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# CHINA DAILY

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## BRICS summit to strengthen unity

Grouping ushers in greater cooperation of Global South

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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The 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, is expected to witness reinforced unity among emerging markets and Global South countries, as well as their greater support for multilateralism and global stability, analysts said.

They made the observation as President Xi Jinping was set to attend the landmark event from Tuesday to Thursday.

What makes this year's summit special is that it is the first of its kind following the most recent historic expansion of BRICS.

Chinese officials have emphasized that Beijing attaches great importance to the Kazan summit and fully supports Russia's role as the host.

Zhang Hanhui, Chinese ambassador to Russia, told Xinhua News Agency in a recent interview that the expanded BRICS cooperation will make more contributions to improving the global governance system.

"China will continue to work closely with other BRICS members to forge a more comprehensive, closer, practical and inclusive high-quality partnership, and together embark on a new journey for BRICS," he said.

With the latest expansion, BRICS accounts for roughly 30 percent of the world's land area, 45 percent of the world's population and 20 percent of global trade. The grouping has entered a new era of greater BRICS cooperation, observers noted.

Behind this is the rise of emerging markets and developing countries as a whole, and the fact that the Global South accounts for more than 40 percent of the global economy, they added.

"We could strive for new milestone outcomes in such areas as finance, AI, and energy and minerals to get the greater BRICS cooperation off to a good start," Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a BRICS foreign ministers' meeting on Sept 26 in New York.

President Xi Jinping to attend the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia (From Tuesday to Thursday)

**BRICS COUNTRIES ACCOUNT FOR**

- 30 percent of the world's land area
- 45 percent of the world's population
- 20 percent of global trade

**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.

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In the first three quarters of this year, China's imports and exports to and from the other BRICS countries totaled 4.62 trillion yuan (\$649.66 billion), up 5.1 percent year-on-year, according to the General Administration of Customs.

"The BRICS cooperation mechanism is one of the key platforms for China's engagement in global governance," said Ren Lin, head of the

Department of Global Governance at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics.

In recent years, China has put forward the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, which are compatible with the content of BRICS cooperation and will drive BRICS pragmatic cooperation to a new level, she said.

Referring to the greater BRICS cooperation, she said it has "enhanced the ability of emerging market countries and developing countries to cope with external risks and has promoted pragmatic

cooperation among the Global South countries."

Recent months have witnessed a growing number of countries, such as Thailand and Malaysia, expressing their intention to join BRICS.

Jiang Tianjiao, deputy director of the Center for BRICS Studies at the Fudan Development Institute in Shanghai, said this also reflects that ideas such as "decoupling", proxy wars and protectionism are unpopular around the world.

"With its spirit of openness, inclusiveness, cooperation and win-win situations, BRICS will be able to gain wider recognition worldwide," he told Xinhua.

Magdy Amer, vice-president of the Egypt-China Friendship Association and former Egyptian ambassador to China, said that emerging markets are now playing a more important role in the world order, and "BRICS Plus" cooperation — collaboration of BRICS with countries outside the grouping, mainly developing countries — enjoys great potential.

"BRICS Plus" cooperation provides an opportunity for emerging markets to reach consensus on global issues and to boost the common development and growth of their economies, he said at a forum on BRICS cooperation in governance and culture last month in Moscow.

WORLD WATCH  
By Marcos Cordeiro Pires

### Paving the way for an inclusive intl order

The 16th BRICS Summit will take place in Kazan, Russia from Tuesday to Thursday. The meeting, the first of its kind since the group's expansion, will have leaders from the new member countries join the discussions. Invited by Russian President Vladimir Putin, countries including Venezuela, Malaysia, Bolivia and Mongolia are also expected to participate as guests to follow the discussions.

This year, several meetings have been held covering crucial themes such as finance, climate change, health cooperation, women's and youth rights, intellectual property, etc. The induction of new countries as members and the interest expressed by others in joining BRICS prove the cooperation mechanism's vitality and potential. BRICS promotes multilateralism and advocates a fairer and more inclusive international order that reflects the political, demographic and economic weight of the countries of the Global South.

The 16th summit is taking place at a very challenging time, amid political and military instability in many corners of the world, such as Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Here it is worth highlighting Brazil and China's commitment to seeking peaceful and fair solutions to the conflict in Ukraine. On September 27, a ministerial meeting of the "Friends for Peace" group was held on the Ukraine crisis at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The meeting was co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira and Chief Adviser of the Presidency of Brazil Celso Amorim. Representatives from many Global South countries were present, including South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, Thailand, Vietnam and Zambia.

