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# CHINA DAILY

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## Fujian urged to lead modernization

President stresses province's role in boosting innovation and opening-up

By CAO DESHENG  
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President Xi Jinping has urged Fujian province to further deepen reform and promote high-quality development in all aspects in a bid to play a pioneering role in the country's modernization drive.

He underlined the need for the coastal province in southeastern China to achieve greater progress in accelerating the construction of a modern economic system, make greater efforts to serve and integrate with China's new development paradigm, take bigger strides in exploring new paths for integrated development across the Taiwan Strait, and seek greater breakthroughs in creating high-quality life.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks during an inspection tour in Fujian on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The tour took him to Zhangzhou, where he visited a village, a memorial hall and a cultural park, learning about local efforts to advance rural vitalization across the board, carry forward revolutionary traditions and strengthen the protection of cultural heritage.

He told local farmers that China's countryside will surely have brighter prospects, and farmers will live a more prosperous life on the new journey in the new era.

Xi also traveled to Xiamen, where he visited the Xiamen Area of China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone, an important gateway for opening-up.

He pointed out that after more than 40 years of development, the Xiamen Special Economic Zone has undergone tremendous changes that were unimaginable in the past.

He emphasized the need for Fujian and Xiamen to adapt to the



President Xi Jinping talks to an employee of the comprehensive service hall during an inspection tour of the Xiamen Area of China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone on Tuesday. YAN YAN / XINHUA

changing situation, steadily promote institutional opening-up, align with higher international standards, and make new contributions to further expanding high-level opening-up.

On Wednesday afternoon, Xi heard a work report by officials of the CPC Fujian Provincial Committee and the provincial government. He urged local authorities to blaze a trail in promoting the deep integration of scientific and industrial innovation.

It is essential to step up the establishment of a system to support comprehensive innovation, he said.

Xi also called for strengthening the construction of high-level scientific

and technological innovation platforms, and implementing major actions for securing scientific and technological breakthroughs in key fields.

He underlined the need to enhance the role of enterprises in scientific and technological innovation, improve policies and mechanisms that facilitate financial support for technological innovation, and create a more conducive environment for innovation and talent development.

Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of promoting the development of the real economy and called for consolidating the strengths of traditional industries,

vigorously promoting industrial transformation and upgrading, nurturing and expanding strategic emerging industries, and outlining strategic plans for future industries.

It is important to develop new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions and shape new advantages in industrial development, Xi added.

While emphasizing the need for Fujian to take the lead in comprehensively deepening reform and expanding high-level opening-up, the president called for focusing on key areas and crucial links with bolder moves.

He highlighted the importance of

developing both the public and private economies to fully unleash the vitality of investment and entrepreneurship across society.

Prioritizing reforms in various aspects of people's livelihood is necessary, particularly those related to the immediate concerns of the public, he said.

Xi urged Fujian to implement the strategy of upgrading the pilot free trade zone, proactively align with major regional development strategies, deeply integrate with the high-quality construction of the Belt and Road, and build a demonstration zone for integrated development across the Taiwan Strait.

WORLD WATCH  
By Siddharth Tiwari

### Systemwide approach to fight climate change urged

The year 2024 marks the 80th anniversary of the Bretton Woods institutions, which came into being after World War II to regulate international economic flows. The international financial institutions have helped enable periods of high growth, fueled by the expansion of globalization in goods, services, information and people-to-people exchanges, which have benefited large chunks of the world's population.

Most countries have benefited from economic growth and large parts of the population have been lifted out of poverty in China, India and Indonesia. However, financial crises have also occurred during this time, leaving many in the clutches of penury.

Three challenges currently threaten the 80-year record of rising global living standards and poverty reduction. First, it is widely recognized that the crisis in the global commons, the term encompasses cross-border challenges that do not fall under national jurisdictions, such as climate, pandemic and technology, are having an increasingly negative impact on the global economy.

Second, these challenges risk becoming even more urgent without effective collective action over time. Third, despite this recognition, most people agree that progress in addressing the issues has been too little and too slow.

What are the reasons that have stopped the global economic architecture from acting in time and at scale? First, the challenges in managing the global commons have grown more numerous and more difficult, with climate change perhaps being the most pressing issue. Second, the global economy has become more fragmented, and geopolitical tensions have increased, making collective action difficult.

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### AUSTRALIAN SCHOLARS PUSH TO REKINDLE INTEREST IN CHINA

Academics say knowledge about country's biggest trading partner needs boost

By KARL WILSON in Sydney and XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong

The past 20 years has seen a steady decline in the number of Australian students enrolling in China Studies, with academics expressing concern the country is slipping behind in its efforts to better understand its biggest trading partner.

Professor David Goodman, director of the China Studies Centre at Sydney University, said that all 84 of the center's PhD students were from overseas, with 82 of them Chinese nationals.



"The course brings together the vast variety of experiences in China such as social sciences, humanities and engineering," Goodman said.

The drop in enrollments of Australian students has taken place as research grants for China Studies and academic exchanges have also fallen.

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### Rich heritage on display



Visitors walk past colossal ancient statues placed along the Grand Staircase of the Grand Egyptian Museum on Tuesday in Giza, Egypt. The museum opened its doors to 4,000 visitors as a trial run on Tuesday. Over 100,000 artefacts are on display. KHALED DESOUKI / AFP

## Xi: Beijing and Washington should boost each other's development

By ZHOU JIN in Beijing and MINLU ZHANG in New York

China and the United States should serve as a boost to each other's development rather than a hindrance, President Xi Jinping has said, expressing Beijing's willingness to work with Washington as a partner and friend.

The success of one country is an opportunity for the other, Xi said in a congratulatory message sent to the annual gala dinner of the National Committee on US-China Relations on Tuesday.

Xi has been sending congratulatory messages to the organization's annual gala dinner for a number of years. In November last year, Xi attended a dinner reception hosted by the committee and the US-China Business Council following his meeting with US President Joe Biden in San Francisco.

In the letter, Xi expressed his appreciation for the committee's unremitting efforts to promote exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in various fields, and congratulated this year's gala's esteemed honoree, William E. Ford, chairman and CEO of General Atlantic, a global growth equity company.

Xi said he hopes that the committee and friends from all walks of life will continue to care about and support China-US relations, and actively participate in and benefit from China's modernization.

He emphasized that China-US ties are one of the world's most

important bilateral relationships, which bear on the well-being of the two peoples and the future of mankind.

China has always handled the bilateral relationship on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, he said.

Xi said that China will enhance institutional openness, continue to build a world-class international business environment and leverage the advantage of its enormous market and domestic demand potential to bring about more opportunities for China-US cooperation.

He called on the two sides to carry out more visits and exchanges, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation to bring more benefits to the two peoples and inject more stability and positive energy into the world.

On the same day, US President Biden also sent a congratulatory message to the event.

At the dinner, Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng said that for China and the US, "turning back on each other is not an option, and trying to remodel or take down one another is unrealistic."

A total of 1,920 US companies were set up in China last year, and 80 percent of US businesses in China plan to reinvest profits generated there this year, according to Xie.

All of this shows that businesses from the US are "voting with their feet", he said, adding that their choice is not to distance themselves from China, but to invest more deeply in it.

The gala took place as a pair of giant pandas, Bao Li and Qing Bao, arrived in Washington, DC, on Tuesday - fulfilling a promise made by Xi last November in San Francisco, where he announced China's readiness to continue its cooperation with the US on panda conservation to further deepen friendly ties between the two peoples.

Regarding Xi's letter, Jeffrey Greene, chairman of the Sino-American Aviation Heritage Foundation, said that Xi emphasizes the importance of direct communication between China and the US.

President Xi is taking a very pragmatic approach in terms of encouraging cooperation, Greene said, adding that "although there are challenges, we need to reach out to our friends and business partners to work together, to face challenges and build bridges."

Peter Reisman, managing director and chief communications officer of Bank of China USA, said, "Regardless of the difficulties that we have in the relationship between the US and China, now we have to buckle down and work toward better communication, because, at the end of the day, there's nothing more important than a robust and deep US-China relationship."

"And that doesn't mean we have to agree on everything, but it does mean that we have to learn how to communicate and work together on the areas that we can," he said.

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## PAGE TWO

# Studies: Illuminating cultural exchanges, reshaping perspectives

From page 1

In a letter to the Australian Research Council in May, 60 China Studies scholars from 22 universities in Australia expressed their concern about the decline in funding grants.

The letter cited the 2023 "Australia's China Knowledge Capability" research report, which said there are "serious questions" about generating "direct knowledge of China, informed by world-class understanding of how China operates."

"Australia's capacity to produce cutting edge research on China is currently at crisis point, precisely at a time when that knowledge is most sorely needed," the letter said.

In the 1990s, Australia produced "outstanding China scholarship" that was recognized internationally, the letter noted.

One of the letter's signatories was Australian Sinologist Colin Mackerras, professor emeritus at Griffith University in Australia and a fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities. Mackerras said in an interview with China Daily it was "terribly sad" to see how far China Studies had declined in Australia.

"Education builds better relations between nations. It goes without saying," said Mackerras, who for more than 60 years has been at the forefront of China-Asian studies in Australia and has also frequently taught in China.

"Through education you get an understanding of the culture and history of a people. In turn, this helps build bridges between people," he added.

In June, the Colin Mackerras Chair in Australian Studies Program was established in Beijing to honor the professor's contribution to the educational and intellectual exchanges between China and Australia.

The program was jointly launched by the Australian Studies Center at Beijing Foreign Studies University, where Mackerras has taught multiple times since the 1960s, and the Foundation for Australian Studies in China.

## Open minds in China

While academics in Australia are lamenting the declining interest in China Studies, the reverse is true in China. Australian Studies programs at Chinese tertiary institutions have been flourishing in recent decades.

From humble beginnings in the 1980s, there are nearly 40 Australian Studies centers at universities throughout China — one of the highest concentrations in the world.

"It is quite remarkable," said the University of Canberra's Richard Hu, joint editor of the book *How Australia is Studied in China*.

"China has arguably the largest community of Australian Studies in the world," the professor told China Daily.

However, not much is known about this phenomenon, including its emergence, rationale, interests, influences, and the implications for strategic Australia-China engagement in a region of increasing challenges and uncertainty.

The book is a collection of essays by leading academics which, Hu says, goes some way to unpacking how Australia is taught, learned, researched, communicated, and promoted in China.

"There are multiple reasons why Australian Studies has become so popular in China," Hu says. "They range from historical to cultural reasons. Language is also another reason. Australia is an English-speaking country, and English is very popular in China so Australian Studies is a good fit," he said.

The historical reasons stem from when China began to open its doors to the world in the 1970s, Hu said.

In 1972, the Australian government, led by then prime minister Gough Whitlam from the Labor Party, established diplomatic relations with China.

The following year, Australia opened its first embassy in the People's Republic of China.

The Australian and Chinese governments subsequently signed a cultural exchange agreement, and in 1979 China sent nine scholars to study at the University of Sydney, Hu said.

The scholars were Du Ruiqing, Hou Weirui, Hu Wenzhong, Hu Zhuanglin, Huang Yuanshen, Long Rijin, Qian Jiaoru, Wang Guofu and Yang Chaoguang. They came from some of the most prestigious universities in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Xi'an, Suzhou, and Chongqing.

They were all awarded a Master of Arts in Australian literature and linguistics from the University of Sydney, with their graduation ceremony featured in the pages of the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper on Jan 9, 1981.

"These scholars took this knowledge back to China and became leaders of English education in China," Hu said. "Because of their influence they laid the groundwork for Australian Studies in China."

He said Australian Studies programs in China have become a model for other countries to follow.

## Building understanding

What do Chinese students gain from Australian Studies?

"They gain cultural literacy and language capability," Hu said. "At the same time, they learn Australian history, literature, culture and indigenous history — all elements to better understand a people."

One Chinese professor, Li Yao, has translated 50 Australian novels, including some by the country's indigenous writers, into Chinese over the past 40 years, he said.

"I tell some of my Australian colleagues that Patrick White and Henry Lawson are read more in China than Australia," Hu said of the two renowned Australian authors.

Cui Xuehai, a faculty member at the East China University of Political Science and Law's School of Foreign Studies in Shanghai, studied for his doctorate at Western Sydney University from 2018 to 2022.

Cui did a comparative study of two novels — *A Journey to Steppe Mongolia* by Uljiburin, an author from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, and *Carpentaria* by Alexis Wright, an Australian Aboriginal writer.

"It is the shared similarities and nuanced differences of these two works that offer insights into why Australian Studies matter for us," Cui told China Daily.

"In their unique ways, both authors rework the major language that their novels are written in, to represent or reflect the language, culture, mythology ... of their distinctive cultures."

The two works look at different forms of oral traditions that have historically helped with the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and wisdom in both China and Australia.

"Such a comparison illuminates many aspects of a strengthened unification among the many ethnic groups in China while maintaining their diverse linguistic and cultural heritages," he added.

Cui said it is important for young people in China to take Australian Studies to enhance ties between the two nations as "knowledge of another culture and its people always precedes understanding of it".

He cited Australian and Chinese media coverage of bush fires that ravaged areas of Australia as an example of differing perspectives on the relationship between humans and nature. "While the Chinese media was more concerned with how the natural disaster affected flora and fauna. The Australians seemed to place more emphasis on how mankind influenced living things by causing phenomena such as global warming," Cui said.

He views Australia as a rapidly rising country geographically close to China with its economy, culture and national strategies growing in importance.

Cui said it is in Australia's interests to build friendlier and closer ties with China. "So, it is very worthwhile for Chinese students to do Australian Studies and be dedicated to it (the pursuit)," he said.

Australian Aboriginal culture is incredibly rich and diverse, encompassing a wide range of traditions, languages, and art forms, Cui added.

"It is one of the oldest continuous cultures in the world, with a history that spans over 50,000 years," he said.

"Its key feature, as represented in literature, is its deep spiritual connections to the land — a fundamental concept in Aboriginal spirituality called the 'Dreamtime'."

## Connecting people

There has been a boom in Australian Studies in China in recent years, said Wang Guanglin, a professor at the Australian Studies Centre at the Shanghai International Studies University.

However, Australian Studies started relatively late in China compared with study of the United Kingdom and the United States.

The popularity of Australian Studies is the result of several factors, Wang said. Australia is located in Asia and has close proximity to China, and it is in the antipodean country's economic interests to be on good terms with China.

Another reason is overseas students are profitable for Australia's education sector, despite grumblings from some locals their impact has contributed to the rise in property prices and other commodities.

The Australian Studies Center has



A performer plays a pipa (four-stringed Chinese lute) at the Chinese Garden of Friendship in Sydney, Australia, on May 15. Musicians from the China Conservatory of Music staged a Chinese folk music performance titled *Pipa Ballad: Strings through the Seasons*. MA PING / XINHUA

Education builds better relations between nations. It goes without saying. Through education you get an understanding of the culture and history of a people. In turn, this helps build bridges between people."

Colin Mackerras, professor emeritus at Griffith University in Australia and fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities

established very good relations with their counterparts in Australia, he said. "The ties are beautiful, and they can help increase understanding and reduce potential conflicts between the two sides," Wang said.

His center has organized the translation of classic Australian novels into Chinese, and participated in events such as talks between the Chinese author Mo Yan, who was awarded the 2012 Nobel Prize in literature, and South African-Australian novelist and essayist J.M. Coetzee.

Angela Lehmann, chair of the Foundation for Australian Studies in China, said Australian Studies programs have become a "strong network" for research and teaching in the Chinese university sector. These studies have expanded since the 1980s with support from the Australia-China Council and the foundation.

"Good academic relations exist between Australian and Chinese figures, and the research, publications and translations emerging in China have been increasingly significant over recent years," Dr Lehmann told China Daily.

"These centers have wide-ranging interests from Australian and comparative literature and cultural studies to economics and trade, political systems, environmental studies, gender, indigenous studies, social sciences and more.

"Some centers offer courses and programs, and others are more focused on research activities and public events."

There are an estimated 250 scholars in China currently involved in teaching and doing research on Australia, and many more students taking part in undergraduate or postgraduate courses linked to Australian Studies.

"The popularity has been driven by the experience of leading scholars who spent time in Australia, who came back to China and developed courses to teach and build a new generation of scholars with an interest in Australia," Lehmann said.

"Initially, the focus of many Australian Studies centers was on literature and translation, as English Studies departments often were linked to those with an interest in Australia.

"Now we are seeing the diversification of disciplines that these scholars are engaging with. The community has grown in terms of numbers, but also in breadth — more scholars (are) studying a wider range of topics."

Lehmann said Australian Studies enable students in China to learn and engage with Australia.

"Many of these students may not otherwise have the opportunity to learn about Australia. Many will go on to study in Australia or engage with Australia throughout their careers," she added.

"Supporting a scholarly community in Australia has formed an important people-to-people bridge that has been built over many years.

"This bridge has been proven to withstand the challenges of the pandemic and bilateral tensions and continues to grow and prosper," she said.

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Top: A Chinese artist performs an acrobatic show of spurring flames during the China Culture Day held in Canberra on Feb 27. Above left: A guest tries Chinese calligraphy while attending the China Culture Day. PHOTOS BY CHU CHEN / XINHUA Above right: A visitor selects Chinese tea during China-Australia tea culture week in Canberra on Nov 24. HU JINGCHEN / XINHUA

## TOP NEWS



Premier Li Qiang (fifth from left) and other leaders of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization pose for a group photo on Wednesday at the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of Member States of the SCO in Islamabad, Pakistan. LI TAO / XINHUA

## Deeper cooperation in SCO proposed by China

Beijing calls for formulating a development strategy for next decade

By ZHANG YUNBI  
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

On behalf of China, Premier Li Qiang has put forward a four-point proposal on deepening cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Li unveiled the proposal when addressing the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of Member States of the SCO in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Wednesday.

The proposal includes strengthening the synergy of development strategies, expanding practical cooperation, actively addressing major risks and expanding people-to-people exchanges.

Beijing calls on the organization's member states to work on formulating a development strategy for the SCO for the next decade, drawing a road map for cooperation in various fields, strengthening strategic communication, and "resolving differences and enhancing mutual trust through dialogue", Li said.

He said that, in terms of practical cooperation, it is necessary to deepen cooperation in areas such as poverty reduction, the digital economy and green development, and to enhance facilitation of trade and investment as well as connectivity in the region.

“(Building such a common home for the SCO) requires a more solid political foundation, more reliable security guarantees, closer economic ties, deeper emotional ties, and more coordinated multilateral cooperation.”

Premier Li Qiang

Member states "should maintain the stability and smoothness of the industrial and supply chains" and actively prepare for the establishment of an SCO development bank, headed.

Regarding the main risks faced by member states, Li emphasized the need to strengthen joint actions to combat the "three evil forces" of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

He underlined the need to speed up the construction of an integrated center for dealing with security

threats and challenges as well as an anti-narcotics center.

Building such a common home for the SCO, Li said, "requires a more solid political foundation, more reliable security guarantees, closer economic ties, deeper emotional ties, and more coordinated multilateral cooperation".

The rest of the parties participating in the meeting agreed that SCO member states have vigorously boosted the region's peace, stability and development, and they need to be even more united and collaborative.

They said it is necessary to strengthen the synergy between the Belt and Road and the Eurasian Economic Union, and deepen cooperation in areas such as economy and trade, security, connectivity, energy, finance, green development and poverty reduction.

They also called for practicing genuine multilateralism, jointly upholding international justice, and promoting lasting peace and common prosperity in the region and the world.

