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CHINA DAILY

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Xi, Putin meet ahead of BRICS summit

China and Russia have 'sense of responsibility as major countries for the world'

By XU WEI and REN QI in Kazan, Russia

President Xi Jinping underlined the unchanging profound and lasting friendship between China and Russia and the two nations' steadfast sense of responsibility as major countries for the world and their people, during talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday.

In talks with Putin at the centuries-old Kazan Kremlin, Xi said that the two nations have seen their relationship forge ahead "despite wind and rain" over the past 75 years.

"We have achieved many groundbreaking results and found the right way for two big, neighboring countries to get along with each other characterized by non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not targeting any third party," he told Putin.

"The world today is facing momentous transformations unseen in a century, resulting in a fast-changing and turbulent international landscape. Yet I am confident that the profound and lasting friendship between China and Russia will not change, nor will our sense of responsibility as major countries for the world and for the people," he continued.

Xi arrived in the Russian city on Tuesday for the 16th BRICS Summit, a visit that also marks his 10th trip to Russia since he became Chinese president in 2013. The meeting on Tuesday was the third between the two heads of state since the beginning of the year.



President Xi Jinping meets Russian President Vladimir Putin in Kazan, Russia, on Tuesday. DING HAITAO / XINHUA

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The Chinese president also mentioned the positive progress

in bilateral cooperation, including trade, on Tuesday, calling for continuous steps to further align the Belt and Road Initiative with the Eurasian Economic Union and give strong momentum to the high-quality economic development of both countries.

With 2025 marking the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War, Xi called for even closer communication and coordination between China and Russia within multilateral frameworks such as the UN and the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The two sides should jointly promote a correct view of the history of World War II, and firmly uphold the UN-centered international system, he said.

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Brick by brick, president drives BRICS cooperation

As President Xi Jinping and a host of other leaders gather in Kazan, Russia, for the 16th BRICS Summit, the world is once again shining the spotlight on the burgeoning international mechanism for how it will push forward self-development and respond to global woes.

A steadfast champion of BRICS cooperation, Xi once compared its five members at that time to the five fingers of one hand: They are short and long if extended, but form a powerful fist if clenched together.

Now that hand has grown bigger and stronger, after the announcement of BRICS' historic expansion last year, yet the essence of Xi's metaphor is becoming even more relevant.

With the world trudging on in a new period of turbulence and transformation, the leader of the largest developing country is poised to help guide BRICS, the leading echelon of the Global South, to play a bigger role in building a better shared future for humanity.

Golden value

BRICS, an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, is literally called "gold bricks" in Chinese, indicating the optimism about its great potential and shining future.

The sanguine view features prominently in Xi's engagement with the group. He has consistently placed BRICS high on China's foreign policy agenda. His first appearance on the multilateral stage as China's head of state was at the 2013 BRICS summit in Durban, South Africa, and he visited all four other BRICS countries during the first two years of his presidency.

"China led by President Xi Jinping has contributed significantly to the success of BRICS," noted Bunn Nagara, a senior China researcher in Malaysia.

Thanks to the joint efforts of its members, the golden value of BRICS has continued to rise. World Bank data shows that the share of BRICS in global GDP grew from 18 percent in 2010 to about 26 percent in 2021, with increases in all years during the period.

Among the drivers of its remarkable growth is a strong orientation toward real results. "BRICS is not a talking shop, but a task force that gets things done," Xi once emphasized.

Following this spirit, practical cooperation has always been the foundation of the BRICS mechanism, a good example of which is the launch of the New Development Bank. The multilateral institution, whose headquarters is in Shanghai, had approved 105 projects in all member countries for approximately \$35 billion by the end of 2023.

In view of BRICS' evolving development needs, Xi, at the 2017 summit in China's coastal city of Xiamen, Fujian province, joined other member leaders in formally incorporating cultural and people-to-people exchanges into the engines of BRICS cooperation, in order to further enhance the bond between these nations and reinforce the foundation of BRICS interaction.

Powered by the three engines of political and security exchanges, economic and financial exchanges and cultural and people-to-people exchanges, BRICS cooperation has witnessed even more substantial progress and growing popular support.

Wang Lei, director of the BRICS Cooperation Research Center at Beijing Normal University, said that the unique value of BRICS cooperation goes beyond economic terms, and the mechanism is an innovation of international cooperation, which is in marked contrast to some protectionist, exclusive political, military or economic alliances in the West.

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'Friends of Peace' initiative to help resolve global conflict

The China-Brazil "Friends of Peace" initiative is a groundbreaking diplomatic effort aimed at resolving the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict. Launched during the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly on Sept 27, this platform offers a framework for inclusive dialogue, gathering nations from the Global South to discuss peaceful resolutions and seeking to end a conflict that has endured for over two years, emphasizing equitable participation from all sides. It also serves as a blueprint for global conflict resolution that could extend beyond Ukraine, offering a model of diplomacy rooted in dialogue and cooperation.

China's involvement in the initiative

WORLD WATCH By Khalid Taimur Akram

active highlights its ongoing role as a peace broker on the global stage. Over the past several years, China has played a crucial role in mediating some of the world's most challenging regional conflicts. Bringing about a reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as facilitating talks among Palestinian factions, has earned Beijing considerable admiration. In the face of rising risks and challenges, the global community is increasingly looking at China for solutions

to these complex issues. This diplomatic responsibility fits well with China's broader commitment to fostering global peace and stability.

The China-Brazil partnership in the "Friends of Peace" initiative underscores their longstanding relationship built on mutual respect and cooperation in various sectors, including trade, culture, and education. Both countries share a commitment to dialogue over confrontation, making them ideal partners in efforts to mediate the Ukraine conflict. Through their collective approach, offering dialogue rather than military solutions, China and Brazil present an alternative vision of global conflict resolution that reflects a broader

trend of Global South nations stepping into more prominent diplomatic roles.

Countries from Latin America, Africa, and Asia have already endorsed the initiative, recognizing the importance of prioritizing political solutions over military ones. These nations, alongside China and Brazil, focus on alleviating the humanitarian crisis that has resulted from the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Their advocacy for negotiations and dialogue as primary tools for achieving peace underscores the non-aligned nature of the "Friends of Peace" platform. Rather than taking sides in the conflict, the platform seeks to create an environment where dia-

logue can flourish, demonstrating its commitment to preventing the conflict from being prolonged by external powers.

In recent years, Beijing has been instrumental in resolving various international hotspot issues. In a similar vein, China has taken on a constructive role in addressing the Ukraine crisis. Its leaders have engaged in in-depth communications with leaders from both Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, China had issued position papers and sent special envoys on numerous occasions, calling for de-escalation and promoting peace talks.

In May 2024, China and Brazil laid the groundwork for the "Friends of Peace" initiative by issuing a six-point consensus on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

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ANCIENT, MODERN ELEMENTS IN HARMONY FOR NEW GENERATION

Musical movement sweeps China, making heritage relatable through tech, videos

By CHEN NAN chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

In-depth

In a sleek recording studio, young Chinese musicians are gathered around their instruments. Clad in traditional hanfu — flowing robes with wide sleeves and intricate headpieces — they are preparing to create music, but there's a twist.

These musicians are not playing electric guitars or synthesizers, despite their rock-star aura and sun-

glasses. Instead, their hands grasp ancient Chinese instruments, including the erhu (a two-stringed fiddle), guzheng (a Chinese zither), suona (a piercing double-reed woodwind), and the zhongruan (a lute). The studio pulses with energy as they prepare to reimagine a popu-

lar song from the 1990s and transform it into a piece that bridges ancient and modern worlds.

Their rendition, aptly titled *Disco Dancing Version of Your Shining Knight*, revives Hong Kong singer-actor Hacken Lee's 1991 Cantonese hit, which resurfaced in popular culture after being featured in the 2018 Chinese comedy *Hello Mr. Billionaire*.

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Helping hand



Staff members transfer emergency medical aid from China on Monday at Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut, Lebanon. China delivered a shipment of 3,601 boxes of emergency medical aid to Lebanon including anesthesia equipment, tracheal intubation tubes and surgical gowns. BILAL JAWICH / XINHUA See story, page 11



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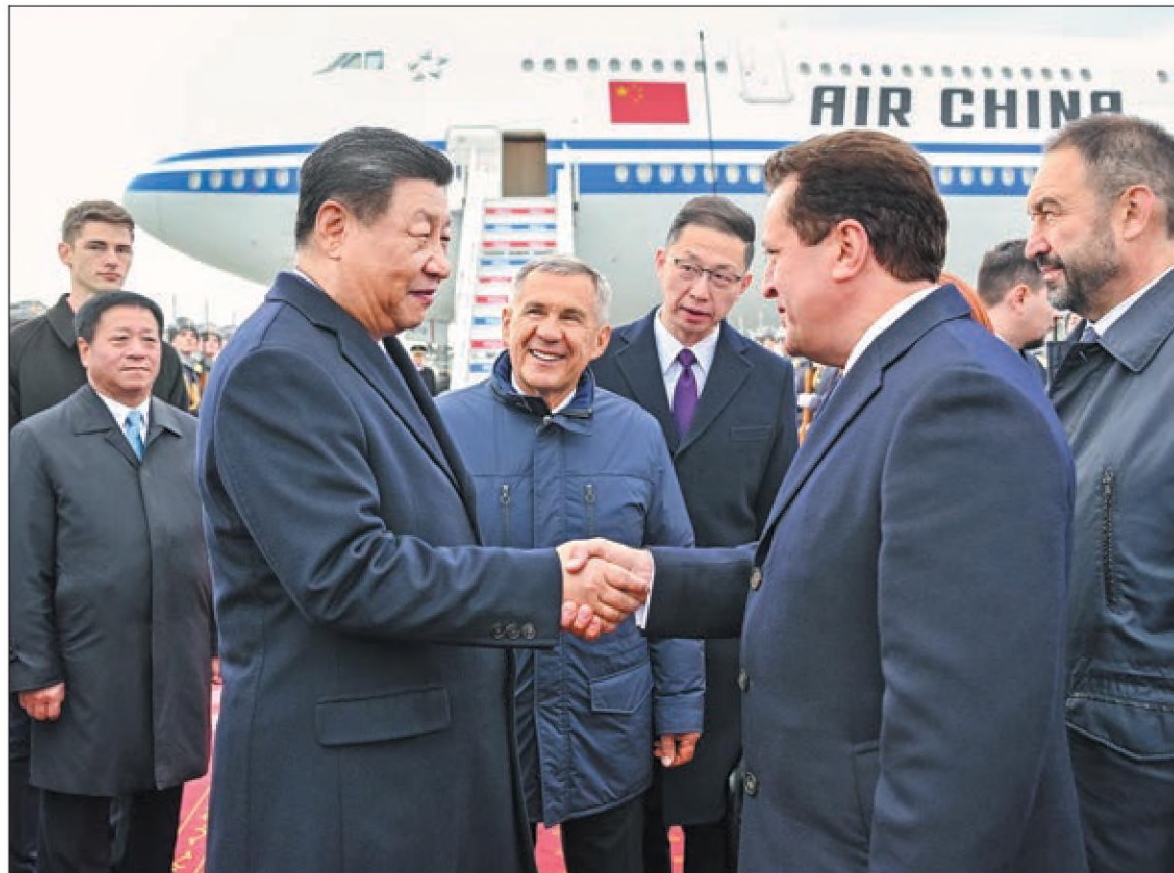
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XI'S VISIT



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Ilur Metshin, mayor of Kazan, Russia, on Tuesday, upon his arrival at the airport in Kazan. President Xi is in Kazan to attend the 16th BRICS Summit. LI XUEREN / XINHUA

Summit: Goal is more opportunities for Global South

From page 1

Regarding BRICS cooperation, the Chinese president noted that the mechanism has become "the most important platform for unity and collaboration among emerging markets and developing countries today".

Xi said he looks forward to engaging in in-depth discussions with BRICS leaders on the future development of the cooperation mechanism, fostering consensus among all parties, sending a positive signal of unity and cooperation, and advancing strategic coordination and pragmatic cooperation across various fields.

The goal is to create more opportunities for the Global South, he added. Xi and Putin are set to join leaders from other BRICS countries for the summit in Kazan on Wednesday, the first since the grouping's historic expansion at the beginning of the year.

According to a statement released by the Russian government, Putin described ties between Russia and China as "a model for how relations between states should be built in the modern world".

"Our multifaceted cooperation is equal, mutually beneficial, and free

from any external conditions," he told the Chinese president, adding that Russian-Chinese cooperation in global affairs is one of the main stabilizing factors on the world stage.

He also stressed readiness to jointly celebrate with China the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and to maintain strategic communication and coordination with China on international affairs.

China has been Russia's largest trade partner for 14 consecutive years, and Russia has become China's eighth-largest trade partner. The annual trade volume between China and Russia once again set a record last year, exceeding \$240.1 billion.

Zhang Hanhui, Chinese ambassador to Russia, described China-Russia relations as "full of impetus and rich with outcomes" during an interview with reporters at the airport minutes before Xi's arrival.

"This is why I believe that through this meeting, the two top leaders will further clarify the direction of strategic coordination between the two nations and advance all-around pragmatic cooperation," he said.

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Russian women in traditional costume welcome President Xi Jinping upon his arrival in Kazan, Russia, on Tuesday, with traditional etiquette. DING HAITAO / XINHUA

Grouping: President Xi unwaveringly promotes openness and cooperation

From page 1

In Xi's words, BRICS cooperation transcends the old formula of political and military alliances, the old mindset of drawing lines on the basis of ideology, and the obsolete notion of "you-win-I-lose" and "winner-takes-all".

The golden thread record, as many observers have pointed out, has not only proved wrong various gloom-and-doom claims, but also significantly increased BRICS' appeal to the rest of the world.

Greater BRICS

On Aug 24 last year, the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, erupted with applause upon the announcement of BRICS' historic expansion. That, Xi said at a news conference, demonstrated "the determination of BRICS countries and developing nations to unite".

Since the inception of the BRICS mechanism, openness and inclusiveness have remained its members' abiding commitment, and Xi has repeatedly emphasized that BRICS countries do not gather in a closed club or an exclusive circle. "A tree cannot make a forest," he said as early as at his BRICS summit debut in Durban in 2013. A year later, at the Fortaleza summit in Brazil, he proposed the "BRICS spirit" of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation.

With such an open mind, the group developed a tradition of inviting

leaders of other countries to its summits. Then, at the 2017 gathering in Xiamen, an ancient port city that has evolved into a dynamic hub in China's opening-up and reform, Xi built on that outreach practice and put forward the "BRICS Plus" program, encouraging more participation of other emerging markets and developing nations.

In fact, Xiamen happened to be where Xi went to work as deputy mayor in 1985 at the age of 32. Now, under Xi's initiative, an innovation base for BRICS partnership on the new industrial revolution has taken root there.

Over the years, with profound changes reshaping the world to a degree rarely seen in history, the Chinese president has unwaveringly championed openness and cooperation.

"Under the new circumstances, it is all the more important for BRICS countries to pursue development with open doors and boost cooperation with open arms," Xi said at the 14th BRICS Summit in 2022.

A year later, more than 60 countries gathered in Johannesburg for the 15th BRICS Summit. The gathering was "not an exercise of asking countries to take sides, nor an exercise of creating bloc confrontation", Xi said. Rather, it was "an endeavor to expand the architecture of peace and development," he noted.

Other than the countries that

became new full members on Jan 1, 2024, more than 30 nations have also formally applied to join BRICS, while many other developing countries are seeking deeper cooperation with the group.

"There is a reason why these countries choose to join BRICS," said Mekhri Aliev, a board director of the BRICS innovation base in Xiamen. "Because they see future, they see potential and opportunities within BRICS."

Bigger voice

Three months after its expansion decision, BRICS convened an extraordinary joint summit on the Gaza situation with leaders of invited members, as well as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. That was a first-of-its-kind meeting for the group. The meeting, as Xi said, marked "a good start" for greater BRICS cooperation following its enlargement.

Commenting on the joint summit, Al Jazeera said that leading countries of the Global South were looking for "a greater say in a global order dominated by the West".

Steven Gruz, an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs, said, "It does reflect on the growing assertiveness and confidence of the BRICS grouping, not waiting for the West."

BRICS is an important force in shaping the international landscape. Advancing a more just and equitable

international order has been a consistent theme in Xi's remarks on BRICS cooperation.

Effective coordination between BRICS members and other Global South countries is "adding more bricks to the global governance architecture," said Wang, the Chinese expert at Beijing Normal University.

The New Development Bank exemplifies this effort.

President Xi said, "The establishment of the bank serves as a beneficial supplement and improvement to the existing financial system, which can encourage deeper reflection and more active reforms in the global financial system."

During a meeting in Beijing in 2023 with Dilma Rousseff, former Brazilian president and current New Development Bank chief, Xi called on the bank to help with the modernization of more developing countries.

Rousseff shares Xi's vision. "It is a vision that we don't want BRICS to speak just for a few countries. What we want is for most countries to be part of BRICS," she told Xinhua News Agency.

As Xi has observed, strengthening global governance is the right choice if the international community intends to share development opportunities and tackle global challenges.

Jeff D. Opydyke, a global investment expert, has said, "Economically, non-Western nations — with BRICS at the vanguard — are pushing the globe into a new reality: an emerging economic, social and monetary status quo that is upending what the world has accepted as normal for nearly eight decades."

XINHUA

NDB positioned to drive growth of member states

Bank chief outlines measures taken to address pressing issues and ensure stable development

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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The New Development Bank will make greater efforts to advance economic growth in emerging economies and help address pressing issues such as climate change as it welcomes more potential members, said Dilma Rousseff, the NDB's president.

To help emerging countries ensure stable development and avoid crises, the NDB will facilitate the building of infrastructure in areas such as logistics, education, digital services and healthcare, Rousseff had said during an interview in September after she received China's Friendship Medal, the highest honor China offers foreigners.

The NDB has already stepped up efforts to finance infrastructure projects in member countries. It has cumulatively approved loans of \$35 billion for 105 projects, with the major ones being the Mumbai Urban Transport Project-III in

India, the Serra da Palmeira Wind Power Project in Brazil, and the Jiangxi Urban and Rural Cold Chain Logistics Project in China, according to a Xinhua News Agency report.

At the end of August, the NDB announced a \$280 million loan agreement with Transnet, South Africa's leading freight transport and logistics company, to support the modernization and improvement of the country's freight rail sector.