One topic that is attracting much attention in the Western media is cooperation in financial matters among the BRICS members. The priorities of the Russian presidency include enhancing the role of BRICS states in the international monetary and financial system, developing inter-bank cooperation, providing assistance in transforming the international payments system, expanding the use of national currencies of BRICS states in mutual trade; and strengthening cooperation on the use of payment systems and financial technologies.

In the financial sector, BRICS made its mark first in 2014 when it announced the creation of the Contingent Reserve Fund and the New Development Bank. The group also acted together in defense of greater democratization of the management of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Brazil, India, Russia and South Africa are founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment

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### Events make voices of global youth better heard

By GUI QIAN  
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A total of 276 young speakers from around the world gathered on the shores of Taihu Lake in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, to make their voices heard through China Daily's flagship English speaking competitions.

The 6th Belt and Road Youth English Speaking Competition Global Final and the 29th "21st Century Cup" National English Speaking Competition Grand Final were held in Wuxi from Oct 17 to Monday.

The Belt and Road competition's global final attracted contestants from more than 50 countries and regions, while the "21st Century Cup" event drew finalists from among more than 600,000 young people from 34 competition zones nationwide, all eager to share China's story with the world.

The two champions of the "21st Century Cup" college category and youth category will represent China in the 2025 International Public Speaking Competition in London.

"From the Belt and Road Youth English Speaking Competition to the '21st Century Cup' National English Speaking Competition,



Participants in the 6th Belt and Road Youth English Speaking Competition Global Final applaud champion Khaurisa Sarah Makhubele from South Africa in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, on Monday. ZHAI JIHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

young talent with international vision, cross-cultural communication skills and innovative thinking continue to surprise us with wonderful moments of intellectual exchange," said Xu Ying, a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Jiangsu Provincial Committee and head of the provincial committee's publicity department.

She also acknowledged and praised the cooperation between China Daily and Jiangsu province in promoting youth activities domestically as well as internationally.

Xu made the remarks at the award ceremony for the two competitions on Monday afternoon. The ceremony was also attended by Chen Dawei, director of the International Communication Bureau of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, Du Xiaogang, Party secretary of Wuxi, and Li Qiufeng, head of the

publicity department of the CPC Wuxi committee.

In a speech at the ceremony, Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, emphasized the importance of inter-civilizational exchanges and said that by hosting a series of global events, China Daily takes on the responsibility of fostering interactions and exchanges among young people worldwide.

He shared three vivid stories from these events, which he referred to as "China encounters", "brave voices" and "long live friendship". Through these stories, he urged the youths to unleash their potential.

"I hope that every young person here will join hands and forge ahead, courageously becoming the strivers, pioneers and contributors of our era," Qu said.

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### WUHAN PLAYS ITS ACES TO CASH IN ON TENNIS FEVER

String of champions, tournaments, training programs turn city into hub for sport

By LI YINGXUE  
and LIU KUN in Wuhan



Fresh off her Olympic victory, Zheng Qinwen embarked on a grueling stretch of four consecutive tournaments, culminating in a runner-up finish at the Wuhan Open, her hometown event, earlier this month.

Battling fatigue and a slight muscle strain in her left leg, "Queen Wen" made the tough decision to withdraw from last week's Ningbo Open, officially ending the China leg of her season.

But the 22-year-old's remarkable performances — reaching the semifinals at the China Open and securing a spot in the Wuhan Open final — were enough to secure her first-ever qualification for the prestigious WTA Finals next month.

In a parallel storyline, 11-year-old Li Mengxiao, also from

Wuhan, Hubei province, is chasing her own tennis dreams. Ranked 41st in the girls' U12 category by the Chinese Tennis Association, Mengxiao is still more than 1,300 points shy of qualifying for her year-end championship. But the young hopeful plans to compete in several more tournaments, and is determined to close the gap.

The Wuhan Open was an occasion that connected two generations of Chinese tennis. As Zheng battled on the court, Mengxiao was right there with her — serving as a ball girl for every match, and watching up close as her hometown hero carved out yet another milestone in her career.

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# XI'S VISIT

## Founding member China vows to continue strengthening BRICS

Ambassador to Russia highlights importance of bloc ahead of upcoming meeting in Kazan

By REN QI in Kazan, Russia  
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As a founding member, China is willing to work with its partners to continue improving the BRICS cooperation mechanism and creating a better future for human society, a senior Chinese diplomat has said.