Li and other participating leaders of the SCO member states signed and issued a joint communique and approved resolutions related to the buildup of the SCO, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

On the sidelines of the SCO gath-

ering, Li held the China-Russia-Mongolia trilateral prime ministers' meeting together with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and Mongolian Prime Minister Luvshannamsrai Oyun-Erdene on Wednesday.

China is ready to focus on key cooperation within the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, deepen multilateral collaboration in the SCO and other platforms, share development opportunities and their fruits, and safeguard common interests, Li said.

The Russian and Mongolian sides expressed their willingness to jointly strengthen the synergy among the Eurasian Economic Union, the Steppe Road Program and the Belt and Road Initiative, accelerate the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, and cooperate closer in areas such as transportation, energy and culture.

Also on Wednesday, Li held a bilateral meeting with Russian Prime Minister Mishustin, and both leaders praised the high level of bilateral ties.

Li said Beijing is willing to further deepen cooperation with Moscow in traditional fields such as the economy, trade and energy, as well as promote cooperation in emerging sectors such as the digital economy and constantly upgrade the level of collaboration in industrial and supply chains.

Mishustin said Russia is willing to deepen practical cooperation in areas such as trade and closely communicate and collaborate with China within frameworks such as the United Nations, the SCO and BRICS.

Inside

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## Growth: There is merit in identifying weak links

From page 1

After decades and decades of supportive geopolitics, demographics and advances in technology, many of the positive trends are now being reversed. Moreover, the tailwinds to global growth, such as growing markets, increasing trade, expanding supply chains, and financial globalization were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategic competition and geopolitical tensions have been inevitable fallouts of armed conflicts, exacerbating this fragmentation. The conflict in Ukraine has ruptured the rules that govern the international order. International cooperation is at its lowest point since the Cold War. The peace dividend has evaporated as defense spending has risen across the globe. These developments have increased political tensions leading for a rush for food, energy, security, near assuring of supply chains and the adoption of protectionist policies.

However, the cost of fragmentation is high. Depending on how it goes, the IMF estimates that it is somewhere between 2 percent to 7 percent of GDP. Many economic forecasts show that in the next 30 to 40 years, about two thirds to three quarters of global growth will come from the Global South. However, these countries will be devastated by adverse climate changes.

So the challenge is, how can we keep global growth up in a situation where the countries that are supposed to grow are also facing the strongest headwinds? That is a governance issue that needs to be tackled by the official sectors because it is hard to have a collective movement forward where the governance of the institutions does not reflect the realities.

China plays a significant role in the fight against climate change. On one hand, China's growth is critical for the growth of Asia and of middle and low-income countries. On the other hand, China has made tremendous progress on the emission front and in devising a market and a taxonomy for dealing with climate change. That is something that other countries can learn from.

The private sector is key to solving climate change challenges. All estimates of needed financing are in the band of \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion annually, the bulk of which is supposed to come from domestic revenue mobilization and foreign direct investment.

Therefore, there is merit in identifying the specific shortcomings in the entire system, public and private, that are impeding progress. With respect to climate specifically, three gaps exist in both the public sector and in the private sector. These are gaps in governance, implementation and accountability.

And finally, despite the existence of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, there is no institution that has the overall responsibility to coordinate the global climate change policy and system wide financial effort. A reform of the global financial system is

urgently needed to assess and coordinate the necessary financing, as well as fiscal policies.

The first question that comes up is, do we need a new institution to close the gap? In today's geopolitics, it will be very hard to reach a consensus on a new institution's role, charter and funding. Even if we reach an agreement on a new institution, it will take at least a decade for the institution to gain the necessary scale and expertise to make an impact.

Also, technical advances over the last few decades have improved the feasibility of making rapid progress. In particular, innovation has dramatically improved the economics of reducing carbon emissions. Thus, the problem is no longer whether it's technically feasible to stabilize and then bring down global carbon emissions, but, instead, how to do it quickly, equitably and at scale. It means that the focus needs to shift toward coordinating actions that will help set priorities for mitigation and adaptation and mobilize financial resources. The private sector can contribute effectively to meet these challenges.

Two key instruments are needed to encourage the private sector's participation. One is the global carbon trading schemes that facilitate increase in voluntary compliance, the integration of nature-based solutions in the form of decarbonization plans and the introduction of carbon taxes, including cross-border adjustments, together with appropriate policies that would help middle- and low-income countries.

The IMF and the World Bank should help support the development of global carbon markets and assist in the development of carbon taxes and mechanisms. A regime that allows the real price discovery of carbon in advance and developing economies would be essential for the ecosystem to develop.

Finally, on the accountability side, the current system of voluntary disclosures enforced by shareholder action is not manageable. The framework fails to verify the consistency of corporate disclosures with the corresponding financial statements. Market regulators should verify the consistency of mandatory sustainability disclosures with the corporate financial statements and monitor divestment policies that shift high emission activities to lesser regulated jurisdictions.

Climate change is the single largest threat that faces the global community. Critical gaps in governance, implementation, and accountability need to be bridged to solve this crisis. Neither the public sector nor the private sector can resolve the impasse alone. We need a system-wide approach to move forward.

The author is vice-chairman of the International Finance Forum and former chief representative for Asia and the Pacific at the Bank for International Settlements. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Fiscal stimulus package could amount to 10 trillion yuan

By ZHOU LANXU  
and OUYANG SHIJIA

China's much-anticipated fiscal stimulus package could amount to somewhere around 10 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion), which would represent reasonable and moderate funding to address the most immediate issues facing the world's second-largest economy, policy researchers and advisers said.

They underlined the need for policymakers to avoid any overly large stimulus that could come at a heavy cost, but instead advance deeper, wider reforms along with the stimulus package to secure a more sustainable transition in growth drivers.

Sheng Zhongming, a research fellow at CF40 Institute, which is affiliated with the China Finance 40 Forum think tank, said that China must confront the key structural issues of local debt risks, government outstanding payables to businesses, real estate concerns and the recapitalization needs of banks.

Effectively addressing these issues will require at least 10 trillion yuan in additional public funds over several years, Sheng said, adding that he anticipates an annual debt swap program of around 2 trillion yuan, with a cumulative total of 5 to 6 trillion yuan required to substantially reduce the debt load in heavily indebted areas.

Charlie Zheng, chief economist at

“The key is for the government to comprehensively communicate with the public regarding details of the package as soon as possible so as to provide more certainty to the market and ensure a steadier recovery in confidence.”

Gong Liutang, a professor of applied economics at Peking University's Guanghua School of Management

Samoyed Cloud Technology Group Holdings, said that a fiscal stimulus package of around 10 trillion yuan may be essential in 2025 to tackle the key issues highlighted by the finance minister.

The proposed package, which could be financed by ultra-long-term special treasury bonds, would primarily focus on local debt swaps and bank recapitalization, while alleviating the property sector's challenges and supporting people in difficulties, Zheng said.

However, he emphasized that

China should not rely solely on stimulus measures to revive the economy, warning of high inflation and an imbalance between the State-owned and private sectors that could result from overreliance on government spending.

China must advance reforms to boost the private economy at the same time, Zheng said, urging policy clarity for private entrepreneurs that any business is permissible unless prohibited by law, while explaining to government officials that any governmental behavior is infeasible without legal authorization.

Discussions of the size of China's stimulus package heated up after Finance Minister Lan Fo'an said on Saturday the country plans to increase the debt limit by a large scale and replace local government hidden debt, while recognizing there is "relatively large space" for the central government to raise debt and increase the deficit.

The market is waiting for the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress—the country's top legislature—to convene in late October or early November to approve the specifics of the plan.

Gong Liutang, a professor of applied economics at Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, said that if the stimulus package comes to about 10 trillion yuan, it won't be "overly aggressive" given that China's annual GDP has reached 126 trillion yuan.

“The key is for the government to comprehensively communicate with the public regarding details of the package as soon as possible so as to provide more certainty to the market and ensure a steadier recovery in confidence,” said Gong, who is also a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Compared with the stimulus program initiated in 2008, Gong said the latest round of policy buffer should focus more on enhancing consumption and preventing resource misallocation, with increased spending on education, healthcare and social protection, as well as subsidies for low-income and unemployed individuals.

After the recent bigger-than-expected policy stimulus announcement, Goldman Sachs has raised its forecast for China's real GDP growth from 4.7 percent to 4.9 percent this year and from 4.3 percent to 4.7 percent in 2025.

“The Chinese government has clearly made a turn on cyclical policy management and increased its focus on growth,” a Goldman Sachs report said, adding that a significant policy offset is needed next year due to the property market's lingering drag on GDP growth and the possibility of slowing export growth.

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## Hello world



An employee of Berlin Zoo holds one of the newly born twin panda bear cubs during a presentation to the media on Tuesday in Berlin, Germany. The pair began to take turns to greet the public from Wednesday, for about an hour a day between 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm local time. EBRAHIM NOROOZI / AP

## CHINA

# HK leader shares plan for reforms

Govt committed to transforming city into global, high-caliber talent hub

By OASIS HU in Hong Kong  
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John Lee Ka-chiu, chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, unveiled his third Policy Address on Wednesday, highlighting the government's commitment to deepening reforms, exploring new growth opportunities and building the city into a global, high-caliber talent hub.

Lee took three-and-a-half hours to deliver the policy blueprint themed "Reform for Enhancing Development and Building Our Future Together", which comprised nine chapters.

"The overarching governance philosophy this year is to boost economic growth and enhance development to improve residents' quality of life," Lee said.

Lee, who was elected in 2022, noted that the objectives of his annual policy address evolve in response to the prevailing social circumstances and the progress of the era.

His inaugural policy address was crafted during the COVID-19 pandemic, so it focused on charting a brighter future for the city together.

Once it was time for his second policy address, Hong Kong had overcome the pandemic, leading to a shift in focus towards fostering social recovery.

This year, the city has guaranteed national security and is transitioning from order to prosperity, making reform for enhancing development the central theme of the policy address.

Reform is a continuous process, Lee said. Looking ahead, he pledged to fully leverage the strengths of "one country, two systems" and uphold the fundamental premise to safeguard the sovereignty, security and development interests of the nation.

A number of initiatives have been touted to boost the city's economy, including developing the low-altitude economy and silver economy, refining the capital investment migration scheme, positioning Hong Kong as an international gold trading hub and developing world-class gold storage facilities, and proposing to the central government a plan to reintroduce unlimited entries for more mainland cities under the Individual Visit Scheme.

Efforts are underway to simplify procedures for foreign companies to establish their world or regional headquarters in the city, with visas for foreign staff members of Hong Kong-registered companies to be extended up to five years. Additionally, the government will ease visa criteria for nationals of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar seeking multiple-entry visas for travel and business, extending the validity period of these visas from two years to three years.

Lee also proposed cutting taxes on imported liquor, easing mortgage restrictions and strengthening support for small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as rolling out a raft of measures pertaining to culture, sports and tourism to foster economic diversification.

Lee urged legislation on creating a standard for subdivided flats, and those who fail to meet the standard will be banned from rental markets. The supply of public housing units is expected to reach 189,000 units over the next five years — an 80 percent increase compared to 2022.

To maintain Hong Kong's status as a haven for high-caliber talent, Lee said the government will revise its talent list and expand the Top Talent Pass Scheme to include graduates from 198 universities, adding 13 more top mainland and overseas higher education institutions. The city will extend a pilot program allowing graduates from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area campuses of Hong Kong universities to work in the city for two years.

Furthermore, the much-discussed "Study in Hong Kong" program has become a reality, leveraging scholarships and other incentives to entice more overseas students — particularly those from ASEAN nations and countries and regions participating in the Belt and Road Initiative — to pursue their education in Hong Kong. Scholarships for further studies will also be introduced for local talent to pursue post-graduate studies that will contribute to the city's "eight centers" outlined in its 14th Five-Year Plan.

Enhancing governance is also high on Lee's agenda, which suggested launching mutual civil servants exchange programs with the GBAs mainland cities as well as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Wuhan in Hubei province and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, as well as pushing for the adoption of AI in government and public services.

Lee said the government will set up four cross bureau coordination groups to develop the low-altitude economy, the silver economy, tourist hotspots, and promote the integrated growth of education, technology and talent.

Reflecting on past achievements, Lee noted that the government has made significant progress in various aspects, including fulfilling its constitutional duty by enacting local legislation for Article 23 of the Basic Law to protect national security.

The blueprint was welcomed by the Hong Kong community, with the city's lawmakers pledging to walk through the plans. And representatives of various sectors hailed the blueprint as "pragmatic", saying it showed Lee's determination to achieve reform.



## Mass release

Captive-bred Chinese sturgeons, Yangtze sturgeons and other rare fish are released in batches down slides into the Yangtze River at an event in Yichang, Hubei province, on Wednesday. A total of 1,200 Chinese sturgeons and 1,000 Yangtze sturgeons, which are first-level nationally protected animals, were released during the event.

ZHOU XINGLIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Multiple entry visa allowed for expats from two SARs

By OASIS HU in Hong Kong  
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Starting Wednesday, foreign residents living in Hong Kong and Macao can apply for multiple-entry visas to the Chinese mainland with a validity period of up to five years by following a simplified procedure, according to the central government.

The Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region announced on Wednesday that non-Chinese Hong Kong permanent residents and non-Chinese Hong Kong residents who are

traveling to the mainland for tourism, business, family visits or cultural and academic exchanges can apply for a visa valid for up to five years, which will allow them to stay on the mainland for up to 180 days.

Under the new arrangement, applicants are not required to provide proof of round-trip tickets or hotel reservations when applying for visas, the office said.

Those who successfully applied for visas from overseas Chinese visa-issuing authorities and had their fingerprints collected during the process will be exempted from fingerprint collection when applying

from Hong Kong, the office added.

The office stressed that the validity of the visa and duration of stay will be decided case by case, and applicants may also be asked to submit additional documents or attend interviews.

The visa policy does not apply to foreign domestic helpers, the office noted.

Also on Wednesday, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Macao SAR announced a similar optimization for permanent and temporary foreign residents of the city.

People who apply from Macao for short-term activities such as tourism, trade and family visits can get visas with a validity period of five years and a stay for no more than 180 days, the office said, adding that proof of outbound transportation and hotel bookings are no longer required under the new arrangement.

Starting July 10, non-Chinese permanent residents of both Hong Kong and Macao can apply for a new mainland travel permit, which allows multiple entries into the mainland within a five-year validity period, with each stay capped at 90 days.

## Scientists mark 60th anniversary of nuclear program

By YAN DONGJIE  
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Scientists and their families gathered Wednesday at an old rocket research site in Beijing's Huairou district to commemorate the 60th anniversary of China's first atomic bomb test and reflect on the historic "Two Bombs and One Satellite" program.

The milestone marked China's rise as the fifth nation to possess nuclear weapons, following the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France.

Hou Jianguo, president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the development of the Two Bombs and One Satellite program — encompassing China's first atomic bomb, hydrogen bomb and satellite — was a monumental effort that required national unity and resilience.

"The success was a great feat achieved through the concerted

efforts of the entire country," Hou said. "Many outstanding scientists answered the call of the Communist Party and the State, working in remote, harsh conditions to forge the spirit of the program."

Hou Xun, a CAS academician and researcher at the Xi'an Institute of Optics and Precision Mechanics in Shaanxi province, recalled the early challenges workers faced in setting up the program.

The academicians were involved in the development of Two Bombs and One Satellite program.

"We had almost no equipment when the institute was first established," he said. "In Xi'an, there was no gas, so we had to build our own combustible gas supply system from scratch."

The Yanqi Lake campus of the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which houses China's first rocket research and

“Many outstanding scientists answered the call of the Communist Party and the State, working in remote, harsh conditions to forge the spirit of the program.”

Hou Jianguo, president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences

testing base, has preserved key facilities related to the project. This year, the university renovated its memorial hall dedicated to the Two Bombs and One Satellite pro-

grams, displaying items such as China's first satellite and high-speed cameras.

Open to the public since 2015, the hall documents the stories of 17 key figures involved in the program and over 10,000 research and testing personnel. It has welcomed more than 430,000 visitors to date.

Recent additions to the exhibit include manuscripts, clothing worn during historic moments and models of crucial scientific instruments.

Pan Yiyao, a UCAS student and memorial hall guide, emphasized the importance of the legacy.

"The spirit of Two Bombs and One Satellite — love for the motherland, selfless dedication, self-reliance and daring exploration — continues to inspire us as we strive to build a world-class scientific and technological power in the new era," Pan said.

## Communication, remote-sensing satellites in orbit

By ZHAO LEI  
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China launched a group of 18 communications satellites from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in Shanxi province on Tuesday evening, deploying the second batch of equipment in the Space-sail Constellation network into orbit.

Developed by Shanghai-based satellite maker Genesat, the plate-shaped satellites were carried by a Long March 6A rocket that blasted off at 7:06 pm and soon arrived in their preset orbit.

Previously known as the G60 network, the Spacesail Constellation network will provide high-speed, secure and reliable broadband internet services to users around the world, and is designed to consist of more than 10,000 satellites traveling in low-altitude orbits before the end of 2030, according to Spacesail, the

network's operator in Shanghai.

The first 18 Spacesail Constellation satellites were designed and built by the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Innovation Academy for Microsatellites in Shanghai and were launched by a Long March 6A rocket from the Taiyuan spaceport in early August.

According to a project plan, 648 satellites will have been launched into orbit before the end of 2025 to form the first version of the Spacesail Constellation network, which has been called by some observers as China's answer to SpaceX's Starlink system.

The Long March 6A rocket model was developed by the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology as a medium-lift launch vehicle. It consists of a 50-meter, liquid-propelled core booster and four solid-fuel side boosters. The core booster has a diameter of 3.35 meters and is propelled by two 120-metric-ton-thrust engines burning

liquid oxygen and kerosene.

The rocket has a liftoff weight of 530 tons and is tasked with transporting satellites to multiple orbits, including sun-synchronous, low-Earth and intermediate circular orbits.

In another development, China launched a remote-sensing satellite on Wednesday morning for Earth observation purposes.

The Gaofen 12E was carried by a Long March 4C rocket that lifted off at 7:45 am at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in the northwestern Gobi Desert and successfully arrived in its orbit.

Remote sensing satellites refer to those tasked with observing, surveying and measuring objects on land or at sea as well as monitoring weather.

Developed by the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology, the Gaofen 12E will obtain images and data to be used in land mapping, urban construction planning, agri-

cultural yield forecasting and disaster prevention and mitigation.

China launched the Gaofen program in May 2010 and listed it as one of the 16 national important projects in science and technology. The program has established a massive space-based system with more than 30 satellites in active service.

Images and data from the Gaofen satellites have been widely used by thousands of research bodies and enterprises in dozens of industries across China and have helped reduce the country's dependence on foreign remote-sensing products.

The Long March 4C, also a product of the Shanghai academy, has a liftoff weight of 250 tons and is mainly used to send satellites to sun-synchronous orbit. It is capable of transporting satellites with a combined weight of 3 tons to a typical sun-synchronous orbit 700 kilometers above the Earth.



John Lee Ka-chiu, chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, prepares to deliver his 2024 Policy Address at the Legislative Council building in Hong Kong on Wednesday. ANDY CHONG / CHINA DAILY

CHINA

# Digital advances herald judicial progress

Rapid socioeconomic development and technological innovation lead to more efficient legal system

By CAO YIN  
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More than 30 years ago, judge Ren Jianyou would have to ride her bicycle to inform people to attend their day in court. Today, the now-retired judge uses the digital superhighway to mediate disputes.

