends.

## Mozambique early vote counting underway after general elections

MAPUTO — Mozambique began counting votes on Wednesday evening at the close of tense presidential and parliamentary elections.

Vote tallying started shortly after polling stations closed at 6 pm, with initial results expected in about two weeks.

About 17 million people were registered to vote, including 333,839 voters registered in the diaspora participating from seven African and two European countries as part of Mozambique's global electoral process.

This year's general elections mark the seventh presidential election, with the ruling party Prelimo's candidate Daniel Chapo, 47, aiming to succeed incumbent President Filipe Nyusi, who is completing his maximum of two terms.

Chapo faces competition from three other candidates: Lutero Simango of the Democratic Movement of Mozambique, Ossufo Momade of the main opposition



An electoral official shows voters a ballot paper at a polling station in Munhava, Sofala Province, Mozambique, on Wednesday.

ZINYANGE AUNTONY / AFP

party Renamo, and independent candidate Venancio Mondlane backed by Optimistic Party for the Development of Mozambique.

In addition to the presidential race, voters would elect 250 members of parliament and 794 members for provincial assemblies, with

35 political parties competing for national parliamentary seats and 14 parties and civic groups vying for provincial positions.

According to observers from national and international organizations, the one-day electoral process is proceeding smoothly. Reports indicate that 92.8 percent of the 3,297 voting stations visited by 800 electoral observers had the presence of party delegates.

### Calm and patience

After casting his vote at the Josina Machel Secondary School in the capital Maputo, outgoing President Nyusi, 65, urged for calm and patience throughout the voting process.

"I would also ask that no group of citizens agitate or threaten others, that everything happens in peace and tranquility, and that we avoid announcing the results ahead of time," Nyusi said.

He also underscored the necessity

of maintaining peace and transparency during the election, saying, "Let's ensure our democracy strengthens the development of our country."

Chapo, if elected, would become the first leader born after Mozambique's independence.

After casting his vote in Inhambane Province in southern Mozambique, Chapo called for a peaceful continuation of the electoral process, urging the celebratory spirit of the campaign to carry through to the voting and counting phases.

According to the National Election Commission, the electoral process is being monitored by 11,516 national observers and 412 international observers, including delegations from the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the European Union and the Southern African Development Community.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## The deeper lies go, the more exposed Lai's true colors are

Compared with his overtly separatist speech at his "inauguration" on May 20, the "pro-peace" and economy-focused address of Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te at a ceremony in Taipei on Thursday may, at first glance, sound less provocative. But to assume he is on the path to mend himself would be similar to doubting the ability of a chameleon to change colors to suit the circumstances.

There is no doubt the secessionist-minded politician has realized the importance of hiding his true colors and not being seen as a rabid troublemaker. It's possible he has compared notes with his backers in Washington who might have advised him to keep a low profile at this sensitive juncture and avoid giving Beijing any reason to launch strong response measures, and thus pass the ball to Beijing's court.

Both Lai and his US patrons are well aware of the rising tensions across the Taiwan Strait since the secessionist Democratic Progressive Party led by Lai's predecessor Tsai Ing-wen refused to recognize the 1992 Consensus — that both sides of the Strait belong to one China. It is obvious that Tsai and Lai mustered the courage to do so because of the collusion between the DPP and the United States.

So despite the great lengths Lai has gone to try and ride his DPP authorities out of the storm of their own making, it is evident that he used his Thursday speech to hide his separatist agenda under the garb of promoting economic development and "democracy".

But he let the cat out of the bag when he said that the fundamental reason for advancing the development of the island to a higher level is to ensure the island enjoys equal status in its dialogue with the Chinese mainland and enhance its capability to maintain status quo across the Strait — which essentially means preventing the reunification of Taiwan with the motherland.

The measures to improve the livelihoods of Taiwan residents are only a means to consolidate the DPP authorities' power so they can advance their "Taiwan independence" agenda.

The haste with which Lai stressed at the beginning of his performance on Thursday that the island's residents are conscious of their "national identity" — under Taiwan or any other name — and "the two sides of the Strait do not belong to each other" indicates how shrewd Lai is in reality.

But the fact that Taiwan residents conveyed their good wishes to Beijing on National Day on Oct 1 — Lai hastened to stress that China is not their motherland — shows that Taiwan residents, contrary to Lai's claims, see themselves as Chinese nationals.

The truth is that because of the DPP's separatist activities, the island's international space is shrinking continuously, as evidenced from the island's ever shortening list of "foreign state guests" at key ceremonies over the past decades.

It is a historical and legally binding fact that there is only one China and Taiwan is an integral part of China. In fact, the one-China principle, recognized by the United Nations, is the bedrock of China's diplomatic relations with other countries.

Interestingly, Lai called on Beijing to use its influence to help end the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Middle East crisis when he should be asking Washington to do so, because it is the latter that is prolonging the conflicts.

In doing so, Lai and his party are trying to claim the moral high ground by calling for peace in Eurasia and the Middle East, and portraying themselves as peace lovers, victims of "bullying" and defenders of "rules-based order", but they forget that the world has long seen through their tricks.

The DPP authorities are pushing Taiwan residents toward misery by pursuing their "Taiwan independence" agenda.

## Double act cause for grave concern

As the single-minded Benjamin Netanyahu Cabinet doubles down on its war against Israel's regional foes, the anxieties of Israel's Western allies about the prospect of the ongoing conflict escalating into a Middle East war are growing.

But it seems increasingly obvious they will not be able to rein in the Netanyahu government, which seems lost in a berserker-like frenzy of violence for violence's sake. This inability leaves Israel's closest allies in an awkward position as it promises to leave them facing troubles far beyond the credibility conundrum they already face.

Balancing support for Israel's crackdown on alleged terrorist threats and handling the worsening resultant humanitarian crisis as the Israel Defense Forces intensify their clearing offensives in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon is proving increasingly tricky and sensitive for many Western governments.

At a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Wednesday, the US' ambassador to the UN urged Israel to urgently address the "catastrophic conditions" among Palestinian civilians in the besieged Gaza Strip and to stop "intensifying suffering" by limiting aid deliveries. The United Kingdom's UN ambassador told Israel that it "must do much more" to avoid civilian casualties and ensure the UN and aid groups can operate safely and effectively in Gaza. While France's UN ambassador complained "delivery of humanitarian assistance is being hindered, and humanitarian workers are constantly under threat".

The head of the UN Palestinian refugee agency painted a grim picture of the situation, warning that "Yet again, Gazans are teetering on the edge of a man-made famine".

Turning a blind eye to the broadening humanitarian crisis is severely undermining the moral ground for not only Israel's ongoing offensives, but also that for Western support for Israel. But Netanyahu's eyes are focused solely on his military agenda, and he is dismissive of any calls to heed the humanitarian crisis that continues to worsen by the day and urgings that he end the military operations.

In his Sunday exchange with French President Emmanuel Macron, who called for stopping arms shipments to Israel to make way for a political solution, Netanyahu told the latter that placing restrictions on Israel will just serve Iran and its proxies.

Despite the acute international concern that Israel's present military operations in Lebanon may turn the country into another Gaza, and US President Joe Biden's reported warning that "the perception of Israel around the world increasingly is that you're a rogue state, a rogue actor", Netanyahu shows no sign of backing down. Instead, he said on Tuesday that Lebanon would meet the same fate as Gaza if its people did not rise up against Hezbollah.

Immediately after his Wednesday discussion on the phone with Biden on Israel's plan for retaliating against Iran's missile attacks, during which the latter urged him to avoid escalating the tensions and a further slide into a broader war, the Israeli defense minister simply promised that a strike against Iran would be "lethal, precise and surprising". Considering Teheran's warning of greater devastation in case of any Israeli counterstrike, the retaliation the Netanyahu government is preparing would only perpetuate the military tit-for-tat.