In the 18 years since the establishment of the mechanism, China and its BRICS partners have always worked hand in hand to move forward bravely against all odds and played an important role on the international stage carving out a path of mutually beneficial cooperation, according to Zhang Hanhui, the Chinese Ambassador to Russia.

The past years saw the rapid development of emerging-market economies and developing countries. Some major powers, however, have regained their Cold War mentality, wielded the stick of sanctions and instigated camp confrontation, Zhang said.

"When the world is at the historical crossroads of unilateralism or multilateralism, President Xi Jinping has put forward the concept of a community of a shared future for mankind, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative to contribute Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions to solving the global peace deficit, development deficit, security deficit and governance deficit," Zhang noted.

The ambassador emphasized that being the founding member, China will work with its partners to continuously improve the BRICS cooperation mechanism, continue to gather the consensus of the Global South, advocate and practice the above-mentioned three global initiatives, and make BRICS contributions to creating a better future for human society.

The historic expansion last year has created a milestone in the development of the BRICS.

At the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod in June this year, all parties highly



Chinese musicians play traditional tunes of the BRICS members with *guzheng*, a folk Chinese stringed instrument, during the BRICS Dialogue on Civilizations event in Kazan, Russia, on Sept 24.  
CAO YANG / XINHUA

**“I believe that BRICS cooperation will further enrich the connotation of China-Russia strategic cooperation and inject new momentum into the development of relations between the two countries.”**

Zhang Hanhui, Chinese Ambassador to Russia

praised the important role of the BRICS mechanism and the results of its expansion, and believed that more and more countries joining the BRICS cooperation will help accelerate the process of multipolarization in the world and promote development of the international order in

a more just and reasonable direction.

The Chinese envoy said the BRICS countries share common views of international order, security and development. They are believers in defending multilateralism, maintaining common security, promoting common development and improving global governance.

"The expanded BRICS accounts for nearly half of the global population and one-fifth of global trade, and their total economic volume has surpassed the Group of Seven in terms of purchasing power parity," said Zhang, stressing that China and other BRICS members are important economic and trade partners, and their import and export trade have maintained steady growth.

What's more, the BRICS countries play an important role on the international stage. At the end of last year, the leaders of the BRICS countries held a special meeting on Palestine and Israel, and jointly defended the rights and interests of developing countries in multilateral mechanisms such as the Group of 20, giving a strong BRICS voice.

The diplomat while highlighting the upcoming meeting between President Xi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin said Russia is an important BRICS partner of China.

"I believe that BRICS cooperation will further enrich the connotation of China-Russia strategic cooperation and inject new momentum into the development of relations between the two countries."

He said the two presidents have met more than 40 times on various occasions in recent years, establishing good working relations and deep personal friendship. The heads of state of the two countries have also maintained close communication on strategic issues such as bilateral relations, the international situation and global governance.

"China is pleased to see that Russia has made great progress in its work as the BRICS chair this year," Zhang said, adding that China will, as always, support the Russian side in fulfilling the duties of the chairmanship and jointly promote the fruitful results of the BRICS summit to be held in Kazan from Tuesday to Thursday.

## Summit expected to discuss financial cooperation

By NDUMISO MLILO in Johannesburg, South Africa

Progress in BRICS financial cooperation to facilitate international trade is expected to be made at the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, according to South African analysts.

"It is expected that there would be a follow-up on the Johannesburg declaration on the options or road maps and local currency payment systems to allow all members to trade with one another with local currency to reduce the US dollar volatility and provide options to help navigate the fragmented global systems," Gustavo de Carvalho, senior researcher at think tank South African Institute of International Affairs, said.

The 2024 BRICS Summit will be held from Tuesday to Thursday in Kazan. The 2023 BRICS Summit, which took place in Johannesburg, mandated the ministers of finance and central bank governors to explore new payment systems that BRICS could use, and report about it in the 2024 summit.

"The BRICS payment systems must start talking to each other," said Jerry Mashamba, from the BRICS secretariat.

"The current system of using the US dollars is one-sided and has got so many loopholes and room for manipulation. It is these distortions and disparities that we want to deal with," he said, adding no one is advocating for the "killing of the Visa or MasterCard".

BRICS countries have nearly half of the world's population, have natural resources including platinum, oil and gas, and should determine their price and their own time, said Mashamba, a chartered accountant.