During a meeting of the bank's board of directors in late August, a \$1-billion loan was approved for financing South Africa's water and sanitation infrastructure development. Another \$150 million loan was approved to China's Bank of Communications Financial Leasing for the acquisition of at least three liquefied natural gas carriers.

In January, the NDB inked three loan agreements with India to boost the country's transportation, water and sanitation infrastructure in designated areas. The combined value of the loans is about \$700 million.

As Rousseff pointed out, developing countries have limited capacity to address climate change. Further development and use of more renewable energy sources was needed, she said. As China is already a world leader in the electric vehicle segment, she hoped the nation would make more progress in energy storage and stable renewable energy supply.

According to the NDB's strategy between 2022 and 2026, climate change mitigation will be a focus area, as the majority 40 percent of the bank's \$30 billion financing to be provided by 2026 has been reserved for green goals.

After issuing a 6-billion yuan (\$840 million) five-year panda bond — yuan-denominated bonds issued by overseas institutions in the Chinese onshore market — at the beginning of the year, in July the NDB issued an 8-billion yuan three-year panda bond. The bonds are part of the bank's efforts to finance infrastructure and sustainable development in member states while addressing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Initiated by Brazil, Russia, India,

China and South Africa in 2014 with the purpose of mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging markets and developing countries, the NDB formally began operations in July 2015, with its headquarters in Shanghai.

In 2021, the NDB began expanding its membership and admitted Bangladesh, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay as new member countries.

"The partnership within the NDB does not sit on the development goals of respective members but rather represents the vision of member countries and better connects them," she said, adding that the NDB welcomes other countries.

A model for the future

According to Rousseff, China's development trajectory can serve as a good reference for the Global South. The nation's experiences show that economic, infrastructure and technological development can overcome barriers, sanctions and obstacles, she said.

Applauding China's achievements in the fields of socioeconomic and cultural development over the past 75 years, Rousseff said that it is now taking the lead in innovation, helping to advance globalization and reform. The country's stress on development of new quality productive forces has shown its dedica-

tion to scientific and technological development.

"I feel like that there is no one single moment that I can have a full picture of China, as it is always developing, taking on a new look. The ever ongoing reform and opening-up has been refreshing China's image," she said.

The stronger ties between China and Brazil are another good example, showing that partnership among the Global South countries can help facilitate economic growth and improve people's well-being, she said.

Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China and Brazil have strengthened their cooperation in the areas of trade and technology. At the same time, Brazil has served as China's largest food supplier over the past few years, playing an important role in China's food security, said Rousseff.

Meanwhile, Chinese companies' presence in Brazil is of great importance, facilitating Brazil's reindustrialization, she said.

As Rousseff further explained, there are several highlights in China's investments in Brazil. These include the China National Offshore Oil Corporation's concession contracts with Petrobras' leading oil and gas company Petrobras for oil exploration in the Pelotas Basin in southern Brazil.

Also, the less-developed areas in Brazil have benefited from China's investment in power and overall energy supply, and high-voltage direct transmission lines built by China have helped address Brazil's energy shortage, she said.

Since 2009, China has been Brazil's largest trading partner and a major source of investment, while Brazil has been China's largest trading partner in Latin America. Trade volume between China and Brazil reached \$181.53 billion in 2023.



Dilma Rousseff



Meeting kicks off

People walk below banners announcing the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, on Monday. The event that began on Tuesday, runs through Thursday.

ANATOLY MEDVED / PHOTOHOST AGENCY
BRICS-RUSSIA2024.RU



XI'S VISIT



Brazil Russia India China South Africa Saudi Arabia Egypt UAE Iran Ethiopia

STRENGTHENING COOPERATION FOR A BETTER WORLD

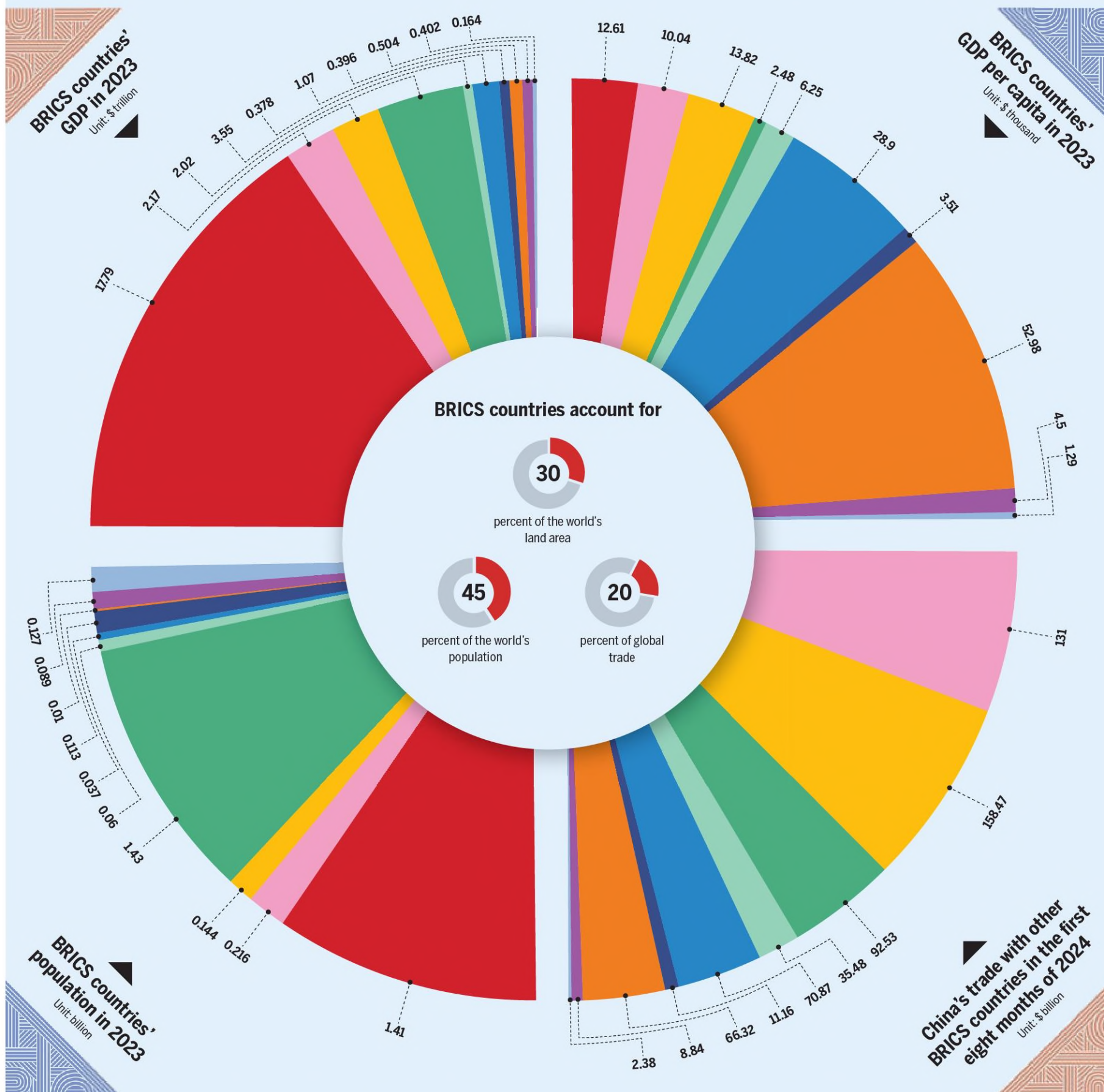
A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRICS

- ▶ In 2001, the term BRIC, an acronym for the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China, was coined.
- ▶ In 2006, the foreign ministers of the four countries met for the first time, marking the beginning of BRIC cooperation.
- ▶ In 2011, BRIC became BRICS with South Africa joining the grouping.
- ▶ In 2024, BRICS had its second membership expansion.

CHINA HAS HOSTED THREE BRICS SUMMITS

- ▶ The 3rd summit in Sanya, Hainan province, in April 2011, under the theme "Broad Vision, Shared Prosperity"
- ▶ The 9th summit in Xiamen, Fujian province, in September 2017, under the theme "BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future"
- ▶ The 14th summit via video link in June 2022, under the theme "Foster High-quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development"

China Brazil Russia India South Africa Saudi Arabia Egypt United Arab Emirates Iran Ethiopia



Sources: the World Bank, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China's General Administration of Customs, People's Daily

TEXT BY WANG QINGYUN, GRAPHICS BY MUKESH MOHANAN / CHINA DAILY



XI'S VISIT



China and the World Roundtable | BRICS Summit

Editor's note: As BRICS is becoming more appealing to the Global South, it is perceived as a leading voice of emerging markets and developing countries. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Liu Chen

China devoted to South-South cooperation

Across the world, an increasing number of people recognize that the BRICS countries can represent the Global South and articulate their views on the international stage. They also acknowledge that China's development experience is exemplary and instructive for other nations in the Global South.

In 1978, representatives of 138 states adopted by consensus a "Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries" at the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in Buenos Aires, giving it the name Buenos Aires Plan of Action and urging all governments and elements of the UN system to implement its recommendations.

From its origin, the South-South cooperation agenda has been different from the traditional North-South cooperation agenda, because its goal is to leave no one behind and strengthen the bond among developing countries. However, South-South cooperation evolved in the context of the Cold War till the early 1990s.

The Latin American debt crisis in the 1980s, the Asian financial crisis in 1997-98 and the global financial crisis in 2008 affected major global economic powers. Amid all the global financial turmoil, South-South cooperation stood out as a true apt example of cooperation.

China acknowledges and values the role of South-South cooperation. From the 1950s, China-Africa relations have been framed by the tumultuous liberation struggles in Africa, the Cold War and the African-Asian solidarity sanctified at the Bandung Conference in 1955 that brought together 29 Asian and African countries. Since then, China-Africa cooperation has grown from strength to strength.

China-Africa cooperation began in earnest when construction on the Tanzania-Zambia Railway started in 1970. In the era of economic globalization, beginning in the 1990s, China has been the pioneer of cooperation among developing countries. China held the first ministerial conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, helped establish the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001, and organized the first FOCAC Summit in 2006 which resulted in China pledging to double the aid to Africa in the next three years.

The China-Africa community has welcomed the FOCAC's emphasis on people-to-people ties and educational exchanges, while reaffirming the significance of building a fairer and just world.

On South-South cooperation platforms, China and other developing countries have worked together in fields ranging from infrastructure construction and energy to science, education, culture and the environment, while making joint efforts to alleviate poverty. These projects have changed the lives and destiny of many people.

China's association with the Global South



The author is a professor of international development and international communication at the Beijing Foreign Studies University and the author of *The Chinese Story in Global Order*.

is based on two principles — mutual benefit and equity — which are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture.

South-South cooperation is also about developing countries sharing their successful development experiences with

each other, and not blindly following in other countries' footsteps. Accordingly, while advancing Chinese modernization, Beijing refuses to stay insensitive to the changing times.

Pursuing modernization is the right of every developing country and important to strengthen South-South cooperation. But to strengthen cooperation, countries of the Global South need to assist each other. Strong South-South partnerships respond to the challenges faced by developing countries.

South-South cooperation has expanded rapidly in scale and extent thanks to open international trade, which is a result of globalization. However, globalization has changed the way we share the

world with fellow humans. By adopting a global outlook, we can become more aware of our connections to people in other societies.

We are moving toward an uncertain future. In such a situation, South-South cooperation can help the world find solutions to the global challenges and reduce the uncertainties facing the world. Yet the efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation are not aimed at denying the necessity or importance of North-South cooperation, because only by working together can we build a better world.

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



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Hisham Abubakr Metwally

BRICS creates new opportunities for Africa

At the ongoing BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, the leaders of BRICS member states are focusing on strengthening strategic partnerships and enhancing the grouping's role in international affairs.

BRICS has a multi-tiered framework of pragmatic cooperation in fields such as economy and trade, finance, technology, agriculture, culture, education, health, and so on. It has become a constructive force in promoting global economic growth, enhancing global governance, and advancing the democratization of international relations.

The grouping also has to strengthen the roles of its member states in the global monetary and financial system, deepen interbank cooperation, facilitate the transformation of the global settlement system and expand the use of national currencies of BRICS member states to settle payments.

The BRICS summit is becoming increasingly important for the countries of the Global South, because the grouping is no longer just a platform for economic cooperation, but has become an effective and important means for the Global South to build a safer and fairer world.



The author is a researcher in economics at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Trade and Industry.

Some powers and their allies have monopolized the control of international organizations and institutions that were established after the end of World War II to realize global stability and development for all. But the whole world has realized that those countries do not abide by international or humanitarian law, or adhere to the United Nations Charter or UN agencies' rules.

By controlling their wealth and movement of their trade, and by printing copious amounts of monetary dominance, some developed powers have also drowned the countries of the Global South in debt for decades without giving them the opportunity — by triggering wars and political upheaval — to develop their economies.

According to the World Bank Group's estimates, Africa's total external debt

reached \$1.15 trillion in 2023, compared with \$1.12 trillion in 2022, with some estimates suggesting the debt could reach \$2 trillion by the end of this year.

This means Africa's debt challenge will continue in the near future, especially because global interest rates have reached the highest level in 40 years. Also, African countries have suffered due to declining export revenues since commodity prices began falling in 2015, with the COVID-19 pandemic further worsening the situation.

The fall in commodity prices has reduced the foreign exchange earnings of the Global South countries, which need them to service their loans. Many countries have taken out new loans to pay off old debts, putting them in a debt spiral that prevents them from investing in infrastructure, healthcare systems and education. In fact, the World Bank said last year that 22 countries were at risk of "over-indebtedness". African countries alone will have to pay \$163 billion in debt service in 2024, a sharp increase from \$61 billion in 2010.

About 80 percent of these debts are to international institutions including the World Bank and the IMF. China, too, has

given loans to the African countries to boost their infrastructure development. But China accounts for only about 11 percent of African countries' total loans, which fortunately are all investment projects that promote Africa's economic growth.

As for the five countries that formally participated in BRICS cooperation on Jan 1, they have outstanding financial capability and development potential. For example, the United Arab Emirates has the capability and means to finance and invest in major projects, and Egypt is a large country occupying a strategic location with expertise in the field of agriculture and communications.

BRICS now accounts for 37 percent of global GDP, 46 percent of the world population, about 40 percent of global oil production, and 25 percent of global exports. By becoming BRICS members or partnering BRICS, African countries can create a lot of opportunities for themselves and thus further boost the growth of their economies despite the many challenges.

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

Swaran Singh

Two largest developing nations seeking common good

With all the 10 BRICS member states (including five new members) meeting in Kazan, Russia, for the annual leaders' meeting from Tuesday to Thursday, the original five members of the grouping have catapulted onto varying trajectories that need urgent and innovative planning.

Other than their immediate priorities, the BRICS members must also address the deepening structural challenges that have emerged due to their ever-expanding agenda and asymmetries, and aspirant countries seeking to join, or at least align with, BRICS, so as to herald a new global financial order.

In the BRICS' ongoing tryst with global governance reform, it is important to understand how and why the onus lies primarily on Beijing and New Delhi.

To begin with, by the end of last year China's GDP had increased to about \$18 trillion, which is higher than the cumulative GDP of the other nine BRICS member states. All other BRICS members have China as their largest trading partner and, except India and Brazil, all are part of China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

While for Brazil, China is the destination of nearly one-third of its global exports, for India, the imports from China exceed its imports from its next four largest trade partners combined. India, with nearly annual 7 percent economic growth and the world's largest youth population, seems set to become the world's third-largest economy by 2030, next only to the United States and China.

As the two leading growth engines of BRICS Plus, China and India have to shoulder the responsibility of steering BRICS' redemption as it begins to work with new members and co-opt several other partners from the list of more than 30 applicants to join the grouping.

Energy is BRICS' other advantage. As a driver of economic growth, this could make BRICS Plus the game changer and give China and India added leverage. With Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joining Russia in BRICS, the group accounts for about 40 percent of global oil exports. Incidentally, China and India happen to be the world's largest and third-largest oil-importing countries.

Also, BRICS' ongoing campaign to improve the global payment system has resulted in a noticeable increase in intra-BRICS trading in local currencies.

Collectively, the GDP of the BRICS members now accounts for more than 37 percent of the global total and is higher than that of the G7 countries. And yet the G7 countries continue to control leading global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Though the G7 member states are aware of BRICS' expanding economic heft — with China being as world's largest lender nation since 2017 — they remain frustratingly piecemeal in addressing these problems.

China and India have reached a plan to resolve the Sino-Indian border issue.

Besides, the Russia-India-China coordination will facilitate building consensus at the BRICS Summit which, in turn, can help India and China slowly revive their pre-2020 bonhomie when the leaders of the two countries also held "informal summits".

In his first five years in office, the Indian prime minister met with the Chinese leader more than a dozen times and visited China five times — more than the cumulative visits of all the preceding Indian prime ministers. And the recent high-level meetings and positive language from both sides raise hopes that India-China ties will return to normal.

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



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CHINA



A scene from the music video *Disco Dancing Version of Your Shining Knight*, featuring young Chinese musicians playing traditional Chinese musical instruments. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

MUSIC: ANCIENT ODE TO MODERN TUNES

From page 1

The original version of *Your Shining Knight* revisited the glitter-ball days of disco. But this new take combines disco beats with the sound of something far older — ancient Chinese melodies.

The musicians pluck their strings and beat their drums, and perform in sync with AI-generated characters based on historical Chinese relics, such as a figurine of a dancer, and a musician from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220).

The resulting music video released to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival on Sept 17, captured the imagination of the public, amassing over 15 million views across social media platforms.

The use of ancient Chinese instruments to perform a pop song struck a chord, not only for its catchy beat but for how it masterfully intertwined the old and the modern.

Crazy Folk music

These musicians are part of a larger movement sweeping China that celebrates the rising popularity of *guofeng* music — a Chinese style that uses elements from traditional culture.

As part of a video series called *Crazy Folk*, participating artists have released over 300 music videos since October 2020, featuring more than 200 Chinese musicians who give fresh life to pop songs through the distinctive sound of traditional Chinese instruments.

Among popular covers are songs like Jay Chou's *Dao Xiang* (Fragrant Rice), Liu Shuang's *Mohe Ballroom*, and Japanese singer Yui Takahashi's *The Wind Rises*, making the old music instruments more relatable to younger audiences.

These videos have traveled beyond Chinese music fans to reach international audiences via YouTube and other media platforms. With performances filmed against the stunning backdrops of cities such as Changsha, Hunan province, Luoyang, Henan province and Xiamen, Fujian province, the *Crazy Folk* series not only showcases China's rich musical traditions, but also highlights the breathtaking beauty of the country's landscapes and historic sites.