While the White House is reportedly increasingly frustrated at Netanyahu's disregard of US concerns, there seems to be little it can do about it. After all, tampering with arms supplies to Israel, which some believe is the most important leverage it has, is politically dangerous. The position the Biden administration has put the US in may prove disastrous for Kamala Harris and the Democratic Party's prospects in the November elections, with the dissatisfaction of Arab American voters in the battleground state of Michigan having the potential to hurt the Harris campaign dearly.

Israel has refused to embrace US proposals for a cease-fire in Gaza and Lebanon. That is why there has been speculation that Netanyahu is hoping to influence the US elections in favor of the Republican Party candidate, Donald Trump.

Trump has sided with Netanyahu, saying that the latter "knows what he's doing". While encouraging Netanyahu "to get this over with", Trump told reporters at a news conference on Aug 15 that he would give Israel the support that it needs to win fast.

It seems that it is not just the Netanyahu government that needs reining in, but the US as well because enabling Israel has become the default position as the presidential election looms ever closer.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Rule of law bedrock of fair and transparent business environment

The central authorities recently said that China will further standardize administrative law enforcement behavior with regard to enterprises, adopt more inclusive supervision and flexible law enforcement methods, and prevent selective law enforcement or imposition of random fines, random inspections and random seizures.

For some time now, arbitrary administrative inspections, abuse of discretionary power, fine-oriented law enforcement, selective law enforcement and other enterprise-related law enforcement malpractices have seriously affected the normal functioning of enterprises. Particularly, the "illegal law enforcement in nonlocal places", or places outside the area of jurisdiction of cer-

tain law enforcement agencies has triggered widespread angst, shaking the confidence of some enterprises in the business environment.

Some local law enforcement agencies still try to rein in private entrepreneurs in areas beyond their jurisdiction, or illegally seal, freeze and/or transfer their properties. Such actions have obviously weakened private entrepreneurs' sense of security, increased their operating costs, disturbed their normal operation, and affected investment-making decisions. Such malpractices have also greatly damaged the credibility and authority of law enforcement agencies and the government. Once the credibility of local governments is lost, it is difficult to build it up in a short period of time.

So the authorities should standardize and improve the administrative law enforcement assistance system between different regions. That way entrepreneurs can operate peacefully, and prevent some people from suddenly losing their jobs because of "illegal law enforcement" by certain law enforcement agencies.

In order to achieve this goal, the country must rely on the rule of law and effectively stop power from being abused in the hands of individual law enforcement agencies. It should enhance the fairness and transparency of law enforcement by strengthening institutional constraints and supervision and accountability.

— BEIJING NEWS

## The real winner of Nobel in chemistry is AI

The Nobel Prize in chemistry was shared by US scientist David Baker for "computational protein design", and Demis Hassabis and John Jumper from the United Kingdom for "protein structure prediction".

The Nobel Prize committee remarked that "they cracked the code for proteins' amazing structures". What rallied global attention is the fact that both Hassabis and Jumper come from Google DeepMind, which specializes in artificial intelligence, and they created an AI model that fundamentally changes

the way of studying a protein's structure.

Given that even the Nobel Prize for physics went to computer scientists associated with AI, AI has dominated the Nobel Prize this year.

By understanding the three-dimensional structure of a protein, scientists can infer its role and how it interacts with other molecules, which helps in the study of diseases and development of new drugs. Besides, predicting protein structures helps in better comprehend-

ing the origins of life, which is linked to the Nobel Prize in physiology that went to researchers in mRNA.

All these date back to Hassabis' and Jumper's AlphaFold model developed decades ago. Clearly, AI has helped humankind by making endless computations a cakewalk, in the process hastening research on the protein structure. The scientists who developed it deserve the prize as more scientists will now be encouraged to study it.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## ASEAN should beware US hijacking its agenda

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Vientiane, capital of Laos, from Tuesday to Friday to attend a series of Association of Southeast Asian Nations and related leaders' meetings.

Although the US State Department claims that Blinken took advantage of the trip to reiterate the United States' commitment to ASEAN centrality, the top US diplomat is pushing the grouping to align itself with the Joe Biden administration's China-targeted "Indo-Pacific" strategy.

In alleging that the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", an empty document the organization passed under Washington's influence in 2021, shares the fundamental principles with the US "Indo-Pacific" strategy, Blinken has tried to highlight the importance of the US-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which was formed just two years ago.

But Blinken remained vague in disclosing how much of the "unprecedented \$1.2 billion in economic, development, and security assistance for the nations of Southeast Asia" requested by the Biden administration's 2024 budget has been forthcoming, and in what ways the US' assistance has benefited

local people and regional prosperity and stability.

As the US' meager assistance to its closest ally in ASEAN, the Philippines — which are strictly strangled to Washington's demands for Manila to act as a regional proxy to provoke China in the South China Sea — indicates, the US' sole interest in ASEAN is to drive a wedge between the grouping and China.

Washington admitted it had previously neglected the long-term strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific, lamenting that it had left a vacuum for Beijing to fill. That explains the US' return to Asia under the disguise of its "Indo-Pacific" strategy.

It was after the US' return, which immediately broke the long-term tranquility of the region featuring friendly neighborhood relations based on similar cultures and the common need for development, that tensions in the Asia-Pacific started quickly building up.

The souring of the Sino-Philippine relations is a reminder to all regional countries of the ugly role the US has been playing in the Asia-Pacific in its attempts to sow discord between them and China and force them to choose sides between Washington and Beijing.

It is the across-the-board China-

ASEAN cooperation that has delivered concrete benefits to the people of both sides over the past decades. Neighborhood diplomacy is a priority of China's foreign policy, while the US' wooing of ASEAN is only a makeshift flirtation.

China regards the ASEAN member states as good neighbors, reliable partners and like-minded countries working together for common development, while the US only sees them as sources of cheap labor and raw materials, if not dispensable pieces on its geopolitical chessboard.

It is good that Blinken discussed Myanmar, the South China Sea and Ukraine in Laos — all of which are attributable to the US' geopolitical calculations and selfish moves accordingly — as that provides all ASEAN leaders with a rare chance through collective face-to-face interactions with the top US diplomat to reflect on whether they really want the "rules-based order" the US tries to establish to prevail in their common home.

If the US is allowed to hijack ASEAN to advance its agenda, a crisis similar to what Ukraine and Europe are experiencing looms in the Asia-Pacific.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Harald Brüning

## EU should avoid trade war over EVs

The dispute within the European Union surrounding Chinese electric vehicles has seen new developments. The European Commission's proposal to impose definitive countervailing duties on imports of battery electric vehicles from China has obtained the necessary support from EU member states for the adoption of tariffs on Oct 4. The high number of countries that abstained from voting was puzzling, because it included several countries that have sought closer relations with China in the recent past.

The protectionist tariffs were proposed in June by the EC, which claimed Chinese-made EVs were benefiting from government subsidies and thus enjoying an unfair advantage against EU carmakers. Beijing has denied having ever subsidized the EV industry, saying it "firmly opposes the unfair, illegal and unreasonable protectionist practices of the EU in this case, and resolutely opposes the EU additional countervailing duties on China electric vehicles".

The fact is that the EC has the exclusive powers to determine the bloc's external commercial policy, and, in this case, to ensure that its desired tariffs on Chinese-made EVs finally get off the ground.

The problem for the EU is that its number one car-manufacturing state, Germany, voted, understandably, against the proposal, since its giant auto companies such as Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen and BMW have heavily, and profitably, invested in China. This has set German Chancellor Olaf Scholz of the center-left Social Democratic Party against his compatriot Ursula von der Leyen, whose conservative Christian Democratic Union is Germany's main opposition party.