He added, "We can't have one

system throughout the world for determining the value, the currency; the Global South must speak and BRICS must rise."

Following the 2023 BRICS Summit, five countries became new members of the organization. Prior to this year's summit, more than 30 countries have expressed their eagerness to join the bloc.

Meanwhile, members may also discuss the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, according to Carvalho.

"While BRICS have shied away from geopolitical issues in the past, it is expected that there would be some mention of the crisis in the Middle East since it affects some of its members, especially Iran and Egypt," he said.

He also said that BRICS could explore some "triangular cooperation" with the G20 and the G7 to forge greater cooperation with big economies.

Emmanuel Matambo, research director at the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Africa-China Studies, said it is expected that the BRICS summit will continue to deepen trade and relations between the member states.

He said there are some areas of cooperation that South Africa and other African countries could explore, including energy and technology.

While addressing the media in Pretoria, South Africa, earlier this month, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, South Africa's minister of presidency, said President Cyril Ramaphosa will attend the BRICS summit. Ntshavheni said the BRICS summit will discuss issues about trade, global political matters and advancing cooperation between member countries.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



A Chinese engineer (center) discusses with local employees at a production line of television sets operated by manufacturer Hisense in Cape Town, South Africa, in August. WANG LEI / XINHUA

## Educational collaborations, cultural exchanges forge stronger Sino-Russian ties

By ZHAO YIMENG  
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China and Russia have taken significant steps to strengthen educational collaboration and cultural exchange in recent years, highlighted by a series of agreements between higher education institutions in both countries and closer ties in language learning.

In April, China's Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng led a delegation to Russia, and agreements were signed between Chinese and Russian universities aimed at improving practical collaboration in education, especially in basic sciences.

Education authorities of both countries signed agreements covering joint talent cultivation, scientific research, vocational training and digital education, Huai said.

During the visit, Peking University awarded an honorary doctorate to the rector of Lomonosov Moscow State University, Victor Sadovnichy, for his achievements in mathematics, physics and computer science, as well as his efforts to promote higher education collaboration between the two countries.

Several agreements were signed between the two universities, including a memorandum of understanding on setting up a China-Russia earth sciences center and a mathematics challenge fund.

The two universities have promoted partnership through platforms such as the Sino-Russian Mathematics Center and the China-Russia



Left: Igor Khripunov, director of the Confucius Institute at Novosibirsk State Technical University, introduces a book on Russia-China dialogue at a book fair in Novosibirsk, Russia, in September last year. Right: Vladislav Ronzhin, a graduate student from Russia who studies at the Beijing Language and Culture University, hosts a Confucius Institute Day event earlier this month. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Comprehensive University Alliance, said Gong Qihuang, president of Peking University and a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

High-level universities played a crucial role in supporting national strategies and socioeconomic development, Gong said, calling for enhanced international collaboration in basic sciences between universities.

"Exchanges and practical collaboration are especially important in times of global transformation."

Peking University and the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology have discussed working more closely together in mathematics, material sciences and in academic programs such as summer

schools and student exchanges, the Beijing university said.

In addition, there is expected to be a collaboration between Peking University and Kazan Federal University in areas such as energy and environmental studies.

Confucius Institutes also continue to play a crucial role in strengthening educational collaboration and cultural exchange between the two countries.

Igor Khripunov, director of the Confucius Institute at Novosibirsk State Technical University, said the institute has been acting as a bridge not only for higher education institutions but also for middle schools, helping promote educational exchanges.

"The institute provides Chinese-



language courses, helps teachers develop study programs and contributes to nurturing local talent in Chinese language education," Khripunov said. "A key focus is ensuring that students understand Chinese culture, which is essential for mastering the language."

As the only Russian institution offering all three types of Chinese-language proficiency tests, it has had an increasing number of candidates from various regions.

"More students are now attempting higher-level tests, which allows them to take part in scholarship programs in China," Khripunov said.

Since the institute was established in 2007, nearly 150 students have attended Chinese universities

through scholarship programs. Many outstanding teachers at the institute have taken part in international Chinese teaching competitions and achieved notable success, he said.

The institute has been collaborating with Dalian University of Foreign Languages in Liaoning province, and this year a master's program was jointly launched by the two institutions, he said.

"Former students from the institute find employment related to the Chinese language, making them competitive in both China and Russia. One graduate won the Global Chinese Bridge competition and now runs a business in Qingdao with his wife, another alumnus." Graduates are thriving in fields

such as international relations, trade, education and media, he said.