"These videos still give me goose bumps!" a viewer from Nepal, Banaz Gurung, commented on YouTube, reflecting the emotional impact of this innovative project.

Behind *Crazy Folk* is a talented group of young musicians in their late 20s and early 30s, all classically trained at prestigious music conservatories.

Li Haoyan, one of the project's core team members, said the appeal of traditional Chinese music lies not only in its distinctive sound, but also in the aesthetic beauty of the instruments themselves.

"Traditional Chinese music is incredibly expressive," said Li. "The instruments evoke powerful emotions, and visually, they are

captivating to modern audiences."

Young people in China are increasingly drawn to their cultural heritage, seeking to reconnect with traditional values in a world being rapidly shaped by globalization, she added.

Connecting with heritage

The team's mission is not just to preserve these ancient sounds but to breathe new life into them through technology. By using artificial intelligence and storytelling, they are creating new ways to present traditional music and incorporating history, museum artifacts, and cultural relics into their performances.

For Xue Yiyang, a 26-year-old *erhu* player from Chengdu, Sichuan province, performing traditional music in a modern context feels both nostalgic and fresh. "I grew up playing the *erhu*, learning the instrument from my grandmother, who was passionate about traditional Chinese music," Xue recalled.

The *erhu*, often described as China's answer to the violin, is known for its hauntingly beautiful tone and is capable of expressing a wide range of emotions.

"I used to play it in the typical, softer style," Xue said, "but *Crazy Folk* opened my eyes to a whole new way of performing. We're taking songs that people already love and giving them a new twist."

Xue explained how playing a well-known pop song on an ancient instrument like the *guqin* or *pipa* injects new life into the piece. "It's like rediscovering something familiar in a completely new way," she said.

"These instruments are timeless. Our goal isn't just to preserve tradition but to show how these instruments, some over 1,000 years old, can still move and inspire audiences today — especially younger generations who may never have paid attention to them before."

This growing interest among China's youth is part of a broader cultural movement. Many young Chinese are consciously reconnecting with their heritage, seeing traditional music as a way to explore their iden-



A scene from *Disco Dancing Version of Your Shining Knight*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Our goal isn't just to preserve tradition but to show how these instruments, some over 1,000 years old, can still move and inspire audiences today — especially younger generations who may never have paid attention to them before."

Xue Yiyang, *erhu* player

tity in an era of rapid change.

Central to this resurgence is the *guofeng* (national style) movement, which celebrates Chinese aesthetics in fashion, music, and art. The rise of *guofeng* music, in particular, is a testament to the blending of ancient melodies with modern production techniques, combining classical poetry, traditional instruments, and contemporary themes. This fusion has fostered a greater appreciation for traditional Chinese art forms, especially among younger audiences.

Social media platforms like Douyin and Bilibili have played a pivotal role in the movement's expansion. Viral videos of traditional Chinese instruments, modern pop covers, and collaborations between classical and contemporary artists have brought these ancient sounds to the forefront. This digital exposure has made traditional music more accessible, and more importantly, relevant to today's youth.

Veteran virtuoso

One of the most popular folk musicians among young users of Bilibili is the gray-haired *pipa* player Fang Jinlong.

Aged in his early 60s, Fang became a viral star after he gave a 12-minute performance at the New Year's Eve concert on Dec 31, 2019, which was livestreamed. The performance, *Rhythm World*, featured Fang performing with a 100-member orchestra. He played an array of traditional musical instruments from China, India, Italy, and Japan, and even performed a solo by tapping on his own face. To appeal to young fans, he incorporated elements from Chinese martial arts culture, American folk music and Japanese anime.

Since that performance, Fang has been sharing videos showcasing the versatility of ancient Chinese musical instruments by working with players of various styles, from classical musicians to rock stars.

"Never doubt the charm of traditional Chinese music. All you need to do is to watch

and listen," said Fang, who has great confidence in the appeal of these old instruments.

"Though the instruments are very old, they can be fun and contemporary. What I need to do is to experiment and let the music reach the young people."

Other art forms based in tradition, such as classic Chinese dance and *hanfu*, are also rising in popularity with young people.

"This interest is partly driven by a desire to reconnect with traditional values and aesthetics in a rapidly modernizing and globalized world. For them, traditional Chinese music, with its deep historical roots, symbolizes a rich cultural legacy that offers a sense of identity and belonging," Fang said.

Another rising star in the *guofeng* movement is Little Green Onion, a group of musicians led by songwriter Zhou Mingcong.

With their hybrid of pop and traditional music, they have captivated audiences with songs like *Bi Shang Guan*, or *Reflections on the Walls*, which has been viewed over 100 million times since its release in 2019. Inspired by the Mogao Caves mural paintings in Dunhuang, Gansu province, Zhou's music evokes memories of China's distant past while remaining contemporary.

This year, the song was adapted and re-performed on social media platforms over 300,000 times, making it a hit again. Veteran vocalist Gong Linna also did a version of the song.

Cultural DNA

Zhou, who studied at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, describes his work as a blend of pop and Peking Opera. His first release, *Kuang Lang Sheng*, explored themes of loneliness and dreams through the lens of traditional Chinese opera and delighted listeners across China.

"Chinese music and operas have a unique charm," said Zhou. "It's like cultural DNA in our blood. The moment we hear traditional music, we understand it on a deep, emotional level. It connects us to something ancient yet profoundly present."

Zhou pointed out that *guofeng*'s influence is not just confined to music. The style is increasingly appearing in video games, notably *Black Myth: Wukong*, a hit action game based on the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*.

The game's soundtrack blends traditional Chinese instruments with modern orchestral music, creating a cinematic experience that resonates with fans of both ancient culture and modern gaming.

The ability to blend old and new is what makes *guofeng* music so relevant today, Zhou said. In a world where cultural pride is rising alongside technological advances, traditional Chinese music has found its place once again. This renaissance is not about nostalgia, but about evolution — taking the best of the past and fusing it with the possibilities of the future, he added.



Top left: Members of Little Green Onion pose after a show on June 19 at Beijing's Mao Livehouse. Top right: Singer Fu Hongyu, a member of Little Green Onion performs during the same show on June 19. Above: An impromptu concert takes place in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Aug 2, 2023, gathering together traditional Chinese musicians and classical musicians. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CHINA

Country to launch 14th manned space flight

By ZHAO LEI
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The Shenzhou XIX spacecraft, China's next manned mission, is scheduled to be launched in the coming days to transport three astronauts to the Tiangong space station, according to plans announced by the China Manned Space Agency.

The mission crew's spacecraft and its carrier, a Long March 2F rocket, were moved to the service tower on Tuesday afternoon at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert, the agency said in a brief news release, adding that the launch equipment at the spaceport "is in good condition".

The release noted that the spacecraft and rocket will undergo final functional checks over the next several days. It said the launch will take place in due course.

The Shenzhou XIX crew will carry out China's 14th manned spaceflight and will become the eighth group of inhabitants of the Tiangong.

The crew members, whose names have yet to be disclosed, will take over the massive orbital outpost from their peers — mission commander Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu and crew members Lieutenant Colonel Li Guangsu and Lieutenant Colonel Li Cong — who arrived on April 26 with the Shenzhou XVIII mission. By the end of October, Ye's team will have been in orbit for six months.

Wang Yanan, chief editor of Aerospace Magazine, said the Shenzhou XIX astronauts will likely be tasked with conducting scientific experiments and technological tests that will be more sophisticated and challenging than those performed by their peers in previous missions.

"In the first two years since the



The Shenzhou XIX crew spacecraft and its carrier, a Long March 2F rocket, are moved to the service tower at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on Tuesday. LI DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tiangong started formal operation, astronauts would not be given very complex science and technology assignments because their primary tasks were to explore living and work patterns that most fit them and to check whether the massive station could function well," he said.

"Now, as Chinese astronauts have

gotten used to living inside the station and well understand its long-term orbital flight pattern, the newcomers will be given more challenging tasks, namely to conduct difficult science and technology operations," he said.

Completed in late 2022, Tiangong is one of the largest and most com-

plex structures ever established in space by humankind.

Orbiting Earth at a distance of about 400 kilometers, the Chinese station has three permanent parts — a core module and two science capsules — and is regularly connected to several visiting crew and cargo spaceships.

More elderly living alone, survey says

Authorities are striving to strengthen care for the aging as trend deepens

By WANG XIAOYU
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The number of elderly people living alone in China has increased significantly since 2010 as they tend to have fewer children, highlighting the significance of strengthening the nation's elder care system, according to the results of a survey released recently.

The survey considers an individual elderly once he or she reaches the age of 60.

Elderly empty nesters — those who live by themselves or live with their spouses only — accounted for 59.7 percent of all the elderly people in China in 2021, up 10.4 percentage points from 2010, according to the fifth sample survey on the living conditions of urban and rural senior residents.

About three-fourths of empty nesters lived with their spouses. The proportion of rural empty nesters was slightly higher than that of their urban counterparts, standing at nearly 62 percent, the survey said.

The survey was jointly conducted in 2021 by six government departments and elder care industry associations, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the National Health Commission. The results were made public recently.

It also shows that the average number of children that each senior had in 2021 was 2.6, down by 0.6 from 2010. Rural elderly had slightly more children on average at 2.9, compared with 2.3 for urban senior residents.

"In various aspects of daily life, middle-old (70 to 79 years old) and very-old (80 and above) empty nesters tend to confront greater risks, so the growing size of this population has posed higher demands for developing at-home and community-based elder care services," said the China National Aging Committee, which was involved in the survey, in a statement explaining the results.

The committee added that the trend of having fewer children will diminish families' ability to care for seniors, thus requiring accelerated efforts to improve supportive policies for home-based and public elder care.

China is coping with a rapidly aging population. Official data

shows that the number of people age 60 and older was almost 297 million last year, comprising 21.1 percent of the total population. The proportion of elderly is expected to exceed 30 percent of the nation's population by 2035.

The deepening aging trend has prompted authorities to step up development of home-based and community elderly care homes, strengthen the integration of medical and elder care services and encourage the private sector to make investments in the elder care industry.

Survey results show that the number of elderly who have become more accepting of care provided by elder care institutions has increased by 3.3 percentage points since 2015.

"Their demands tend to be more varied over time, and their top five demands are at-home medical services, meal assistance, cultural and entertainment activities, health education and at-home cleaning services," the survey said.

Li Yongxin, an official at the Ministry of Civil Affairs, said during a news conference on Monday that the number of elder care facilities in China had increased to around 410,000 by June, double the figure seen in 2019. The majority of them are community-based.

To address the prominent healthcare demands of the rural elderly, Li said that efforts are being made to upgrade rural elder care homes into regional eldercare centers. Public venues in the countryside that sit idle will be the first considered for conversion into care facilities or canteens for seniors.

According to the survey, more than 56 percent of the elderly population in 2021 consisted of the younger group, from 60 to 69 years old, which was on par with the level seen in 2010.

"Young elderly represent important and valuable human resources that have great potential," said the committee, adding that the age structure of China's elderly population in China will continue to remain relatively young.

At the same time, the proportion of seniors with a senior high school diploma or degree from a higher education institute also increased from 2010 to 2021.

Beijing officials crack down on illegal store closures

By HUANG ZHILING
and PENG CHAO

Authorities in Beijing have launched the country's first crackdown on illegal store closures that exploit and violate consumers' rights, and have placed two enterprises, three intermediary agencies and two people under investigation, officials said on Tuesday.

The cases have resulted in fines and confiscations totaling 655,800 yuan (\$92,100), according to the Beijing Administration for Market Regulation and the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau.

Since the start of this year, the practice of hiring so-called "professional store closers", who help prepaid service providers close their businesses and evade debts, has

gained national attention. These operators assist unprofitable businesses by changing their legal representatives, transferring assets and avoiding liability to consumers, for which they receive a commission.

Li Lingsong, an official responsible for consumer rights protection at the Beijing market regulator, said these closers often run promotions before shutting down the businesses in order to exploit prepayments from customers.

The illegal closures also leave employees unpaid and consumers without refunds, disrupting economic order. Authorities targeted the entire chain of these operations during their probe, from the businesses themselves to the closers and intermediary agencies involved.

Investigations uncovered two cas-

es of unprofessional closings involving two art training institutions, Art Umbrella and Muyi Art.

In the first case, three intermediary agencies provided services to Art Umbrella, recruiting a debt bearer, surnamed Jia, as the nominal legal representative. The agencies submitted falsified registration documents and concealed important facts. Art Umbrella was fined 100,000 yuan, while the agencies were fined and had their illegal gains — ranging from 700 yuan to 18,800 yuan — confiscated.

In the second case, a person surnamed Han provided similar services to Muyi Art, recruiting a debt bearer, surnamed Zhang, as its nominal legal representative and shareholder. Muyi Art was fined 180,000 yuan, while Han was fined 50,000

yuan and Zhang 10,000 yuan. Authorities also confiscated illegal gains from both of them.

As part of the penalties, the market regulator revoked false registration documents for both institutions and banned nine people from reapplying for business registration within three years.

Since implementing the Single-Purpose Prepaid Card Management Regulation in June 2022, Beijing has heightened its supervision of prepaid cards, covering 28 fields in 14 sectors. The law requires businesses to notify consumers in advance through various channels if they cannot honor prepaid cards due to closure or relocation.

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Micro dramas boom as many turn to short videos

By WANG QIAN in Beijing
and ZHU XINGXIN in Linfen, Shanxi

Chinese creatives foresee huge potential in micro dramas, the new trend in the country's entertainment industry, experts said at an event in Linfen, Shanxi province, on Monday.

"Through the event held in partnership with CCTV.com, the online media outlet affiliated to China Media Group, we want to build Linfen into a national platform for the micro drama industry," Yan Jianguo, director of the Linfen publicity department, said in his speech at the Light and Shadows of Linfen: China's Premium Micro Short Drama Night.

Micro dramas are low-budget productions mostly shot in vertical format, with each episode a few minutes long, that are shown on short-video streaming platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou. In this genre, viewers can enjoy dramatic plot twists and fast-paced narratives that revolve around revenge or betrayal.

According to statistics from the China Internet Network Information Center, the total number of internet users in the country had reached 1.1 billion by June, with 52.4 percent of them viewing micro dramas.

A recent industrial report by mar-

ket consultancy iiMedia Research, the market value of the country's micro dramas last year was nearly 37.4 billion yuan (\$5.25 billion), a year-on-year increase of about 268 percent. It is expected to exceed 50 billion yuan this year and surpass 100 billion yuan in 2027.

"Since 2022, micro dramas, with their fast pace and short duration, have been increasingly enjoyed by more users on Douyin, with more than 400 such dramas garnering over 1 billion views as of early this year," said Lang Fengwei, deputy editor-in-chief of Douyin, adding that the platform has launched a program in micro-drama creation and promotion to explore a new market model.

Wang Xingyi, vice-president of short-video app Kuaishou, said micro dramas have not only enriched people's cultural lives, but have also injected vitality into the entertainment sector. Under the app's micro-drama program, there have been nearly 1,000 such series produced as of early this year.

Micro dramas are not only popular in China, but are also spreading to the overseas market. According to data provider Sensor Tower, ReelShort, a micro-drama app created by Chinese publishing company



The crew of a micro drama interact with the audience during an event in Linfen, Shanxi province, on Monday. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

COL Group, landed on the eighth spot on the "Top Free" chart and ninth on the free entertainment chart in the Google Play Store.

To meet the market demand, scriptwriters, authors and actors have expressed their anticipation in the new genre.

"When the TV adaptation of my novel *A Lifelong Journey* aired on China Central Television, I watched it every night alongside viewers across the country," said author Liang Xiaosheng.

"Now I wonder whether it can be

adapted into a micro drama. I look forward to possibly experiencing that with audiences again," he added.

In August, Tencent and the Linfen government built a premium micro-drama base to attract key players to shoot their dramas.

Meanwhile, the local government has issued a policy to support the industry development with a 50-million-yuan fund established to boost production and foster talent.

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High tides flood homes, vehicles in coastal cities

By YAN DONGJIE
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Coastal cities such as Panjin and Yingkou in Liaoning province and Tangshan in Hebei province were deluged by high tides, flooding homes and vehicles in the areas on Monday.

No deaths or injuries have been reported, and floodwaters soon began gradually receding, according to media reports on Tuesday.

No similar abnormal occurrences were reported in China or in other global maritime regions during the same period, the Ministry of Natural Resources said.

From Sunday evening to Monday afternoon, tide gauge stations in the northern parts of the Bohai Sea and Yellow Sea saw a rise in water levels ranging from 80 to 160 centimeters in the absence of any significant weather systems, the ministry said.

Experts attribute this unusual water influx primarily to the backflow of storm surges from the open sea in addition to astronomical high tides.

Strong storm surges occurred along Bohai Bay and the coast of the Shandong Peninsula from Friday to Saturday. Then, from Saturday aft-

ernoon to Sunday, a widespread and sustained decrease in water levels exceeding 100 centimeters was observed along the Bohai coast, leading to the accumulation of a large amount of seawater offshore.

The accumulated seawater surged back ashore from Sunday night to Monday morning, coinciding with local astronomical high tides, resulting in elevated water levels along the coasts of Liaoning, Hebei and Tianjin.

"I have lived on this street for over 40 years and have never seen such a high tide," Zhang Xinghua, a fisherman in Panjin, told Xinhua News Agency.

"The water came in quickly today and receded quickly as well," said a woman in Panjin surnamed Liu.

Zhou Guanbo, a senior engineer at the China Meteorological Administration, told CCTV that astronomical tides typically occur during the full moon and new moon periods in the lunar calendar, as the gravitational forces of the sun and moon are strongest during these times, causing sea levels to rise.

The unusual occurrence of this coastal inundation coincided with the full moon in the ninth month of the lunar calendar.

CHINA

'AI police' improve rate of solving crime

Digital analysis boosts effectiveness of public security operations in Kunshan

By GUO JUN in Nanjing and ZHANG XIAOMIN

"AI police" have significantly enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of public security operations in detecting, preventing and solving crimes in Kunshan in Suzhou city, Jiangsu province.

In many cases, the Kunshan Public Security Bureau's "Kunpeng Team" or "AI Team" has played a pivotal role.

"In the past, some activities were challenging to detect and gather evidence about," said Xu Chenbo, an officer from the team. "However, the AI police were able to promptly identify and recognize suspicious activities, effectively issued warnings and swiftly assisted in many aspects."