Incidentally, the auto industry accounted for nearly one-quarter of Germany's



**Protectionism hinders industrial modernization, a field in which the EU and other Western economies are lagging behind China.**

total domestic industry revenue in 2022.

The Oct 4 vote hurts Germany's national interests, that is, the interests of both its carmakers (employers, employees and their families) and consumers that look for affordable, eco-friendly vehicles.

The EC said in its statement that the vote represents another step toward the conclusion of its anti-subsidy investigation. But it was quick to add that, "in parallel, the EU and China continue to work hard to explore an alternative solution that would have to be fully WTO-compatible..."

I believe the "price commitment" approach could be a way out of the conundrum. In this compromise solution, Chinese carmakers would have to commit to setting minimum prices for their EVs sold in the EU, and I hope the minimum prices would be low and acceptable to Brussels and Beijing.

As a German and EU citizen living in China's Macao Special Administrative Region, I can only hope that both sides will be able to hammer out a

win-win deal by the end of this month.

The term "countervailing duty", that is, a duty levied on imported goods to offset the unfair price advantage the goods-making companies hold due to subsidies paid by the government of the exporting country is often little more than a euphemism for imposing punitive and/or protectionist tariffs.

German Finance Minister Christian Lindner of the pro-business Free Democratic Party responded to the troublesome outcome of the EU members' vote, saying the EC "should not trigger a trade war ... We need a negotiated solution."

The auto sector accounts for 2.5 million direct and 10.3 million indirect jobs across the 27-member EU. Last year, Chinese-made EVs accounted for 19 percent of the European EV market, and analysts have forecast that the share could reach 25 percent by the end of this year.

But if this month's negotiations fail, the EU will impose extra tariffs on affordably priced Chinese-made EVs from Oct 31 for up to five years. Chinese-made EVs are already subject to 10 percent tariff.

The EU auto market is much more important to China than the US market because of which Washington's recent decision to impose 100 percent tariffs on Chinese-made EVs is politically annoying, but economically less so.

The EC's aim is to make it more difficult for Chinese automakers to compete in the EU, many of whose automakers are still struggling to catch up with their Chinese counterparts that have rapidly transitioned to EVs.

Instead of resorting to protectionism to cope with the competition from Chinese-made EVs, EU states' governments should do everything in line with World Trade Organization rules to help their countries' automakers expedite their development, especially in making EVs.

Protectionism hinders industrial modernization, a field in which the EU and other Western economies are lagging behind China. It's time Western economies rolled up their sleeves and learned from their competitors, including those in China, even on the price front.

Let's hope the last-ditch China-EU negotiations help the two sides to strike a compromise acceptable to both.

In today's fast-changing political, economic, strategic and environmental landscapes, a trade war between the EU and China is the last thing the world needs, not least because they are among the world's top three trading economies and their mutually beneficial trade relations still have a lot of potential. What we need most urgently today is free and fair, and mutually beneficial trade. But without the goodwill of all sides, this can never be achieved.

So I hope the EU's and China's negotiators will reach a mutually acceptable deal by the end of the month. I am sure car company employers, executives and workers, and consumers both in China and the EU would be grateful for their success.

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Chen Weihua

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## More Assanges needed to expose West's hypocrisy

Julian Assange shocked the world in 2010 after WikiLeaks, which he founded, uploaded online video footage and documents of US war crimes, including indiscriminately killing Reuters journalists and other civilians in Baghdad during the American occupation of Iraq.

Few, however, expected the US administration to go after Assange so hard, forcing him into a 12-year ordeal of seeking asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London in June 2012 and then being arrested and thrown into the Belmarsh prison in London in April 2019.

Assange was released on the basis of a plea deal in June this year.

I have been writing about Assange since 2010, including about the demonstrations in the US demanding the release of Chelsea Manning, then known as Bradley Manning, a US army intelligence analyst who leaked the documents to WikiLeaks.

It's good to see both of them free now. In particular it was exciting to finally see Assange in person at a hearing at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on Oct 1, his first public event since his release from prison.

Assange was inspiring as usual when he told the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that: "I am not free today because the system worked. I am free today after years of incarceration because I plead guilty to journalism. I plead guilty to seeking information from a source. I plead guilty to obtaining information from source. And I plead guilty to informing the public what that information was."

## The hypocrisy of many Western leaders and the double standard they resort to stands exposed.

His words drew loud applause not just from PACE members, but also the journalists covering the hearing, something unusual for reporters and photographers doing their work.

Assange shows strong signs of being tortured in prison. His wife Stella appeared tormented, saying Assange continues to suffer the effects of very prolonged and extreme torture and for being forced to live in harsh conditions for years. But she didn't go into the details to safeguard his privacy.

On Oct 2, PACE recognized Assange as a "political prisoner" and warned against the chilling effects of his harsh treatment.

When I asked Thorhildur Sunna Aevardsdottir, the PACE rapporteur in the Assange case, if she was disappointed with most of the European leaders for not seeking the release of Assange, her answer was blunt. She said it has a lot to do with who was pursuing Assange and trying to put him in jail for 175 years, adding that it's more difficult for politicians to speak up when their allies violate human rights.

The hypocrisy of many Western leaders and the double standard they resort to stands exposed.

Over the past weeks, many Western leaders, from US President Joe Biden to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, have condemned Iran's retaliatory attacks against Israel and marked the one-year anniversary of the Hamas attacks on Israel on Oct 7. But they have never condemned Israel for assassinating senior Iranian officials and killing more than 42,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, in the Gaza Strip.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres rightly said after the Oct 7, 2023, Hamas attacks that they "did not happen in a vacuum" because "the Palestinian people have been subjected to years of suffocating occupation".

Most Western leaders, who like to proclaim themselves to be representatives of the international community, have refused to see the whole picture and find the root cause of the conflicts in many parts of the world. Also, they accuse anyone exposing or challenging their double standard of spreading "disinformation".

Western countries and news media have had outsized influence in the global system. But as Assange told the audience in Strasbourg, people should do their part to ensure the voices of the majority are not silenced.

From Assange to Gaza, many Western leaders and mainstream media have stubbornly chosen to be on the wrong side of history for the interests of a few.



Sun Jianxiang

## Philippines' opportunism doomed to failure

The Philippines has been making provocative moves in the South China Sea and thus escalating tensions in the region since last year. Perhaps Philippine leaders have not heard of a Chinese saying: A quarrel between two sides will only benefit a third party.

The Philippines hopes to benefit from the United States' moves to check China's rise and maintain its hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region.

For decades, the Philippines has been an opportunistic player. In 1971, taking advantage of rotating its troops to deal with a typhoon, the Philippines illegally occupied Zhongye Island in the South China Sea. In 1999, when the bombing of the Chinese embassy in erstwhile Yugoslavia heightened tensions between China and the US, it grounded a World War II-era warship on Ren'ai Reef in a bid to occupy it permanently.

Also, for decades, it has been trying to benefit from the US-China competition, especially from deteriorating US-China relations. However, in its blind pursuit of material and strategic benefits, the Philippines has become a pawn in the hands of the US, which has been furthering its "Indo-Pacific strategy" to contain China.

**The Philippines will be in great danger if it believes US soldiers will shed blood for Philippine ships or personnel in the South China Sea.**

The Philippines' opportunistic trait aligns perfectly well with the US' China-containment strategy. What Manila doesn't understand is that it can use the Philippines-US Mutual Defense Treaty to extort military aid from Washington, but not draw the US into a confrontation with China.

History tells us that the US has often left its allies in the lurch because it has always believed in serving its own interests. For example, in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 during the Vietnam War, the US publicly refused France's request for assistance. In the same year, the US signed a so-called mutual defense treaty with China's Taiwan but did not get directly involved when the Chinese People's Liberation Army shelled Kinmen in 1958, aside from providing some

logistical support to the island.