The Confucius Institute aims to cultivate professionals proficient in Chinese to meet the growing demand for bilingual talent in various industries, Khripunov said.

Vladislav Ronzhin, a graduate student of Beijing Language and Culture University, started to learn Chinese in 2007 at Siberian Federal University.

"My family and I foresaw China's potential in development and chose to study Chinese," he said.

When he engaged in an exchange program in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, during college, he met his future wife and now lives in China. After working for several years as an English teacher, Vladislav found he was still intrigued by Chinese culture and prepared to pursue further education in Beijing.

"I find the Ming Dynasty particularly inspiring. The domestic policies, as well as the foreign relations efforts during that time, reveal how diligently China worked to establish healthy relationships with neighboring countries through cultural exchange."

Vladislav, now studying international relations at Beijing Language and Culture University, said China's role in organizations such as the United Nations is significant and serves as an exemplary model.

"China does not align itself with any particular friend or enemy, focusing instead on creating peace and stability. This commitment to diplomacy and peaceful coexistence is something worth emulating."

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## XI'S VISIT

## AI offers fresh potential for group's cooperation

By ZHOU JIN  
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When Dipuo Mazibuko embarked on her first overseas travel in September, it was to China. She took a close look at the country's achievements in the field of artificial intelligence and gained a deeper understanding of the importance of working with China and other BRICS countries on AI.

Mazibuko, deputy director of evaluation and impact at South Africa's Department of Communications and Digital Technologies' Information Society and Capability Development Division, was attending the BRICS Excellence Training Program on Artificial Intelligence Technology and Governance, which took place in three Chinese cities.

The program was organized by the BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution Innovation Center in Xiamen, Fujian province, ahead of the 2024 BRICS Summit, which is being held in Kazan, Russia, from Tuesday to Thursday.

During Mazibuko's 20 days of training — in Xiamen, in Hefei, Anhui province, and in Beijing — she and the other 29 participants from 16 countries attended lectures, seminars and discussions, and visited Chinese companies to learn about AI in China and other countries, AI governance, AI empowerment in public administration and AI plus applications in various industries.

Mazibuko said she was impressed with the theoretical and practical issues that were covered. "China's practices and global AI developments and trends have opened my mind," she said, adding that she was particularly impressed by the applications of AI in cybersecurity in China, and that applications based on the technology help improve public security.

Working with China on AI is essential for South Africa to develop AI policies and standards, she said.

## Improved governance

"If we can learn about these standards and research policies, we can improve our governance," Mazibuko added.

South Africa is among the countries referred to in the BRICS acronym — the others being Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Chen Zehao, deputy director general of the Office of the Xiamen Leading Group for the BRICS PartNIR Innovation Center, said the training program aims to promote international collaboration to improve technological innovation, empowerment and capacity-building of AI technology in order to bridge the digital divide.

The program strengthens the exchange and sharing of AI development policies and successful practices among BRICS countries and other emerging markets and developing countries, she said. "It is conducive to enhancing mutual understanding and further improving AI technology and governance capabilities."

Juliano Danilo Spuldaro, a coordinator for the Business Research Program at the University of West Santa Catarina in Brazil, said the training in China gave him insights at both a macro and a micro level.

"What I have learned from the program is to think from a macro perspective of AI governance at the governmental level to a micro perspective of AI adoption in business and daily life," he said.

Spuldaro said he was particularly impressed by the Multi-Hazard Coupling Experimental Platform at Tsinghua University's Hefei Institute for Public Safety Research, where he learned how AI

can be applied in disaster prevention and reduction.

"AI should be used to solve public problems like disasters," he said, adding that China's technology could help Brazil deal with challenges such as floods and wildfires in the Amazon rainforest.

Talking of AI's potential for tackling social inequalities in Brazil, he said, "I think one of the problems that AI can help us to solve is the imbalance between rich and poor."

Over the past few years, the leaders of BRICS countries have demonstrated their recognition of the significance of AI and other emerging technologies, reaffirming their commitment to promoting these technologies.

In 2022, the Beijing Declaration of the 14th BRICS Summit called on BRICS members to jointly address the risks and ethical dilemmas related to AI, share best practices and develop a common governance approach that ensures the ethical and responsible use of AI.

Last year, the Johannesburg Declaration of the 15th BRICS Summit reaffirmed the commitment to strengthening intra-BRICS cooperation to solidify the BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution and create new opportunities for accelerating industrial development.