In the 1980s and 1990s, for a judge, being able to ride a bike was almost as important as knowing Chinese legal statutes in and out.

At that time, the majority of civil cases weren't held in grand and specialized courtrooms, but rather in nondescript offices, with a squat table and a few chairs.

However, as China's economy rapidly grew, followed by a wave of technological advancement, especially in the past decade, Chinese courts have been revolutionized — made smarter and more organized — giving litigants easier access to legal services and putting the tools of the world wide web at judges' fingertips.

Before Ren retired and hung up her gavel in 2001, Beijing Chaoyang District People's Court had already heard civil cases in specialized courtrooms and she'd learned to use a computer to handle legal matters.

Now, despite retiring, the 75-year-old is still fighting on the legal front line as a part-time mediator, helping to resolve disputes before they get to court.

Ren searches for legal information with her laptop instead of cycling to the Supreme People's Court in central Beijing to read books and root out materials. After helping mediate disputes, she upholds the mediation agreements via an online platform to get judicial confirmation from courts, no longer having to wait more than a month as she did in the past.

"Such quick and convenient services were unthinkable when I was a judge," she said.

"I could never have imagined that today's litigants and lawyers can file cases, submit evidence and attend mediation or litigation on their mobile phones, rather than traveling to courts with bags full of materials."

Noting that the changes are great achievements made by the country in terms of promoting the rule of law over the past decades, she added, "No matter how technologies improve and how services are optimized, the goal remains unchanged, that is, serving the people and delivering justice."

## Happy despite hardship

Before she was transferred to the Chaoyang court in 1991, Ren worked for the Weiyang District People's Court in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. In both cities, the courts shared office buildings with other government departments such as the justice and the finance bureaus.

Ren said working in this environment was hard. "I was in the same room with two other judges. If we all heard cases at the same time, it would be difficult for us and our litigants not to affect each other," she said.

Another retired judge He Huiying, 65, has a similar story. In 1979, when she came to the court in Beijing's Tongzhou district to work, it was just a courtyard and a row of bungalows, no specialized courtrooms, judge's benches and robes.

"At that time, judges had to ride around to figure out the root causes of



Chengdu Internet Court, based in Chengdu, Sichuan province, hears a dispute online on May 25, 2021. It is the first case heard by the court, which is the first such court in central and western China. DU YUQUAN / XINHUA

## Timeline of China's important legal milestones

### • 1954

China's first Constitution is enacted, laying the groundwork for the draft of the country's current Constitution.

### • 1978

The third plenary session of the 11th Communist Party of China Central Committee shapes a new period of the country's reform and opening-up, during which the development of a socialist democracy and improved socialist laws became a key policy for the Party and the nation.

### • 1982

The National People's Congress, China's top legislature, adopts the current Constitution, providing a great legal guarantee for China's reform and opening-up as well as the building of a modern socialist country.

### • 1997

The 15th CPC National Congress announces the building of a socialist country governed by the rule of law, stressing the rule of law is the basic strategy for the Party to lead the people in the country's governance.

### • 2012

The 18th CPC National Congress opens a new chapter of building the socialist rule of law. Since then, the country has advanced law-based governance in all aspects.

### • 2020

A conference on work related to overall law-based governance is held in Beijing. It marks the establishment of Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law and its status as the guiding ideology for law-based governance in China.

### • 2021

The Civil Code, a fundamental law for regulating civil activities, takes effect with general provisions and six individual sections, such as family and marriage, inheritance and contract.

CAO YIN



Above: Judges from the Shizhong District People's Court in Zaozhuang, Shandong province, interact with the audience during a livestreaming session on national security education on April 13 last year. JI ZHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Left: Social workers consult a judge via video link at a community affairs service station in Jiaying, Zhejiang province. Workers at the service station invite local judges to facilitate mediation and resolve grassroots disputes. XU YU / XINHUA

conflicts and notify residents involved in disputes to attend their trials," said He, who retired in 2014. "The longest ride took me more than an hour and a half to reach the place where the dispute occurred."

Even creating legal documents back then was a long process, according to He. A judgment or mediation agreement needed to be first handwritten by judges, and then sent to a typing room where typists typed it on wax paper with an old-fashioned typewriter and printed it with ink. Finally, the judges checked the correctness and stamped it, she said.

Ren recalled with a smile, "In the 1990s, a clerk and I completed more than 500 cases a year, all written by hand. Afterward, we were too tired to lift our arms."

Despite the lack of convenient transportation and intelligent tech, neither of the two retired judges complain about the hardships and fatigue they faced in those years.

"Whenever I prepared to write a verdict by hand, I was actually very happy, because it meant that the facts had been found out and the case would be over. It's good both for me and the litigants," He added.

## Counting pigs

With socioeconomic development and the pace of judicial standardization increasing, the courts where the two retired judges used to work have become large high-rise blocks, with clearly divided trial and work areas.

Judges must wear robes during case hearings, and the design of

courtrooms as well as the placement of chairs and benches is followed to a unified standard.

More than 3,500 courts nationwide have embraced the internet and digital technologies. At Beijing Internet Court, for example, all legal procedures, including case filing, case hearing, evidence exchange and ruling delivery, can be done online.

Litigants and lawyers are allowed to attend trials via video link, "which can help save time and travel expenses, meaning residents can deal with their cases at any time and any place, such as in a car or a meeting room," said Yan Jun, a judge from the court.

"Previously, I had to find the documents I wanted from lots of paper materials piled up like mountains in my office, but since 2018 when I



came to work at the court, I have turned to an internal intelligent system where a database can give me the accurate information," she said.

As the work environment and methods have changed, so has the content of some disputes.

When Ren was at the Chaoyang court, one of her major jobs was to deal with divorce-related disputes. What impressed her most was a trip to the outskirts of Beijing in the early 1990s to help split the family property — a number of pigs — between the divorced couple.

"The pair didn't reach an agreement on the exact number of pigs in their household and how many pigs each side could get, so I went to their home to further investigate and count the pigs," Ren said with a laugh. "Domestic animals were also important family assets at that time, as were savings and household appliances such as televisions, refrigerators and washing machines."

"Since the late 1990s, most divisions of family properties have focused on real estate and private cars," she said, adding that the change is due to the country's economic development and the improvement of people's living standards.

Yan agreed, saying that the establishment of the internet court was to meet people's new legal demands and to seek better solutions for internet-related disputes in the fast-developing digital age.

While the growth of e-commerce and the increase of internet services have made online contract disputes more frequent in recent years, the popularity of online literature has also enhanced the public's awareness of copyright protection, Yan said.

"Emerging businesses and technologies, including artificial intelligence and big data, have brought new types of civil disputes to the world such as those on AI-generated content and the intellectual property of data," she said. "At the same time, they have also challenged the judiciary, urging us to explore new ways to protect the legitimate rights of people and regulate the industrial development by rule of law."

## For the people

He reaffirmed though that although legal services have become more diverse and courts have become more technology-friendly, "our pursuit to serve litigants and uphold justice has never changed."

Looking back on her 35-year career, she said, "Being a judge to solve problems and alleviate conflicts for the people was the thing that made me most proud."

In the 10 years since her retirement, she has devoted herself to law education for teenagers.

She's not only invited judges to provide lectures for students, but also worked with the district's youth education and assistance program to illustrate real cases in comic book form and provided them free to schools.

In her view, improving efficiency by applying technologies is important, but it is more important for judges to enhance their learning ability to help people tackle legal issues.

The goal of courts becoming smarter and more professional is to safeguard justice for the people, Yan said.

Ren added, "Solving difficulties for the people in line with the law is something that cannot be changed at any time."



Online  
See more by scanning the code.

## New perspective reveals passion hidden by the past

While at college majoring in law, I carried with me some resentment that I wasn't actually studying the subject I really wanted to study — journalism.

In 2010, when I was ready to graduate from college, I sent out lots of resumes to media companies and took many written tests and interviews organized by news outlets. Finally, I became a journalist, starting my ideal career path.



Cao Yin  
Reporter's log

While covering breaking and social news, what surprised me was that due to my study background in law, I was also asked to report on legal issues, including legislation, judiciary and law enforcement. In

my daily work, the people I came into contact with the most were police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers and law experts.

What is even more unexpected is that such reports and contacts continue to this day.

In the past decade, I witnessed the births of several milestone legislative pieces such as the amendment to the current Constitution and the Civil Code, the first law to be called a "code" since the People's Republic of

China was founded in 1949.

I also attended a number of major case hearings that received widespread attention at home and abroad, including trademark disputes between retired NBA star Michael Jordan and a Chinese company, and a typical case in which Nie Shubin, a young man executed in 1995 for rape and intentional killing, was declared not guilty for insufficient evidence to prove the previous convictions.

When I was covering the formulation or revisions of laws, I discovered the need for legislators to solicit opinions from various aspects. In covering the cases, I realized the significance of upholding justice to the people.

More importantly, thanks to talks with police, judges and lawyers, I found that the legal theories and provisions I had studied in college were no longer obscure and boring. My interest grew in the public security department's crackdowns against crimes and real cases handled by courts. I have developed a passion for the rule of law, and also gained a

new understanding of my major.

Previously, I didn't like my law major, probably because I didn't have contact with the people involved in it, nor knew about their efforts and stories. As I have more contact with them at work over the past few years, my interest in law has also increased.

Although I am not someone who deals with the rule of law directly, I am fortunate to be able to document its development from a journalist's perspective. I hope my reporting on the legal field and contacts with legal practitioners will continue for another decade or more.

# CHINA

## Ethnic appreciation inspires stylish designs

### Bouyei fashion designer's products reveal passion for his heritage

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and CHEN MEILING

For Wei Xianglong, the unique dyed clothes and textiles of the Bouyei ethnic group have taken him on a lifelong journey, from being a humble craftsman of his ethnic culture to a fashion designer whose outfits have appeared on the runway at international fashion week in Beijing.

From his studio in the city of Duyun in the Qiannan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, the 35-year-old designs and makes clothing, shoes, computer bags, tea sets, handbags, backpacks and refrigerator magnets all in the style of his Bouyei ethnic heritage.

Bouyei is one of the 56 ethnic groups in China, predominantly hailing from the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau.

Wei opened his studio in his hometown after graduating from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 2011. Over the years, the popularity of his work and his customer base have continuously grown.

In 2018, he was recognized as an inheritor of traditional indigo dyeing of the Bouyei ethnic group.

Indigo dyeing, as well as batik, tie-dye, brocade weaving and embroidery are essential techniques for traditional Bouyei clothing.

Wei even takes on custom orders. "One young lady told me she just wanted the most beautiful and expensive piece I had," Wei said, adding that he wasn't surprised because Bouyei people cherish their traditional ethnic clothing.

Another customer liked a pleated



Left: Wei Xianglong (center) poses with several of his colleagues after a show featuring his collection of Bouyei-style clothing during the 2019 China Fashion Week in Beijing. Right: Wei trains women to do indigo dyeing in Duyun city, Guizhou province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Bouyei ornaments designed by Wei Xianglong.

his cultural heritage and sees it as a part of his role that he carries forward. "Western creators draw inspiration from their own cultural backgrounds or from Eastern elements for artistic creation. But I want to dig deep into our own culture," Wei said.

Skirts, for example, often represented the economic status of a family in ancient China, according to Wei. To research the history and design of an original pleated skirt, a complex and ornate piece of Bouyei attire, Wei spent a decade traveling to remote villages.

"Most of the time, we could only find a piece of fabric in one village and a section of pattern in another. It was like piecing together a puzzle," he said.

Even the elderly only remembered seeing their grandparents

wearing these garments when they were young, but none had been preserved. After nearly 10 years of searching, Wei finally discovered a relatively complete pleated skirt.

He said touching a real pleated skirt is different from merely seeing one in books. To restore it, one must study its craftsmanship and dimensions, Wei explained.

Following traditional techniques such as plant dyeing and hand weaving, and drawing inspiration from the structure of Bouyei traditional clothing, Wei weaves patterns that show a "worshipping of the universe, praise for nature or care for humanity", just as his ancestors did when designing clothes.

He personally likes roxburgh rose, a wild plant whose juice has become popular in Guizhou.

"There is a metaphor that rox-

burgh rose implies not being humble. It exudes strong self-confidence. It also symbolizes enduring love," he said. "This wild fruit, like the Bouyei people, is born in the mountains with a resilient and confident spirit."

Wei said it's more meaningful to convey the culture of the Bouyei people through creative products than to just superficially apply ethnic elements.

To bring Bouyei clothing into the modern era, Wei has also designed patterns to be used on the uniforms of flight attendants, organized a Bouyei fashion show for students, and his team is presenting a new wedding series from this month to Spring Festival.

He also teaches indigo dyeing at colleges and conducts trainings in rural areas, and has been invited onto TV programs multiple times.

"My ideal is to make more people understand this traditional craft and culture, and through my designs make indigo-dyed products more popular in daily life," he said.

Luo Cheng, a member of Wei's studio, said Wei is very meticulous and serious. "He is methodical in his work. He personally oversees everything and is not very tolerant of mistakes," he said.

"Many people said they began to learn about Bouyei through our Wutuwusheng brand. We hope to further promote the culture of the Bouyei and bring this local cultural brand to a larger stage," Luo said.

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.

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国际爱护动物基金会



CWCPC

AD

华北豹  
North China leopard

Between heaven and earth,  
together with other sentient beings, I live.

—Zhuangzi, philosopher, late fourth century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一  
——《庄子·齐物论》




# ACROSS ASIA

Editor's note:

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



Pet owners with their dogs at the Jeju International Airport in Jeju, South Korea, on March 16, 2023. PHOTOS BY YONHAP

## PET PEEVE

Pet-friendly cafes in South Korea find themselves in the doghouse

Cho, a 31-year-old cafe owner in Seoul who did not want to give her full name, used to run a popular spot for pet owners.

Her cafe, known for its dog-friendly atmosphere and puppuccinos, a drink for dogs, regularly welcomed customers with their pets. Occasionally, she would bring her own dog to work.

But recent government warnings have made it difficult to allow dogs on the premises.

"I received a warning from the government about having dogs here," Cho said. "They told me a complaint was filed, claiming the cafe was unhygienic because of the dogs." Cho said most pet-friendly cafes and restaurants operate unaware of a ban on pets. Owners typically become aware of the regulation when a civil complaint is filed, she said.

Current laws prohibit pets from entering food-handling establishments such as restaurants and cafes. The ban applies to animals in crates and strollers and includes outdoor seating areas that are registered as part of the business.

Businesses receive a warning for a first offense. A second violation results in a 15-day suspension and a third incurs a 30-day suspension. A fourth violation or more can lead to a 60-day suspension, revocation of the operating permit, or even an administrative order to close the business.

Pet owners say the rule is out of sync with current trends in South Korea.

Nearly a quarter of the country's population, about 15 million people, are pet owners and the country is witnessing a surge in pet-friendly services, particularly in dining and traveling, they pointed out.

Park Hee-jung, 31, who owns a 10-year-old golden retriever, expressed frustration with the in-



A dog takes part in a pet supplies show in Seoul on Oct 16, 2020.

sistent pet policies at restaurants.

"I've had several experiences where I went to a restaurant based on reviews saying it was pet-friendly, only to find they had changed their policy," she said, adding that she hopes the law will evolve to offer more options and clearer guidelines.

"Different restaurants have different rules and they usually don't state them clearly. It's very confusing and challenging to find a place where I can dine with my dog in peace," Park said.

In response to growing demand for pet-friendly dining, the government launched a two-year pilot project in December 2022 to explore regulatory sandbox permits for some restaurants and cafes.

"As of July 2024, 141 stores from 38 brands are legally registered as pet-friendly," said Jung In-kwon, an official of the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety of South Korea.

Seo Yul-hee, the owner of cafe Beryl Kiki in Pohang, North Gyeong-sang Province, is one of them.

"There are agencies that charge

around 3 to 5 million won (\$3,700) for assistance (in obtaining the sandbox permit)," Seo said, who handled the application process on her own.

She said that while it requires some effort, such as renovating the store, it is manageable. "It's not a walk in the park, but with proper preparation, it's achievable for a business owner."

Establishments with permits must follow a set of guidelines from the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, such as posting signs that pets are allowed, ensuring dogs are leashed and covering food when served or displayed. Permits are valid for two years.

Information on pet-friendly establishments with the permit is available on the government's Regulatory Information portal. Seo said she believes many businesses are simply unaware of the permit.

She also advocates for a change in the law, suggesting that restaurants should be allowed to accommodate pets if their staff completes require-

ments like hygiene training, rather than enforcing an outright ban.

As the pilot program on pet-friendly dining nears its conclusion, the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety is studying possible revisions of the current regulations, with December 2025 set as its initial timeline for any changes.

"We will assess the pilot project's results and gather expert opinions first," Jung said.

However, there are some who do not support the idea of pets in restaurants and cafes.

"I think small dogs are cute, but imagining their fur and dust in my food puts me off. If a restaurant is pet-friendly, I wouldn't go," said Yoon Hye-jung, a 33-year-old Seoul resident.

"I think outdoor seating at cafes is fine for dogs, but I believe many people would feel uncomfortable with dogs inside restaurants," said Kim Hyo-jin, a 30-year-old owner of a Maltipoo, a small mixed-breed poodle. "Besides, there could be people who are allergic to dogs or cats."

Veterinarian Choi In-young, a director at the Seoul Veterinary Medical Association, said pet-friendly restaurants are necessary but should follow specific legal guidelines.

"There should be designated areas for pets, and shop owners must inform customers in advance," he said. "The interior and equipment should be designed to prevent food contamination from pet fur."

Choi also emphasized that pet owners need to take responsibility.

"If your pet hasn't been taught basic etiquette, like not barking or biting, you may need to sign a waiver. Shop owners should have the right to ask disruptive customers to leave," he said.

THE KOREA HERALD, SOUTH KOREA

## More Malaysian seniors seek jobs amid rising costs

A growing number of seniors in Malaysia are applying for jobs after retirement to cope with the rising cost of living and longer life expectancy, according to Jobstreet, a Southeast Asian employment website.

The online employment company's managing director Vic Sithasanan said there has been a 13 percent rise in job applications from seniors aged 60 and above between January 2023 and the end of August 2024.

He said the trend was likely due to factors such as the rising cost of living and extended life expectancy, which necessitates longer careers for financial stability.

"The reasons reflect personal motivations and broader economic factors, but the most pressing is the rising cost of living," Sithasanan said.

"On Jobstreet's platform, we've seen the number of senior users aged 60 to 99 grow 2.6 times from 2022 to 2023, with a 2.4-fold increase in Q1 (the first quarter) of 2024 alone compared with 2022.

"Seniors are motivated to extend their careers to increase their financial safety net."

He added that with longer life expectancies, seniors feel the need to sustain their income for a longer duration, prompting many to seek employment opportunities beyond the retirement age.

Sithasanan said an estimated 1 percent of the current 3.9 million seniors are actively searching for jobs, which reflects a significant portion of the aged population in the job market.

"As the workforce ages and the value of experience becomes more apparent, companies will — if they have not yet already — recognize the benefits of hiring senior talent," he said.

"This requires a shift in perception, and the need to create a working environment that supports and encourages the hiring of older workers."

Sithasanan said many companies are implementing upskilling and reskilling programs specifically designed for older employees, ensuring they are in line with the latest technologies and industry trends.

"Doing this will appeal to senior hires, who are looking for ways to remain relevant and leverage their vast experience to mentor and guide younger employees, fostering a culture of knowledge transfer and intergenerational collaboration," he said.