Besides, the US pulled Pakistan into a bilateral mutual defense assistance agreement and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization with seven other countries, again in 1954. However, during the 1965 India-Pakistan War, it turned down Pakistan's request for assistance, stating that the agreement did not apply to the conflict.

A recent Congressional Research Service report on "US-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas" said the US is wary of the Philippines taking extreme actions under the treaty that may drag the US into a military conflict with China, and suggested that Congress review the treaty's applicability.

Buyers are rarely smarter than sellers in business. Dealing with the US is akin to selling the soul to the devil. The US, as the dealer at a gambling table, can see every card the Philippines is holding and knows how to manipulate the latter's moves.

Moreover, the US' interpretation of the Philippines-US Mutual Defense Treaty is flexible, because it uses a strategy of ambiguity to mislead the Philippines in different international political circumstances.

In 1975, then US secretary of state Henry Kissinger issued a memorandum, legally interpreting the commitments of the US under the Philippines-US Mutual Defense Treaty, saying that US commitments in the "MDT may apply in event of attack on (Philippine) forces deployed to third countries". The report cited two reasons for that: first, the Nansha Islands are not part of Philippine territory; and second, the Philippines is not a claimant in respect of the Nansha Islands.

The US always accords the highest priority to its interests, which the Philippines will be aware of. But being an opportunistic player, the Philippines still believes it can gain from its alliance with the US without realizing that it is being led down the garden path by the US. The Philippines will be in great danger if it believes US soldiers will shed blood for Philippine ships or personnel in the South China Sea.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS



**Editor's note:** The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategic Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

ZHOU ZHIWEI

## Momentum injector

As core forces in South-South cooperation, China and Brazil should strengthen their coordination to promote a collective identity for the Global South

The rise of the Global South is the result of multiple interacting factors. With the goal of Global South cooperation having subtly changed from "driving growth through unity" to "driving change through coordination", the Global South needs to effectively address challenges in order to achieve broader cooperation and gain greater influence.



The Global South has established quite a few regional cooperation mechanisms and forums, but they are scattered and fragmented, making it imperative to build more comprehensive mechanisms. The Global South comprises countries with different political systems, levels of economic and social development, and traditional cultural values. To achieve more extensive and effective synergy, the Global South needs to explore a multi-engine approach.

China and Brazil are respectively the largest developing countries in the Eastern and Western hemispheres, and the most representative members of the Global South. The key global concerns for the Global South — autonomy, development, security, equity and justice — are also prioritized in China-Brazil bilateral cooperation, especially in their multilateral policies.

China-Brazil ties now possess the characteristics of a major-power relationship. This is due not only to the high degree of alignment between their interests and the mutually beneficial nature of their relationship, but also to the increasingly significant spillover effects of their cooperation. Therefore, China and Brazil share a responsibility to uphold the rise of the Global South and the potential to lead its development.

First, China and Brazil should actively respond to the challenges facing the Global South. On the one hand, they should strengthen their respective regional cooperation mechanisms. Only when more effective South-South cooperation is formed in different regions will there be more diverse support for the Global South and a stronger synergy.

On the other hand, they should enhance interconnection within the South-South cooperation net-

work. China and Brazil are core forces in South-South cooperation, and both have established multidimensional and intersecting South-South partnership networks. While promoting their own diplomatic goals, they need to strengthen their coordination on issues of common concern to the Global South, promoting the alignment among different mechanisms.

Meanwhile, China and Brazil should expand consensus to promote a collective identity for the Global South. They should take the initiative in Global South dialogues, so the international public opinion about the Global South will not be skewed by developed countries.

Second, China and Brazil should take the lead to drive Global South cooperation in key areas of global governance. The rise of the Global South is driven by structural changes in the international system. These changes are reflected both in the power dynamics within the global power structure, where the collective strength of the Global South is comparable to that of the Global North — and in some cases, even exceeds it — and in the greater potential and feasibility for reforming the global governance system. The path of co-consultation, co-construction, and co-sharing is not only desirable but also inevitable. In other words, the rise of the Global South is driven by changes in the international landscape, and it is also a key factor in promoting a more reasonable evolution of the global order.

Therefore, cooperation between China and Brazil in global governance not only fully reflects the comprehensive, strategic and global nature of their bilateral relationship but also injects strong momentum into Global South cooperation.

In a world with increasing geopolitical and economic uncertainties, what matters most to the Global South is practical cooperative actions. In this regard, the interaction between China and Brazil is demonstrative.

For instance, Brazil acknowledges China's significant role within the Global South, effectively countering the distorted narrative from the West that seeks to exclude China from the Global South. During his visit to China in 2023, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

proposed to work with China to promote a "Peace Club" aimed at peacefully resolving the Ukraine crisis, emphasized the idea of "de-dollarization" in the reform of the international monetary system, and issued the Brazil-China Joint Statement on Combating Climate Change. Particularly noteworthy is that in May 2024, the two countries reached a six-point consensus on political settlement of the Ukraine crisis, which received widespread attention from the international community, including the Global South.

All of these demonstrate that China and Brazil share a consistent global perspective on security, development and global governance, and their aligned positions give a substantive push for reforming the global governance system.

On Aug 15, President Xi Jinping and President Lula exchanged congratulatory messages on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Brazil. President Xi emphasized that while promoting the development and revitalization of their respective countries, China and Brazil have also played important roles in world peace, stability, prosperity and development. President Lula pointed out that Brazil-China relations are increasingly important for building a multipolar world order as well as more just and effective global governance, and play an underpinning role in the stability and predictability of the two countries and the world.

Based on this political mutual trust and shared recognition of interests, there is broad space for expanding cooperation in global governance between China and Brazil. The positive interaction between the two countries will not only promote consensus within the Global South but also play a pivotal role in driving cooperation among the group.

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EFE CAN GURCAN

## Integration, expansion, collaboration

Double-size group of developing countries set to further swell as precursor of a community with a shared future

As the 16th BRICS summit approaches, the world's attention is firmly fixed on this influential forum of developing countries. This historic summit will mark a pivotal moment, being the first to include the newly admitted members following BRICS' inaugural expansion with the inclusion of Egypt, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia. The global community is keen to see how this expanded platform will shape the future of international cooperation and governance.



Russia, the 2024 BRICS chair, has placed a strong emphasis on smoothly integrating the new members. In the economic and financial domain, the agenda is dominated by the urgent need to address rising protectionism and the weaponization of unilateral sanctions. Other strategic priorities include fostering high-tech collaboration, transforming the international payment system, and expanding the use of national currencies in mutual trade, all while building resilience against global economic volatility. Additionally, at the 2023 BRICS summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the creation of an "artificial intelligence study group" to foster innovation in artificial intelligence among the BRICS nations. Continuing this important endeavor, the 2024 summit prioritizes closer collaboration in science and technology, including AI, to potentially break the Western monopoly on global AI governance.

The 2024 BRICS summit will certainly be shaped by these strategic priorities, with a particular focus on integration and expansion, tackling protectionism and sanctions, advancing high-tech collaboration and reforming the international payment system. However, while BRICS is expanding its reach and influence, it is not positioning itself as a strategic rival to the West. The 2024 chairship's focus on strengthening interaction with multilateral platforms such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G20 highlights the role of the grouping as a constructive dialogue platform. The members of

the expanded BRICS are not aiming to replace existing global governance structures but to devise innovative and complementary mechanisms that work within a more balanced, inclusive and democratic framework. This cooperative vision, especially amid growing global tensions, will undoubtedly be a defining feature of this historic summit.