To tackle the challenges posed by managing a region with a population exceeding 3 million, including over 1.8 million migrants, local police selected 35 versatile officers to establish a high-quality innovation center in May, putting the dynamic and innovative Kunpeng Team into operation.

Relying on a decade's worth of accumulated data, the AI Team introduced artificial intelligence and algorithms to develop over 220 intelligent models focused on combating crime, maintaining public security and enhancing community services, effectively functioning as a group of AI police.

He Yongliang, deputy captain of the criminal investigation brigade at the Kunshan Public Security Bureau, highlighted the remarkable

“The integration of various investigative experiences into the AI police has significantly enhanced the efficiency of police operations.”

He Yongliang, deputy captain of the criminal investigation brigade at the Kunshan Public Security Bureau

able role of the AI police in combating telecommunications fraud.

According to He, AI police have assisted in resolving 609 cases of telecommunications fraud, recovering losses amounting to 32.4 million yuan (\$4.54 million) and increasing the recovery rate by 62 percent in recent months.

With robust support from the Suzhou Public Security Bureau's criminal investigation detachment, the AI police now conduct comprehensive analysis of telecommunications fraud, operating around the clock, resulting in a more than fivefold increase in efficiency, he said.

Earlier this year, a local police station received a report of telecommunications fraud involving a victim swindled out of 980,000 yuan. The victim's statement was transmitted to the AI Team analysis center.

Within 10 minutes, the AI police traced the flow of funds, successfully halting the transfer of 500,000 yuan. Eight hours later, they traced 87 related accounts and identified 57 suspects, leading to the capture of nine suspects within three days and the recovery of 200,000 yuan for the victim.

"Previously, such a workload would require a specialized team of five to six police officers working continuously for two weeks to achieve similar results," He said.

"The integration of various investigative experiences into the AI police has significantly enhanced the efficiency of police operations, allowing even inexperienced officers to function as super investigators," he added.

The use of AI has also improved the effectiveness of combating counterfeiting and protecting intellectual property rights.

Zeng Cheng, the head of Kunshan police's high-quality innovation center, said that the integrated approach of investigation and analysis by the AI police, rather than handling cases individually, has not only saved time and effort but also yielded better results by delving deeper into the origins of crimes and conserving police resources.

Shi Weihua, vice-mayor of Kunshan and director of the Kunshan Public Security Bureau, said that the application of the AI police has paved the way for governance improvements, empowering various public security operations with big data and leading to a significant enhancement of capabilities without an increase in the police force.

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From left: An Nianchu paints a mural on a wall at Cha village in Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region. A visitor poses with a mural created by An at the village. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Young artist makes her mark in Xizang

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQIONG in Lhasa

A young artist from Guiyang, Guizhou province, has left an indelible mark on a Tibetan village through her innovative 3D murals.

After graduating in art and design from Guiyang University in 2016, An Nianchu visited the Xizang autonomous region for the first time.

She was deeply attracted by the beautiful scenery of Cha village in the regional capital Lhasa, as well as the kind and warm Tibetan people, and so, started her own creative journey. At first, she painted in places such as guesthouses and restaurants, with her artwork focusing on cultural and humanistic elements related to Tibetan culture.

The inception of her artistic endeavor can be traced back to An's deep-rooted aspiration to use art as a medium to "package" a village.

"I thought that if murals could be painted on Tibetan residential houses in the rural villages to blend harmoniously with the surrounding environment, it would create a beautiful scenic attraction," An said.

Beginning in 2022, alongside her dedicated team, An ushered in a blend of tradition and modernity with her murals that have revitalized the rural landscape and injected a fresh allure into local cultural tourism.

As luck would have it, her path converged with the Beautiful Villages Project spearheaded by the Aid-Xizang project in Lhasa's Dagze district.

She said that Xizang is a magical place, a destination that many people yearn for, and the themes of her creations include Tibetan figures, scenes of Tibetan life, distinctive landscapes, unique wildlife species, medicinal herbs and more, all presented in murals.

Upon commencing the project, An and her collaborators meticulously crafted a sample mural — portraying a young girl tenderly offering Tibetan butter tea — to gauge villagers' reactions at the Cha village.

It resonated profoundly with the locals, setting the stage for what would evolve into a two-month mural project sprawling across

2,000 square meters and on walls of 20 households. "The villagers were very excited when they saw the first sample, and felt that it upgraded their own living conditions so they gladly accepted it," An said.

She said that during the painting process and even after its completion, local residents and tourists would visit specifically to see the artwork. "There were even some famous internet bloggers who came to visit and shared their experiences on social media," she said, adding that it allowed more people to see Cha village.

"Embracing the majestic landscapes and the profound cultural heritage of Xizang, I find inspiration in the warm embrace of the Tibetan people, whose genuine hospitality and cultural richness fueled my creative spirit," she said.

"If there is an opportunity, I hope to create at more villages, allowing more people to experience the diverse and colorful aspects of Xizang."

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In the past 19 years, 20% of their species disappeared or died out due to poaching, retaliatory killings, loss of habitat and climate change.

The global population of the snow leopard is less than 8,000, meaning it's very vulnerable to soon become extinct.

To reverse the tide, WWF is working to help the snow leopard and its habitat conservation in 8 out of 12 range countries.



www.wwfchina.org

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AD

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Yuan-based assets seen more alluring

Official: 'Cross-border capital flows will maintain ... positive trajectory'

By ZHOU LANXU
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Renminbi financial assets are set to attract more foreign investment in the months ahead after foreign holdings of onshore bonds and equities rose amid the country's sharpening policy focus on shoring up asset prices, according to officials and analysts.

"We have the conditions and confidence that China's cross-border capital flows will maintain a stable and positive trajectory in the coming months of the year and beyond," said Jia Ning, head of the Balance of Payments Department of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

SAFE data showed on Tuesday that foreign investment in Chinese bonds saw a continuous and stable influx, amassing over \$80 billion in net increases in the first three quarters.

A "noticeable improvement" in foreign investment in onshore stocks has emerged recently, according to SAFE, without disclosing specific figures.

James Wang, head of China strategy at UBS Investment Bank Research, said that focus from foreign investors on the country has picked up as the latest policy moves appeared to be aimed at lifting asset prices, which would support expectations and consumption via the wealth effect.

"We believe a stabilization in some key economic indicators, particularly nominal retail sales, could see some long-only investors come back to the China (stock) market," Wang said, though a greater level of volatility in the equity market is likely, given the short-term nature of capital inflows so far.

Since late September, Chinese policymakers have launched a series of stimulus measures with a particular emphasis on stabilizing the property market and bolstering the stock market. The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, launched its first policy tools specially aimed at boosting stock market liquidity.

On Monday, the PBOC conducted the first operation of a new swap facility — which enables financial institutions to swap less liquid securities for more liquid ones and pledge them for lending to invest in the capital market — at a size of 50 billion yuan (\$7.02 billion).

Share-buying transactions financed through the facility were made by China International Capital Corp Ltd on Tuesday.

Informed sources said the central bank will continue to conduct the facility operation in batches as necessary and will expand the size of the facility based on the actual situation after the initial 500 billion yuan in quota is used up.

The implementation of a special central bank lending program to buy back shares and boost share holdings with an initial quota of 300 billion yuan also got underway. As of Sunday, 23 listed companies said they had applied for over 10 billion yuan of the loans in total, and more are expected to follow suit.

China's benchmark Shanghai Composite Index closed up 0.54 percent at 3285.87 points on Tuesday, while the onshore renminbi came in at around 7.12 against the greenback as of Tuesday afternoon, weakening by 82 basis points from the previous session.

"Foreign investment in China's capital markets is still in a nascent stage, with holdings of renminbi-denominated assets accounting for 3 percent to 4 percent of the domestic bond and stock markets," said Li Hongyan, deputy head of SAFE.

"There is room for further growth given a multitude of favorable factors," Li said, adding that a package of incremental policies has consolidated China's long-term positive economic momentum.

Total holdings of onshore renminbi bonds by foreign investors have surpassed \$640 billion so far, marking a historic high, with treasury bonds and bonds issued by policy-oriented banks the preferred investment targets, she said.

According to SAFE, the accumulative amount of cross-border receipts and payments by non-banking sectors was \$5.2594 trillion and \$5.2566 trillion during the January-September period, respectively, representing a surplus of \$2.8 billion.

In September, the surplus surged to \$60.2 billion amid improved foreign investment and continued inflows from trade, SAFE data showed.

Guan Tao, global chief economist at BOCI China, said that in the base case scenario that the United States achieves a soft landing and continues interest rate cuts, foreign institutions may continue to boost holdings in renminbi bonds, especially treasury bonds, as yield spreads further narrow.



Technicians check out oil exploration facilities at an oilfield in Uganda. XINHUA

Leap in Sino-African ties foreseen

By WANG KEJU
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The current global economic slowdown and shocks to industrial and supply chains have presented China and Africa with a crucial opportunity to scale up mutual cooperation and move it to a higher level, officials and experts said.

A shift in China-Africa investment cooperation toward higher-end industries, digitalization, and green development is a vital step in facilitating the inclusive growth of both sides, they said.

They made the remarks at the Symposium on High-Quality Development of China-Africa Investment Cooperation on Monday, which was jointly hosted by the China-Africa Development Fund and the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Development in Beijing.

The complementary economic and industrial development profiles of China and Africa have formed a solid basis for their thriving cooperation, said Jing Ning, deputy director-general at the department of Western Asian and African affairs under the Ministry of Commerce.

The synergistic pairing of China's technologies, equipment and management expertise with Africa's markets and human resources has been a key driving force behind the advancement of the continent's industrialization, technological innovation, and youth employment, Jing said.

China's investments in Africa are

not only growing in volume but are also strategically oriented toward ensuring that Africa becomes a global manufacturing hub, said Rahamtalla M. Osman, permanent representative of the African Union to China.

Africa's green development potential, renewable energy needs, youth population and emerging consumer markets, coupled with the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area, have made it a promising investment destination, Osman said.

The Chinese government announced plans to facilitate at least 70 billion yuan (\$9.8 billion) in investments by Chinese companies in Africa over the next three years during the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing in September.

Meanwhile, China and Africa will establish a joint digital technology cooperation center and 20 flagship digital demonstration projects. China is committed to equipping African nations with the latest advancements in clean energy technologies, including solar, wind, and hydropower systems.

As Chinese enterprises expand their investments in Africa, they are not only pursuing their own interests, but also striving to bring tangible benefits to African countries, said Wang Shaodan, chairman of the China-Africa Development Fund.

CADF, along with partner enterprises, is actively promoting technology transfers to African countries, transitioning from

"Made in China" to "Made in Africa" and enhancing the local industrial development capabilities, Wang said.

In 2013, Chinese home appliances manufacturer Hisense and the CADF jointly invested \$350 million to establish Hisense South Africa Industrial Park, where the company has promoted technology transfer and upskilled local workers.

This has enabled South Africa to acquire manufacturing capabilities and develop export-ready brands for the European market, Wang added.

China is also working to facilitate the transfer of agricultural technologies to Africa through a wide range of cooperation modalities, which is crucial for enhancing Africa's food security, said Yu Ziron, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Development.

Africa is currently facing the dual dilemma of debt and development, and Chinese financial institutions and enterprises are exploring the expansion of new collaborative models to address this challenge, said Yu Yong, deputy director-general of the department of African affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

These new approaches, including public-private partnership, and integrated investment-construction-operation model, are designed to ensure the continuous funding and liquidity needed to support Africa's industrialization, ultimately leading to a reduction in the continent's debt burden, Yu said.

More policy support to assist in meeting GDP target

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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China is set to introduce a new wave of incremental policies aimed at expanding effective investment and stabilizing expectations as the country strives to achieve its preset annual growth target of around 5 percent this year, said the country's top economic regulator.

An official with the National Development and Reform Commission told China Daily on Tuesday that the commission will continue to closely monitor economic trends and measure the effectiveness of the implementation of existing policies, saying the country will introduce new incremental policies when necessary to sustain the continued economic recovery trend.

The NDRC is currently working with relevant departments to study the revision of the catalog of encouraged industries for foreign investment, and the updated version will feature additional categories to further incentivize foreign investment, the official said.

5 percent

China's preset annual growth target for this year

To further optimize the business environment and boost market confidence, the commission will issue a guideline for the building of a united national market as soon as possible and accelerate the revision of the negative list for market access to pave the way for greater business participation.

The NDRC recently announced it will partially frontload investment plans for next year's central government budget of 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) and another 100 billion yuan for key investment projects by the end of this year.

The NDRC official emphasized the need for sustained policy support through the remainder of the year and into 2025, saying the country will accelerate the implementation of investment projects over the next three months, which can translate into physical work volume and provide strong support for fourth-quarter economic growth.

The official said the country will accelerate the implementation of 102 key projects listed in the country's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), and 96.5 percent of the 5,100 specific projects under those key projects have either started construction or have been completed.

Looking into 2025, the country will continue to issue ultra-long-term special treasury bonds to support the construction of projects for major national strategies and building up security capacity in key areas.

A new report released on Tuesday by the Institute of Finance and Banking, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the country's recently announced stimulus policy package has greatly buoyed market confidence, as key indicators in real estate demand, consumer spending and capital market activity have shown marked improvement.

Cao Jing, an associate researcher at the institute, said the country needs to further step up macroeconomic policy support in key fields, including issuing additional special treasury bonds to increase fiscal spending on social welfare sectors such as pensions, childcare, education, healthcare and affordable housing.

Cao suggested that the government should align monetary policy with inflation targets, maintain a strong course of interest rate cuts and improve transparency in policy operations.

Briefly

Central bank conducts reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 158.4 billion yuan (\$22.24 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.5 percent on Tuesday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the central bank said. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding,

with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

Beijing's GDP grows 5.1% in Jan-Sept

The gross domestic product of Beijing increased 5.1 percent year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2024, the city's statistics authorities said. The Chinese capital's GDP reached 3.3 trillion yuan (\$463 billion) from January to September, according to the

municipal bureau of statistics. Key industries in Beijing showed robust growth in the first nine months of the year. The manufacturing of computers, communication and other electronic equipment saw an increase of 19.5 percent year-on-year, while the automotive manufacturing industry surged by 18.4 percent compared with the same period last year.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Gold prices continue to hit new highs

By LIU YUKUN
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Global spot gold prices soared to new heights on Monday, reaching \$2,740 per ounce, following multiple records since the year began.

Experts predicted possible fresh highs backed by US Federal Reserve interest rate cuts, geopolitical uncertainties and purchases from central banks.

Such a trend is set to favor gold mining companies while presenting challenges for downstream retail sales, said experts, adding companies ought to innovate by offering products with smaller weight variations and novel features to entice consumers.

Li Yuefeng, a researcher at the Beijing Gold Economy Development Research Center, said that escalating conflicts in the Middle East, the impending US election

and expectations of loose monetary policies worldwide have propelled a surge in gold demand as safe-haven assets, driving up international gold prices to break past \$2,700 per ounce, establishing a new all-time high.

Li said this year has witnessed a remarkable increase of over 30 percent in international gold prices, the most significant annual surge since 1979. Looking ahead, Li highlighted the upcoming release of the Purchasing Managers' Index data as an important factor influencing gold prices.

"If the PMI data continues to show better-than-expected performance, the US dollar may rise against other currencies to new highs as investors could further reduce their bets on Fed rate cuts," said Li. "Conversely, if the PMI unexpectedly drops below 50, indicating a contraction in private busi-

ness activity, it could exert pressure on the dollar, thereby driving international gold prices higher. This week may see a risk of a slight drop of gold prices after reaching new highs."

Liu Shikai, manager of research and development at a trading center under the Shandong Zhaojin Gold and Silver Refinery Co Ltd, said that the recent surge in international spot gold prices to cross \$2,700 per ounce was predominantly driven by regional tensions.

He anticipated a continued upward trajectory for international gold prices in the near term, potentially reaching new historical peaks. Geopolitical tensions, mounting uncertainties surrounding US politics and the economy in anticipation of the election, remain pivotal in supporting international gold prices.



An employee sorts gold jewelry at a shop in Renhuai, Guizhou province. CHEN YONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Furthermore, a recent report from the World Gold Council highlighted that central banks' gold purchases have contributed and will continue to contribute to the uptrend in gold prices. In July, global central banks' net purchase of

gold reached 37 metric tons, marking a 206 percent increase from the previous month, the highest monthly increase since January. The WGC has forecast a continuation of this trend among global central banks in the near future.

BUSINESS

SOE to speed up nation's recycle drive

New enterprise in Tianjin to utilize 260m-ton scrap steel, iron annually

By YANG CHENG in Tianjin
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As a centrally administered State-owned enterprise that was recently established to boost the nation's circular economy, China Resources Recycling Group Co Ltd will build itself into a key player in the field, ramping up solutions for warehousing, processing, distribution and trade-in programs, so as to take a lead in establishing market standards, said the company's top executive.

The SOE announced its establishment in Tianjin on Friday with a registered capital of 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion).

The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, China Baowu Steel Group Corp, China Petroleum and Chemical Corp and China Resources (Holdings) Co each hold 20 percent shares in the new SOE, while Aluminum Corp of China and China Minmetals Corp each hold 10 percent.

"The group is dedicated to embracing the principles of a circular economy — reduce, reuse, recycle — with the aim of improving resource efficiency through meticulous waste management, effective recycling and efficient utilization," said Liu Yu, Party chief and chairman of China Resources Recycling.

"We will establish a comprehensive nationwide platform for the utilization of renewable resources, and ramp up efforts to continue expanding the range of recycled materials."

The group will focus on the recycling and utilization of major recyclable resources, such as scrap steel and scrap nonferrous metals. It is anticipated that annual scrap steel and iron utilization will reach 260 million metric tons.

Additionally, the group will strive to enhance the network for recycling old products and equipment, assist businesses in establishing reverse logistics systems for recycling old products, and promote the efficient use of decommissioned wind power,

solar power and power batteries.

Liu said: "We are ready to seize the abundant opportunities in advancing the circular economy. By leveraging the integration of State-owned enterprise resources as a catalyst, we are progressively promoting the integration of relevant domestic industries."

Yang Liu, director of the Tianjin investment promotion bureau, said: "Tianjin has significant advantages in promoting the circular economy due to its industrial foundation. Ziya Circular Economy Park in Jinghai district is the nation's first national economic and development zone in this sector."