Sithasanan said companies offering flexibility at the workplace could also appeal to older talent prioritizing the ability to manage family or health commitments.

He added that the government has several initiatives that support

and incentivize older workers in the workforce, such as income tax reductions for employers who hire older workers, as well as training and development programs to help older workers acquire new skills.

"The Human Resources Ministry (of Malaysia) has also stepped in to issue age-friendly workplace guidelines to address the specific needs of older workers, such as ergonomic workstations and accessible facilities," he said.

Sithasanan said a Jobstreet survey showed that Malaysian talent is largely driven by salary and compensation, but more mature generations such as Gen X and baby boomers typically look for roles that can showcase their wealth of experience and knowledge, with job security at the forefront of their minds.

"Seniors have also expressed a desire to stay active and engaged in the workforce, as a way to maintain a sense of purpose and contribute to society," he said.

He said in terms of competitiveness in the workforce, the inclusion of senior workers complements the workforce they prefer roles that differ from those sought by younger candidates, such as part-time, consultancy, or mentorship positions.

Sithasanan said companies are increasingly aware of the unique skills and perspectives of senior employees, particularly those who can mentor younger employees and position the company for sustained success.

"Their experience enables them to efficiently navigate challenges, making them valuable assets in decision-making processes, especially in roles that require specialized knowledge," he said.

"This can be particularly beneficial to productivity and stability, especially in industries facing skills shortages." In short of the type of jobs senior citizens are seeking, the highest number of job applications on Jobstreet are from the manufacturing, transport and logistics industries (15 percent), followed by accounting (12 percent), and human resources and recruitment sectors (10 percent).

Sithasanan said awareness, government support, age-friendly workplace policies and a commitment to inclusivity is necessary to help seniors rejoin the workforce.

"Employers must be made aware of various policies and initiatives that exist to incentivize the hiring of senior citizens," he said.

"The government could also expand funding for training and development programs that help senior workers acquire new skills, ensuring they remain competitive in a rapidly evolving job market."

THE STAR, MALAYSIA

## Nepalese Sherpa, 18, breaks 14-peak youngest record

Nima Rinji Sherpa, 18, reached the summit of Mount Shishapangma in the Xizang autonomous region, China, on the morning of Oct 9, becoming the youngest person in the world to summit all 14 of the planet's 8,000-meter peaks.

Bikram Karki, Nima's spokesperson said the young climber reached the summit at 6:05 am of local time in Xizang. Mount Shishapangma is 8,027 meters high.

With the feat, Nima has overtaken his uncle, Mingma Gyabu Sherpa, for the world record. Mingma Gyabu had held the record for being the youngest to climb all 14 peaks above 8,000 meters, which he achieved in 2019 at the age of 30.

"Congratulations, Nima! Your journey continues to inspire us all,"

his father, Tashi Lakpa Sherpa, managing director of Seven Summit Treks, Nepal's largest expedition company, wrote in an online post.

Nima's father holds the record for climbing Qomolangma, known as Mount Everest in the West, without bottled oxygen at the age of 19, becoming the youngest climber to scale the world's highest peak.

Nima started climbing at 16 and debuted on Sept 30, 2022, with Mount Manaslu, the eighth-highest mountain in the world at 8,163 meters.

Over two years, he has broken multiple world records and become the youngest to summit several major mountains. In 2023, at the age of 17, he climbed nine peaks above 8,000 meters in a single year.

His conquest of Mount Shishapangma marks the completion of an "extraordinary journey," Karki said.

Nima's historic accomplishment is part of his larger vision for the "SherpaPower" initiative, which aims to reshape the global perception of Sherpas.

"Sherpas are not just mountain guides but elite athletes and adventurers capable of creating unique paths on the world stage," he said.

"Today, as I stand atop my 14th 8,000-meter peak, I dedicate this world record to my parents, especially my father, Tashi Lakpa Sherpa and my mother, Leema Sherpa, and my project, #SherpaPower," Nima said in a statement following his feat.

"This summit is not just the cul-

mination of my journey but a tribute to every Sherpa who has dared to dream beyond the traditional boundaries set for us. Mountaineering is more than labor; it is a testament to our strength, resilience, and passion," he said.

"Through #SherpaPower, I want to show the younger generation of Sherpas that they can rise above the stereotype of being only support climbers and embrace their potential as top-tier athletes, adventurers, and creators.

"We are not just guides; we are trailblazers. Let this be a call to every Sherpa to see the dignity in our work, the power in our heritage, and the limitless possibilities in our future."

On Oct 16, 1986, Italian Reinhold



Nepalese mountaineer Nima Rinji Sherpa waves upon his arrival at the airport in Kathmandu on Monday. PRAKASH MATHEMA / AFP

Messner, at the age of 42, became the first climber to reach the peaks of all 14 eight-thousanders with-

out using supplementary oxygen.

THE KATHMANDU POST, NEPAL

## BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Humanoids make waves on factory floors

Chinese market for such sector projected to skyrocket to around \$46.31 billion by 2031

By CHENG YU

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In Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province, a sleek silver humanoid robot, standing at an impressive 180 centimeters, made an unexpected appearance among a group of "dancing grannies" performing a lively exercise routine.

To the grannies' amazement, their robotic partner wasn't just keeping pace — it was cutting capers with large, confident strides, executing dance moves that rivaled their own. Some of its movements were even more precise than those of the human dancers, adding an unexpected flair to the gathering.

Beyond its dancing prowess, humanoid robots like this one are already making significant contributions to China's industrial sector.

In the factory of Audi FAW, for instance, another humanoid robot can easily carry a crate of auto parts weighing 15 kilograms, and navigate through narrow aisles and around obstacles with the grace of a seasoned worker.

These humanoid robots begin their real-world training in actual factories, and a sci-fi-like future is starting to take shape in China.

Last week, Elon Musk, founder of electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc, surprised the tech world by unveiling its humanoid robot Optimus. Optimus not only wandered among the attendees, but also spoke with a very human voice, even using modern slang and incorporating verbal pauses.

The hum of such automatons at work is the sound of the manufacturing sector's next era in China, where human-robot collaboration is not just for fun, but a real thing that aids mankind.

Xu Xiaolan, former vice-minister of industry and information technology and a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee, said that humanoid robots are expected to become another "disruptive product" after computers, smartphones and new energy vehicles.

"Currently in China, new technologies, products and formats represented by humanoid robots and general AI are thriving and becoming the pinnacle of global technological innovation, a new track for future industries and a new engine of economic growth," Xu said.

Huang Jiawei, marketing director of leading humanoid robot firm Unitree Robotics, said China's humanoid robots are already at a top global level with a series of core technologies, including joints with maximum torque, and high-precision 360-degree cameras.

The humanoid robot that danced with the grannies can walk at speeds of up to 3.3 meters per second, making it a world record holder. It is also the world's first full-sized electric-driven humanoid robot capable of performing a stationary backflip, Huang noted.

In August, the Hangzhou-based robotics firm said that its G1 humanoid robot had just been updated,



Humanoids of Unitree Robotics at the World Robot Conference in Beijing in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

transforming it into a version that can be mass-produced, with stronger performance and an even better appearance.

The humanoid robot, priced at 99,000 yuan (\$13,910), which is considered very reasonable, can simulate human hand movements with remarkable precision, making it one of the most affordable options in the market.

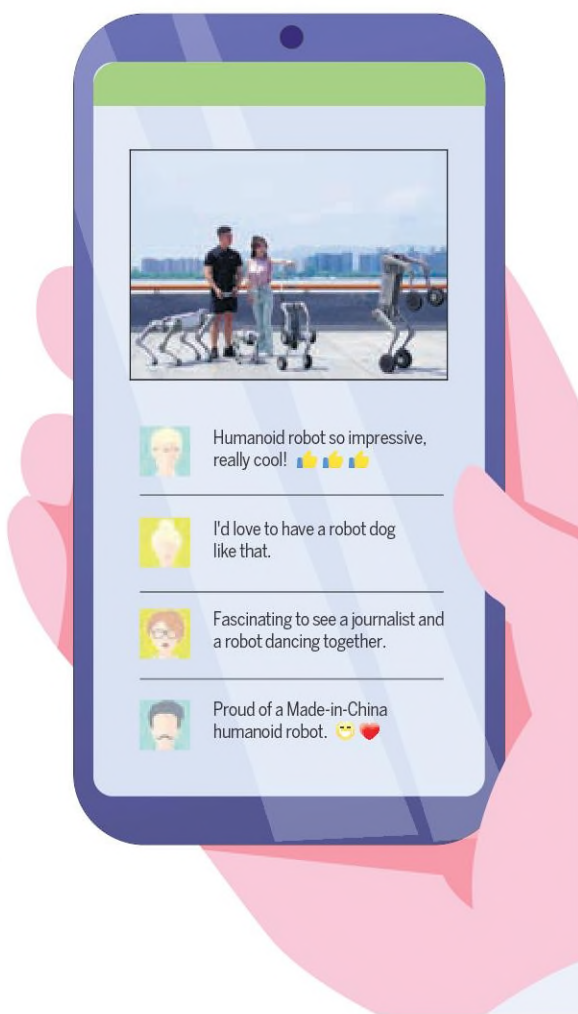
What sets the Unitree G1 apart is its price point. In comparison, Tesla's Optimus is projected to have a price of \$25,000, making Unitree's offering significantly more cost-effective. This pricing strategy could accelerate the adoption of humanoid robots across various industries in China.

According to market consultancy Coherent Market Insights, China's humanoid robot market is rapidly growing and is expected to clock in \$2.9 billion in sales revenue this year, and is projected to skyrocket to around \$46.31 billion by 2031, at a staggering compound annual growth rate of 48.6 percent.

Jiao Jichao, vice-president and executive dean of the research department of UBTECH, another leading Chinese robot company, said that the firm is confident that its humanoid robots will achieve widespread factory applications within three years.

"The company aims to deliver humanoid robots in small quantities to industries, especially automobile factories, for handling and sorting tasks, by the end of this year," Jiao said.

He further disclosed that from next year to 2027, such humanoid robots will be gradually used for assembly tasks and on-site operations. Besides the automotive industry, the company will deploy such



robots in 3C, or computer, communication, and consumer electronics fields, as well as the logistics sector.

"During this period, we aim to achieve larger-scale commercial mass production. Here, mass production not only involves a quantity increase, but also improvements in quality, cost control and operational efficiency," he said.

By 2033, the company's humanoid robots are expected to perform more precise assembly work, such as assembling interiors, as well as assembling smaller and more delicate products like smartphones and smartwatches in the 3C industries, he added.

According to a guideline from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China aims to establish a preliminary innovation system for humanoid robots by 2025. By 2027, the country will see a secure and reliable industry and supply chain system, and related products will be deeply integrated into the real economy.

To sharpen the competitiveness of future industries including humanoid robotics, China will launch a series of scientific research projects, establish a number of incubators, support certain regions to explore and develop application scenarios, and cultivate more industrial high-fliers, said Jin Zhuanglong, minister of industry and information technology, at a news conference in July.

The National Development and Reform Commission also issued a document in June encouraging the development of humanoid robots based on large-scale AI models to enrich consumption scenarios.

Rick Xiong, general manager of the Beijing Embodied Intelligence

Robotics Innovation Center, said: "These combined efforts will shape the future in our favor. Chinese robot companies have the right timing, the right place and the right people to accelerate the humanoid robot push."

Xiong said that leading Western countries have witnessed deep-pocketed industry giants dominating the robot landscape, whereas China is characterized by a proliferation of small to medium-sized enterprises striving to navigate the competitive terrain of humanoid robots.

He also said the rise of AI large language models, exemplified by technologies like ChatGPT, has been a game-changer in the robotics industry.

Traditionally, robots were limited to executing pre-programmed commands and struggled with understanding natural language. However, the integration of advanced AI models has unlocked new capabilities, allowing robots to comprehend and act on human language instructions — ushering in what is broadly referred to as embodied intelligence, he said.

Wang Xingxing, CEO and founder of Unitree Robotics, is also optimistic about the commercialization of China's robotics industry, and predicted that within three to four years — certainly no more than five — the industry will experience its "iPhone moment".

Wang said this will be the point when humanoid robots become a staple in industrial and service sectors, driving a dramatic increase in production and adoption.

For now, while humanoid robots may still seem somewhat limited in their capabilities, the pace of development suggests that this perception will soon change.

Wang speculated that by the end of this year, we might see the first general-purpose robot AI model emerge, setting the stage for a new era of robotics.

Chen Jia, a researcher at the International Monetary Institute, which is part of Renmin University of China, said, "Humanoid robots will be an industry field with great growth potential in the next decade, driven by the latest technological advancements in AI."

Marina Bill, president of the International Federation of Robotics, said about 60,000 industrial robots were installed in China 10 years ago, and their number has gone up to 290,000 now. "Hardly any other country in the world has had that quick development."

China is by far the fastest-growing robot market in the world, with the highest number of annual installations, and it has had the largest operational stock of robots each year since 2016, according to the IFR.

"China's rapid growth shows the power of its investment so far, but it still has much greater potential in terms of automation," Bill said.



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## Automatons looking, acting, working more like us



Cheng Yu  
Reporter's  
Log

When I recently visited Unitree Robotics, a cutting-edge Chinese humanoid robot company in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, I decided to test their creation in a unique way. I volunteered for an experiment — having both the robot and myself pushed over, standing side by side, to see who would recover their balance more quickly.

To make things even more challenging, I requested to be blindfolded, ensuring I couldn't anticipate the push. The result? It blew my mind.

While I stumbled several steps, struggling to regain my balance, the humanoid robot barely moved, staying almost in place.

The level of advancement in Chi-

nese humanoid robotics is far beyond what I had anticipated. Robots are often referred to as the "crown jewel of manufacturing," with humanoid robots considered the pinnacle of achievement in the field.

Unlike industrial robots, which are prized for their specialized, mechanical precision, humanoid robots face much more complex challenges — they must replicate the human processes of perception, cognition, decision-making and action in real-world, real-time scenarios.

Achieving this level of sophistication means that humanoid robots are becoming more human-like — and, in some ways, even surpassing human abilities.

This evolution holds significant implications, as humanoid robots are expected to play increasingly critical roles in areas like disaster rescue, industrial inspections and high-risk environments that are too dangerous or inaccessible for humans.

Recognizing both the immense opportunities and challenges in

this space, Chinese tech giants and startups alike are intensifying their research and development efforts in humanoid robotics.

For instance, Xiaomi Corp recently unveiled its own humanoid robot, CyberOne. Standing at 170 centimeters and weighing 52 kilograms, CyberOne is capable of 21 degrees of angled maneuvers and can simulate full human motion with a real-time response rate. It even has emotion-detection capabilities.

"CyberOne's artificial intelligence and mechanical features were all developed in-house by Xiaomi's Robotics Lab," said Lei Jun, Xiaomi's founder and chairman, during a press conference.

"We've heavily invested in research and development across software, hardware and algorithm innovation. With AI at its core and a humanoid form as its vessel, this robot represents the future of Xiaomi's technological ecosystem, marking a significant break-

through for the company. We plan to integrate CyberOne into our smart manufacturing in the near future," Lei said.

As I walked alongside a humanoid robot and a robotic dog during my visit to Hangzhou, I felt something shift. It wasn't just an interview anymore — it was a glimpse into the future. We are no longer merely individuals. We are pioneers exploring the limitless possibilities of tomorrow.

According to a guideline unveiled by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China aims to build an innovation system for humanoid robots by 2025, with breakthroughs to be made in key technologies to ensure the safe and effective supply of core components.

China is propelling its robotics industry forward with unparalleled determination, taking bold steps to establish itself as a global hub for robotics innovation. Every automaton's stride brings us closer to that vision.



Visitors check out a humanoid robot at the World Robot Conference in Beijing in August. LI MUYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## WORLD

## World Bank to increase capacity to lend by \$30b

WASHINGTON — The World Bank voted on Tuesday to change its internal lending guidelines, freeing up \$30 billion in additional lending capacity over the next decade to help developing countries and emerging markets grapple with climate change and other global challenges, World Bank President Ajay Banga told Reuters.

Banga said the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, or IBRD, a development bank administered by the World Bank, would lower its equity-to-lending ratio by 1 percentage point to 18 percent, taking on a bit more risk, as it continues to implement reforms outlined in an independent report prepared for the Group of 20 economies and demanded by its shareholders, including the United States.

The move, coupled with changes in the bank's pricing policies, means the bank will be increasing its lending capacity by a total of \$150 billion over the next seven to 10 years through adjustments to its balance sheet, Banga said.

The changes come at a time of mounting global challenges, such as the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, worsening climate disasters and massive levels of government debt. Banga said one of the biggest looming crises was an expected gap of nearly 800 million jobs for the 1.2 billion people who would reach working age over the next 10 years.

Some experts estimate that developing countries and emerging markets will need at least \$3 trillion in funding annually to address future pandemics, climate change and other challenges.

The IBRD last changed its equity-to-lending ratio in 2023, dropping it to 19 percent from 20 percent.

## Further adjustments

Asked if further adjustments were possible, Banga said the bank would keep looking at new instruments such as hybrid capital and ways to optimize its balance sheet.

The board also approved changes in its fee structure to make it easier for borrowing countries to get loans and then make them cheaper to repay, including discounted pricing for short maturity, seven-year loans and extending IBRD's lowest pricing to more vulnerable small states, the bank said in a statement.

Banga said the World Bank was also pushing to replenish the lender's fund for the world's poorest countries, the International Development Association, by more than \$100 billion, adding it was realistic to aim for \$120 billion, as some African and Caribbean leaders have suggested.

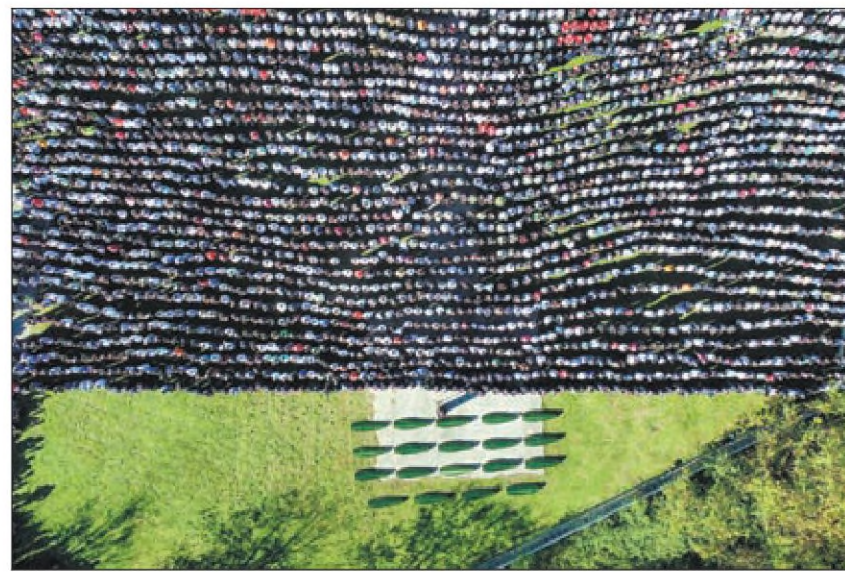
To reach that total, World Bank shareholders and donor countries would have to boost their contributions from \$24 billion to \$30 billion, which would be a challenge given the rise of the US dollar and domestic fiscal challenges.

"We're fighting really hard to get through this," he said, noting that Denmark had already announced a 40 percent increase in its contribution and other countries, including Britain and Spain, were considering increases.