While the integration of the newly admitted members is likely to dominate discussions at the upcoming summit, the agenda will continue to include items related to expansion and the various forms it may take, with over 30 countries expressing an interest in joining. However, it is concerning that some debates around expansion, namely from those outside the grouping, emphasize division over unity, confrontation over cooperation, and a zero-sum approach to international relations. This "Cold War mentality", prevalent in Western policy circles, stands in stark contrast to the vision of a community with a shared future proposed by China, which stresses peaceful development, mutually beneficial cooperation and shared prosperity.

The Cold War mentality is reflected in misguided fears that the expanded BRICS, now holding 42 percent of global oil and gas reserves, 72 percent of the world's rare-earth metals, and 42 percent of annual grain production, could wield increased influence over global supplies and prices to the detriment of Western nations. A similar situation goes for the expanded BRICS efforts toward alternative AI governance and de-dollarization, which is often misunderstood as an anti-US policy, when in fact it only consists of asset diversification in response to the excessive weaponization of the US dollar and sanctions. Such misguided beliefs aside, the BRICS expansion will significantly contribute to overcoming this Cold War mentality, advancing the vision of a community with a shared future through greater inclusivity and collaboration on the global stage.

This Cold War mentality was particularly evident during Turkey's application to join the BRICS. Turkish officials hesitated to publicly announce their bid, likely out of fear of a negative reaction from the West, leaving Russia to confirm Turkey's official application in

September 2024. Public debates in both Turkey and the West have focused on how Turkey's BRICS application conflicts with its NATO membership, overlooking the reality that the BRICS is not a military alliance, or bloc imposing binding decisions. Instead, the BRICS operates chiefly as a forum, or platform for constructive dialogue, exchange and cooperation, intentionally avoiding bloc-style thinking. The cooperative nature of Sino-Indian relations within the BRICS, despite their regional differences and India's participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, highlights the inclusive approach of the group. Besides NATO, a similar line of debate has been to superficially juxtapose Turkey's aspired integration into the European Union with its bid for the BRICS, despite the fundamental differences between the two. Dominated by wealthy Western European countries, the EU aims to create a supranational framework on a regional level, while the BRICS focuses on global governance, where the principles of sovereignty, equality, and inclusivity remain central.

As the world grapples with the most severe humanitarian crisis since World War II and the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression, it is clear that the Western-dominated global governance system is failing. It has been unable to prevent major conflicts or address global economic instability, raising the risk of further escalation, possibly even World War III. In this context, it is only natural for developing nations to challenge the Cold War mentality and seek a greater role in shaping global governance — one that does not necessarily come at the expense of Western countries. The BRICS expansion itself holds strong potential to foster greater democratization, stability and inclusivity in the global system, offering a pathway to a community with a shared future away from an oppressive system dominated, or monopolized, by a handful of countries.

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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

## CULTURE



Clockwise from above left: Percussionist Wang Jianan, Kunqu Opera actress Shen Yili, pianist Bao Huiqiao (also below) and composer Zhang Zhao (below, left) are among the musicians participating in the Beijing Ancient Architecture Music Festival, which runs until Oct 28. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In the interplay between music and architecture, there exists a profound connection that transcends both art forms. When live performances take place within the walls of historical buildings, the synergy between sound and structure transforms the experience into something magical.

When the 2024 Beijing Ancient Architecture Music Festival opened on Sept 25 at Zhaigong (Palace of Abstinence) in Beijing's Ditan Park (Temple of Earth), the audience experienced dialogue between music and architecture, where every note reverberates through time, and every architectural feature enhances the journey of sound.

"These spaces, with their rich histories, act as more than just backdrops — they become integral components of the performance, adding layers of depth, emotion, and resonance," says Yao Ying, co-initiator of the festival.

"This event, centered on 'reviving cultural relics through music', not only honors China's traditional music culture, but also breathes new life into ancient architecture," Yao adds.

In its third edition, the festival, supported by Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau, runs until Oct 28, featuring 10 live performances at eight iconic historical buildings in Beijing, including the Drum and Bell Towers, the White Pagoda at the Miaoying Temple, Dajue Temple, and Zhenjue Temple, now called Beijing Stone Carving Art Museum.

Over 30 groups of musicians and artists are performing during the festival, including pianists Bao Huiqiao, Sheng Yuan, Kunqu Opera actress Shen Yili and the renowned Amber String Quartet.

Many audience members who attended these concerts had been touched by the works presented by modern musicians in these ancient architecture spaces. Among them was an audience member named Silver, who commented in the festival's official WeChat account, after watching the concert by Bao at the Zhenjue Temple on Sept 30, saying that "the octogenarian pianist Bao, with her passion and grace, created a unique contemporary symphonic piece together with the age-old Zhenjue Temple. The piano keys vibrated with the autumn breeze after the rain, accompanied by the rustling of ancient ginkgo trees. The cawing of passing crows seemed to join in the melodic ensemble."

Music, as an art form, is inherently fluid, ephemeral, and ever-changing, while architecture is solid, permanent, and rooted in history. Yet, the two are deeply interconnected, according to architect and artist Zhu Qipeng.

"These historical buildings, with their unique acoustics, are themselves designed with an understanding of sound. Vaulted ceilings, intricate stonework, and vast open chambers were intended to carry sound in ways that would elevate it, allowing music to linger, echo, and envelop listeners," Zhu says. "When contemporary musicians perform in these spaces today, they tap into that original purpose, awakening the building's acoustic potential."

## Ancient buildings alive with sound of music

Festival combines architecture and live performances to produce magic, **Chen Nan** reports.



Zhu also notes that these historical landmarks in the capital were used by the royal families for worship ceremonies dedicated to both gods and ancestors with music featuring as an integral part of those ceremonies.

"These rituals were seen as essential for maintaining harmony between heaven, earth and humankind. Music was not only a form of artistic expression, but also

a sacred tool for communicating with the divine and honoring the ancestors," he says.

On the afternoon of Sept 26, the majestic Ditan Park, with its deep historical significance and unique architectural style, became the first venue to sound the festival's opening note. Percussionist Wang Jianan, accompanied by traditional Chinese music, woke up the park with

a powerful performance on the drum, marking the official start of the festival. As the cool autumn air embraced the ancient building, a harmonious symphony between history and modernity resonated.

"We performed against the backdrop of the ancient buildings and surrounded by old trees," Wang says. "It's a quite different experience for us performers, com-

pared to the modern venues, such as concert halls and theaters, where we usually perform. It was magical. I believe that the audience will feel the same way."

The percussionist mentions that the drums he used during the performance fit the outdoor space, allowing the sound to be reverberant and lasting.

Wang, who is a Beijing native, went to school near the Drum and Bell Towers. Both were built during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and served as the capital's center of timekeeping through the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

"I love visiting these old buildings, which connect me with the history and inspire me," Wang says.

This blending of old and new can be especially poignant when the music reflects themes of heritage, memory, or cultural identity, according to the percussionist.

"Performing traditional Chinese music at these landmarks helps us (musicians and audiences) connect with the ritual music of the past that was once played there and with the people who once lived, worked and celebrated in those spaces," Wang says. "In this sense, it is an act of preservation, not only of the music itself but of the historical significance of the space."

He also adds that this kind of cultural events draw people to these old spaces, encouraging exploration and appreciation of the cultural importance of these ancient architecture landmarks.

On Monday, the Amber Quartet will give a concert at the Guozijian imperial college in Beijing, which was the highest educational institution and administrative organ of education set up by the imperial court during the three dynasties of Yuan, Ming and Qing.

The program will include the first movement of the *String Quartet in G minor, Op 10*, by Debussy; the *String Quartet in G Minor, Op 74, No 3, Rider*, by Haydn; and *Song of Burying Flowers from The Dream of the Red Chamber Suite* by Chinese composer Wang Liping and *Totem* by Chinese composer Zhang Zhao.