Since 2008, Jinghai has forged partnerships with Kyushu, Japan on circular economy, incorporating leading Japanese technologies and equipment in scrap car dismantling; importing its technologies to establish production lines for refrigerator crushing and plastic crushing; and launching a pilot project for kitchen waste recycling.

"The region boasts a complete industrial line for waste metals, car dismantling, electronic devices and batteries with cutting-edge technologies," Yang said.

Wang Guoliang, director of the administrative committee of China-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City, where the new SOE is located, said: "The eco-city will seek to play a crucial role in promoting green development as it has been designated as a national green development model in the country. It will support the company's technological research, standard setting, industrial fruit transfer and application processes."

Wang Junfeng, director of the circular economy and low carbon research center, Nankai University, said: "The company's establishment in Tianjin is not unexpected. The city has been at the forefront of circular economy applications and international collaborations, further driving synergistic development not only for the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, but also for the entire country."



Employees work at a biopharmaceutical production facility in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Guangzhou building biopharma hub

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou
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Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, is sparing no effort to build a global hub for innovation and development of its biopharmaceutical industry, a city official said.

This is expected to inject strong momentum into the sector in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and across the country.

The development of the biopharmaceutical industry will bring more hope and benefit a vast number of patients, said Meng Hao, deputy secretary general of the Guangzhou municipal government.

To this end, the city government will establish a 150 billion yuan (\$21.5 billion) industrial investment fund to promote cooperation between major financial investment companies and local investment institutions, with a focus on investing in the biomedicine sector, Meng said.

Meng made the remarks at a news conference on promoting Guangzhou's biopharmaceutical industry on Monday.

Guangzhou has a population of nearly 24 million. It is the most populous city in the GBA, which includes nine Guangdong cities as well as Hong Kong and Macao.

The southern metropolis has about 6,800 registered medical and health institutions, including 47 major hospitals and eight national and regional medical centers.

"In the first half of this year, more than 93 million patient visits had been recorded in the city's medical institutions, and the abundant medical resources provide

broad space for the transformation of achievements and market application of biopharmaceutical enterprises," she said.

Guangzhou's biopharmaceutical industry is in the top tier in the country, and the city has more than 6,500 biopharmaceutical and related enterprises, including 12 Fortune Global 500 companies, 23 listed companies and over 1,000 high-tech enterprises. These have formed biopharmaceutical industrial clusters that are playing an increasingly important role in the development of Guangzhou's pillar industry, said Meng.

The city will accord priority to the development of four major industries — biopharmaceutical, medicine, traditional Chinese medicine and high-end medical apparatus and instruments. It will also try to construct a number of key State laboratories, industrial innovation centers, manufacturing innovation centers and national engineering technology centers in the next five years, said Meng.

Guangdong province will accelerate the construction of industrial parks and zones for biopharmaceutical and related industries in the following months, she added.

Zhang Yi, deputy director and spokeswoman of the Guangzhou health commission, said the commission unveiled a series of measures in September to promote the high-quality development of innovative medical devices and support their clinical application.

"The new measures aim to promote and accelerate innovation in the biopharmaceutical industry and help develop new quality productive forces," she said.

"Meanwhile, the commission encourages research and

development personnel from pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers to connect with clinical experts in medical institutions to further improve the mechanism of medical engineering integration, collaborative innovation and information exchange through establishing clinical research beds in medical institutions and conducting medicine clinical trials," she said.

The commission will further promote the application of innovative medicines and medical devices in hospital admissions, said Zhang. Zhao Huie, a representative from Guangzhou Medprin Regenerative Medical Technologies Co Ltd, said the new measures will help enterprises accelerate clinical applications and enhance production.

"All companies hope that their medical products can be clinically applied as soon as possible," she said.

Guangdong province is planning to boost annual revenue from its biopharmaceutical and health sector to more than 1 trillion yuan by 2027, from 663.8 billion yuan in 2023, according to an action plan issued by the provincial government earlier this month.

The action plan aims to promote high-quality development of the biopharmaceutical sector in Guangdong.

According to the action plan, Guangdong is planning to lift the total annual revenue of biopharmaceutical enterprises above a designated size — which has grown by 10 percent on average since 2018 — to 500 billion yuan by 2027.

Li Yongxi contributed to this story.

North China expands trade via freight rail

By WANG ZHUOQIONG in Beijing and YUAN HUI in Hohhot

With regular freight train service from Qisumu International Logistics Park in Ulaanqab, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, to Moscow now in operation, experts said the new route opens a trade channel for North China, and will further expand its exports with the support of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Launched on Oct 16, the route marks a new addition to the China-Europe freight railway lines originating from Ulaanqab, and is also the city's first eastbound route along this line.

Ulaanqab is one of the first 23 cities that was designated as a national logistics hub for the China-Europe freight train service.

Since the launch of its first China-Europe freight train in 2016, Ulaanqab has expanded operations to eight countries, with destinations such as Yekaterinburg, Russia and Almaty, Kazakhstan. The city now operates 22 international routes.

As of Oct 16, Ulaanqab's China-Europe freight routes have operated 806 trains with 33,000 carriages, with a total cargo value of \$1.53 billion.

In recent years, Inner Mongolia has prioritized the development of the freight train network, focusing on Ulaanqab's role as a key gateway for northbound trade.

The autonomous region aims to further enhance its participation in the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor by strengthening Ulaanqab's logistics capabilities."

Liang Jing, deputy general manager of Inner Mongolia Asia Europe International Logistics Ltd

"The autonomous region aims to further enhance its participation in the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor by strengthening Ulaanqab's logistics capabilities," said Liang Jing, deputy general manager of Inner Mongolia Asia Europe International Logistics Ltd.

Citing the importance of the east route of the China-Europe freight service, Liang said, "The new route will increase railway capacity, optimize platform resources and improve service efficiency to further integrate Ulaanqab into the high-quality development of the BRI."

Liang said Ulaanqab's proximity to Erenhot — only 327 kilometers away — also plays a big role in lowering logistics costs, as many of the products manufactured in Inner Mongolia are transported via these routes.

So far this year, the region's government has invested 800 million yuan (\$112.4 million) in infrastructure to support Sino-European freight services, including the construction of a logistics center.

Major exports on this route from Inner Mongolia include sunflower seeds from Bayannur, Chery automobiles from Ordos, and local timber, grain and oil products, which make up about two-thirds of the region's total goods transported. Local products account for up to 50 percent of the total freight, Liang said.

From January to September, 14,689 China-Europe freight trains were operated nationwide, marking a 13 percent year-on-year increase, said China State Railway Group Co Ltd, the nation's railway operator.

The trains transported 1.57 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of goods, an 11 percent year-on-year rise.

In September, over 171,000 TEUs of products were transported by 1,633 China-Europe freight trains, marking 12 percent and 15 percent year-on-year increases, respectively. The freight service saw monthly operations of over 1,600 trains for seven consecutive months so far this year.

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Takeda: China will become second-largest market by 2031

By ZHENG YIRAN
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Having been in the Chinese pharmaceutical market for 30 years, Japan's Takeda is optimistic about the market and will keep investing in the country, a senior company executive has said.

"China is a key strategic market for Takeda. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Takeda in China, which is a significant milestone demonstrating our long-term commitment to China," said Thomas Wozniowski, global manufacturing and supply officer at Takeda. "China is Takeda's third-largest market. Our China business maintained strong growth which was exceeding market growth since 2020. It is expected that China will become our second-largest market by 2031."

Between 2020 and 2024, Takeda brought 16 innovative medicines and treatment options to the Chinese market.

"The Chinese government is increasingly recognizing the value of innovative medicines and has established pathways, for example, the breakthrough therapy designation, to accelerate the registration process. Thanks to this initiative, Takeda in China has successfully obtained breakthrough designations for several new assets," Wozniowski said.

Since China's medical reform in 2015, the development of innova-

tive drugs in the country has greatly accelerated pace. The approval time of such drugs has been cut from 16 months to around 50 days, and that of urgent clinical drugs has been cut even shorter, creating favorable conditions for the development of innovative drugs.

On Sept 13, the National Medical Products Administration said that it is accelerating the approval process of urgent clinical drugs, cutting the approval time from 60 to 30 workdays.

The Tianjin manufacturing site, established in 1994, was Takeda's first production facility in China, marking the beginning of local production for the company. The site stands as a cornerstone for Takeda's journey in the country.

In 2019, Takeda invested 110 million yuan (\$15.4 million) to expand the Tianjin site, which significantly enhanced its production and storage capacities.

To better address the growing demand for the treatment of high-prevalence diseases in China, Takeda invested an additional 50 million yuan in 2022 for a full process technology transfer from Japan to the Tianjin site for an



A view of Takeda's booth at an expo in Shanghai.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

innovative drug to be produced there.

According to Takeda, between 2020 and 2024, the production output of its Tianjin manufacturing site doubled and its production efficiency increased by 35 percent.

"The Tianjin site has been crucial in supporting our 'in China, for China' strategy over the past three decades, producing high-quality pharmaceuticals locally. Additionally, the site continues to play an important role in our manufacturing network through its focus on local production and constant modernization," said Wozniowski. "Localization helps us gain speed

and flexibility. It also helps us better understand and comply with the local quality and safety standards. It is also good for supply continuity. This is especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic period. It is also very cost-efficient."

An Guangyong, an expert with the Professional Committee of Credit Management, the China Mergers and Acquisitions Association, said that multinational corporations' localization is beneficial for them in enhancing brand trust and market share, promoting technological innovation and increasing market demand. It is also good for gaining

governmental support and highly efficient communication.

Chen Jia, an independent international strategy researcher, said: "After the test of the COVID-19 pandemic, China's economy has shown excellent resilience, with unparalleled supply chain guarantee capabilities and a continuous trade surplus leading the world. This greatly enhances the confidence of foreign-funded enterprises to increase capital and build factories in China."

"When a large number of Chinese enterprises adopt the 'going global' strategy to showcase Chinese manufacturing, the spillover effects generated will promote the acceleration of vertical industrialization of relevant international industrial chain leading enterprises and increase investment in the Chinese market. In this way, large-scale operations can be carried out to reduce total costs. In addition, China's more mature industrial research and development capabilities can be leveraged."

Wozniowski said: "We are committed to continuously investing in the Tianjin plant as well as other places in China. We will invest in new technologies, capacity and doing the right thing for the planet. As the Chinese market continues to grow, we look for the best opportunity to source the local market."

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Smart door locks showing key potential

Market reach of security item at 16.5% in lower-tier cities, indicating strong prospects

By ZHU WENQIAN
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A niche market is developing for smart door locks in China, especially in certain county-level cities with detached houses.

Though over 80 percent of Chinese consumers have not used a smart door lock as yet, there is increased demand for such products, industry players said.

In particular, high-end smart locks, which differ from traditional mechanical locks, are smarter and more convenient in recognition and management, and they usually carry price tags of over 2,000 yuan (\$281) each, market research firm Euromonitor International found.

Sales of smart locks in China reached 10.6 million units in the first half of this year, up 5.5 percent year-on-year. Given that the production volume in the second half is usually higher than that in the first half of the year, production and sales volumes are both expected to exceed 25 million sets for the whole year, according to an estimate by the China Daily Hardware Technology Development Center.

"The average price of smart door locks has declined as a result of price competition, while technologies being used in the products have become more advanced, leading to increased cost-effectiveness of smart lock products and higher acceptance by consumers," said Wu Qing, deputy director of the center.

"Chinese smart lock brands take a leading position in the global market. Most domestically made products are equipped with in-house screens of high-definition cat's-eye view and advanced identification technologies such as fingerprints, 3-D face recognition and iris recognition," Wu said.

The smart door lock industry, driven by multiple factors such as favorable policies, growing consumer acceptance, technological development, and growing market penetration, has maintained its growth momentum and remains a sunrise sector despite its small industry size, the center said.

The sector has witnessed a more evident industrial cluster effect, and the main production and sales areas of smart locks are centered in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province; and Zhongshan and Foshan of Guangdong province, among other places.

With improved support facilities, the supply chain has become more mature and stable. The develop-



Employees work on a smart lock production line in Shaoyang, Hunan province, in April. TENG ZHIZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

ment momentum of industrial clusters in Guangdong and Zhejiang has been particularly strong, the center said.

After experiencing rapid growth from 2015 to 2018, the smart door lock industry has entered a stage of stable growth. Sales of smart door locks in 2023 reached 22.3 million units in China, up 12.7 percent year-on-year, data from the center showed.

Hangzhou-based Desman (China) Machinery & Electronic Co Ltd in Zhejiang province has seen sales volumes of high-end smart door locks retain leading market share in China and abroad for three consecutive years, according to the center.

Desman operates more than 3,000 brick-and-mortar stores nationwide, and it opened some 800 new stores in the first eight months of this year. It plans to continuously expand its presence in smaller cities, besides strengthening online sales efforts.

In first and second-tier Chinese cities, the market reach of smart locks stands at 21.3 percent, while the figure is 16.5 percent for third and fourth-tier cities, thus indicating considerable growth potential for these products, Desman said.

The company has also expanded sales in Southeast Asian and Central



The booth of Desman (China) Machinery & Electronic Co Ltd, a smart lock maker, at a hardware expo in Shanghai in September 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Asian countries in the past few years. Since homes in Vietnam are similar to those in China, Desman said it has a certain market share in the country.

"This year, we are expanding in some new markets such as the United States. We have started the production of smart locks designed for some wooden doors commonly seen in Europe and the US. Those doors mainly require smaller locks, and many people can install the locks by

themselves," said Zhu Zhiling, CEO of Desman.

"The quality of door locks has a significant impact on the quality of people's lives. If consumers can't easily get into or out of homes, it would be troublesome. Consumers should use high-quality locks to ensure the convenience and safety of daily life," Zhu said.

The company's high-end smart locks have continuously ranked at

the very top in sales within the country. Besides, global market research conducted between 2021 and 2023 showed that Desman took the top spot for sales volume and market share in the global high-end smart locks market for three years, Euromonitor International said.

The survey included the Chinese mainland and overseas countries and regions, such as North America, Asia, Europe and Latin America. The survey researched more than 10 brands, including Desman, Samsung and Xiaomi, Euromonitor International said.

"The research and development of smart locks integrate technologies such as artificial intelligence recognition, biometric identification and cloud computing, and the R&D of a product usually requires three to four years. We have invested an increasing amount of funds in R&D year by year," Zhu said.

He added that the latest products can be connected to mobile phones, and even if a fingerprint is worn down, like those of gymnasts, the locks can still recognize certain fingerprints.

The fingerprint module applying the company's GPTfinger fingerprint recognition technology has achieved a false acceptance rate of 0.00099 percent and a false rejection

rate of 0.86379 percent, it said.

"GPTfinger fingerprint recognition technology has enabled the products to embrace a new era of GPT algorithm-based recognition, and this advancement addresses the challenges faced by a small group of people with difficulties in fingerprint recognition," said Maksim Krikov, a certification officer at London-based World Record Certification Agency.

This has also been awarded as the "world's most outstanding smart lock with ultrahigh fingerprint recognition rate" by the agency.

In addition, Desman has completed the building of its fourth global joint laboratory in Phoenix, the United States, thus completing its global network of four labs.

These labs are strategically located in diverse environments, including the desert climate of Phoenix; the extreme high temperatures of Dubai, the United Arab Emirates; the typhoon-prone weather of China's Taiwan province, and the moderate climate of Hangzhou.

"The labs form a comprehensive testing network and enable Desman products to go through rigorous reliability tests in extreme conditions, ensuring long-term stability of the smart lock products across regions," Zhu said.

Bosch to build innovation park for commercial vehicles in Wuxi

NANJING — German multinational giant Bosch Group signed an agreement on Oct 16 to set up its strategic commercial vehicle China headquarters in Wuxi, East China's Jiangsu province, indicating its bullishness on China's new energy vehicle and smart driving industries.

The agreement was inked between the company and Wuxi high-tech district during a ceremony celebrating the 20th anniversary of Bosch's subsidiary in Wuxi.

According to Bosch, the project aims to build an innovative industrial park for commercial vehicles, focusing on providing technological solutions in fields of vehicle electrification and assisted driving.

The company has already established several automotive-related factories in Wuxi, with total sales reaching nearly \$3.8 billion last year.

"The strategic cooperation agreement serves as a catalyst for the smoother commercial vehicle business restructuring in China and marks another milestone in the long-term partnership between Bosch and Wuxi," said Thomas Pau-

er, president of Bosch's Powertrain Solutions division. "By signing it, we aim to further localize our innovative products for the commercial vehicle business and unleash our full potential to help shape the future of low-carbon mobility together."

The new energy sector constitutes one of Wuxi's rapidly growing industries. China has long been the world's largest market for new energy vehicles, and despite facing undue policy pressures from some Western nations, masses of companies within the automotive supply chain remain confident in China's manufacturing and market advantages.

"As one of the first foreign companies to invest in China since the country's opening and reform, Bosch has been deeply integrated into China's economic development and growth journey," said Stefan Hartung, chairman of Bosch's board of management, at the ceremony. "We see China as a key strategic market for Bosch, and as playing an essential role in our global strategy. Our efforts have led to significant success, making Chi-

na Bosch's largest market outside of Germany."

He noted that Bosch has been continually enhancing its capabilities in the Chinese market, leveraging local talent and infrastructure.

"With this strong foundation and a steadfast commitment to our 'local for local' strategy, Bosch remains dedicated to increasing investments in China, expanding our strategic presence, and driving growth through technological innovation," Hartung said.

Bosch's new project in Wuxi underlines China's undiminished allure for foreign investors, particularly as the country continues to foster high-quality development.

From January to July, China's actual use of foreign direct investment exceeded 500 billion yuan (\$70.2 billion). As the country fosters high-quality development, foreign investment is shifting from short-term "hot money" to long-term commitments with stronger institutional and innovation capacities.

For instance, in April, Volkswagen announced an investment of 2.5



A technician works at Bosch Powertrain Systems Co Ltd in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, in February 2020. XINHUA

billion euros (\$2.71 billion) to expand its innovation hub in East China's Anhui province, following the establishment of Volkswagen's research and development center in Anhui.

High-tech manufacturing is a key

driver of FDI in China. In the first seven months, the proportion of actual FDI in high-tech manufacturing increased by 2.6 percentage points from 2023.

"We are fully convinced that this new setup in Wuxi will pave the

way for enhanced collaboration, ultimately contributing to a low-carbon transportation future, not only in China but globally," Hartung added.