The BRICS cooperation mechanism is a vital platform for collaboration among emerging markets and developing countries, said Chen of the BRICS PartNIR Innovation Center.

Last year, BRICS set up an AI study group to drive innovation and collaboration among its member countries. The establishment of the group formalized and strengthened collaboration among BRICS countries in AI, offering a structured platform for member states to exchange knowledge and resources.

Spuldaro said China has built the capacity to lead the development of AI technology, and in the BRICS framework this role is even more important because most BRICS members would find it difficult to catch up with the technological progress.

He called for the establishment of a solidarity mechanism to connect countries at different stages of AI adoption.

Collaboration on AI among BRICS countries is about far more than creating and selling technologies to other countries, he said.

## Pooling resources

Radik Shafigullin, deputy head of the executive committee of Kazan, also underlined the need to pool knowledge and resources relating to AI.

Shafigullin said the varied levels at which BRICS countries find themselves in developing AI underscore the need for them to work together.

AI collaboration among BRICS countries is still in its infancy, he said, but collaboration could begin in areas such as public health, security and climate change.

Shafigullin said that Russia and China both possess the wherewithal to invent new technologies, and if they pool their efforts they can help other countries gain more technologies and services more economically.

He stressed the need for a united approach among BRICS members. "We should move in the same direction and avoid competing with each other. We should embrace innovation and be open to information and technology exchanges."

Shafigullin said he expects the net result of discussion at the BRICS summit in Kazan will be members working more closely together.

## Ready for summit



People walk by a sign for the 16th BRICS Summit near Kazan Railway Station in Russia on Sunday. The first BRICS leaders' offline summit since the group's expansion is being held in Kazan from Tuesday to Thursday. The group has evolved into an influential international cooperation mechanism with an expanded membership. ALEXANDR KRYAZHEV / PHOTO HOST AGENCY

## Reports on new BRICS states out

Investment environment rated to help member countries identify their advantages, expert says

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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Reports assessing the investment environment of the newly added BRICS members have been released for the first time, ahead of the gathering of leaders in Kazan, Russia, for the 16th BRICS Summit, the first summit after the expansion of the grouping in January.

The assessments on the countries were jointly released on Monday by Dagong Global Credit Rating Co and Tsinghua University's Belt and Road Strategy Institute.

BRICS has been an important force in shaping the international landscape. Its expansion this year with new members, including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Ethiopia, is expected to have a profound influence on industry cooperation among its member states.

"The newly joined BRICS countries have enormous advantages in energy, minerals and agriculture.

They will help provide abundant raw materials for industrial production among members and help optimize global resource allocation," said Wang Youxin, a senior researcher at Bank of China.

The investment environment in the UAE is rated as excellent. With a low domestic crime rate, young population structure and high level of education, the country's labor supply is relatively sufficient. It has abundant oil reserves and a higher degree of economic diversification than most Middle East countries, the report said.

The convenience of doing business in the UAE ranks first in the Middle East region. With a superior geographical location, Dubai has become a global shipping and trading center, and its land transportation infrastructure is also relatively complete.

Dagong Global Credit Rating said the evaluation system is mainly based on the business environment

of a country, and is examined together with bilateral relations, advantageous industries, the scientific research environment and negative events.

"The reports aim to fully address information asymmetry in international economic cooperation and investment, helping all parties involved to seize investment opportunities, avoid investment risks and optimize resource allocation," said Ying Haifeng, director and CEO of Dagong Global Credit Rating.

He said the reports also help those countries to identify their own advantages and weak areas in the global system. The assessments will also help promote the effectiveness and success rate of cooperation, and achieve mutual benefits between the investing parties.

Dagong Global Credit Rating, a Chinese rating company founded 30 years ago, went through a strategic reorganization in 2019 and is currently affiliated with China Reform Holdings Corp.

The company said it is actively striving for discourse power and

influence in the international credit rating field, where Standard & Poor's, Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings lead the market.

In addition, the overall investment environment in Egypt is rated as good. The political situation of the country is basically stable, and Belt and Road cooperation between China and Egypt will be far-reaching.

Egypt has rich reserves of mineral resources and a relatively complete industrial system, and its short-term economic growth is showing an accelerated recovery trend driven by domestic demand.

Furthermore, the investment environment in Ethiopia is rated as medium. The government has continued to promote reforms to attract foreign investment and improve the economy.