"Across the world, cultural institutions and festivals are recognizing the value of merging the old with the new," says the string quartet's founder and cellist Yang Yichen, who is a teacher of the Central Conservatory of Music. "Arts are playing a crucial role in the preservation and reinterpretation of historical spaces."

Yang adds that the quartet musicians chose to perform the aforementioned music pieces from China and the West at the Guozijian imperial college, "hoping to build up a dialogue between the past and the present, between China and the West."

"We are looking forward to performing at the ancient architecture, which will create a shared experience where music and architecture combine to evoke emotion, memory, and meaning," he says.

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### What's on



#### Raising the flag

During the many years he kept guard on the Kaishan, a remote, barren island about 12 nautical miles from Yanwei Port, East China's Jiangsu province, Wang Jicai, the island's fifth militia sentry director, and his wife Wang Shihua would raise the national flag, at 7 am every day, before their inspection. He was not even 30 years old when reporting for the first day of duty on the island, and he died while on duty at the age of 58 in 2018.

The flag he once raised, a witness to his dedication and resilience, is now on show at a long-term exhibition at the

National Museum of China in Beijing, which marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

On exhibition are red flags — including the national flags of China and the flags of the Communist Party of China — as well as photos and documents that trace the country's revolutionary progress since the 20th century, and how the course shaped the designs of the national flag and the CPC flag.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 16 East Chang'an Avenue, Dongcheng district, Beijing. 010-6511-6400.

#### Shadow art

*From Tradition to Modern* is an exhibition that surveys the evolution, preservation and revival of Chinese shadow puppetry, which is a popular form of folk art and entertainment that integrates handicrafts, local operas and light manipulation on a miniature stage that has over time developed into different styles from region to region.

The long-term exhibition at the



Crafts Museum of China Academy of Art, in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province, gathers more than 300 puppets from across the country, from the collection of the China Academy of Art, as well as videos of puppet shows and puppet animations.

It navigates the audience from the past to the present on which artists and craftsmen have worked together to introduce modern art and design into

the renaissance of shadow puppetry, to cater to the cultural needs of people today.

9:30 am-4:30 pm, closed on Mondays. CAA Xiangshan Campus, 352 Xiangshan Village, Xihu district, Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. 0571-8716-4613.

#### Embracing nature

Tianjin Museum is running the *Nature and Art* exhibition, displaying a

selection of classic Chinese landscape paintings in its collection. More than half of the works featured at the long-term exhibition are being shown for the first time.

The exhibition is dedicated to the mountain-and-water genre of Chinese painting in the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) of which the influence of the Four Wangs — leading landscape artists surnamed Wang in the early Qing era, namely Wang Shimin, Wang Jian, Wang Hui and Wang Yuanqi — was still a key element of the work of ink painters.

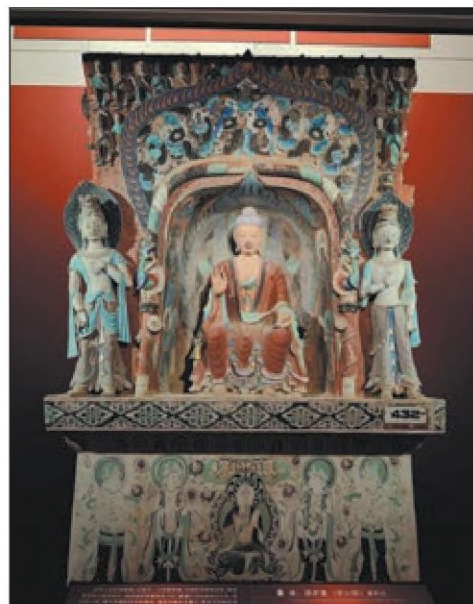
Meanwhile, regional painting groups also emerged at the time to reflect social transformations and people's changing tastes of art and culture, such as the rise of the Shanghai School (called Haipai in Chinese) which saw artists create to address a modernist tendency embraced by city dwellers.

9 am-4:30 pm, closed on Mondays. 62 Pingjiang Dao, Hexi district, Tianjin. 022-8388-3000.



CHINA DAILY

## LIFESHANGHAI



**Left:** The reproduction of statues of Buddha and Bodhisattva (central figure), from Mogao Cave No 423, crafted in the Western Wei Dynasty (535-556). **Middle:** Nirvana of the Buddha, reproduced from Cave No 158, built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). **Right:** A stone stupa, with inscriptions of the Buddhist sutra in Chinese and ancient Indian writing, built in the Northern Liang period (397-460).

## Technology shows Mogao Caves in a new light

Exhibition displaying relics and digital reproductions from Dunhuang gives public a better view, **Zhang Kun** reports.

Arguably the most comprehensive and diversified exhibition of Dunhuang art in Shanghai, *The Great Art of Dunhuang* exhibition was a big hit during the National Day holiday, which lasted from Oct 1 to 7, attracting visitors around the country.

Featuring 168 pieces and sets of cultural relics recognized as national treasures of China, the exhibition is being held from Sept 20 to Dec 20 at the China Art Museum on the east bank of the Huangpu River.

According to the museum's statistics on Tuesday, it welcomed more than 50,000 visitors during the holiday.

On display are some of the most representative and rare artifacts from the collection of Dunhuang Academy in Gansu province, which are making their first public debut in the metropolis.

"We have brought some of our most cherished artifacts to this exhibition," says Bai Jian, an official of the Gansu Provincial Administration of Cultural Relics. "We have reproduced six caves and, presented an unprecedented large-scale reproduction of frescoes by our predecessor scholars."

Dunhuang was an important crossroad along the ancient Silk Road for centuries, where Han and other ethnic groups melded.

"It held a similar status as today's Shanghai," Bai says. "We hope that by bringing Dunhuang artifacts to Shanghai's wider audiences, it will attract more people to visit Dunhuang in Gansu."

The ancient city of Dunhuang is located in an oasis in the Gobi Desert that served as an important trading center along the ancient Silk Road. From the fourth century to the 14th century, it was also a center for Buddhism, where hundreds of caves were dug with Buddha statues and frescoes built inside. The grottoes, known as the Mogao Caves,



Visitors at the exhibition *The Great Art of Dunhuang*, from Sept 20 to Dec 20 at the China Art Museum in Shanghai.

PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

### If you go

*The Great Art of Dunhuang*  
Through Dec 20, 10 am-6 pm (final entry no later than 5 pm), Tue-Sun  
China Art Museum, Shanghai, 205  
Shangnan Road, Pudong New Area,  
Shanghai  
400-921-9021



**Online**  
See more by scanning the code.

were named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

One of the exhibits is the Shengli Stele, a stone with an inscription recording the beginning of the construction of the grottoes.

The text on the stone reads that in 366, a virtuous monk named Lezun (or Yuezun) "arrived at the mountain and suddenly saw the burst of golden lights with the image of thousands of Buddha inside". Inspired by this, he constructed the first cave on the cliff. Later, Monk Faliang built a second cave beside Lezun's.

From then, new caves were dug and temples were built with statues carved and frescoes painted. The craftsmen drew inspiration from

sutra classics and secular life, creating a diverse collection, from legendary immortals flying midair in dance poses to the parade of powerful patrons and life scenes of prestigious families.

Six of the most representative caves — Cave No 2, 17, 45, 158, 285 and 320 — have life-size reproductions on exhibit, bringing an immersive experience of the Mogao Caves to visitors.

According to Zhang Yuanlin, deputy director of the Dunhuang Academy, the six caves were carefully selected to "encapsulate the concise history of Dunhuang art spanning almost a millennium". Some of the caves are closed to visitors at the Mogao Caves to protect the fragile artifacts.