XINHUA

WORLD

Chinese aid arrives in Beirut

Critical medical supplies delivered as Lebanon grapples with humanitarian crisis

By JAN YUMUL and MIKE GU
in Hong Kong

Responding to calls to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon, nearly 60 metric tons of emergency medical supplies from China arrived in Beirut on Monday, according to the Chinese embassy in the Lebanese capital.

The timely aid came as Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit called for an immediate cease-fire and the scaling up of humanitarian assistance in Lebanon, as part of his priority agenda when meeting Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati, the National News Agency reported.

Qian Minjian, Chinese ambassador to Lebanon, said the Israel-Hezbollah conflict has led to tens of thousands of casualties in Lebanon and displaced millions.

"China firmly supports Lebanon in maintaining national sovereignty, security and dignity, and strongly opposes any indiscriminate attacks against civilians," Qian was quoted as saying by Xinhua News Agency. He also expressed hope that the medical aid would help ease Lebanon's strained healthcare system.

Qian and Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad attended the hand-over ceremony for the aid, which comprised 58 metric tons of urgently needed medical supplies, including anesthetics, disposable tracheal intubation tubes and surgical gowns.

Abiad expressed his gratitude, saying Lebanon highly appreciates China's position in calling for an immediate cease-fire. The donation further demonstrated China's valuable support for Lebanon, he added.

Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes across Lebanon "continue to kill and injure civilians and displace a growing number of families," said the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.



People look at a damaged building after Israeli airstrikes in Tyre, Lebanon, on Monday. AZIZ TAHER / REUTERS

Lebanon's Health Ministry said on Monday that the death toll since Israel's offensive began had risen to 2,483, with 11,628 injured. Israel's campaign in Lebanon has driven 1.2 million people from their homes.

On Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel — the last attempt before a presidential election that could upend US policy. Diplomatic efforts have so far failed to bring an end both to the year-long conflict in Gaza and to its spillover conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.

During a meeting with Mikati, Aboul Gheit reiterated the Arab League's support for the Lebanese people, state and government while calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon.

He also rejected foreign interference in Lebanon's internal affairs and urged an end to the indiscriminate

killings as well as a return to the immediate implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which seeks to end hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel.

Aboul Gheit stressed the need for the displaced Lebanese to return to the south without Israeli interference and demanded guarantees from Israel to stop its attacks on the Lebanese people.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelaty, in a phone call with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri on Sunday, condemned the Israeli army's targeting of the Lebanese army, infrastructure and UN peacekeepers. Cairo also rejected any infringement on Lebanon's territorial integrity, Egypt's Ahram Online reported.

On the ground, Hezbollah said it had fired rockets at two bases near the Israeli city of Tel Aviv and one

west of Haifa on Tuesday morning.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said the death toll from an Israeli strike on Monday night near Rafik Hariri University Hospital, Beirut's main government medical facility, had climbed to 18.

Rescuers were still searching for survivors beneath the rubble on Tuesday, said an AFP correspondent who heard a cellphone ringing under chunks of concrete.

After a heavy night of Israeli strikes on Lebanon's south and the southern suburbs of its capital, Hezbollah said it had fired rockets at the Gilot base used by Unit 8200 of Israeli military intelligence, and the Nirit area in Tel Aviv's suburbs.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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Partnership: Focus turned on root cause of conflict

From page 1

This consensus called for an immediate ceasefire, a resumption of negotiations, and active involvement from the international community to facilitate a diplomatic solution. This consensus offers an alternative framework for conflict resolution that resonates with many countries in the Global South by emphasizing fairness, justice and peace.

The "Friends of Peace" initiative marks a crucial step toward ending the Ukraine-Russia conflict. By creating a platform for Global South countries to participate in peace efforts, the initiative challenges the West's dominance in diplomacy and advocates for a more inclusive, fair approach to conflict resolution.

The China-Brazil partnership also reflects a broader trend of emerging economies contributing to global peace and security. This collaborative approach demonstrates how countries from the Global South can lead in addressing global conflicts by offering an inclusive, balanced approach to international conflict resolution that values fairness and the voices of all stakeholders. This initiative also aligns

with China's broader Global Security Initiative, which seeks peaceful solutions to global conflicts while upholding justice and fairness. The GSI reflects China's approach to handling international hotspot issues by offering Chinese wisdom and solutions aimed at fostering global stability. As China and Brazil continue to promote their peace plan, they are setting the stage for a new era in global conflict resolution by emphasizing the importance of addressing the root causes of conflicts rather than resorting to military force. They advocate for dialogue, inclusiveness, and the prioritization of peaceful settlements.

Looking ahead, China will continue to play an essential role in global security and diplomacy, working alongside other nations to promote peace, security, and prosperity for all.

The "Friends of Peace" initiative marks a crucial step toward ending the Ukraine-Russia conflict. By creating a platform for Global South countries to participate in peace efforts, the initiative challenges the West's dominance in diplomacy and advocates for a more inclusive, fair approach to conflict resolution. China's role in the initiative reflects its ongoing commitment to promoting global peace and stability. As the world moves away from military solutions, the "Friends of Peace" initiative offers a new model for resolving international disputes — one rooted in dialogue, fairness, and the pursuit of lasting peace.

The author is executive director of Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future, Islamabad. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Dozens of countries voice opposition to unilateral coercive measures

By MINLU ZHANG

at the United Nations
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China on Tuesday represented 28 Global South countries and delivered a joint statement at the United Nations opposing unilateral coercive measures and urging countries imposing them to "immediately and completely cease such practice."

"Developing countries and their populations continue to fall victim to unilateral coercive measures, which violate the principle of sovereign equality and cooperation, intervene in other countries' internal affairs, and disregard the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, multilateralism and the basic norms of international relations," Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, told the Third Committee of the General Assembly at its 79th session.

Fu delivered the joint statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of 28 member states, including the State of Palestine, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and others.

"Despite the global call to urgently lift unilateral coercive measures, the imposition of these illegal measures continues to cause devastating, sometimes even life-threatening consequences, to targeted

countries and their peoples," Fu said.

Unilateral coercive measures, coupled with secondary sanctions and over-compliance, "exacerbate existing humanitarian and economic challenges, gravely affect the stability of the global production and supply chains, as well as food, energy and financial security, and seriously undermine the world economic order and the efforts of the countries concerned to achieve sustainable development goals," he added.

In September, Alena Douhan, the UN special rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures, submitted her report to the 57th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

In her report, Douhan said that unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States and other countries on China violate international law, negatively affecting the human rights of the Chinese people and causing spillover effects.

The report also says unilateral coercive measures have led to a serious shortage of medicines, vaccines and medical equipment in the countries targeted, and that it has led to a rise in mortality rates, leaving those in vulnerable situations such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled in a particularly difficult situation.

"We recognize the work done by the special rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral

coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights for the United Nations Human Rights Council and take note of the reports, country visits and statements delivered by the special rapporteur," Fu said.

"We are also concerned that unilateral coercive measures and over-compliance have limited the ability of affected countries to access and acquire foreign investment and technologies, and hindered international cooperation in culture, arts, sports, travel, people-to-people exchanges and transport, including civil aviation," said Fu.

In recent years, the United States has implemented a range of unilateral measures against China, including restrictions on semiconductor exports, limitations on key technologies and sanctions on certain Chinese companies.

On Thursday, the United States imposed sanctions on two Chinese companies that it accused of "directly assisting" Russia in developing long-range attack drones used in the Ukraine war.

China's Foreign Ministry said it firmly opposes the US imposing illegal unilateral sanctions against Chinese companies and does not accept "groundless" accusations and pressure from the US.

Globally, the US has imposed broad economic and financial sanctions on countries such as Iran, North Korea, Russia and Venezuela, limiting their trade, energy exports and banking operations.



Nature's magic

A rainbow arcs above tourists aboard a boat braving the misty waters of Niagara Falls in Ontario, Canada, on Monday.
MERT ALPER DERVIS
VIA GETTY IMAGES

Xinjiang now enjoying stability, growth

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
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During a visit to Japan on Tuesday, a delegation from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region highlighted how policies have curbed the frequent occurrence of terrorist attacks, supported high-quality economic growth and cultural prosperity, and strengthened interethnic exchanges.

Between 1990 and 2016, Xinjiang witnessed many terrorist attacks. However, since 2017, no such attacks have taken place, primarily because of the government's efforts to combat terrorism and extremism in accordance with the law, said Chen Cheng, deputy director of the Information Office of the People's Government of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Chen attributed the root causes of violent terrorism, religious extremism and ethnic separatism to the lingering influence of "pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism", which has been exacerbated by anti-China forces. "Their ultimate goal is to separate Xinjiang from China," he added.

In recent years, Xinjiang has emphasized counterterrorism and de-extremization efforts under the rule of law. Duan Yangwei, an associate professor at the National Security School of Northwest University of Political Science and Law in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, said China has gradually developed a legal approach to counterterrorism and de-extremi-

zation tailored to its specific needs. "The international community should respect different approaches to counterterrorism based on the rule of law, oppose double standards and reject the politicization of counterterrorism issues," Duan said.

Xinjiang has deepened reforms in its administrative law enforcement system to ensure supervision at every stage, he said. In cases involving terrorism, judicial authorities strictly protect suspects' rights, prohibiting the use of torture or other illegal methods to extract confessions.

Stability is the cornerstone of development. Last year, Xinjiang's GDP reached 1.91 trillion yuan (\$268.2 billion), fiscal revenue surpassed 200 billion yuan, and imports and exports rose 45.9 percent year-on-year to 357.3 billion yuan. These accomplishments are closely tied to Xinjiang's sustained de-extremization and anti-terrorism efforts, Chen said.

Education has also played a key role in Xinjiang's fight against poverty. By last year, all eligible children aged 4 to 6 in Xinjiang had access to nearby preschools, said Zilimila Ainwaer, a research associate at the Institute of Law of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences. Since 1988, more than 2 million rural middle school students and some impoverished urban students in Xinjiang have received free compulsory education.

Zhang Peilin, minister-counselor at the Chinese embassy in Japan,

said Xinjiang is experiencing its best development period in history, marked by economic prosperity, social stability and ethnic unity. The region also plays a key role in China's efforts to enhance openness and global cooperation, he added.

Meng Nan, dean of the School of History at Xinjiang University, said that from a historical perspective, Xinjiang has always been an inseparable part of Chinese territory. "The multiethnic composition of Xinjiang dates back to ancient times, and it has always been a region where multiple cultures and religions coexist."

Maimaiti Juma, vice-president of the China Islamic Association, said the Chinese government fully respects citizens' rights to religious freedom and lawfully protects legitimate religious activities.

Kumiko Haba, a professor emerita at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, recently visited Xinjiang with a Japanese delegation. In every city they visited, such as Urumqi and Turpan, she noted a deeply rooted and high-level culture, alongside impressive preservation of ancient heritage.

"In Japan, information about Xinjiang is scarce, and much of the news on religion is focused on terrorism and negative stories," she said. "Seeing Xinjiang firsthand, I was struck by the richness of people's lives and the many developments taking place. We realized it's our mission to share these new realities with Japanese society."

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COMMENT

Editorials

With expanded membership, BRICS' role set to be bolstered at Kazan summit

Countries of the Global South are increasingly looking upon the BRICS grouping as an indispensable international force for global economic development and the building of a more just, equitable world.

This year marks the beginning of greater BRICS cooperation after the expansion of the grouping in 2023. Leaders of the member states of the newly expanded BRICS are expected to draw a blueprint for the future development of this vibrant bloc at their summit in the Russian city of Kazan. On the agenda for their discussions from Tuesday to Thursday are advancing economic globalization and the democratization of international relations, and upholding multilateralism and the spirit of cooperation and unity.

Over the years, BRICS, an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, five developing countries with considerable economic potential, has evolved into an influential international cooperation mechanism. With the addition of some new members, the grouping accounts for about 30 percent of the global GDP, 45 percent of the global population and 20 percent of global trade. Together, the expanded BRICS economies have contributed as much as 80 percent of global growth in the past 20 years.

Powered by the three engines of political and security cooperation, economic and financial cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges, BRICS has become an important means for the Global South to raise its presence in the international arena.

As the largest developing country, China has been a significant promoter and driver of BRICS cooperation over the past 18 years, as evidenced by the New Development Bank, set up by the original BRICS members in 2015 and headquartered in Shanghai. Launched in 2015, the bank has become an important financial vehicle for mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other developing countries. By the end of 2023, it had approved approximately \$35 billion for 105 projects.

China and its BRICS partners have also launched projects such as the China-BRICS Science and Innovation Incubation Park for the New Era and the China-BRICS AI Development and Cooperation Center. In the first quarter of this year, China's imports from and exports to BRICS countries increased by more than 11 percent year-on-year.

A steadfast champion of BRICS cooperation, President Xi Jinping has consistently placed BRICS high on China's foreign policy agenda. His attendance at the Kazan summit demonstrates China's confidence in the multilateral cooperation mechanism continuing to play an important role on the world stage. Thanks to concerted efforts of the five original BRICS members, the grouping has made substantial progress and become a beacon shining a guiding light on the path of practical cooperation for developing countries.

To date, more than 30 countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Türkiye and Azerbaijan have either formally applied for or expressed their interest in BRICS membership. Such popularity underscores the wide global recognition of the bloc's role in shaping the international landscape and safeguarding global peace and development. In stark contrast to the bad blood in international relations and governance caused by the developed countries' efforts to cling to their privileges derived from their colonial pasts, the BRICS mechanism champions the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation, which is badly needed in the face of the divisive high-and-mighty actions of the exploitative VIP club of developed countries.

As a pivotal mechanism representing the Global South, the expanded BRICS can play a bigger role in advancing a more just and equitable international order as well as the reform of global governance. Hence, it can be expected that the ongoing BRICS summit will bring to the world more certainty, stability and positive energy and contribute to the building of a better shared future for humanity.

China hopes that the Kazan summit will produce positive outcomes and unleash the strengths of the expanded BRICS, enhancing and upgrading BRICS cooperation and bringing out the strategic significance and political impact of the expanded grouping to help build an international consensus for peace and development.

US enabler of Middle East crisis

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is on a weeklong visit to the Middle East since Monday, his 11th "pro-peace" trip to the region since the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out on Oct 7 last year. Apart from Israel, Blinken is also visiting a number of Arab countries, which, according to the State Department, could include Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Although "bringing the war in Gaza to an end" is a primary goal of his visit, as the State Department's statement said, people hope his visit does not make the situation any worse, as has been happening over the past year.

It was along with the top US diplomat's earlier time-to-end-the-war visits to the region that not only has the war in Gaza escalated — about 42,000 Palestinians have been killed in Tel Aviv's "self-defensive" military operation in the Palestinian enclave since October 2023 — but also the conflict has spilled across the region, with a war with Iran looming on the horizon.

It was along with Blinken's previous we-come-for-peace visits that the US has sent troops to the Middle East to deter any regional country's possible response to Israel's reckless actions that escalated tensions, including eliminating multiple Hamas and Hezbollah leaders even if the two militant groups have clearly voiced support for a cease-fire, and Israel's reckless actions have, instead, ended any possibility of cease-fire talks at many critical junctures.

It was along with his enough-is-enough visits that the US has continuously provided unconditional military and financial assistance for Israel, enabling the warmongering Benjamin Netanyahu Cabinet to proudly claim that Israel is fighting on "seven fronts" at the same time.

It was along with his we-care visits that the US has covertly encouraged Israel to turn Gaza into a hellhole of humanitarian crisis by not only carrying out what many countries call "genocide" but also weaponizing its control on humanitarian aid trickling in for the desperate Palestinians.

It was along with his let's-bring-them-home visits that the US has kept a studied silence over the fact that Netanyahu no longer cares about the remaining hostages held by Hamas, but only his personal political survival. By trying to wag the dog, the Israeli leader aims to be remembered for taking full advantage of external resources, at negligible costs compared with its gains, to technically annex Gaza, markedly expand Israel's buffer zone with Lebanon, and cripple Iran's major regional proxies including the Hezbollah and Hamas.

It was also along with his we-are-concerned visits that the US has connived with Israel to kill more than 200 personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, attack UN peacekeepers' positions in Lebanon, and carry out a systematic insidious campaign to smear the world body while ignoring multiple binding UN resolutions including those initiated by Washington that the latter claimed have full support of Tel Aviv.

No more facts are needed to prove that the US is the sole enabler of the Middle East crisis. That the US side claims again, as before, that Blinken will use the trip to "reaffirm the US commitment to work with partners across the region to de-escalate tensions and provide lasting stability" exposes Washington's hypocrisy. The US has never truly cared about a two-state solution — not to mention Palestinian autonomy — despite claiming so; it is only interested in taking advantage of the Netanyahu government to advance the US' geopolitical agenda in the Middle East and beyond. Compared with the upcoming US presidential election, the Middle East crisis is nothing but a subject on the table, though a little more urgent than others.

Notably, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made clear in a letter to Israeli officials shortly before Blinken's ongoing visit that the Joe Biden administration could be forced by US law to curtail some forms of military aid should the delivery of humanitarian assistance continue to be hindered. That only takes care of the US' callousness.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Expand consumer demand to strengthen growth momentum

The authorities have launched a package of incremental policies, in which expanding domestic demand in order to boost consumption has been confirmed as a major task. China faces demographic challenges such as an aging population and fewer births, which have had an impact on both supply and demand.

The country's population is highly clustered in cities, with most families living in high-rise apartments, and urban space mostly used for commercial development. Apartments rarely have spare space for other requirements. For example, if a family wants to buy an extra car, the lack of parking space might force it to shell out more for parking. Urban spatial constraints and high rental costs limit the supply of emerging services and affect their growth due to high prices.

Due to overtime work and long commuting time, many people lack "leisure time" during working days, leading to a surge in consumer demand on weekends or holidays, straining the services in the tourism, catering, entertainment and other sectors during these times. That also results in a sharp rise in prices, affecting people's consumption experience. Excessive concentration of service consumption in a short period also affects the willingness of service providers to invest in optimizing service quality.

China needs to stabilize economic growth and asset prices through incremental policies, to boost people's expectations and consolidate the basis for consumption expansion. Whether it is stock or incremental policies, the key is to promote their trustworthy implementation and turn them into growth drivers. China's consumption is charac-

terized as a "dual structure" landscape because of different income levels, with 400 million middle- and high-income people, mainly in large and medium-sized cities, shifting to service consumption and upgraded consumption needs, while lower- and middle-income groups still have strong demand for basic commodities. This requires the strengthening of public service guarantees and stabilizing of employment expectations.