He said he was reasonably optimistic that the United States, the world's largest economy, would also contribute "a good number," but gave no details.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Paying respects



Mourners gather as they attend the collective funeral for 19 victims of a landslide caused by recent floods in Jablanica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on Tuesday. Several thousand mourners converged around 19 caskets covered in traditional Islamic green cloth, part of a funeral service held for those killed during the destructive floods and landslides that hit the country in early October.

ARMIN DURGUT / AP

## DC residents thrilled, as pandas enjoy new habitat

By MINGMEI LI

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The return of giant pandas to Washington DC has stirred much anticipation among local residents while also highlighting the extensive renovations by the National Zoo staff of the bears' habitat.

The 3-year-old pandas — Bao Li and Qing Bao — arrived in the US capital from China late Tuesday morning.

The zoo had gone 11 months without pandas after Mei Xiang, Tian Tian and their cub Xiao Qi Ji returned to China in November. "We're very excited. It gives us so much hope for the future. We love supporting endangered animals. Who doesn't love a panda? Everyone loves pandas!" Gene Hunt, 68, of Washington DC told China Daily.

Hunt was taking pictures with panda decorations in the zoo and said he had been watching the news daily to see when the bears would return.

"They are beautiful. The panda is the main symbol of peace between the two nations. We need more of that. We need more exchanges and more cultural awareness of others. It's a great appreciation of nature and the world we live in," he said.

"Thank you, China," for many of those beautiful adolescents," said Albert Garcia, 64, of Washington, who said he hopes that the pandas continue to serve as ambassadors between China and the US. "We love it. And we promise to take good care (of the pandas)."

After a 19-hour, 8,250-mile transpacific journey on the FedEx "Panda Express" from Chengdu, in Southwest China's Sichuan province, the pair landed at Dulles International Airport in Northern Virginia around 11:30 am. They were taken in two trucks to the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute (NZCBI).

A lively crowd of panda fans in black-and-white accessories, along with international media equipped with long-lens cameras, clustered at the zoo's gate.

Bao Li and Qing Bao exited their

crates and began exploring their new indoor enclosures, where keepers had placed ample bamboo. The pair will quarantine for a minimum of 30 days and are set to debut at the zoo on Jan 24.

They are the second pair of pandas to arrive in the US this year.

Yun Chuan and Xin Bao debuted at the San Diego Zoo in August, marking a new round of conservation and research efforts between China and the US. A third pair of pandas is expected in San Francisco.

Bao Li, which means "treasure" and "energetic" in Chinese, is fitting for the curious and extroverted male who was born in Sichuan but has a deep familial connection with the city.

His mother, Bao Bao, was born at the National Zoo on Aug 23, 2013, and his grandparents, Tian Tian and Mei Xiang, are beloved in the Washington area, where they served as ambassadors for their species for 23 years.

"He is just a charmer. He is an acrobat. He already went into his enclosure and tried to look up for places to climb," Brandie Smith, the John and Adrienne Mars director of NZCBI, told China Daily, "while the other one is more thoughtful, a little more deliberate, maybe more willful."

Qing Bao means "green" and "treasure" in Chinese.

"It's going to be fun to kind of get to know them," Smith said. "We also have incredible scientists who work here with us, and this really is key to decades of successful cooperation and collaboration with our colleagues in China."

China and the United States have been working on panda conservation for decades since former first lady Patricia Nixon welcomed the first giant pandas to Washington in 1972. Both countries helped move the giant panda from "endangered" to "vulnerable" on the global list of species at risk of extinction.

James Steell, supervisory veterinary medical officer of NZCBI, who traveled with the pandas on their trip from China, said: "They are eating normally, they are active. They

explored. They'll slowly come out over the next couple of days."

Steell said that the US and China have been working closely on the pandas' primary food source, bamboo, and researching its availability and connections to climate change.

"We also got the recipe for *wowotou*," Steell said of the Chinese word for "steamed cornbread", which originated in China and is a favorite food of pandas. "It's a combination of three flours, egg, oil, a little bit of water, and mineral supplements. We put them together and steam it."

Steell said that he has learned some Chinese words, including a few in Sichuan dialect, which he said the pandas are used to hearing.

Laurie Thompson, the zoo's assistant curator of giant pandas, who has been to China eight times, including a visit earlier in October to meet the pandas, said, "We will start training — basic things like 'open your mouth' or 'show us your paw.'"

The David M. Rubenstein Family Giant Panda Habitat, along with the Bird House and Asia Trail, will reopen when Bao Li and Qing Bao make their public appearance. The habitat has been under renovation since last November.

The zoo upgraded new rock structures with shallow pools for pandas to wade, bathe and play in; there are stands that hold bamboo upright and require the pandas to reach up and pull the stalks down, simulating the foraging techniques needed in the wild.

Climbing structures — made of natural wood beams and woven hammocks — offer additional vertical space but also challenge wild pandas' climbing skills.

"They're splashing around and having a great time, so it sounds like they're using the space just as we had hoped," said Matt Sellers, the zoo's landscape architect.

Stephanie Brinley, deputy director of NZCBI, said: "We want to make sure that they're as healthy as possible. We will start acclimating them. We know that huge groups are going to come to visit, but we want them to get used to people."

## Envoy urges Israel to let aid pass to Gaza

China's UN representative also expresses concern over escalating conflict in Lebanon

By MINLUZHANG

at the United Nations  
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China's envoy to the United Nations on Wednesday expressed concern over the escalating tensions between Lebanon and Israel and emphasized the humanitarian disaster faced by the people of Gaza.

"We are all human. Why must those born in Gaza endure such suffering?" Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, told a Security Council meeting. He said that Israeli shelling has caused fires, and displaced Palestinian civilians have been burned alive.

"Two million people have been struggling on the brink of death for more than a year — how much longer must they wait for the hope of survival?" Fu continued.

Within a week, the people of Gaza have suffered numerous mass-casualty incidents due to Israeli airstrikes, with nearly 400 reportedly killed and almost 1,500 injured, Joyce Msuya, acting under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, told the Security Council.

Fu called on the US to take more actions to achieve an immediate cease-fire.

He said every member of the Security Council "has a responsibility to defend the effectiveness of these resolutions. In this regard, we especially hope that the United States will respond to the strong call of the international community and support the council in taking further actions to achieve an immediate cease-fire," he said.

Fu said that, according to reports, the United States has provided Israel with more than \$17 billion in military aid since October 2023.

"Under the current circumstances, whether supplying weapons on such a large scale is conducive to achieving the objectives of the Security Council resolutions is a question that requires serious consideration," he added.

The envoy urged Israel to lift the blockade and restrictions on humanitarian access to the entire Gaza area and to cooperate with the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations to facilitate security for the transportation of supplies and polio vaccines.

"Using hunger as a weapon of war is a serious war crime. Humanitarian

organizations build the lifeline of Gaza. It is intolerable for them to face suppression, restrictions and even security threats," he said.



We are all human.

Why must those born in Gaza endure such suffering?

Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the United Nations

Fu emphasized the need to uphold and revitalize the effectiveness of Security Council resolutions. He noted that the council has adopted numerous resolutions on the situation in Gaza, calling for a cease-fire, but none have been effectively implemented.

"This has severely impacted the credibility of the entire United Nations system. Security Council resolutions are binding on all countries and must be executed," he said.

"We support the Security Council in utilizing all options available to ensure that its resolutions are carried out," he added. "It is unacceptable to allow the tragedy in Gaza to continue to develop, and it is equally unacceptable for the Security Council to remain collectively paralyzed," he said.

He called the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East "the pillar of humanitarian assistance in Gaza."

"China firmly opposes any smear and suppression against the agency," he said.

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on Wednesday alleged a new violation by Israel against its position near the southeastern Lebanese village of Kafr Kila. In recent days, Israeli forces have reportedly attacked UNIFIL positions numerous times, injuring peacekeepers and sparking international criticism.

The death toll from Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon since the beginning of the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict on Oct 8, 2023, reached 2,367, with 11,088 injured, the Lebanese Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

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## Making their voice heard



People protest in support of Native American tribes in front of the US Capitol in Washington on Tuesday. Nine people were arrested during an "unpermitted" protest by an Indigenous peoples group in Northwest DC, according to United States Park Police. JOSE LUIS GONZALEZ / REUTERS

## Water quality, supply cause concern across Europe

By JULIAN SHEA in London

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A new report from the European Environment Agency, or EEA, has highlighted the widely varying quality of Europe's water resources and said supplies "face an unprecedented set of challenges that threatens Europe's water security."

Although groundwater, which is the main source of drinking water, scores well in terms of quality, just one-third of surface water is adjudged to be in good health because of factors including over-use, climate change, habitat damage, and pollution, with EEA

Executive Director Leena Yla-Mononen issuing a stark warning.

"We need to redouble our efforts to restore the health of our valued rivers, lakes, coastal waters and other water bodies, and to make sure this vital resource is resilient and secure for generations to come," she said.

The study looked at 120,000 surface water bodies and 3.8 million square kilometers of groundwater across 19 member states of the European Union and Norway.

Air pollution, such as exhaust fumes, is a major pollutant, as are pesticides. The report identified agriculture as the biggest consumer

of water in the EU by far, accounting for 59 percent, as opposed to 13 percent by households and services.

A water resilience initiative was proposed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen more than a year ago, but it never went ahead, following complaints from farmers about the additional work it would cause them.

"European agriculture needs to increase its use of more sustainable organic and agroecological practices, accompanied by incentives and a change in our food and dietary habits," the report noted.

But extreme weather conditions this summer prompted environ-

ment ministers from 21 of the EU's 27 member states to contact the commission in July, demanding "concrete action" over the issue of water security.

In light of recent devastating floods across much of Central Europe, the report noted the impact of climate change was putting a strain on lakes, rivers and coastal waters "like never before."

"Having a healthy aquatic ecosystem helps mitigate the impacts we're seeing of climate change," said Trine Christiansen, a co-author of the report and head of the EEA's freshwater and environment group.

## WORLD

## Italy sends 1st migrant group to Albania

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels  
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European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has endorsed the controversial "return hubs" for asylum-seekers just as the first group of migrants, sent by Italy, arrived at a newly opened offshore processing center in Albania on Wednesday morning.

The first group of 16 men from Bangladesh and Egypt were transported by an Italian navy ship to the Albanian port of Shengjin, according to Italy's Interior Ministry. It is part of a plan to process thousands of asylum-seekers outside Italy's borders, with most making the journey across international waters from the North African coast.

The processing centers, viewed by many as detention centers, are part of an agreement signed in November by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and her Albanian counterpart Edi Rama. Meloni, who won her election two years ago by pledging to be tough on migration, touted the move as "a good example" to follow.

"It's a new, courageous, unprecedented path, but one that perfectly reflects the European spirit and has everything it takes to be followed with other non-EU nations," she said on Tuesday.

In a letter to European Union leaders ahead of their summit in Brussels on Thursday and Friday, von der Leyen voiced her support for the offshore processing centers.

"We should continue to explore possible ways forward regarding the idea of developing return hubs outside the union, especially given a new



A drone view taken on Tuesday shows a reception camp for illegal migrants who are expected to be brought from Italy, in Shengjin, Albania. FLORIAN GOGA / REUTERS

legislative proposal on return," she wrote in the seven-page letter seen by the media on Monday evening.

"With the start of operations of the Italy-Albania protocol, we will also be able to draw lessons from this experience in practice."

According to the European Union Agency for Asylum, EU member states received 1.14 million asylum applications last year, an 18 percent increase year-on-year.

At a news briefing on Tuesday, European Commission spokesman Eric Mamer said von der Leyen's letter aims to address the issue by focusing on the legislative and action aspects.

"Now of course, it is up for the leaders to discuss the way forward based on the letter the president has sent," he said, referring to the upcoming EU summit.

The letter was signed on the same day the commission warned Poland that its announced plan of a "temporary territory suspension of the right to asylum" goes against EU laws.

The latest moves by Italy and von der Leyen have drawn sharp criticism from EU political parties and human rights organizations.

"Those backing @vonderleyen's migration policy are enabling her dangerous drift to the far right," said The Left in the European Parliament on Tuesday on X.

"Now she wants 'return hubs'? Hypocrisy! They talk immigration all day but ignore the real causes. No one flees home for fun. Peace stops forced migration, not walls and camps!"

European Greens said "the new 'migration plan' from the EU Commission is undermining the right to asylum & institutionalizing the inhumane treatment of people seeking safety & protection."

In July, Eve Geddie, director of Amnesty International's European Institutions Office, criticized Italy's planned opening of two detention centers in Albania.

"It's shameful that despite all the criticism and concerns raised by

human rights bodies, the Italian government decided to go ahead with this agreement. Not only is the plan incredibly harmful, it is also unlawful," Geddie said.

"These centers represent the latest attempt by an EU country to circumvent their obligations under EU and international law by 'externalizing' or shifting the processing of people's protection claims outside of their territory."

She called on the new EU leadership to "firmly reject attempts to offshore the processing of asylum claims."

Migration has become a contentious issue for EU member states, with the Netherlands and Hungary seeking to opt out of the bloc's asylum and migration rules while Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez extended welcome.

"Spain needs to choose between being an open and prosperous country or a closed-off, poor country," Sanchez told the Spanish parliament last week.

## Unlikely encounter

A dog approaches a lifeless humpback whale washed ashore on Long Beach in Simon's Town, Cape Town, South Africa, on Tuesday. While the cause of the death remains unclear, officials said such strandings are rare. The whale's carcass was removed later in the day for disposal at a landfill site.

NIC BOTHMA / REUTERS



## Harris holds thin lead over Trump in poll

WASHINGTON — US Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris held a marginal 3-percentage-point lead over Republican Donald Trump — 45 percent to 42 percent — as the two stayed locked in a tight race to win the Nov 5 presidential election, a new Reuters/Ipsos poll finds.

While the gap between the two remained steady compared with a poll conducted a week earlier, the new one, which closed on Sunday, gave signs that voters, particularly Democrats, might be more enthused about this year's election than they were ahead of the November 2020 presidential election when Democrat Joe Biden defeated Trump.

Some 78 percent of registered voters in the three-day poll, including 86 percent of Democrats and 81 percent of Republicans, said they were "completely certain" they would cast a ballot in the presidential election. The share of sure-to-vote respondents was

up from 74 percent in a Reuters/Ipsos survey conducted in 2020.

The poll had a margin of error of about 4 percentage points.

Harris entered the race in July after Biden ended his reelection effort following a poor debate performance against Trump in June. Trump, at the time, was widely seen as the front-runner, partly based on his perceived strength on the economy after several years of high inflation under Biden.

More recently, Harris appears to be drawing strength from voters picking her as the better candidate for healthcare policy and for handling political extremism, though voters also rate the US economy as the top issue in the election and said Trump was the better economic steward, according to the new poll.

Harris led Trump by 5 points when voters were asked to pick who was better for handling political extremism and threats to democracy. She led

him by 14 points on healthcare policy.

Trump led Harris 45 percent to 40 percent when voters were asked who was the better candidate for the "economy, unemployment and jobs"; the category of national priorities that 26 percent of poll respondents picked as the biggest problem facing the nation, compared with 23 percent who picked political extremism and 3 percent who said healthcare.

Meanwhile, billionaire Elon Musk gave about \$75 million to his pro-Trump spending group in three months, federal disclosures showed on Tuesday.

Musk, who has said he has voted for Democratic presidential candidates in the past, has taken a sharp turn to the right this election. He endorsed Trump in July and appeared with him at a rally in Pennsylvania earlier this month.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Eurozone inflation to exceed expectations

By JONATHAN POWELL in London  
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Economists have predicted inflation rates will exceed the European Central Bank's 2 percent goal in the foreseeable future, based on findings of a survey released by Germany's Ifo Institute for Economic Research on Wednesday.

According to Ifo's quarterly analysis, conducted together with the Swiss Economic Policy Institute, economists forecast inflation in the

eurozone will hit 2.6 percent this year.

"Inflation is also expected to exceed the European Central Bank's target of 2 percent in the medium term," Ifo researcher Niklas Potrafke said in a statement.

"Due to these stagnating inflation expectations, central banks could hold back on further interest rate cuts."

Last month, the inflation rate across the 20 countries using the euro currency fell to 1.8 percent down from 2.2 percent in August, marking

the first time it has dipped beneath the ECB's 2 percent goal since 2021.

Inflation pressures eased across various sectors, including energy, which saw significant deflation of -6 percent.

However, ECB forecasts released last month indicated a significant economic slowdown in the eurozone, with the third-quarter growth projected at just 0.2 percent.

Germany, the bloc's largest economy, is facing particular challenges, with official GDP growth forecasts

## Saudi Arabia, Egypt call for end to fighting

Leaders urge more humanitarian aid amid growing US military presence

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud have jointly called for de-escalation and a lasting ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon amid escalating violence and increased US military presence in Israel, which have worsened the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East.

During a bilateral meeting in Cairo on Tuesday, the two leaders reiterated their appeal to increase the flow of humanitarian aid to the affected areas. They said establishing a sovereign State of Palestine, in accordance with international resolutions, is the only path to achieving lasting peace and security in the region, Egyptian news website Ahram Online reported.

They said any attempt to liquidate the Palestinian cause would only perpetuate the current conflict and called for respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, security and stability.

Meanwhile, Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said his government has decided to submit a request to the United Nations Security Council for a cease-fire.

In a statement from his office, Mikati said he had received "a kind of guarantee" from the United States to reduce Israeli escalation in Beirut and its southern suburbs. However, the Pentagon said on Tuesday US troops had arrived in Israel as part of the deployment of a Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, missile battery. And Israel continued its airstrikes, pounding Beirut's southern suburbs just hours after Washington expressed its opposition to the scope of attacks on Beirut.

US President Joe Biden's administration has warned that Israel must increase the amount of humanitarian aid allowed into Gaza within the next 30 days or risk losing access to US weapons funding.

The United Nations said current aid restrictions to Gaza are the "worst since Israel's war on the Palestinian territory began in October last year."

UNICEF spokesman James Elder said that for several days, no trucks were allowed into Gaza by Israel, with Palestinians in the north cut off from food, water and medicine during a 12-day siege by the Israeli army.

Marwan Bishara, a senior political analyst at Al Jazeera, said the US warning to Israel is "little more than a deflection" as Washington continues to provide more weapons.

Meanwhile, the deployment of US troops has raised questions on its legality and underscored once again Washington's contradictions and inconsistencies in the region, including going against the aspirations of its regional allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Abdalfatah Asqool, an international law lecturer at the University of Palestine, told China Daily that people expect actions to stop Israel's "heinous crimes" more than mere calls or appeals from the leaders of influential Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

"When Israel is still committing genocide against civilians in Gaza and starts (attacking) other countries, the US comes with these measures to protect Israel, which simply means the US is involved in these acts of genocide and attacks. And it also gives Israel a green light to proceed in its violations," Asqool said.

Mikati has emphasized efforts to remove any pretexts for Israel to target Beirut's airport, seaports and land crossings. While attempts at a cease-fire are continuing at the UN Security Council, he said no final agreement has been reached yet.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told French President Emmanuel Macron that he opposes a unilateral cease-fire, which "would not change the security situation in Lebanon," according to a statement published on Tuesday on the prime minister's website.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi told UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during a phone call that any adventurism by Israel "will face Iran's serious response."

"The responsibility for the consequences of the spread of insecurity in the region lies with the (Israeli) regime and its main supporter, the United States," Araghchi said.

Over the past week, Araghchi has visited Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and Oman in an effort to ease tensions. He arrived in Jordan on Wednesday before traveling to Egypt and Turkey, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said on X.

Xinhua and agencies contributed to this story.