"Thanks to digital technology, visitors coming to the reproduced caves can step in and have a close-up experience with the artworks, which is more than they can do by visiting the real caves."

A visitor to the exhibition, Pang Jian says, "we were not allowed to take photographs when we visited the Mogao Caves and could only follow the dim light from the flashlight the commentator carried ... but in the reproduced caves, we have ample light to see all the intricate details of the paintings and statues and can take pictures too".

Duan Wenjie, former director of the Dunhuang Academy, used to call Cave No 285 "the pantheon of diverse cultures" because the fres-

coes feature Buddhist deities, immortals in ancient Chinese folklore and gods from Hinduism. Writings on the right wall showed that the cave was built in 538 and 539, which makes it the earliest among the Mogao Caves to have its origin year specified.

Cave No 17, or the Cave of Scriptures, was discovered by Wang Yuanlu, a Taoist monk in 1900, when more than 50,000 pieces of relics were excavated, including Buddhist scriptures, social life documents, paintings, embroidery and more. Thanks to digital technology, the exhibition brought several important documents and scriptures from the cave to the public, which are now in museum collections around the world.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of founding of the Dunhuang Academy. "We present this unique experience of Dunhuang art in Shanghai thanks to several generations of scholars who devoted their lives to the research and conservation of the cave art, so we have a section of the exhibition that tells their stories and contributions," Zhang says.

During the exhibition, the museum will invite scholars and researchers to lecture about Dunhuang art every other weekend. A series of workshop activities are held each weekend, enabling participants to try their hand at painting on rocks and making copies of the frescoes.

The exhibition was a highlight of the Shanghai Tourism Festival, which concluded on Sunday. Several tourism companies and airlines joined the exhibition to introduce travel deals between Shanghai and Gansu, as well as other northwestern destinations in China.

Shanghai's jewelry brand Lao Fengxiang also launched gold ornaments featuring some of the most celebrated Dunhuang relics.

Contact the writer at [zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn)

By ZHANG KUN

Art lovers in China may not be aware of this, but a museum in Paris houses an important collection of Asian and Chinese art. The ongoing exhibition *The Journey of Ink: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings From the Musee Cernuschi* showing at the Bund One Art Museum in Shanghai marks the first time a selection of masterpieces from the Paris museum is on display in China.

Running until Jan 5, the exhibition features 89 paintings from the collection of the Musee Cernuschi, including works by familiar masters such as Zhang Daqian, Lin Fengmian, Qi Baishi and Sanyu.

The Musee Cernuschi's collection of modern and contemporary Chinese art has been displayed for more than 70 years, says Eric Lefebvre, director and general curator of the French museum. This year marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and France, "so we think it is a great opportunity to share the ink paintings with audiences in Shanghai", he told media at the opening ceremony.

"We have selected artworks spanning almost a century to showcase

## Paris collection draws evolution of ink painting

how Chinese ink art innovated and developed throughout this period."

The exhibition ranges from paintings made at the beginning of the 20th century to the creations of living artists in the final chapter.

"We search for a link with the past in the paintings," says Mael Bellec, head of the Chinese and Korean collections at the Musee Cernuschi.

In the curatorial process, Lefebvre and Bellec discovered a narrative thread connecting the works and chose ink painting as the main theme. "Because ink is native to Chinese characteristics, viewing it conjures the feeling of its history," Bellec says.

Many Chinese artists stayed in Paris and "while they were there, they did new things with what they learned ... When two cultures meet, there is a blending that happens almost immediately and brings forth new ideas", Bellec tells China Daily.

"In France, people tend to forget that these artists were there and are part of our history," he says. "Except for a few artists such as Pan Yuliang,



**Left:** A visitor snaps up Zhang Daqian's *Peonies* at *The Journey of Ink: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Paintings From the Musee Cernuschi* at Bund One Art Museum in Shanghai. **Right:** An ink painting by Fu Baoshi, featuring the landscape depicted in an ancient poem. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

whose biographic movie was made starring famous actress Gong Li, it's not so easy to recognize and acknowledge them as part of our history, too," he adds.

For French visitors to the Cernuschi Museum in Paris, Bellec says: "Studying the art from a faraway country helps you to get out of your own culture and broaden your view

of the world and its aesthetics, which is very different from your own."

Visitors to the exhibition in Shanghai will find landscape paintings, flowers and birds, and hand scrolls traditionally mounted in the first showroom.

"Then, one chapter after another, they will observe the evolution of ink paintings, from the forms to the

techniques," Lefebvre says.

To give audiences a full evolutionary experience, Lefebvre and Bellec also selected a series of videos from the institution's archives, dating as early as the 1930s, that document the painting process of some artists.

"From these videos, we can learn about the techniques of Zhang Daqi-

an and see how artist Walasse Ting created the popular action painting style of the United States, reflecting the integration of Chinese and Western art," Lefebvre says.

A significant part of the exhibit joins the museum collection from the 1950s when the Musee Cernuschi received an important donation of paintings from Guo Youshou, a Chinese diplomat who later worked for UNESCO.

An important collector and promoter of Chinese art, Guo facilitated the first series of exhibitions of Chinese art in France, Switzerland and Slovakia. From the 1950s to 60s, he helped to organize three exhibitions of Zhang Daqian in France, says Xie Dingwei, founding director of the Bund One Art Museum.

"In 1953, Guo donated 76 paintings to the Musee Cernuschi, including works by Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, Pu Ru and my father," says Xie, the son of renowned Chinese artist Xie Zhiliu.

Guo's donation played an important part in the Musee Cernuschi's collection of modern Chinese art. Today, "we recognize him as a pioneer who made great contributions by introducing Chinese art to the world", Xie says.

## LIFE

The Lao She Theater Festival, an annual cultural event in Beijing, celebrates renowned Chinese playwright and novelist Lao She (1899-1966).

Named after the famous writer, whose works explore social issues in modern China with wit and humanism, the festival features performances of Lao She's plays and other contemporary theatrical works, with a highlight on the connection between theatrical productions and literary works.

On Sept 27, the eighth edition of the festival was announced at the Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center. In the following three months, 35 theatrical productions will be staged in the capital with 90 performances divided into seven sections. The festival showcases a variety of theatrical performances not just by Lao She but also new plays by contemporary playwrights from China and beyond.

These productions explore themes relevant to modern audiences, including social issues, cultural identity and human nature, according to Yang Cheng, president of the Beijing Artists Management Corp, the festival organizer.

"Literature can evoke deep emotions through the reader's imagination and connection to the written word, while theater amplifies this emotional impact by presenting stories live. The immediacy and presence of actors onstage allow audiences to feel the tension, humor or sorrow in real-time, making the emotional engagement more direct," he says.

Last year, the festival commissioned director Fang Xu to adapt Lao She's classic novel *Rickshaw Boy* into a play. Featuring an all-male cast, the play has been staged in over 20 shows across the country. On Sunday and Monday, it was staged again at the Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center.

Fang says that while literature is often the product of a single author's vision, theatrical productions are highly collaborative. The process of staging a play involves writers, directors, actors, set designers and more, contributing their skills to interpret the original text. This collaboration can lead to multiple layers of meaning beyond what is present in the original literary work.

This year, the festival announced its second commission for the event. Chinese director Zhang Xiao will adapt Chinese writer Du Liang's popular novel *Peking in Flames* into a play, which will premiere on Dec 12 with shows running till Dec 15.

The novel is a historical drama set in Beijing (formerly Beiping) during the late stages of the War of Liberation (1946-49), specifically in 1948, just before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The novel was turned into a hit TV drama in 2009 featuring actor Liu Peiqi playing the lead role of Wen San'er, who makes a living by pulling a rickshaw and is depicted as clever, street-smart and knows how to navigate the complex political landscape of Beijing.