So China should vigorously develop services in major cities and create more jobs while meeting people's demands. It should accelerate the construction of a new type of urbanization and the orderly transfer of manufacturing, and provide public service guarantee and localized manufacturing jobs for lower- and middle-income groups.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

Lowering loan interest rate good for real economy

The current loan prime rate (LPR) is 3.1 percent, while that for five years or more is 3.6 percent. This reduces the amount a borrower has to repay monthly toward mortgage loans. The move comes following a series of measures such as reserve requirement ratio cuts and interest rate reductions. This not only helps reduce loan costs for residents and enterprises but also effectively stimulates market vitality, promoting growth in consumption and investment.

On Oct 17, the People's Bank of China conducted a 200 billion yuan (\$28.07 billion) medium-term lending facility operation and a 100 billion yuan seven-day reverse purchasing operation, which laid the foundation for further reductions in the LPR, helping to lower banks' financing costs, thereby encour-

aging banks to finance real economy at lower interest rates.

That once again proves the flexibility and precision of monetary policy in macroeconomic regulation.

Continuous RRR cuts and interest rate reductions have effectively enhanced the public's sense of gain. For individuals, a decrease in monthly repayment means an increase in disposable income, playing a significant role in improving the quality of life and meeting broader consumption needs. Especially for young families, this policy adjustment can alleviate their spending pressure.

This adjustment can also further enhance confidence in the real estate market, providing positive expectations for its recovery.

For small and micro businesses, a reduction in loan costs can provide more abundant cash flow, helping businesses expand production scale, increase R&D investment, and explore new business areas.

This also provides strong support for innovation and development across the entire industry. Moreover, cost reductions also help improve product competitiveness, promote export growth, and give a boost to the domestic economy.

The reduction in the LPR brings many benefits, and its sustained effects depend on the effective transmission by financial institutions. They should clear downstream bottlenecks to ensure the benefits reach those most in need.

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

Nuclear weapons not means for common security

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from a statement by Shen Jian, China's ambassador for disarmament affairs and deputy permanent representative of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva, at the Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons at the First Committee for the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York on Monday:

The de-escalation of relevant regional tensions and achieving cease-fires as soon as possible are clear priorities for the international community. The nuclear-weapon states should take concrete measures to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security policy. Certain parties should refrain from playing with fire with the forward deployment of strategic forces.

The nuclear-weapon states should adhere to a pragmatic approach to nuclear disarmament. Countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals should assume special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament and continue to make drastic and substantive reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

China always advocates for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. It has pledged to not

be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances, and has unconditionally committed itself to not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones. China is dedicated to safeguarding the international nuclear arms control regime with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as its cornerstone, and supports the three pillars of the treaty in a comprehensive manner.

The nuclear-weapon states should approach the issue of transparency in an objective and rational manner. They vary significantly in terms of their nuclear arsenals, nuclear policies and security environment. The focus and limit of such transparency naturally vary among different nuclear-weapon states.

China has always kept its nuclear force at the minimum level required for national security. China's nuclear arsenal is limited in scope and it has no inten-

tion of being part of a nuclear arms race. Any country that does not use nuclear weapons against China will not be threatened by China's nuclear weapons.

The current challenges and risks in the nuclear field need to be tackled at their roots. Obsessed with the Cold War mentality, hyping up major power competition and instigating bloc confrontation will only lead the international nuclear arms control process to a dead end. Certain nuclear-weapon states should abandon the transfer of large quantities of weapons-grade uranium used for nuclear submarines to a non-nuclear-weapon state.

China advocates that the international community uphold the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, adhere to true multilateralism, respect each other's legitimate security concerns, and work together to promote nuclear arms control and disarmament.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

WARWICK POWELL

Enabler rather than enforcer

Statecraft enables countries to resolve differences not through military force, but through negotiation in which disputants are part of the solution via consensus

In a transforming global order, major countries' roles evolve to reflect the times. Being an enabler rather than an enforcer underlines the difference between the role of a major power in a unipolar world to that within the unfolding multi-nodal configuration.



For much of the past five centuries or so, the global configuration has been anchored by economic relations between major nations and those at the peripherals of the global economic system. As each successive wave of economic expansion took place, we also witnessed the emergence of new centers as old ones gave way. From the times since the city-state economies of Venice and Florence fanned European colonial expansion through the periods of Spanish, Dutch, English and more recently US-led globalization, the major economic powers of the day were also military powers, enabling market access and the ability to extract resources from subordinated peoples and places.

The world wars in the first half of the 20th century saw two transnational institutions emerge that aimed at creating a framework through which global order could be governed, in theory with less risk of warfare than had been the case in previous epochs. The League of Nations was created by the victors of World War I on Jan 10, 1920, but failed in its ostensible mission to prevent further wars and suffering. World War II proved its ineffectiveness. The League was disbanded formally on April 19, 1946, with its powers and functions transferred to the nascent United Nations.

Parallel to the UN, for the non-Soviet bloc, global economic and financial coordination was orchestrated through a myriad of intertwined institutions associated with what became known as the Bretton Woods system, which was formalized in 1944, initially with 44 participating nations. It delivered an international financial order, with countries guaranteeing convertibility of their currencies into the US



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

dollar at a fixed rate, with the dollar convertible to gold bullion. To mitigate the risk of nations pursuing competitive devaluations, the International Monetary Fund was established to monitor exchange rates and act as lender of last resort to nations with balance of payments deficits. In parallel, the International Bank for Reconstruction and

Development was created.

Gold convertibility of the US dollar ended in August 1971 when the United States depegged from gold, but the IMF and the IBRD — now known as the World Bank — continue to play pivotal roles in the global economic landscape. However, while these twin institutions were ostensibly charged with the

task of enabling global economic development to take place, and systemic imbalances to be addressed, the realities of uneven development and exchange rates continued to dominate the global economic system after World War II.

The IMF's role as lender of last resort has contributed to persistent developing world indebtedness,

with debts denominated in the US dollar. IMF loans have consistently failed to live up to their promises when it comes to poverty alleviation. For example, a recent study of loans to 81 developing countries from 1986 to 2016 by US researchers Glen Biglaiser and Ronald J. McGaurran concluded that "IMF loan arrangements containing structural reforms contribute to more people getting trapped in the poverty cycle..."

Rather than enabling countries to develop, the IMF enforced conditions that retarded economic development, reinforcing the uneven exchange that has been at the heart of the global economic system for centuries. Indeed, as Gaston Nieves and Alice Sodano from the World Inequality Lab have pointed out, since the expansion of financial integration and capital liberalization in the 1990s, "the top 20 percent richest countries are capturing more than 90 percent of total foreign wealth" and these inequalities are posing "constraints on the poorest countries". For them, the excess yield accrued by foreign capital is a privilege for the developed world, but for example, for the "BRICS countries the negative return differential constitutes a yearly burden of between 2-3 percent of their GDP".

Global inequality has never gone away, but has emerged with a renewed gusto since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the ideological and institutional domination of global affairs by what became known as the "Washington Consensus". US and Western economic domination was buttressed by intensified US military interventions, as demonstrated by Monica Duffy Toft and Sidita Kushi in their 2023 book *Dying by the Sword: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy*, in what observers

have described as the period of US unipolarity.

But the unipolar moment is now coming to an end. Global economic dynamics, particularly due to the rise of China over the last four decades, have transformed the configuration from one in which the US and the West acted as expropriating fulcrum, enforced by the strength of the US military and the omnipotence of the US dollar, to an emergent multi-nodal setup.

Diminished relative economic strength coupled with diluted military preponderance has undermined the capacity of the US and its Western allies to act as global enforcers — either through military interventions or by way of monetized sanctions and assorted prohibitions. The failure of sanctions and the general weaponization of the dollar system in recent years points clearly to the changes that are afoot.

Against this backdrop, the challenge for all nations — and particularly the larger and more influential ones — is to frame their conduct by learning the lessons of the past century. Primacy and unilateral authority no longer exist. The capacity of a small number of nations to expropriate wealth from others is diminishing, as developing countries now have choices for markets and technologies. No single nation can project itself as a global enforcer, by dint of military capabilities. And nor should it.

As enablers, major nations need to activate the tools of multi-nodal statecraft rather than military-backed enforcement. Statecraft focuses on enabling countries to find their own ways to development through collaboration, resolves differences not through military force, but by enabling negotiation in which disputants are part of the solution via consensus, and is committed to the symbiotic relationship between security and prosperity.

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WEI ZONGYOU

Navigating a crisis

China should strengthen strategic consultations with Europe to address mutual concerns and reduce the internal momentum behind NATO's 'Indo-Pacific' pivot



NATO's pivot toward the "Indo-Pacific" region can be traced back to the period following the end of the Cold War, when the bloc began turning its attention to Asia and sought preliminary security cooperation with certain Asian countries.

However, this cooperation was not based on the same strategic rationale as NATO's current "Indo-Pacific"

pivot. Today, NATO's shift toward the "Indo-Pacific" not only reflects changes in global geopolitics but also reveals a new security mindset. From the initial concept of "cooperative security" to the current strategy of "integrated deterrence", NATO's policy adjustments have underscored strategic competition with China and Russia. This shift marks a decline in major country cooperation and an intensification of great power rivalry, particularly in the context of China-United States strategic competition and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. NATO is reshaping its role in the "Indo-Pacific" region, which is creating new challenges for Asian countries.

In the early 1990s, as the Cold War ended and the Soviet bloc disintegrated, the US strategic community engaged in debates over what grand strategy Washington should pursue. One camp proposed a new strategy of "cooperative security" to replace the Cold War containment strategy. In the 1990s, under this concept, NATO began engaging with Asia-Pacific coun-

For China, it is essential to assess NATO's "Indo-Pacific" pivot and its trajectory in the context of China-US strategic competition, regional power dynamics, and the profound adjustments in great power relations that are part of major changes unseen in a century.

tries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, inviting them to support and participate in NATO's military operations in the Balkans. After the Sept 11 attacks in the US, NATO, backed by US leadership, gradually established security partnerships with Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the Republic of Korea in the name of counterterrorism.

In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War and the Sept 11 attacks, NATO formed security partnerships with certain Asia-Pacific countries within the framework of "cooperative security" — aimed at enlisting their assistance in NATO's military and "stabilization" operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan and the Middle East. In comparison, the current pivot toward the "Indo-Pacific" is driven by an entirely different strategic logic. It is more aligned with the US strategy of competition with China, and in the context of the Russia-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Ukraine conflict, and it serves the purpose of "integrated deterrence" against China and Russia. The strategic thinking behind "integrated deterrence" concentrates on addressing "challenges posed by China" while simultaneously dealing with the Russian threat. The US plans to address the strategic and security challenges posed by China and Russia through "close cooperation" with NATO allies and "Indo-Pacific" partners.

Driven by the logic of "integrated deterrence", NATO's current "Indo-Pacific" pivot exhibits some new characteristics.

First, the bloc is shifting from emphasizing great power cooperation to focusing on great power competition. In the 1990s and after the Sept 11 attacks, NATO's engagement with the Asia-Pacific was based on the logic of "cooperative

security", which posited that great power competition had been replaced by great power cooperation, and that such cooperation could effectively address both traditional and nontraditional security challenges. However, NATO's current "Indo-Pacific" pivot has evolved in the context of US-China strategic competition and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Its underlying logic is the replacement of great power cooperation with great power competition, highlighting China and Russia as security threats and "systemic challenges" to NATO. NATO has been deepening defense cooperation with Japan, Australia, the ROK and New Zealand, focusing on "Indo-Pacific" maritime security, and stressing the "indivisibility" of Euro-Asian security, with the aim of imposing dual deterrence on China and Russia.

Second, NATO is advocating the interconnection of Euro-Asian security. The Euro-Atlantic region has always been the core of NATO's security agenda. NATO's new strategic concept document states that NATO's core mission is to "safeguard the freedom and security of all its members". Collective defense is at the heart of NATO. However, as US-China strategic competition intensifies, particularly with the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, NATO has begun to emphasize the interconnectedness and "indivisibility" of Euro-Asian security while ensuring the security of its Euro-Atlantic members. US officials and NATO's secretary-general have promoted the narrative of "Ukraine Today, Asia Tomorrow" in various settings.

Third, Japan, Australia, the ROK and New Zealand have been key

strategic pillars for the "Indo-Pacific" pivot of NATO. The bloc has invited the leaders of the four countries to NATO summits, upgrading defense and security cooperation with them. It has also focused on defense technology collaboration with these nations, indicating NATO's intent to establish the four nations as key strategic pillars in its "Indo-Pacific" pivot.

However, NATO's pivot to the "Indo-Pacific" is constrained by several factors, including NATO's core strategic interests, its military capabilities, and differing opinions within the alliance. As such, the future of NATO's "Indo-Pacific" pivot remains uncertain. Overall, NATO's "Indo-Pacific" pivot is more rhetorical than substantive, with security cooperation focusing mainly on soft security areas such as defense technology, defense production, and maritime domain awareness. The pivot is also likely to be significantly impacted by shifts in US domestic politics.

For China, it is essential to assess NATO's "Indo-Pacific" pivot and its trajectory in the context of China-US strategic competition, regional power dynamics, and the profound adjustments in great power relations that are part of major changes unseen in a century. At the same time, it is crucial to recognize the constraints and internal limitations NATO faces in its "Indo-Pacific" pivot, stemming from its core mission, military capabilities, and internal disagreements. While observing some of NATO's emerging trends, it is also necessary to recognize the significant uncertainties and disruptive factors that will shape its future development. Amid these complexities and uncertainties, China should maintain strategic resolve, properly navigate crises, and, in particular, strengthen diplomatic and strategic consultations with Europe to address mutual concerns and reduce the internal momentum behind NATO's "Indo-Pacific" pivot.

The author is a professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Textiles symposium bolsters bilateral ties between China and Africa

Annual event helps support scientific, technological and cultural exchanges

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As a long-term development exchange platform, the Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel has been held alternately in China and Kenya, attracting the participation of African countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

In May 2015, Donghua University hosted the first Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel, which was attended by more than 230 domestic and foreign experts, professors and postgraduates from six countries and regions, including Kenya, Zimbabwe and Sudan. Thereafter, the two sides agreed to hold the symposium in China and Africa in turn.

In 2016, the second Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel added the Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum, which effectively promoted mutual understanding, trust and cultural exchanges between Chinese and Kenyan peoples and Chinese and African peoples. Since then, the Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum has become an annual event for China-Africa scientific, technological and cultural exchanges.

In 2018, the fourth Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum was held at Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia. Before the forum, the delegation of Donghua University attended the



Representatives from Donghua University and Africa attend the Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum in 2022. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

unveiling ceremony of the Belt and Road Textile Education and Training Center (Africa), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. It was jointly built by Orient International (Holding), Donghua University, and Yangtze River Delta International Seminar on Textile Production Cooperation.

At the unveiling, Weng Tiejui, former vice-minister of education and former vice-mayor of Shanghai, lauded the achievements made by Donghua University in actively responding to the BRI and continu-

ously deepening cooperation with Africa in all aspects of education. Weng expressed hope that the university would give full play to its unique advantages in textiles, materials, design and other fields to train more high-quality enterprise talents for the development of the African textile industry, so as to make substantive contributions to advancing China-Africa cooperative relations.

On the basis of the joint university academic forum, Donghua University and Kenya's Moi University

followed the development of artificial intelligence technology and explored the new form of forum with digital technology. In 2020, the sixth Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum was hosted online for the first time and broadcast live on multiple media platforms, attracting attention from many parties and achieving remarkable results.

On Dec 14, 2023, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations

between China and Kenya, the ninth Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum was held in Mombasa, Kenya. The forum was jointly hosted by Donghua University, Moi University in Kenya, Quanzhou Normal University and the University of Bayreuth in Germany. The event was covered by many Chinese and foreign media, including China Daily, People's Daily and Guangming Daily. Driven by digital education, Donghua University has accelerated

the pace of deepening international educational governance and people-to-people exchanges, while international exchanges and cooperation have been continuously expanded.

The 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation took place on Sept 4-6 in Beijing under the theme "Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and Build a High-Level China-Africa Community with a Shared Future". It was attended by 53 heads of state and government, including Morocco's Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch.

This year's 10th edition of the Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum will be held under the guidance of the China National Textile and Apparel Council, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and the Moroccan Association of Textile and Apparel Industries (AMITH), and supported by institutes such as the Moroccan School of Textile and Clothing Industries (ESTIH).

The theme of this year's forum is "Circular Textiles, Greener Life". Participants will conduct exchanges on topics including more advanced, functional, and greener fiber, fiber treatment and advanced textile technology, intelligent manufacturing and application of AI technology in textiles and apparel, sustainable development of textile composite materials, and green development of textiles and apparel, to promote the industrial and educational cooperation between China and Morocco in the field of green textiles.

They will also implement the important consensus reached by the heads of state from China and Morocco at various high-level meetings.



From left: The fourth Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum is held in Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia, in 2018. Participants share insights online during the forum in 2021. The audience applauds at the 2021 forum.



Donghua University plays leading role in fostering cooperation

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Donghua University is spearheading innovative strategies to bolster China-Africa collaboration.

In May 2024, Donghua University was selected as a member of the China-Africa Universities 100 Cooperation Plan and the China-Africa Consortium of Universities Exchange Mechanism. The former is a project to implement the major initiative of the Plan for China-Africa Cooperation on Talent Development, based on the "China-Africa Universities 20+20 Cooperation Plan". Application for the plan and its selection are organized by the China Association of Higher Education under the guidance of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges of the Ministry of Education.

The plan involves 10 fields, including digital education, health, agricultural development, trade and investment, mineral resources, connectivity, environment and sustainable development, language, culture and civilization, governance and social management, and media communication and national image. African partner institutions and Donghua University will carry out cooperation in digital education. Empowering local education, Donghua has provided support via its construction of smart classrooms in Kenya.

On July 22, the unveiling ceremony for the "Shanghai Love Classroom" took place at Moi University in Kenya. Distinguished attendees included



From left: The unveiling ceremony of the "Shanghai Love Classroom" takes place at Moi University in Kenya on July 22. Representatives of Donghua University, the Open University of China and the Open University of Kenya sign agreements on the establishment of the China-Africa Regional Cooperation Center for Digital Education. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shang Yuying, deputy secretary-general of the Shanghai government; Yan Bo, chief of the Shanghai Bureau of Ecology and Environment; Chen Ge, vice-president of Donghua University; Isaac Kosgey, vice-chancellor of Moi University; and Isaac Kimengi, deputy vice-chancellor of Moi University in charge of academics, research and extension affairs.