"With a youthful population structure, and being the second-most populous country in Africa, the local economy has maintained a high growth rate in the past two decades, and it has made significant progress in industrialization and poverty reduction," Ying said.

## Relations: Greater monetary autonomy crucial for developing Global South nations

From page 1

Bank, an idea developed by the Chinese government. In addition to the management and creation of new financial institutions, the BRICS is advancing in creating a new monetary paradigm, one of the priorities of the Russian presidency, with which the governments of the other member countries agree. Intra-BRICS trade using local currencies is a reality and will be boosted in the coming years.

During the first working session of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meeting earlier this July, Brazilian Foreign Minister Vieira echoed that Brazil expected the new members to be fully engaged in the internationalization of local currencies, payment instruments and platforms, an important topic raised by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Johannesburg and a primary concern for Brazil's BRICS presidency next year, too.

Greater monetary autonomy is crucial for developing countries in the Global South as the exorbitant privilege of the US dollar is a major constraint on monetary policy worldwide. Changes in the Fed's interest rates affect exchange rates worldwide, as do the various sanctions imposed against countries and companies that restrict the use of the dollar and SWIFT payment

system. As the BRICS advances, the United States elite fears losing its enormous discretionary power.

US presidential candidate Donald Trump has compared the loss of dollar hegemony to defeat in a revolutionary war. During a rally in Wisconsin on September 7, Trump stated: "Many countries are leaving the dollar. They are not going to leave the dollar with me. I'll say, you leave the dollar, you're not doing business with the United States because we're going to put a 100 percent tariff on your goods."

Despite the coercive pressure from the Washington elite, the process of dedollarization is already underway and inexorable. India and Russia, for example, have doubled their payments in national currencies (rupee-rouble) since 2023, despite US and European Union sanctions. The same occurs with China and Russia. Saudi Arabia, one of the largest oil exporters to China, signed a three-year currency swap with Beijing in November 2023 worth the equivalent of \$6.93 billion. Brazilian companies have started to use the RMB to export to China.

The next BRICS Summit is expected to bring deep outcomes. The Brazilian government sees building new platforms on financial and monetary issues essential to advancing economic coopera-

tion among the BRICS countries. As a result, practical measures are expected to be adopted, especially by countries with more extensive reserves and balance of payments surpluses, such as China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

At this point, China is well positioned to lead this process, as it is the only member with an international reserve currency that is part of the IMF's Special Drawing Rights and the most successful international payments system in the Global South, the Cross-border Interbank Payment System. In addition, it is necessary to consider restructuring the New Development Bank to incorporate the new BRICS members into the institution's governance and provide a new source of resources to the NDB's cash flow.

The foundations of multilateralism are being laid. The road is long, the will is strong, and the BRICS countries are firmly paving the way to build an inclusive and open international order.

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## Contestants: Reflections on culture among topics

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The competitions covered a wide range of topics, from personal reflections on traditional culture to in-depth insights about the coexistence of different civilizations.

In the Belt and Road Youth English Speaking Competition Global Final, Khaurisa Sarah Makhubele from South Africa emerged as the champion. In the "21st Century Cup" National English Speaking Competition Grand Final, Sun Yiting from Chongqing University was crowned champion in the college category, while Wang Yuting from Nanjing University took the top honor in the youth category.

The award ceremony also included a youth conference dedicated to the Global Civilization Initiative, which offers Chinese wisdom and solutions for global governance from a cultural standpoint.

In the face of a complex and dynamic global situation, the events emphasized cross-cultural dialogues among young people from different countries.



Participants in the BRICS Excellence Training Program on Artificial Intelligence Technology and Governance visit the robot section of the 2024 BRICS New Industrial Revolution Exhibition in Xiamen, Fujian province, in September. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



# XI'S VISIT

Ivan Vakhrushin

## Trade driving Russia-China ties

The 75th anniversary of the establishment of Moscow-Beijing diplomatic relations is an important occasion in the two countries' history. But the close relationship between the Communist Party of Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China was formed long before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The relationship between Russia and China has, of late, gained in strength. But Russia has been facing many challenges because of the sanctions imposed on it by the collective West due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The near-negligible Western investment in Russia, however, has facilitated the further growth of Russian-Chinese trade. Beijing has widened the scale of its trade and economic cooperation with Russia, exporting huge shipments of a variety of commodities to Russia — from consumer goods, clothing and shoes to cars and sophisticated appliances and machinery — thus successfully filling the commodity niches created by the withdrawal of Western companies from Russia and the stoppage of supplies from Western markets.