People carry a man out of a collapsed building following Israeli strikes in Jabalia, northern Gaza, on Tuesday. OMAR AL-QATTAA / AFP

## Briefly

## AFRICA

## Millions facing worst food crisis in decades

Millions of people across southern Africa are going hungry because of a historic drought that risks causing a full-scale humanitarian catastrophe, the World Food Programme warned on Tuesday. Five countries — Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe — have declared a state of national disaster as the drought has destroyed crops and livestock. "The worst food crisis in decades" has devastated more than 27 million lives across the region and some 21 million children are malnourished, said Tomson Phiri, WFP spokesperson for southern Africa.

## PAKISTAN

## Indian FM makes rare visit, attends forum

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar arrived in Pakistan on Tuesday in the first such visit in almost a decade for a meeting of governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Jaishankar shook hands and had a brief exchange while Sharif was welcoming SCO leaders ahead of the conference on Wednesday. It has been nearly a decade since a foreign minister from India has visited amid frosty relations between the neighbors. Both sides have said no bilateral meeting is planned.

## UNITED KINGDOM

## Robot artist's work to go on auction

The robot artist Ai-Da, a humanoid powered by artificial intelligence, will be the first of its kind to have a painting sold at a major auction house, organizers said on Wednesday. The work, due to go under the hammer at Sotheby's in London next month, is described as a "haunting" portrait of the English mathematician Alan Turing, considered one of the fathers of modern computing. Titled *AI God*, the 2.2-meter high portrait is expected to fetch between 100,000 and 150,000 pounds (\$130,000 and \$196,000).

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## 'Game of chicken' on Korean Peninsula risks a potential mishap if carried on

Beijing on Tuesday urged Seoul and Pyongyang "to avoid a further escalation" of friction, with a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman saying that tensions on the Korean Peninsula do not serve the common interests of all parties, and the priority is to avoid conflict.

For months, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea have been trading their evil feelings via balloons — the north flying filth to the south, the latter sending mostly propaganda leaflets in return.

The result has been a higher level of animosity.

The DPRK has officially forsaken the long-standing goal of unification, and labeled the ROK an "invariable principal enemy".

In a fiery new round of exchanges over the past few days, Pyongyang blew up parts of unused roads once connecting the two countries and ordered its artillery units near the border with the ROK to "get fully ready to open fire". The ROK in turn fired warning shots within its own border. And the corresponding rhetoric has been inflammatory on both sides.

According to DPRK media, leader Kim Jong-un has threatened to turn the country's southern neighbor into "piles of ashes". Seoul, on its part, has threatened the "end of the North Korean regime".

But there seems to be a general consensus among international observers that the verbal threats being exchanged across the demarcation line are symbolic.

Such judgment seems tenable for multiple reasons. Most important of all, neither side wants an immediate military conflict, nor can they afford one at this point in time.

Any coolheaded review of its own conditions should make decision-makers in Pyongyang think twice about making good their threats. The country's economic conditions don't support acting on the war rhetoric. And the ROK could count on the assistance from the United States and its Western allies in case of a real conflict.

Nor do the ROK, the US and their Western allies want a conflict at the moment. It is true that the two Koreas remain technically at war in the absence of a peace agreement. Seoul still retains a ministry of unification, meaning it is yet to abandon unification as a national strategic goal. And Pyongyang's nuclear program and alleged military aid to Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine have been thorns in the US' and its allies' side. However, a hot war on the Korean Peninsula is probably a step too far even for the war-seeking US.

The likelihood of an immediate major conflict that would upend the relative peace on the Korean Peninsula therefore hopefully remains low.

But that in no way forecloses the possibility of an unexpected, unintended flare-up, which may easily trigger an abrupt escalation. No analysis of the situation on the peninsula should ignore the steady accumulation of animosity there, especially as a result of perceived third-party instigation.

For one thing, Pyongyang has been dispatching trash balloons in response to the ROK's joint drills with the US and the deployment of US strategic assets in the region. It has not only carried out more missile tests, but also released photos of a facility to enrich uranium for atomic bombs.

China's position on maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula and promoting a political solution to the peninsula issue remains unchanged. But, as the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said, "We also hope that all parties will make joint efforts toward this goal."

It is consoling to see the ROK's Gyeonggi province, which sits near the border with the DPRK, issue a warning stating "the act of scattering leaflets toward North Korea is an extremely dangerous act that could trigger a military conflict".

The exercising of a little more restraint by both Seoul and Pyongyang would be of far more benefit to both sides than the "game of chicken" they are playing now.

## US initiator of rare earths sector reshuffle

After China banned the export of its rare earths extraction and separation technology in December 2023, a move widely seen as part of its countermeasure to the United States' coercive and bullying practices, the US and its allies and partner countries were left with no option but to rely on refined rare earths from China.

The State Council, China's Cabinet, followed up the move by promulgating the Rare Earths Management Regulations in June, which stipulates that since rare earths, including rare earths reserves, are State assets, the State will develop a rare earths product traceability information system to keep track of which industries the importers are using the Chinese products in.

Rare earths comprise at least 17 metallic elements and are necessary components of more than 200 high-tech products, including defense products such as electronic displays, guidance systems, lasers, and radar and sonar systems, as well as smartphones, computer hard discs, electric vehicles, flat-screen monitors and TV sets. With more than 40 percent of global reserves, China produces about 60 percent and processes nearly 90 percent of the world's rare earth elements.

More important, China has patented core rare earths extraction and separation technologies, making it the only country capable of separating all the 17 rare earth elements from other minerals on an industrial scale. In short, China is a global rare earths refining hub.

Yet despite the ban on the export of extraction and separation know-how and restrictions on rare earths exports, the supply of the metallic elements in the global market has remained stable, because, unlike the United States, China is not using the restrictive measures as a weapon to target other countries.

Of course, China's moves have prompted countries such as Mongolia, India, Vietnam and Malaysia to expedite the exploration and exploitation of their mineral resources. But the fact is that even developed countries, particularly the US, despite markedly increasing their research and development budgets, have struggled to apply the technologies because they are highly polluting.

That's why the US has been pressuring the four countries, along with other countries, to expedite their rare earths exploration. For instance, the Malaysian government estimates it has up to 16.2 million tonnes of untapped rare earths in provinces such as Perak, Pahang, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu. But the US can provide these countries with little technological help to extract, separate or process the metallic elements. The countries are also worried about the US imposing sanctions and/or higher tariffs on their goods if they turn to China for solutions.

"In processing, mining, a lot of technology is held by China. In many aspects they are the most competitive," Malaysian Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Nik Nazmi bin Nik Ahmad was quoted as saying by a media outlet. "Certain countries have limitations... if you use Chinese technology to mine, then maybe there will be limitations (on trade)," he said.

As a matter of fact, to avoid being drawn into the US' geopolitical game, Malaysia has been doing its best to hedge its bets in the rare earths sector by engaging with not only China and the US, but also Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea to develop its rare earths sector.

However, as the Malaysian side's latest complaint indicates, it is the US' coercion and bullying that are preventing the development of several countries' rare earths industries.

China has made it clear that the revision of the catalogue of prohibited and restricted technologies for export, which include rare earths extraction and separation technology, is a specific measure and routine adjustment for the country to adapt to the latest technological advancements and improve its technology trade management.

China has always promoted reform and development through opening-up. Accordingly, it will create the right conditions for facilitating global economic cooperation on rare earths without compromising its national economic security and development interests.

Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Canton Fair showcases country's new advantages in foreign trade

The 136th China Import and Export Fair, or the Canton Fair, being held in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is expected to give a boost to China's foreign trade at a time when the sector is transitioning from high-speed growth to high-quality development.

More than 30,000 exhibitors are participating in offline exhibitions at the fair, nearly 800 more than the last time, of which more than 14,000 enterprises have their own brands, and more than 18,000 hold various international certifications. The number of new products exhibited in the first phase of the fair reached 1.15 million, and the number of products with independent intellectual property rights reached 1.1 million, a significant

increase over the last fair. The registration of 138,000 overseas buyers from 209 countries and regions, and the participation of 223 global retailers and large businesses from various countries and regions, will undoubtedly set off a surge of new products' procurement in the smart era.

A number of high-tech and high value-added products representing new quality productive forces, launched by Chinese exhibitors through innovative concepts, designs, technologies, brands and other ways, will foster a "new force" for Chinese foreign trade enterprises to gain new technologies and win more advantages in international competition.

The new channel will provide strong

support for China's foreign trade enterprises to build green industry, supply and value chains. This year's Canton Fair has achieved carbon neutrality for the first time mainly because of its 100 percent green exhibition layout.

At the same time, a green trade public service platform has been launched at the fair to help foreign trade enterprises enhance green trade awareness and capabilities, and provide more opportunities for digital, intelligent and green products, which will help China to cultivate new foreign trade growth points, accelerate industrial upgrading and green exports, and create more space for China's foreign trade development.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## Sky not the limit in knowledge quest

The medium- and long-term plan for space science jointly released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the China National Space Administration and the China Manned Space Agency on Tuesday includes topics like extreme universe, space-time ripples, panoramic view of sun-Earth, habitable planets, as well as biological and physical sciences in space. At first glance it looks straight out of a science fiction novel, but a closer look at China's science and technology development plan shows that they are practicable.

For example, the extreme universe sector deals with exploring the origins and evolution of the universe, which

involves dark matter and baryonic matter detection.

China's Wukong satellite has the widest observational energy range and the best energy resolution among all dark matter particle detection satellites in the world. Also, its Jinping Underground Laboratory, located 2,400 meters below the Earth's surface, is the world's deepest and largest underground lab.

Biological and physical space science is mainly about movement of matter in space. It will give a better understanding of quantum mechanics and general relativity. China has advantages in that sector, too, as its space station is func-

tioning well in orbit, and it will be the world's only space station when the International Space Station, which has already exceeded its service years, retires.

The medium- and long-term plan is a blueprint for space innovations from now to 2050, during which China will continue sharpening its tools for more achievements.

In some sense, the release of the plan is itself a demonstration of China's confidence in exploring the universe and uncovering its secrets, while the goals it set are both ambitious and practical.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Policy package effective means to bolster confidence

The central authorities have stressed the importance of implementing existing pro-growth policies and introducing incremental policies. The release of a package of incremental policies by different departments over the past days has sent a strong signal of greater efforts to stabilize growth and effectively boost market expectations.

Since the beginning of this year, the domestic and international development environments have remained complex. The growth momentum of major economies in the world is weak, their debt burden is heavy, the international market has been fluctuating significantly and global trade protectionism has intensified amid increasing uncertain and unstable factors. From a domestic perspective, China's effective demand is still insufficient, some industries and enterprises face more difficulties in production and operation, and people's livelihoods still have great potential to be improved. Yet the Chinese economy's long-term positive fundamen-

tal have not changed, and its favorable conditions, such as a broad market, strong economic resilience and great potential, have remained unchanged. The policymakers still have a large room for maneuvering with many policy tools at their disposal. That means the world's second-largest economy still has the ability and conditions to strengthen macroeconomic regulation. The package of incremental policies launched recently closely focuses on the practical difficulties hindering economic and social development. It coordinates policy measures in various fields such as finance, consumption, investment, real estate, the stock market, employment, and people's livelihoods. At the same time, the incremental policy package adheres to the combination of long-term and short-term needs, attaching importance to resolving the current difficulties and problems, as well as major problems dragging on the medium- and long-term development of the economy.

The package of incremental policies involves all aspects of deepening reform. A number of reform measures that are mature and conducive to achieving sus-

tainable and healthy economic development are being introduced at an accelerated pace. For example, lawmakers are soliciting public opinions on a draft law on promoting the private economy; the government will release a new version of the negative list for market access and establish a mechanism for future industrial investment growth.

The key to stabilizing growth is to stabilize enterprises' performance. To that end, the policymakers must do a good job in helping enterprises to alleviate their difficulties through implementing well-targeted policies, and put an end to arbitrary fees and fines imposed on enterprises, so as to enhance the business environment and consolidate the market's confidence.

The implementation of various policies to promote growth, employment and consumption in the fourth quarter is of great significance to the economic development of the whole year. Governments at various levels should pay special attention to carrying out the policies to the letter and refrain from paying only lip service to them.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

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## COMMENT

Qaiser Nawab

## Inclusive Shanghai Spirit guides SCO

Chinese Premier Li Qiang attended the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of Member States of the SCO in Islamabad and paid an official visit to Pakistan from Monday to Thursday.

The SCO heads of government meeting in Islamabad presented the opportunity to reflect on the significance of the SCO as a regional organization as well as its leadership which has been pivotal in shaping its future.

Pakistan, under Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, presided over the SCO meeting in Islamabad, focusing on economic cooperation, environmental sustainability and cultural and people-to-people linkages. This reflects Pakistan's growing role in the SCO as a country committed to fostering regional stability and development. The SCO's focus on combating terrorism, facilitating economic integration, and intensifying people-to-people exchanges is in line with Pakistan's priorities. Hence, the country is well-positioned to contribute to the SCO's future growth.

It should be noted that under Chinese President Xi Jinping's guidance, the SCO has adhered to the Shanghai Spirit, which emphasizes mutual benefit, consultation, and respect for diversity — a model that contrasts sharply with partnerships and alliances built on the basis of hegemony.

To begin with, the top Chinese leader has consistently emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation, common development, peace and a more representative global governance system. He prioritizes regional peace and development through mechanisms such as the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty exemplifies the SCO's preference for peace and dialogue over conflict. The Islamabad meeting further strengthened these commitments, and explored new avenues of cooperation, particularly in economic and cultural exchanges.

Pakistan's participation in the SCO has been marked by a commitment to safeguarding regional security and promoting development, and

the SCO meeting in Islamabad demonstrated the country's commitment to enhance multilateral cooperation in the region.

The organization has undertaken joint counter-terrorism exercises and border control operations, and established mechanisms to curb cybercrime, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

Pakistan, as a key player in these initiatives, has benefited immensely from the SCO's collective security framework, and the just-concluded meeting demonstrated its willingness to enhance security cooperation in the face of evolving threats.

Guided by the Shanghai spirit, the SCO has facilitated trade and investment among member states, with the

resulting economic integration being a testament to the SCO's efficiency and its focus on improving the lives of peoples in other SCO member countries. Initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative have further enhanced economic connectivity, promoting infrastructure development, trade, and technological advancement across the region.

To Pakistan, the Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor offer significant opportunities for economic growth. In fact, the SCO meeting in Islamabad explored ways to further align the development policies of SCO member states in order to advance trade, increase investment and deepen digital cooperation. China's call for deeper

integration in areas such as the digital economy, green energy and modern agriculture is particularly important for Pakistan, as it seeks to diversify its economy and create new growth drivers.

The SCO places great emphasis on cultural and people-to-people exchanges. This aspect of the SCO's work is crucial for fostering mutual understanding and friendship among its diverse member states. Initiatives such as the SCO University, SCO Youth Forum, and various cultural and educational exchange programs have helped bridge the cultural divides and strengthen the bonds between the peoples of SCO member countries.

Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and its long history of friendship with China provide a strong foundation for these exchanges, with the Islamabad meeting giving Pakistan a great opportunity to expand people-to-people programs.

As the world undergoes profound changes, from shifting geopolitical dynamics to climate change, the role of the SCO in maintaining global stability has never been more important. The SCO is marked by a commitment to multilateralism and international justice.

Pakistan, as a member of the SCO, stands to benefit from this multilateral approach, not least because the organization provides Pakistan with a platform to engage with regional powers on an equal footing, addressing common challenges and seizing opportunities for development.

China's vision for the SCO is one of shared prosperity and mutual respect, which ensures the SCO remains a key player in global governance, and a promoter of a fairer and more representative world order. As Pakistan takes its place at the forefront of the SCO, it is poised to play a vital role in shaping the future of this important organization, working alongside China and the other member states to build a more secure and prosperous world.

*The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development and an expert in multilateralism and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Peng Bo

## Services draw most FDI, boost quality growth

Since the launch of reform and opening-up, China has been emphasizing the importance of utilizing foreign investment, making greater efforts to stabilize the inflow of foreign capital and attracting more foreign capital. This approach has yielded rich dividends, boosting China's economic growth, and improving people's livelihoods and living standards.

In recent years, foreign investment in the service sector has grown rapidly, playing an increasingly pivotal role in the development of service trade.

In the early days of opening-up, most of the foreign investment in China was concentrated in manufacturing, which helped make China the "world's factory". However, in 2011, foreign investment in the service sector surpassed that in manufacturing for the first time. By 2015, the amount of foreign investment in services had increased to twice that in manufacturing. Today, the service sector attracts far more foreign capital than manufacturing.

According to the "Report on Foreign Investment in China 2024", manufacturing accounted for only 27.9 percent of actual foreign capital utilization last year, while the service sector used as much as 68.6 percent. Sectors such as transportation, finance, wholesale and retail, technology, media and telecom, scientific research, and business services have seen a dramatic rise in foreign direct investment.

By last year, the top three industries attracting the most foreign capital were scientific research and technical services, leasing and business services, and information and communications technology — all part of the service sector — accounting for 18 percent, 16.2 percent and 10.1 percent of total foreign investment, respectively.

China's service sector has not only grown faster than other sectors but also proven more resilient. Last year, retail sales of consumer goods grew by 7.2 percent, with service-related retail surging by 20 percent.

**As service trade improves in quality, it creates a positive cycle that facilitates further opening-up and attracts more foreign investment.**

Besides, per capita service consumption increased by 14.4 percent, accounting for 45.2 percent of total personal spending, up 2 percentage points year-on-year. The trend continues this year, with retail sales of services growing by 7.2 percent in the first seven months, far outpacing the growth of goods retail.

Globally, service exports have been a standout performer. According to the World Trade Organization, global service exports grew at an average annual rate of 4.9 percent from 2013 to 2023, nearly twice the rate of goods exports. China's service exports, in particular, have outpaced the global average, with service trade growing at an annual average of 6.2 percent between 2012 and 2023.

In the first seven months of this year, China's total service trade increased by 14.7 percent, with exports growing by 12.4 percent and imports by 16.4 percent. The export of personal cultural and entertainment services, as well as intellectual property usage fees, grew by 16.3 percent and 15.7 percent, respectively. In particular, travel services grew by a whopping 48.5 percent, making it the largest segment of China's service trade.

The government remains committed to fostering service consumption. The July 30 meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee said that boosting consumption, particularly consumption of services, is a key priority. As such, policies have been increasingly geared toward improving people's livelihoods, promoting consumption, and assisting service sectors such as tourism, eldercare, childcare and domestic services.

Accordingly, the State Council, China's Cabinet, recently issued guidelines on promoting high-quality service consumption, which emphasizes the importance of expanding market access and further opening up sectors such as telecommunications, education, eldercare and healthcare. By implementing these policies, China is positioning its service sector for even higher growth.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the country has accorded priority to the high-level design of service trade, further opening up the sector to attract top global service resources.

As service trade improves in quality, it creates a positive cycle that facilitates further opening-up and attracts more foreign investment. International service companies entering China bring with them high-quality services, invigorating domestic market players and fostering stronger ties between domestic and international resources, ultimately driving China's growth.

For example, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce recently released the 2024 version of the negative list for foreign investment access, lifting all restrictions in the manufacturing sector and indicating that the focus of opening-up will shift to services in the future. Also, pilot programs for expanding foreign investment in healthcare were launched, further promoting the high-quality development of the sector.