The "Shanghai Love Classroom" project, initiated by the Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation, aims to promote the Belt and Road Initiative and implement a series of public welfare projects to spread the philanthropic philosophy of Soong Ching Ling worldwide. Supported by the Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation and Shanghai-based JuneYao Group, Donghua University donated electronic classroom facilities to Moi

University, including touch-integrated video screens, remote direct recording systems, and audio equipment, so as to establish standardized smart classrooms. This contribution is expected to significantly enhance the digital education capabilities at Moi University and explore innovative paths for international educational cooperation.

As the implementing organization for the "Shanghai Love Classroom" project, Donghua University has consistently leveraged its academic strengths to promote global educational equity through digital empowerment. Utilizing smart classrooms, virtual teaching and research platforms, and virtual simulation training platforms, Donghua has collaborated with more than 40 specialized institu-



tions in textiles, materials and fashion from 19 countries to conduct online training programs, offer premium online courses, and has hosted nine sessions of the Sino-Africa International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel and Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum, as well as four sessions of the Advanced Seminar for Textile Industry International Cooperation (BR-TIIC). These initiatives have driven the development of an emerging engineering education community of the textile industry in the digital era.

As well, the university established the China-Africa Regional Cooperation Center for Digital Education. In September 2024, the China-Africa Consortium of Universities Exchange Mechanism Annual Con-

ference was held in Beijing. With a memorandum of understanding on cooperation signed, the China-Africa Regional Cooperation Center for Digital Education was jointly founded by Donghua University, the Open University of China and the Open University of Kenya. The signing ceremony was chaired by Guan Peijun, vice-president of the China Association of Higher Education and former deputy ministerial-level member of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission. Signatories included Chen Ge, vice-president of Donghua University, Fan Xianrui, vice-president of the Open University of China and Caroline Omulando, deputy vice-chancellor of the Open University of Kenya.

The China-Africa Regional Cooperation Center for Digital Educa-

tion has been established to promote China-Africa cooperation in the field of digital education, and to cultivate talents of all kinds by utilizing digital technology, as well as by developing academic and non-academic education projects. A demonstrative platform will be built to lead digital education in the universities of both countries.

Based on the overseas learning center platform of the Open University of China, a complete system of China-Africa digital education is planned, involving the establishment of a digital education community for teaching-production cooperation and practice. The cooperation covers the joint construction of the Kenya Open Learning Centre subordinate to the Open University of China, as well as the further improvement of facilities, such as specialized classrooms, teaching laboratories and video interactive systems, to be commonly achieved by partner institutions in Africa. What's more, the center will make use of multimodal educational and teaching data to provide support for the development and application of major artificial intelligence models.

This cooperation has been supported by Lenovo Group, iFlytek, Chengdu-headquartered Sobey, Huawei, JuneYao Group and Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation, as well as others, to jointly provide educational technology and smart education solutions for Africa and help African countries develop high-quality education.

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

A volleyball celebration across the Taiwan Strait

By LI XINRAN
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Standing at 173 cm, Hung Yu-tien is the tallest player on her volleyball team, so she was surprised to see her opponent Li Yushan, who is 197 cm tall.

"I thought to myself, 'Is she really a high school student?'" Hung chuckled.

In the latest episode of China Daily's *Strait Forward*, nearly 600 young volleyball players from the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao gathered in Xiamen, Fujian province, to participate in the first Cross-Strait (Jimei) Youth Volleyball Friendship Match.

Hung, 16, plays for the Taiwan Taichung Dongshan Senior High School Team, while Li, 17, is part of the Fujian Youth Team.

"In blocking and attacking, they have a big advantage," Hung said, referring to the height advantage of Li's team.

However, Li noted that Hung's team has its own strengths. "They are overall very well-coordinated, and they pushed and fought hard," she said.

The two were also amused to discover that they use different terms for positions in the sport. For example, the last position is called *dapaoshou* (the cannoneer) in Taiwan and *zhugong* (outside hitter) on the Chinese mainland; the setter is referred to as *juqiuyuan* in Taiwan and *erchuan* on the mainland.

Shared aspirations

Despite their differences, the two young athletes have a lot in common, and they both believe they can learn much from each game, regardless of the outcome.

For example, many players from both sides of the Taiwan Strait shared how the film *Leap* (2020) impacted them. The movie tells the legendary story of the Chinese women's volleyball team, from their first world championship victory in 1981 to the nerve-wracking battle against Brazil in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Hung and Li even had the opportunity to speak with Hui Ruohui, the former captain of the Chinese women's volleyball team, via video chat. During the conversation, Hui encouraged them to enjoy the journey.

"I faced various difficulties, but I believe that sharing a dream with your teammates and supporting and encouraging each other toward that dream will help you grow continuously and develop a greater sense of responsibility," Hui said. She hopes players from both sides of the Strait can not only improve their skills but also build lasting friendships on the court.

They certainly did. While Li and Hung competed fiercely during the game, they instantly switched to friend mode afterward.

"Although we are rivals on the court, we are good friends off the court," Li said.

Huang Hung-chin, a representative of the Chinese Taipei Volleyball Association, highlighted the importance of cross-Strait exchanges facilitated by the sport. He explained that young people from Taiwan eagerly anticipate the cultural richness of the Chinese mainland and are striving to embrace the mainland volleyball spirit, especially that of the women's volleyball team.

"This event truly promotes emotional connections between us," he said.



Hung Yu-tien (left) and Li Yushan pose for a selfie together. ZHENG SHUAIFAN / CHINA DAILY

The power of shared voices

English speaking competition brings together students from around the world, highlighting the role of public speaking in fostering cultural exchange.

Contestants pose for a photo at the Belt and Road English Speaking Competition & the "21st Century Cup" National English Speaking Competition, held in Wuxi, Jiangsu, from Oct 17 to Monday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



"I want to show that women can be not only elegant and sweet but also successful through the power of their voices."

Sun Yiting, a student at Chongqing University



"I truly want to be their voice because right now, I have the ability to speak."

Khaurisa Sarah Makhubele, a South African student at the University of the Western Cape



"It's about the genuine relationships formed among participants from various backgrounds, united by their shared passion for public speaking."

Wang Yuting, a student at Nanjing University

By MENG WENJIE in Wuxi, Jiangsu
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This year is the second time that 20-year-old Sun Yiting, a student at Chongqing University, participated in the "21st Century Cup" National English Speaking Competition. However, it is her first time reaching the finals, fulfilling a dream she has held since the third grade when she first took part in the competition.

From Oct 17 to Monday, Sun joined hundreds of contestants from around the world to gather in Wuxi, East China's Jiangsu province, where the 29th "21st Century Cup" National English Speaking Competition, the 6th Belt and Road Youth English Speaking Competition, and the 7th "21st Century Cup" National Youth English Speaking Competition were held.

For several years, Sun has followed the impromptu speaking topics for the competition. She appreciates how these topics connect to current events and social issues, allowing participants to share personal stories and present youth perspectives on today's world and its future.

"I pay special attention to topics related to women," Sun said, reflecting on her childhood experiences in school speech competitions, where, despite being equally matched with the boys, they were often selected over her.

In her speech, Sun shared a story from the film *Young Woman and the Sea* (2024), which depicts Gertrude Ederle, the first woman to swim across the English Channel, breaking gender barriers as she boldly pursued her dreams.

Sun's delivery was also confident and assertive. "I want to show that women can be not only elegant and sweet but also successful through the power of their voices," she said. Sun achieved her goal by winning the crown at the grand final.

In fact, all the champions across the three categories were female. Khaurisa Sarah Makhubele, a 20-year-old South African student at the University of the Western Cape, won the championship in the Belt and Road competition. Meanwhile, Wang Yuting, 23, from Nanjing University, claimed the title in the youth category.

This was Makhubele's first visit to China, and what impressed her most about the competition was the opportunity to share cultures with peers from countries like Russia, Hungary, and New Zealand. "It's inspiring to be in a room with passionate people, and it makes you feel passionate too," she said.

For Makhubele, public speaking is a way to give a voice to those who are often unheard.

"It's very sad to see people dying every day and to witness children my age who can't attend university like I can. I truly want to be their voice because right now, I have the ability to speak," she said.

Global connections

With the slogan "Let the world hear you", the competition has not only promoted diverse voices but also brought together young people from around the globe. "It's about the genuine relationships formed among participants from various backgrounds, united by their shared passion for public speaking," Wang said.

Chen Xiyuan, 20, a student at Beijing Foreign Studies University, echoed this sentiment. "Many of my closest friends were made through this competition," she said.

This is Chen's 10th year participating in the "21st Century Cup". The competition has played a significant role in her personal growth, shaping her worldview and encouraging her to focus on national and social developments, as well as China's interactions with the world.

"Diversity sparks ideas. We should welcome differ-

ent viewpoints and allow them to flourish. While we have a shared vision for global development, we can achieve that goal through various ways," she said.

Xue Shuyun, 22, a recent graduate of Zhejiang Normal University, shared that participating in the competition helped her step out of her social comfort zone and inspired her to embrace the concept of peer learning.

"As new ideas keep emerging, we don't have to wait for educational institutions, textbooks, or teachers to update their knowledge; we can learn right away from the peers around us in different fields," she said.

As a recent graduate, Xue has launched an English education studio. Her team of about 20 young professionals from various fields, each with their own specialties, is dedicated to teaching English to peers of similar age groups.

Xue has found that public speaking not only encourages her to critically analyze issues but also enhances her leadership skills, enabling her to express her ideas clearly and confidently.

"Many young entrepreneurs have excellent ideas but often struggle to articulate them fully or inspire others to join their efforts, which can lead to those ideas missing the opportunity to become a reality," she said.

Jansen Kosasih, 21, an Indonesian student studying psychology at Tsinghua University, is also discovering the transformative power of public speaking. For him, public speaking is a way for people to connect and learn from one another through the topics they discuss, the insights they share, and the personalities they express.

"I think that's one of the best ways to build connections. The greatest thing about this competition is that I'm sure I'll make more long-lasting friends, and it'll be the start of many new friendships for the future," he said.

Z WEEKLY

Shared moments, shared future

A personal experience of cultural exchange highlights how BRICS youth are shaping a more cooperative and inclusive global future.

When I first arrived in Britain as a university student, I never imagined that a simple cooking session would teach me one of the most profound lessons in cultural exchange.

It was the eve of Chinese New Year, and in a small kitchen with my Chinese flatmates, we mixed Indian spices with Chinese flavors. What began as a simple icebreaker meal became hours of conversation about our countries' histories, values, and dreams for the future.

We laughed, debated, and shared stories, realizing that despite the distance between our homes, we had far more in common than we thought.

Fast forward to the BRICS Young Leaders Forum held in Kazan, Russia, this September, and that same spirit of collaboration was alive. The room was filled with young leaders from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and beyond, all eager to contribute to shaping a shared future.

At its core, the BRICS Youth Initiative, signed at this forum, is grounded in the belief that today's youth hold the key to unlocking new opportunities for deeper cooperation within the BRICS framework.

As I sat there, it struck me again that true cooperation doesn't start with policy agreements or formal speeches. It starts with people. It's born in everyday moments, like sharing meals or late-night conversations. These are the moments where real connections are made.

This realization has shaped my work as a journalist in China, where I've spent years telling stories that aim to bridge gaps in understanding between cultures. Personal interactions can indeed transcend the rigid boundaries set by politics or history.

The same principles apply to BRICS cooperation today. While BRICS, as a political and economic bloc, has achieved much on the global stage, it is the youth who can breathe fresh life into its objectives. Young people bring creativity, innovation, and — perhaps most importantly — a willingness to engage with one another in ways that break down barriers.

From vision to action

Today's youth are extremely connected. The internet and social media make it easier than ever to share ideas, collaborate on projects, and learn from each other.

But true collaboration requires more than just connectivity. It demands a genuine effort to understand one another's perspectives and values.

The BRICS Youth Initiative acknowledges this, and it created



Top: Shamim Zakaria (front left) was invited as a guest at a village festival in the Xiangxi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture, Hunan province. Above left: Zakaria spoke at the 2024 BRICS Young Leaders Forum, held on Sept 25 in Kazan, Russia. Above right: Zakaria (far right) enjoying a Chinese New Year dinner with his Chinese flatmates while studying in the UK in 2015. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

opportunities for youth-led initiatives that tackle global challenges while fostering deeper understanding between BRICS nations.

For example, I've been part of discussions between Indian and Chinese youth on issues like poverty alleviation, technology, and public health — areas where our countries can and should collaborate.

These conversations need to happen more often, and in more struc-

tured ways, if we are to turn potential into action.

Youth exchange is also about shared experiences, whether through education, arts, sports, or even something as simple as travel.

During my time in China, I met countless young people eager to learn about India, just as I've encountered young Indians fascinated by Chinese culture. These informal exchanges often foster

more goodwill than any number of political agreements.

The world today faces unprecedented challenges — climate change, inequality, and digital transformation, to name a few. These problems are global, and they require global solutions. The youth of BRICS countries are uniquely positioned to contribute, not just because of their skills or education, but because of their ability to think

beyond national borders.

The BRICS Youth Initiative calls for strengthening collaboration in fields like technology, social governance, and economic development. But this collaboration will only be effective if driven by those most invested in the future — young people. They are the ones who will live with the consequences of today's decisions, so they must help shape tomorrow's solutions.

Building the future

Perhaps the most important contribution young people can make to BRICS cooperation is promoting inclusivity. As inheritors of a world shaped by both cooperation and conflict, they understand the importance of inclusivity both within their own countries and between nations. They see diversity not as a challenge, but as an asset.

This mindset is crucial for the future of BRICS. If the bloc is to continue growing, it must foster an environment where all voices are heard, and where the contributions of different cultures are not just tolerated but celebrated.

This is especially important for youth, who often feel marginalized in discussions about global governance and development. The BRICS Youth Initiative offers young people not just a platform to be heard, but an opportunity to lead the way toward a more inclusive, equitable world.

As someone who has spent the last decade working to bridge cultural divides, I see immense value in the BRICS Youth Initiative. However, for this initiative to succeed, it must be more than a document signed at a forum. It must be lived out through real connections, real collaborations, and real action. And this is where young people have a crucial role to play.

The initiative calls on BRICS youth to embrace opportunities for skills training, career development, and volunteerism, and to take responsibility for shaping the BRICS agenda. These are not just lofty ideals; they are actionable steps that young people can and should take across BRICS countries.

Whether through student exchanges, joint research projects, or entrepreneurial collaborations, there are countless ways for youth to contribute meaningfully to BRICS cooperation.

The signing of the BRICS Youth Initiative is an important milestone, but it's only the beginning. The real work lies ahead, in the hands of young people willing to take on the responsibility of building a more connected, cooperative, and inclusive world. And having seen firsthand the passion, creativity, and determination of BRICS youth, I have no doubt they are up to the task.

Together, they have the potential not just to enhance BRICS cooperation, but to redefine it for a new generation, and in doing so, create a brighter future for the world as a whole.

Written by Shamim Zakaria, an Indian media professional based in Beijing.

Gen Zers explore the cultural riches of Yixing

By LI XINRAN
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"As foreigners, we were more familiar with China's rapid development in science and technology, but our time in Yixing allowed us to see another side of China — one rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage," said Nakahara Kosumosi, a Japanese graduate of Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Nakahara was one of 10 Gen Zers from eight countries who participated in an eco-tourism trip from Oct 7 to 9 in Yixing, East China's Jiangsu province.

During the three-day trip, the participants experienced a variety of activities, from tasting local culinary delights to exploring natural attractions.

They also had hands-on experience with Yixing's famous "purple clay" and learned about local efforts to develop and conserve national forests.

The Yixing Bamboo Sea Scenic Area, in particular, left a lasting

impression on many of the students. Elena Kozelko, from Russia, shared that it was her first time seeing bamboo in real life. "The view was breathtaking," she said.

Nakahara pointed out that as the largest bamboo forest in East China, the area makes a strong visual impact while also offering spiritual inspiration.

"I felt a majestic aura of chivalry, reminiscent of the swordsmen described in Chinese martial arts novels, deep within the bamboo forest," said Nakahara. "Compared to the wabi-sabi philosophy of Japanese bamboo forests, which emphasizes quiet beauty, the Chinese image of bamboo highlights grandeur and majesty. It serves not only as a natural landscape but also as a cultural symbol."

For Marina Dinaeva, a Russian undergraduate student at Shanghai University, the highlight of the trip was experiencing tea culture. Witnessing the tea-making process firsthand and tasting freshly brewed local varieties was "a dream

come true".

Dinaeva recalled meeting a woman at Jiuxiang Tea Plantation, who generously shared her knowledge of

tea harvesting. She patiently explained to Dinaeva the nuances of picking the perfect tea leaves, a skill that had been passed down through

generations.

"Her passion for tea was contagious," Dinaeva said. "The serene environment of the tea fields, combined with the rich tradition behind each cup, was a perfect reflection of Yixing's deep cultural roots. I learned so much more about this beloved beverage."

Michael Oduro, a student from Ghana studying at Beijing Foreign Studies University, was surprised by how the past and present blend at Shanjuan Cave. He learned from the guide that the cave had been preserved for millions of years.

"Inside, it felt like entering an underground city, with modern technology such as sophisticated lighting systems and even disco lights enhancing the experience," he said. "Emerging from the cave, I was filled with wonder, having witnessed such a natural marvel for the first time."

Nakahara also shared a surprising moment during her visit to Yixing National Park. She was impressed by how it had expanded



Left: Elena Kozelko (left) observes a local woman harvesting tea leaves at Jiuxiang Tea Plantation in Yixing, Jiangsu. Right: Michael Oduro (left) with fellow international students at Longchishan Bicycle Park in Yixing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and become so organized in just a few years. "Walking in the park, I felt as if I were in a 'natural oxygen bar', breathing fresh air and experiencing the tranquility of nature. Every tree here is a perfect advertisement for Yixing, showcasing the city's natural beauty to the world," she said.

Reflecting on the trip, Nakahara expressed her amazement at discovering this slow-paced city nestled between bustling metropolises like Shanghai and Hangzhou.

"It offers a retreat for those accustomed to fast-paced urban life, enabling them to unwind and enjoy the peace and beauty of nature. I believe that, in time, Yixing will also become a popular vacation destination for foreigners."

As for Oduro, he feels that the three-day experience allowed them, as international students in China, to dive deep into Chinese culture. "We leave with a desire for more — more experiences, more learning, and more opportunities to connect with this vibrant culture," he said.