"The novel focuses on the lives of various characters from different social classes caught up in the political and military struggles of the time. Du Liang is known for his detailed and immersive storytelling, bringing

## Festival celebrates renowned playwright

Annual cultural event opens eighth edition in Beijing, exploring diverse themes through 35 productions, **Chen Nan** reports.



Scenes from the play *The Family* by Jiangsu Performing Arts Group, which is adapted from Chinese writer Ba Jin's novel of the same title, and from *Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas* by Armazem Theatre Company from Brazil. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: Director Zhang Xiao announces the upcoming new play *Peking in Flames* at the news conference of the eighth Lao She Theater Festival, in Beijing on Sept 27. Right: Young theater lovers from Beijing's universities pose for a photo at the event.



historical events to life with rich characterizations and dramatic tension," says Zhang. "The writer uses the setting of Beiping to symbolize the broader transformation of Chinese society during this period. The character Wen San'er is vivid and, despite his petty, streetwise demeanor, possesses a trait that shines brightly. This trait carries a resilient vitality."

On Dec 7 and 8, the festival will stage *The Family* by the Jiangsu Performing Arts Group adapted from Chinese writer Ba Jin's novel of the same title. Depicting the oppressive effect of traditional feudal families upon younger generations, the novel is Ba Jin's most famous and influential work, which has been adapted into different art forms.

Over the years, the Lao She Theater Festival has expanded to include collaborations with international theater groups, bringing diverse theatrical styles and influences to the event. This has helped position it as a platform for cross-cultural exchange.

The Armazem Theatre Company from Brazil will debut in Beijing by staging its production *Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas* from Oct 31 to Nov 3. Adapted from the book by Brazil's celebrated writer Machado de Assis, the production, directed by Paulo de Moraes, sold out when it was staged during the 10th edition of the Wuzhen Theater Festival — an annual theater event in the ancient water town of Wuzhen, Zhejiang province.

The Song of the Goat Theatre from Poland will return with its theatrical experiment *Hamlet — A Commentary*, featuring actors interpreting the characters, events and emotions through sounds. The text is given a melody and the dialogue is presented as musical harmonies. The words and music reflect the characters' and family's emotions. In 2019, the theater company staged its production *Songs of Lear*, an interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*, during the third edition of the Lao She Theater Festival.

Other highlights of the ongoing festival will include a new section for dance productions. Chinese filmmaker Lu Chuan will present the dance drama *Tian Gong Kai Wu*, or The Exploitation of the Works of Nature, inspired by the science classic of the same title by Song Yingxing, a scientist who lived in the late Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. First published in 1637, the book offers a summary of ancient China's manufacturing and farming techniques, earning recognition as an encyclopedia of science and technology. The eponymous drama, coproduced by the Jiangxi Cultural Performance Group and the Beijing Dance Academy, revolves around Song's quest, portraying his journey to gather the techniques and tools and emphasizing the craftsmanship of ancient Chinese laborers.

Since its launch in 2017, the festival has supported young theater lovers from various universities. Eighteen theatrical productions by students of Chinese universities will be staged during the festival, selected among 60 productions from 33 universities.

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## Kunqu Opera tunes into modern times

NANJING — In Kunshan, East China's Jiangsu province, the melodies of Kunqu Opera, an ancient art form, are not confined to the stages of grand theaters but ring out in unexpected scenes — school bells, fitness routines and bus stop illustrations where lively cartoon figures greet passersby every day.

Kunshan is the birthplace of Kunqu, which blends poetry, music, intricate costumes and graceful performances. The 600-year-old traditional Chinese performance art was listed as one of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2001.

But Kunqu is far from a relic. In the bustling streets of Kunshan, this ancient art form continues to find new life, delicately balancing between preserving its timeless beauty and embracing the demands of modernity.

For performers like You Tengpeng, an actress at the Kunshan Contemporary Kunqu Theater, the act is both a challenge and a passion. After a long day of rehearsal, You and her colleagues discuss their latest performance strategies not in a traditional theater but on Douyin, a Chinese video-sharing platform.

In partnership with the platform, You and seven other performers livestream their shows for at least 20 hours each month. The goal is simple yet ambitious: to reach a new generation of audiences who might hesitate to sit through a two or three-hour-long performance in an opera house.

One of the challenges is interpretation — not from language to language but from cen-

turies-old art to the flickering screens of smartphones.

To draw audiences in the digital age, the performers have condensed the intricate art form into digestible one-hour segments, inviting viewers to experience Kunqu in more relaxed settings, whether over tea at a cafe or within the walls of a museum.

The strategy seems to be working, particularly among Chinese youth. After performances, it is common to see young fans eagerly lining up for selfies and autographs with the performers. Their newfound enthusiasm for this ancient art is a testament to its evolving relevance.

You was not surprised to see the heartening trend. "The aesthetics of Chinese culture, ancient and modern, are continuous," she says. "What we strive to inherit is not just the technique but the pursuit of beauty that has always existed."

"Kunqu reflects societal values, many of which were born in the feudal era. This tension between the past and present is where we find space for innovation, reimagining the stories of old to resonate with modern audiences," she adds.

One innovation was seen in the Kunshan Contemporary Kunqu Theater's production of *The Story of Washing Gauze*, a play written in the 16th century. The story centers around Xi Shi, a legendary beauty from ancient China who sacrifices her happiness to serve her country.

In the original ending, after years of separation and war, Xi Shi reunites with her lover

and lives happily ever after. However, the modern production altered the ending, leaving it open and tinged with sorrow. The reimagining struck a chord with audiences, many of whom praised the new ending for its emotional depth and realism, noting that it made Xi Shi's character more relatable to modern viewers.

Kunshan's commitment to preserving and promoting Kunqu goes beyond the stage. Over the last few years, the Kunshan Kunqu theater has held more than 2,500 performances and tours, drawing over 20 million attendees from China and abroad.

In addition, the local government has invested 177 million yuan (\$25.05 million) to fund new productions, support rehearsal spaces and subsidize performances since 2018.

Kunshan's commitment extends to preserving not only Kunqu but also the diverse opera traditions of China. Since 2018, the annual Chinese Opera Gala (Kunshan) has been hosted by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the provincial government. The gala showcases 348 traditional operas, including puppetry and shadow plays, bringing these art forms — many of which are endangered — into the spotlight and providing a platform for artistic exchange.

Wang Wei, a Liuzi Opera actor from Shandong province, performed the role of General Zhang Fei at the gala, a famous character from the classic Chinese novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

To play the role more impressively, Wang often learns from the character's other ver-



Kunqu Opera actress You Tengpeng (right) introduces the classical piece *The Peony Pavilion* at a Kunqu Opera cultural center in Kunshan, Jiangsu province. WANG XUZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

sions and finally creates a brave and lovable general. "This gala is such a good opportunity to learn from each other, I am very happy to stand on this stage to let people learn about Liuzi Opera," Wang says.

In addition to performances, the gala includes training workshops for performers of minor or endangered opera forms. Xu Min, a composer and performer of tea-picking opera from Jiangxi province, has attended these workshops for years.

"If you focus only on your own art, you become isolated," she says. "But here, I'm exposed to many different plays, rhythms and techniques. I feel like a sponge,

absorbing everything."

Kunshan's role as the birthplace of Kunqu Opera has positioned the city as a guardian of traditional Chinese opera, says Zhou Wei, Party chief of Kunshan. Through the construction of a museum dedicated to local opera and by hosting the annual national event, Kunshan endeavors to become a space for art exchange and growth.

"We want to create a broad stage for different operas to flourish and integrate traditional culture with the modern world," Zhou says.

XINHUA