The 2024 China International Fair for Trade in Services, which opened on Sept 12, and the ongoing 136th China Import and Export Fair, widely known as the Canton Fair, which began on Wednesday, showcased China's commitment to higher-level opening-up and consolidated the foundation for the growth of service trade.

China will continue to roll out more policies to further open up the service sector, attracting high-quality foreign investment and advancing the growth of both the service industry and service trade.

*The author is a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Xiang Haoyu

## 'Asian NATO' bad idea for Japan's new PM

After becoming Japan's new prime minister on Sept 27, Shigeru Ishiba dissolved the House of Representatives on Oct 9, paving the way for general election on Oct 27. The Liberal Democratic Party faces a tough battle in the elections which will decide Ishiba's political future.

Known for his eloquence and political knowledge, Ishiba has been entrusted with the important task of reshaping the image of the slush fund scandal-plagued LDP. But his performance seems to be below expectations, with his Cabinet's approval rating being 46 percent, the second lowest for a new administration since 2001.

In fact, some of Ishiba's speeches have caused disputes within the LDP. He has even drawn flak from both home and abroad for his suggestion to establish an "Asian-style NATO". Plus, his proposal to make Japan and the US equal partners in their security alliance has prompted many to ask whether he has a hidden agenda.

As a prime minister with a weak political foundation, Ishiba's primary task is to bolster the centripetal force of the LDP. Accordingly, he has invited several heavyweights to hold key positions in the Cabinet in an attempt to win the upcoming general election. But the fact that some LDP leaders turned down his offer suggests he could face trouble within the party.

In particular, Ishiba faces three major challenges.

First, although the LDP-Komeito coalition secured absolute majority in the lower house of parliament in the last election, the LDP's position this time is relatively weak owing to the fund-raising scandal. It will be difficult for the

**Some other Asian countries are also worried that the "bloc confrontation" against China will force small and medium-sized countries in the region to choose sides.**

party to retain all its seats, although it may still win a simple majority in the lower house. And the election to the House of Councillors next July will be a "midterm exam" for Ishiba.

Second, Ishiba may have to produce visible results in terms of boosting the economy and improving people's livelihoods. In order to encourage investment and entrepreneurship, and generate high added value, he said his government will strengthen the initiatives taken by former prime minister Fumio Kishida to turn Japan into a "leading asset management center".

During his tenure, Kishida tried to reform the distribution system and boost Japan's economy with a "new form of capitalism", but he could not curb soaring prices or increase wages to the extent people expected. Those were important reasons why Kishida stepped down. Therefore, Ishiba may draw lessons from Kishida's failure, and introduce effective policies to improve people's livelihoods as soon as possible.

Third, Ishiba faces complicated diplomatic challenges. Ishiba visited Laos this week, for the first time in his official capacity, to attend a series of meetings of the ASEAN.

After the US presidential election on Nov 5, Japan will need to streamline communication channels and improve bilateral relations based on mutual trust with the new US government in order to prolong Japan's honeymoon period with the US.

But as to China-Japan ties, Japanese leaders also need to strike a balance between catering to the domestic public, which means they should manage to maintain cooperation with China rather than simply taking a populist tough stance against China.

In a commentary published by the Hudson Institute, a leading US think tank, on Sept 25, Ishiba shared his views on the future of Japan's foreign policy in response to a request from the institute's Japan Chair before he was elected the president of the LDP.

In the commentary, Ishiba said that he wishes to "establish the Asian NATO" and make the US and Japan "equal partners". He also compared China's Taiwan island to Ukraine and claimed that the absence of a collective self-defense system like NATO in Asia means that wars are likely to break out because there is no obligation for mutual defense. So he concluded that under these circumstances, the creation of an Asian version of NATO is essential to deter China by Japan's Western allies.

He also said time is ripe to change the asymmetrical Japan-US security treaty. In his opinion, it is possible that the Japan-US Security Treaty and Status of Forces Agreement could be revised to allow the Self-Defense Forces to be stationed in Guam to strengthen the deterrence capabilities of Japan and the US. Furthermore, expanding the scope of joint manage-

ment of US bases in Japan would also reduce the burden on US forces in Japan.

His views sparked strong reactions both within and outside Japan. Although the concept of an Asian-style NATO has been talked about for some time now, and has gained currency in recent years due to the US' promotion of the "Indo-Pacific strategy" to contain China, the mainstream view across the world is that the idea of an "Asian NATO" is not conducive to the diversity in the Asian region and goes against the common interests of the countries in the region.

Some senior officials of the Joe Biden administration have said that the US has no intention to establish an Asian-style NATO, with most politicians, media and scholars from ASEAN countries also opposing the idea. Some other Asian countries are also worried that the "bloc confrontation" against China will force small and medium-sized countries in the region to choose sides. And many in Japan think the idea of making Japan and the US "equal partners" is unrealistic.

Reflecting on the frequent changes in Japan's domestic politics, the new Japanese prime minister needs to address real problems to improve people's livelihoods and implement practical policies for cooperation with China. Creating an "Asian-style NATO" would not yield positive results and is just a bad idea.

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# GLOBAL VIEWS

DAVID KING AND QI YE

## Join hands for net-zero emissions

Immediate global collaboration is crucial for deploying the necessary technologies that will hasten China's smooth shift from coal to renewable energy

As extreme weather events become commonplace, it is clear that national commitments to rapid emissions reduction across the world don't go far enough, nor fast enough. To avert the worst impacts of climate change, we must raise our collective ambitions and accelerate global action. To combat the speed and power of extreme weather events, we need to take bold and decisive actions.



David King



Qi Ye

While the United States, Europe and the Middle East have historically contributed the most to the climate crisis, the challenge we face today demands an all-in, all-out response. As a major economic power, China also bears the responsibility of ramping up its efforts. Indeed, the steps China will take over the next decade will have a significant impact on a safe and stable future for our planet.

Compared to many other countries, China has already made significant strides in tackling emissions. Notably, in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, China had made remarkable progress in combating air pollution, laying the groundwork for its low-carbon future.

Over the past decade, China has introduced new policies in response to the climate crisis. This evolution has led to the recent "electrify everything" strategy, which has not only contributed to emissions reduction but also brought clear health and well-being benefits to the people.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

**Immediate global collaboration is crucial for deploying the necessary technologies that will help smooth China's shift from coal to renewables. With this support, China's leadership in the clean energy transition could become a global blueprint, offering solutions for others to follow.**

The current focus on rapidly scaling up renewable energy and nuclear power for electricity generation addresses a critical question: how can a growing economy, historically reliant on coal, successfully transition to low-carbon energy sources? By investing heavily on clean energy infrastructure, China is demonstrating a path forward for other developing nations facing similar energy transition issues.

Despite China's rapid progress, significant challenges remain in phasing out coal completely in a short period of time. And despite its efforts to reduce coal usage, China continues to build new coal-fired power stations due to concerns over energy security and grid stability. This ongoing reliance on coal challenges its transition to clean energy.

Similarly, while China is leading the world in renewable energy deployment, its capacity for generating energy from renewables is considerably higher than the actual contribution to the generated energy mix. This discrepancy is caused by the current system which lacks sufficient storage capacity.

This problem has been encountered and tackled before in different parts of the world and is therefore an area in which international collaboration has the potential to accelerate China's energy transition.

In the Climate Crisis Advisory Group's latest report, the impressive work that China has undertaken to move toward clean energy is apparent. However, it is also acknowledged that China's over-arching pathway to net zero by 2060 could face challenges.

To move beyond coal and, we hope, not just meet but exceed commitments, international collaboration will be essential for China.

Using new data and modeling, the report by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou) examines some future scenarios, each outlining a different trajectory for China's energy transition and how likely the country is to meet its United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change targets.

A worst-case scenario assumes high electricity demand, with energy consumption exceeding the China Electricity Council's forecasts —

reaching 12 terawatt-hours annually by 2030. In this scenario, peak emissions are not achieved until post-2035, putting China's 2060 carbon neutrality target at significant risk.

Under more modest scenarios, where annual electricity grows at a rate of 3.07 percent per year — in line with CEC forecasts — China's carbon peak is still projected to slip to 2033.

Another scenario highlights positive results that can be achieved through strong international partnerships. In this model, annual electricity demand in China is still increasing at a rate of 5.69 percent; however, global collaboration to tackle issues with renewables intermittency shows that peak carbon emissions by 2030 would still be within reach.

These findings reveal a significant opportunity. China, unlike many other nations, has the chance to hit peak emissions earlier than anticipated, all while supporting its growing economy.

Let's be clear, China's journey to a clean energy future will be challenging, but the potential rewards in its transition are clear. No country can tackle climate change alone, but China's progress in transitioning away from coal will have a significant impact on global efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

Immediate global collaboration is crucial for deploying the necessary technologies that will help smooth China's shift from coal to renewables. With this support, China's leadership in the clean energy transition could become a global blueprint, offering solutions for others to follow.

The stakes are high, but with united efforts, the rewards could be defining for future generations around the world.

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FAJAR HIRAWAN

## Navigating the New Silk Road

As the BRI continues to evolve, it offers ASEAN countries, particularly Indonesia, a chance to reshape its economic relationships and position in the global economy

Since the Belt and Road Initiative was launched in 2013, it has transformed the global landscape of infrastructure development and economic collaboration. China's vision for global connectivity through investments in infrastructure, trade agreements and financial assistance has turned the BRI into a cornerstone of modern international relations, positioning China as a central player in reshaping the economic and geopolitical landscape.



Fajar Hirawan

For Indonesia, which is strategically located along several key maritime routes, the BRI holds both significant promise and profound challenges. Indonesia's inclusion in China's ambitious 21st Century Maritime Silk Road places it at the crossroads of international trade flows, making it an essential partner for China in Southeast Asia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, of which Indonesia is a leading member, has also experienced increased connectivity and economic integration with China due to the BRI.

The BRI has significantly increased Chinese investments in Indonesia and ASEAN as a whole, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure, transportation and energy. Projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway in Indonesia and major port developments in Malaysia and Cambodia symbolize the deepening economic ties and enhanced connectivity between China and the region. These large-scale infrastructure investments have improved regional logistics, trade routes, and eco-

economic integration, positioning China as a key development partner for ASEAN countries.

In the case of Indonesia, its strategic location along critical maritime routes has made it a focal point of the BRI, with major investments aimed at upgrading its infrastructure. However, Indonesia's export economy remains heavily reliant on raw materials such as coal, palm oil, and nickel. In the past five years, these commodities dominated Indonesia's exports to China, reflecting a low value-added trade composition. At the same time, Indonesia imports high-value manufactured goods from China, including electronics and machinery, creating an economic imbalance. This pattern has contributed to a significant trade deficit, emphasizing Indonesia's need to diversify and upgrade its industrial capabilities.

Across ASEAN, a similar trade dynamic exists, with many member states exporting raw materials to China while importing higher-value goods. This has placed ASEAN in a lower value chain position, where the region is largely dependent on resource exports while relying on China for advanced technologies and manufactured goods. This economic asymmetry presents a challenge for ASEAN's long-term economic ambitions.

To address these challenges, Indonesia and ASEAN must focus on building value-added industries and enhancing manufacturing capabilities. By investing in industrial zones, attracting high-tech investments, and fostering technological innovation, ASEAN can move up the value chain and reduce dependency on raw material exports. Furthermore, strengthening digital infrastructure and

encouraging regional collaboration on innovation will be crucial for ASEAN to maximize the opportunities presented by the BRI while fostering more balanced and sustainable trade relationships with China.

First, strengthening technological collaboration with China can help Indonesia and ASEAN to move up the value chain. Joint ventures in research and development, especially in sectors such as chemicals and manufacturing, could foster new growth areas for Indonesia and ASEAN's economy. Additionally, partnerships in the digital economy and green technologies can open up new avenues for exports, providing opportunities to produce goods with higher market value. By leveraging Chinese expertise and innovation, Indonesia and ASEAN can enhance their industrial capabilities and improve their position in global supply chains.

Second, Indonesia and ASEAN should leverage existing trade agreements such as the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership more effectively. These platforms can provide better access to Chinese markets under favorable trade terms, helping to smooth out imbalances in the trade relationship. For instance, trade facilitated by these agreements contributed to a 20 percent increase in Indonesia's exports to China in 2022, demonstrating their potential to positively alter trade dynamics. By maximizing the benefits of these agreements, Indonesia and ASEAN can create more sustainable and balanced economic ties with China.

Third, Indonesia and ASEAN must diversify their trade relationships. Expanding trade ties with

other Asian countries, as well as markets in Europe and North America, can help balance trade portfolios and improve economic stability. Diversification provides economic buffers and opens new markets for Indonesian and ASEAN products, reducing vulnerability to external shocks in any region.

As the BRI continues to evolve, it presents significant opportunities not just for Indonesia but for ASEAN as a whole. To fully harness the benefits of the BRI, ASEAN countries must focus on enhancing their domestic industries, diversifying trade portfolios, and negotiating equitable trade terms. For instance, transitioning from merely supplying raw materials to China to developing value-added products can elevate ASEAN's role in the global economy.

The BRI offers ASEAN, and particularly Indonesia, a chance to reshape its economic relationships and position in the global economy. By focusing on industrial upgrading, trade diversification, and strategic use of trade agreements, ASEAN countries can foster mutually beneficial partnerships with China that support long-term growth and inclusive development. This



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approach will help ensure that the region capitalizes on its strategic position to create a sustainable, competitive and prosperous future.

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## LIFE

# Iconic US opera runs a gamut of emotions

*Porgy and Bess* is a triumph of international cooperation and technical expertise, **Chen Nan** reports.



Cape Town Opera's acclaimed production of American composer George Gershwin's 1935 masterpiece, *Porgy and Bess*, arrived at Beijing's Poly Theater with shows running on Saturday and Sunday. The Sunday show closed the 27th edition of the Beijing Music Festival — one of the largest music events in the capital first launched in 1998.

Performed by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra under the baton of American conductor Kazem Abdullah, this semi-staged (limited use of props and costumes) production was held in Shanghai on Oct 8 before its Beijing shows.

With an English-language libretto written by DuBose Heyward (with lyrics by Heyward and Ira Gershwin), which was based on Heyward's novel, *Porgy* (1925), *Porgy and Bess* is set in the African-American community of Charleston, South Carolina, and tells a heartfelt story of love and struggle, portraying the lives of marginalized people searching for dignity amid poverty. Since its debut nearly a century ago, the opera has undergone various adaptations, serving as a powerful symbol of cultural exchange across the globe. It is considered to be the first great American opera.

One of the most famous and most covered songs in the opera is *Summertime*, which is a jazz-inspired lullaby, reprising several times throughout the opera.

"It is a great joy to have friends come from afar, goes the famous Confucian proverb," said Zou Shuang, artistic director of the festival in Beijing on Friday. "Beijing Music Festival has welcomed its most distant friends — the Cape Town Opera. The musicians traveled long distances from South Africa to meet with Beijing's audience, making the China premiere of *Porgy and Bess* happen."

The significance of this collaboration lies not only in its artistic achievement, but also in the spirit of international friendship it represents. The involvement of Cape Town Opera — a key insti-



Scenes from Cape Town Opera's acclaimed production of American composer George Gershwin's 1935 masterpiece, *Porgy and Bess*, at Beijing's Poly Theater on Saturday, under the baton of American conductor Kazem Abdullah (left). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



tution in the preservation of South Africa's operatic heritage — demonstrates the power of art to transcend borders, Zou adds.

In this semi-staged version, involving the Beijing Music Festival, Cape Town Opera, and KT Wong Foundation, the production team used props and lighting effects to evoke the atmosphere of 1920s South Carolina, immersing the audience in the vibrant yet challenging world of Catfish Row, a dockside area of Charleston. The performances, complemented by the creative use of lighting to highlight key moments, captured the emotional

depth of the story, while the orchestra played an integral role, interacting with both the singers and the narrative.

South African bass singer Otto Maida plays the role of Porgy, a disabled beggar, who attempts to save Bess, played by South African soprano Nonhlanhla Yende, from her possessive and violent ex-lover.

"*Porgy and Bess* was George Gershwin's attempt to write an opera that showcased the true depth and range of African-American voices. This production of *Porgy and Bess* reflects the particular intensity and energy of South

African singers," says Abdullah, the conductor. "From the first rehearsal after we arrived in China, I had smiles on my face. Despite different languages, the singers and the orchestra worked well together. There are beautiful folk songs, jazz music and symphonic music."

"Bess is a troubled woman, who lives in the darkness under the thumb of her violent former boyfriend. When she meets Porgy, she sees hope and falls in love. In her case, I believe that within her heart, she wants to do the right thing, but she struggles a lot while doing that. Then there is the man, Porgy, who overlooks all

her faults, and just loves her," says Yende. "She is driven by the idea of love."

According to Magdalene Minnaar, artistic director of the Cape Town Opera, this year marks the 25th anniversary of the opera company, and since 2005 it has produced different versions of *Porgy and Bess*, touring over 15 countries.

"These musicians, who perform in China in this new version, have played in our previous versions of the opera. It's wonderful to see this team interpreting this opera again, telling the story in a fresh and innovative way," she says.

Besides the opera, the Cape Town Opera Chorus staged a concert in Beijing on Oct 10. The outdoor concert took place in a special venue inside the Temple of Heaven — the Divine Music Administration. First built in 1420, it is one of the five major structures at the Temple of Heaven, an imperial sacrificial altar and was the highest ritual music academy for training and practicing imperial sacrificial music.

Under the baton of Portuguese-born conductor and pianist Jose Dias, the chorus performed both classic South African songs and newly composed music pieces.

"It's quite an exciting experience for the singers to perform at the venue," says Minnaar. "We have such a rich heritage of singing in South Africa, which is filled with different music traditions. We have 12 official languages, celebrating different cultures."

Further enriching this cultural exchange, the Beijing Music Festival also presents an exhibition focusing on contemporary African photography. The exhibition, featuring works of several African photographers, offered Chinese audiences an intimate look into the diverse landscapes, cultures, and people of Africa, highlighting the growing relationship between China and Africa through the lens of artistic expression, according to Zou.

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## Young Chinese emerge as main buying force at book fair

CHENGDU — The 2024 Tianfu Book Fair, which just concluded in the southwestern Chinese metropolis of Chengdu, has seen both record sales and a record number of young visitors this year.

The four-day event showcased over 800,000 books and attracted more than 58 million visitors online and offline. The total sale of books and cultural products reached 105 million yuan (\$14.8 million).

Young readers carrying canvas bags and notebooks were frequently seen at the fair. They navigated through booths and crowds, carefully selecting books and participating in the various cultural events. They weren't just enthusiastic attendees, they were also the driving force behind retail sales.

Shi Haoran, in his 20s, went straight to a booth for the specially crafted edition of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the publication of which he had crowdfunded a few years earlier.

This edition is part of a panoramic series of China's four great classics, which cleverly incorporates elements that appeal to today's youth, such as rich illustrations, cultural maps and interesting com-



Young people view offers during the 2024 Tianfu Book Fair, which was recently held in Chengdu, Sichuan province. The four-day event showcased more than 800,000 books and attracted over 58 million visitors online and offline. PHOTOS BY TANG WENHAO / XINHUA

mentaries from famous people.

"We prefer works that blend tradition with modernity, as long as they remain true to the original," Shi says.

He purchased five sets of the displayed books. Although the prices were steep, he feels they are worth collecting. He says good books can be read repeatedly, unlike fast consumer goods that are used up quickly.

The demand for books among young people has also become increasingly diverse.

"We noticed that young people are very interested in traditional Chinese culture. The market demand for beautifully crafted books with traditional cultural elements has seen significant growth," says Yuan Ziqi, deputy general manager of a major Chinese publisher.



With the rise of new media, book promotion methods are continuously evolving. Yuan notes that publishers are increasingly prone to promoting their new books through online platforms, such as Bilibili, Douyin and Xiaohongshu — all popular among young readers.

Yuan emphasizes that staying relevant and effectively sharing quality content through online platforms

will be a key strategy for future development.

"I have always been fond of social sciences, history and science fiction. The variety of books at this fair and their exquisite designs have really opened my eyes. I particularly love books that come with cultural products, as they have both reading value and collectible significance," says Zhou Wenqiang, a young reader.

"Many readers now not only buy books but also enjoy purchasing related cultural products," says Yuan Zizhan, a book editor.

Additionally, the influence of anime and ACG (animation, comic, game) culture among the young is increasingly reflected in their consumption habits.

Publisher Wu Shiyu says that his organization has recently focused on introducing anime series books, and has begun to expand into manga products, which have a stable audience and sales in the domestic market.

He also observed that the reading preferences of young people have become quite diverse, encompassing social sciences, literature, aesthetics and philosophy, with increasing attention paid to political and historical books. This may be related to the rise of social media influencers dealing with knowledge and reading, he says.

This year's fair hosted over 1,000 cultural events, covering various aspects such as reading sharing, new book releases and author signings.

XINHUA

# LIFE



From left: Three of chef Alessio Durante's (pictured below) new dishes: Pigeon, Dessert Jewelry Box, and Sea Urchin. Below: Durante aims to bring an elevated French dining experience to Shenzhen, offering diners a taste of refined indulgence. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Tourists opting for shorter journeys

More Chinese tourists opted for shorter travels, as shown in the National Day Golden Week holiday in early October. For many who took those short trips, being immersed in the surroundings of their holiday escapes was necessary and made their experiences more profound and unforgettable.

Lin Keya and her family reside in Urumqi, Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, and they spent a few days of the holiday in a village in nearby Jimsar county. There, they woke to the sounds of roosters and fell asleep under the moonlight.

"Immersed in nature, I felt like my tired soul was healed," Lin says of the village located at the foot of the Tianshan Mountains and just a two-hour drive from Urumqi.

"What truly attracts us now is no longer intense sightseeing tours that just skim the surface, but trips that allow us to integrate ourselves into local life for days and experience different landscapes and customs," says a holidaymaker surnamed Peng, who took her family on a high-speed train from Guiyang to Leshan, two cities in Southwest China.

"Minimizing our time on the road granted us abundant time to enjoy the place," she says.

For Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, the new trend of shorter trips and slower tours can help "promote the modernization of the tourism industry, provide development opportunities for more regions, and facilitate high-quality employment for more people."

This rising trend has also been driven significantly by China's ever-growing high-speed railway network. By Sept 14, China's railway operating mileage exceeded 160,000 kilometers. High-speed railways account for over 46,000 km of that total, a whopping 392.2 percent rise from the end of 2012 and covering over 96 percent of cities with more than 500,000 residents. This has allowed people to reach more destinations in shorter time frames.

According to Ctrip, an online Chinese travel agency, the nationwide average high-speed railway travel radius during this year's three-day Mid-Autumn Festival holiday in September was 361 km, which was nearly 30 percent shorter than the average travel radius recorded during the previous Mid-Autumn Festival.

"Taking high-speed trains or bullet trains to travel allows for precise, controllable itineraries with efficient, convenient transportation," says 68-year-old Shanghai resident surnamed Qian.

"So it is possible to arrange a more leisurely schedule, making it suitable for middle-aged people and the elderly like me," he says.

His words are backed up by the efforts of Shanghai, which has put in place special high-speed railway tourist routes linking the municipality with nearby destinations such as Yancheng in Jiangsu province, Jiaying in Zhejiang province and Lu'an in Anhui province.

Qian's thoughts are also in line with the observations of Lou Jiajun, a professor at the East China Normal University.

"Many localities have made efforts in recent years to optimize their 'railway plus scenic area' combination routes and transportation methods, and to bridge the distances between high-speed railway stations and scenic areas. Such efforts have greatly improved the tourism experience," Lou says.

For other experts, the growth of shorter and slower tourism reflects a shift in tourists' consumption preferences as the demand for spiritual and entertainment consumption continues to increase.

To cater to this shift, tourist destinations should do more to construct and promote an image that is in line with the times, improving infrastructure and public services and nurturing operators with more capital, aiming to constantly enhance tourist satisfaction and the sense of gain felt by locals, Dai says.

XINHUA

## Chef brings ideas that are in the best possible taste

After working in Michelin-starred restaurants, European culinary artist is ready to dazzle Shenzhen, Li Yingxue reports.



At 388 meters above Shenzhen, Guangdong province, Opus 388 offers more than sweeping views of the city's skyline and its tranquil Lotus Hill and Bijia Mountain parks. With a spritz of a custom perfume — crafted from the scents of bread and milk — chef Alessio Durante instantly transports diners to Paris.

It's a small, evocative gesture that sets the tone for the night, where his culinary creations weave together flavors from the Mediterranean and the vibrant metropolis below.

Durante was a bit anxious about the evening. As the new chef, it was his first time presenting his menu to diners after a month of intense preparation. But the empty plates and satisfied smiles quickly assured him that his creations were well received.

### Love at first bite

After sampling the full menu, Shenzhen radio show host and foodie Ma Hao described the meal as a French dining experience deeply shaped by the chef's personal touch.

From the very first bite of Durante's house-made focaccia, Ma was impressed. "I loved the rich, oily texture. There are so many small, thoughtful details in his dishes, like the cod mousse-filled macaroons: they were such a clever twist," he says.

The Caviar, Beef Tartare and Bone Marrow and the Foie Gras, Onion and Croissant also left a strong impression on Ma. "That seared foie gras paired with wine-soaked onions and spread on a croissant was an indulgent and impressive flavor that was hard to resist," he says.

Reflecting on the experience, he adds: "The menu feels like a complete expression of the chef's vision, undoubtedly influenced by his years in Michelin-starred kitchens. I think this marks the arrival of a fresh force in Shenzhen's French dining scene, something exciting for Greater Bay Area residents to explore."

From the Mediterranean to Shenzhen, Durante has transported not just his culinary philosophy across thousands of miles but also expertly fused the flavors of both regions, whether it's French oysters or local shellfish.

With a career spanning Michelin-starred kitchens in France, Italy and Macao, China, 36-year-old Durante is aiming to bring an elevated French dining experience to the city.

Durante, who hails from Liguria, Italy, grew up by the sea. He fondly recalls spending time in the kitchen with his grandmother, cooking together often. By 14, he had decided to attend culinary school.

A few months after starting, his parents took him to Da Claudio, a local Michelin-starred restaurant.

"They told the chef, 'This is our son, he's just started culinary school. Don't pay him salary. Just teach him the craft,'" Durante recalls.

That marked his first step into the Michelin-starred world. His schedule was rigorous: attending school from 8 am to 2 pm and then heading straight to the restaurant to work.

In 2012, Durante moved to France to continue his culinary journey, sharpening his skills in some of the country's top kitchens, including the two-Michelin-starred restaurant at Les Airelles Courchevel and the legendary three-Michelin-star Le Lotus XV-Alain Ducasse at the Hotel de Paris.

Working in a three-star kitchen, he says, felt like being at war: "You have to be like a sponge, absorbing everything, thus you learn a lot."

Returning to his roots in 2014, Durante spent nine years as Chef de Cuisine at Da Claudio. Last year, feeling ready for another adventure, he took on the role of Senior Sous Chef at the two-Michelin-starred Alain Ducasse at Morpheus in Macao.

### Leading the kitchen

This year, Durante felt it was time for another change — to lead his own kitchen and bring his visions to the table.



Clockwise from top left: Spanish Red Prawn Pancake Roll, A Coral From the Sea, Sweet Shells, and Veloute Soup with Gillardeau Oysters.

"I've always worked for others — amazing chefs, some of the best in the world — but I've never worked for myself," he says. "Now, I want to follow my ideas."

In August, he got an offer to be the chef de cuisine at Opus 388 on the 77th floor of Mandarin Oriental Shenzhen.

"Shenzhen has high potential to be a fine-dining destination in China," says Durante. "This young city is vibrant and receptive, offering thrilling and innovative dishes. It's a great professional challenge for me and one that I relish."

"I believe in using the finest ingredients and creating dishes that not only satisfy but also inspire," he adds. "The dining experience at the restaurant will be memorable, delivering a narrative of flavors that resonate with locals and visitors alike."

Durante plans to introduce dishes that honor the essence of French cuisine while incorporating fresh, international influences.

Yan Man, the manager of the restaurant, was struck by Durante from the moment he arrived for his tasting interview. She and her colleagues were responsible for serving his dishes that day.

"Each dish was presented with a sense of ceremony, creating a memorable experience for the guests," Yan recalls. "He is passionate about designing that ceremonial aspect for every dish, which builds anticipation and excitement among diners."

Now, after working alongside Durante for over a month, Yan has witnessed his unwavering commitment to top standards, both in the food and the service. "He often reminds me, 'We know our dishes and our restaurant best. We should provide the most suitable arrangements for our guests, rather than simply catering to their requests.'"

Throughout September, Durante and Yan collaborated to revamp the restaurant's decor, selecting and arranging many details. Simultaneously, Durante worked with the kitchen team to create an entirely new menu.

"Working with him brings the rigor of Michelin standards to life, which is incredibly rewarding," Yan says. "The entire menu and service reflect a collective effort from the whole team."

### A delicious debut

The new menu debuted during a dinner event and afterward, Durante enjoyed two cocktails before sinking into a deep, restorative sleep — the best he'd had in a month. The past few weeks had been a whirlwind of menu preparations, kitchen adjustments and settling into a new city.

"I don't have time to enjoy the city but I enjoy the markets," he says. "I want to use Chinese ingredients because we're in China."

During his market visits, he was particularly intrigued by local pigeons that had never flown, which he transformed into a standout dish on his new menu. Seafood, another area of expertise for Durante, also plays a significant role. "I come from the sea and so do my dishes," he notes.

A highlight of the menu is A Coral From the Sea, a culinary symphony presented in three movements: a unique brandade macaroon that creatively blends a classic French dessert with cod; pickled olives filled with sea bass and fermented garlic mayonnaise; and dried squid marinated in sea salt, sugar, and shrimp powder, served alongside a homemade green bean sauce.

These snacks are artfully arranged on shells, which rest atop a piece of coral that Durante personally selected and meticulously arranged.

With the successful launch of his first menu behind him, Durante is already brimming with fresh ideas, eager to transform his concepts into dishes for diners in the Greater Bay Area.

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## LIFE



Scenes from *She and Her Girls*, a TV series adapted from the real-life experiences of Zhang Guimei, a dedicated middle school principal who has helped over 2,000 rural girl students enter college. Song Jia plays Zhang in the series. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Blockbuster series charts principal's course

TV drama explores extraordinary dedication of renowned educator to her rural students in Yunnan, **Xu Fan** reports.

In remote and rugged mountains, Zhang Guimei, a determined middle-aged rural teacher, makes her way wearily toward a dilapidated village home. The mission she faces is challenging, as she needs to prevent a 14-year-old girl from making the misguided decision to abandon her education.

The girl's father, an alcoholic, is trying to coerce her to support the family by marrying a stranger in exchange for a dowry of 30,000 yuan (\$4,245).

This poignant scenario takes place in the acclaimed TV series *She and Her Girls*, which has earned a remarkable score of 9.4 out of 10 points on the popular review aggregator Douban, making it the highest-rated Chinese drama on the platform this year.

With Song Jia playing the lead role of Zhang, the biographical drama is adapted from the real-life experiences of the female middle school principal, a trailblazing educator who founded the Huaping Senior High School for Girls in Lijiang, Yunnan province, in 2008.

As China's first public all-female high school to offer free education and financial assistance for living expenses, the school has helped more than 2,000 girls from impoverished rural backgrounds to enter colleges.

In 2021, Zhang — who was born in Heilongjiang province in 1957 — was awarded the July 1 Medal, the highest honor bestowed by the Communist Party of China upon outstanding members.

Preparations for the TV series began in June 2020, and went through three years of script writing, shooting, and postproduction, seeking to bring Zhang's self-sacrifice and steadfast determination to the screen.

In the belief that teenagers without acting experience would be able to more convincingly portray rural students, the producers chose 100 girls to take part in a three-month training program before the official start of filming.

Veteran scriptwriter Yuan Zidan, who is known for popular TV dramas like the *Ode to Joy* franchise, tells *China Daily* that she felt stressed and nervous when she was first approached to write the biographical account in early 2021.

"Zhang's story has received a lot of coverage, and many of the most touching narratives are well-known to the public. As a scriptwriter, the challenge lay in striking a balance between staying true to reality, and coming up with an engaging and dramatic plot," she explains.



**Clockwise from top:** A scene from the TV series shows Zhang (fourth from left, second row) posing for a photo with her colleagues and students; Song attends a symposium to discuss the series in Beijing on Sept 27; and a scene showing Zhang caring for two students.

Yuan's initial apprehension dissipated swiftly following her first encounter with Zhang, who proved to be more talkative, humorous and open than the writer had anticipated.

During the crew's first visit to the school, Yuan clearly remembers being struck by the journey. Following a four-hour flight from Beijing to Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, they embarked on a wearying six-hour car ride, arriving at the school almost at 10 pm.

The following morning, Yuan was

surprised as she observed Zhang employ a distinctive method to aid a student grappling with concentration issues in class.

The principal asked the student to sweep up fallen leaves around the campus. This tranquil task gave the student the opportunity to contemplate life. Zhang then reassured the student that she could bring her medical bills to the school the next day, and that the institution would cover the expenses, alleviating the student's concerns.

"I was deeply moved. Zhang's

kindness, generosity and distinctive teaching methods have left a deep impression on me," Yuan says.

"She is very protective of her students and advised us not to interview them directly to avoid disrupting their daily routine and focus on learning. However, she acknowledged our need for more stories for inspiration, and gave us a pamphlet containing interviews with around 100 girls whose fates have been altered by the school and education," Yuan adds.

For director Fei Zhenxiang, whose

filmmaking career spans over 20 years, the new drama is his first foray into shooting a biography, making the creative process a cherished memory.

Fei says that the crew adopted a tactic to maximize conversations with Zhang, who maintains a morning routine of singing with the students, doing fitness exercises with them, and discussing the latest developments in their lives.

"Zhang is not in good health and has many chores, so we used the 30- to 60-minute break after her morn-

ing routine to talk, which enabled us to hear more stories about the school and its students," Fei says.

One of the most notable stories is Zhang's commitment to trek deep into the mountains to visit the village homes of her students during vacations, and offer them and their families encouragement, which she has been doing for over 10 years. Despite pain and disease, she walked more than 110,000 kilometers and reached over 1,500 families between 2008 and 2020, according to the *Guangming Daily*.

In a bid to uncover deeper insight and broaden their understanding, Yuan and the team retraced many of Zhang's routes and over the span of a year, interviewed her friends, former students and their families.

"The aspect of Zhang that engenders the most respect is her demonstration of how an ordinary individual can maximize the realization of their dreams through perseverance, fearlessness and effective problem-solving," Yuan says.

Although the esteemed principal has become a well-known figure since receiving the medal and making headlines, Yuan says that Zhang continues to care for each of her students.

During a later visit, Yuan was surprised to hear Zhang referring to the previous year's college admission cut-off scores, and carefully reviewing the mock exam results of senior students.

"It impressed me to see how well she grasped each girl's traits and learning circumstances, and the sincerity of her desire for a brighter future for each of them," Yuan says emotionally.

The 23-episode series, which aired on China Central Television's CCTV-1 and is still available on the streaming site Tencent Video, continues to make waves online, with related topics attracting more than 350 million views on the popular social media platform Sina Weibo.

Song Huan, director of the Institute of Teacher Education at Beijing Normal University, says that the drama is not just a tribute but also demonstrates China's decades-long dedication to helping underprivileged families through education.

"We need more educators like Zhang. Consistently producing exceptional teachers is crucial for a country to shape future generations. We want more outstanding and dedicated teachers, as well as more popular films and television shows telling their stories," says Song Huan.

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## Chinese scientist helps make Sri Lanka's water safe

COLOMBO — In scientist Wei Yuansong's office drawer is a thank-you letter written in Sinhalese and signed by an entire Sri Lankan village.

The letter, which passed through many hands and was franked in different locations, contains the shared memories of a decade-long fight against a killer kidney disease that had plagued villagers for years because of their lack of safe drinking water.

"We express our heartfelt gratitude to Professor Wei for providing us with safe and tasty drinking water," the residents of Nildiya village wrote.

Now director of the Laboratory of Water Pollution Control Technology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Wei says that his connection to Sri Lanka began in August 2013, when he received an email from Dr S.K. Weragoda about collaboration on water treatment to address Chronic Kidney

Disease of Unknown Etiology.

At the time, CKDu was a major public health issue in Sri Lanka, with over 40,000 people afflicted by the disease since the mid-1990s. In 2016, then Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena referred to it as a "national disaster" that was affecting 20,828 patients and causing 5,000 deaths a year.

Preliminary research by the World Health Organization indicated a strong correlation between CKDu and groundwater pumped for drinking, and correspondence with Sri Lankan scientists brought the issue to the attention of Chinese counterparts.

In August 2014, Wei made his first visit to Sri Lanka to undertake an arduous research journey with Weragoda. Each day, they traveled for hours along bumpy roads deep into the affected areas, and paid home visits to villagers.

They were greeted with cold

shoulders and doubts. "Many local residents thought that the Chinese, like others (foreign researchers), were there to write papers, not to genuinely help them," Wei says. The two scientists had to negotiate difficult conversations to win their trust, but were eventually welcomed to take crucial samples for analysis.

Following preliminary research and extensive coordination between the two sides, a deal was inked in March 2015, enabling joint research into the causes of CKDu and drinking water safety. Since then, Wei has frequented Sri Lanka with other Chinese scientists to conduct thorough research into water treatment solutions suitable to local conditions.

During the following years, the Chinese academy and its partners built four drinking water facilities in Sri Lanka that provide safe drinking water to over 5,000 villagers and more than 1,300 students, and then

founded a China-Sri Lanka Joint Research and Demonstration Center for Water Technology in the central city of Kandy.

The center has trained 30 medical workers, 20 kidney disease investigators, 20 water professionals, and 30 graduate students. Two joint CKDu-related research papers by Wei's team won Sri Lanka's President's Awards for Scientific Research in 2023 and 2024.

"Local residents now trust Chinese scientists wholeheartedly. ... Villagers with kidney disease say they haven't had to go to hospital for years thanks to the help of Chinese scientists," says Titus Cooray, a PhD student at the JRDC.

This July, Wei attended a joint research workshop at the JRDC on climate change, marine sustainability, and other topics, with participants from nearly 10 countries, including the United States, Canada and the Maldives.



Wei Yuansong (right), director of the Laboratory of Water Pollution Control Technology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, pays a visit to Upul Bandara Dissanayake, former vice chancellor of the University of Peradeniya, in Kandy, Sri Lanka, in March 2017. XINHUA

"This is my 31st trip to Sri Lanka. We have laid the foundation from zero to one, and future collaboration will undoubtedly progress from one to infinity," Wei said at the event.

"China has transitioned from being a participant to being a leader in global environmental govern-

ance, and we aim to bring more benefits to the Sri Lankan people through scientific cooperation, and to make this project a model of 'Belt and Road' international cooperation," he said.

XINHUA