Russia, on its part, has been exporting huge volumes of oil, other hydrocarbons and raw materials to China, which significantly balances the bilateral trade structure. This arrangement raised the Russian-Chinese trade volume to a record \$240 billion last year. Along with commodity trade, the Chinese companies have also found an opportunity to increase their investments in Russia, with manufacturing and trading assets abandoned by Western companies being especially attractive to Chinese businesses.

Having passed through various stages of bilateral relationship, including the difficult 1960s-1980s period, the two countries have taken their relations to possibly the highest level — officially described as a comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction in the new era. In some aspects, this relationship could be described as a model one.

The leaders of Russia and China have met face to face more than three dozen times — which is perhaps unprecedented in the history of two major countries.

Equally important, the two countries have presented a united front on most of the key issues at international forums, especially at the United Nations Security Council. Russia and China are also key members of growing global and regional organizations such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. Besides, Russia will make efforts to ensure its presidency of BRICS this year and the grouping's summit in Kazan, Russia, from Tuesday to Thursday help promote regional and global initiatives that both Moscow and Beijing have faith in.

Yu Sui

## BRICS a rising collective in a changing world

The 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, from Tuesday to Thursday will see new members after the historic expansion, marking the beginning of a new era of cooperation for the grouping.

After the end of the Cold War, developing countries and emerging market economies have been seeking to better safeguard their national security, boost the economic development and improve their peoples' living standards. And they need a fair and just world order to promote economic globalization, multilateralism and democratic international relations.

BRICS has established a framework with the leaders' summits at the helm, supported by ministerial meetings. The grouping has been promoting practical cooperation in fields such as trade, finance, technology, agriculture, culture, education and healthcare.

In fact, BRICS has proposed a path of development that is different from Western models. It is a constructive path that is aimed at boosting global economic growth and improving global governance.

BRICS member states contribute about one-third of the global GDP, more than the cumulative share of G7 countries. BRICS spans several continents, with its members accounting for about 31 percent of the world's land and 46 percent of the global population. It also accounts for about 40 percent of the world's oil production and reserves. This means BRICS is in a position to meet the

development requirements of not only its members but also non-member states and help alleviate global poverty.

BRICS, as a grouping of emerging market economies and developing countries, seeks to improve the world order and counterbalance the West's dominance of global affairs. Many developing countries are seeking BRICS' membership so they can help the grouping to eliminate inequalities in international organizations and institutions.

BRICS has been flourishing over the past decade because it believes in consultation and agreement instead of one country making arbitrary decisions or dictating terms to the other members.

The principles of openness, transparency, solidarity, mutual assistance, cooperation and shared development, as well as the spirit of inclusivity and mutual benefit unite BRICS members.

BRICS' new members are from the Middle East and Africa, regions that are the most representative of emerging markets and developing countries, and will help build closer and more solid partnerships.

The inclusion of Middle East countries in BRICS will boost cooperation in the oil and gas sectors. With the Israel-Palestine conflict showing no signs of ending and energy prices rising, BRICS members that are major producers and consumers of oil and gas need to strengthen cooperation to safeguard energy resources.

More than 30 countries have reportedly applied to join BRICS, because the

grouping is democratic and truly representative.

BRICS member states are engaged in practical cooperation across multiple fields. Politically, they respect each other's sovereignty, national security and development interests, and oppose hegemony and Cold War mentality. Economically, BRICS held 14.06 percent of the vote in the World Bank and 14.15 percent in the International Monetary Fund in 2022. On the healthcare front, BRICS member states cooperated in vaccine research and development, most visibly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, BRICS has become an important driver of South-South cooperation and has been making efforts to improve global governance.

At the 2017 BRICS Summit in Xiamen, Fujian province, China proposed the "BRICS Plus" cooperation model and promoted dialogue between emerging market economies and developing countries. "BRICS Plus" has been trying to amplify the voice of developing countries in the global governance system, laying a solid foundation for BRICS expansion.

At the Kazan summit, Russia will focus on "strengthening multilateralism for global development and security" across fields such as finance, trade, technology, industry, culture, education and the environment, with the member states aiming to reach a consensus on enhancing economic cooperation, improving global financial governance,

maintaining global peace and stability, and expanding cultural exchanges, as well as discussing whether or not to include any more members.

Furthermore, Russia has outlined a "BRICS bridge" settlement platform for cross-border payments, including a digital currency. As Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov recently said, the existing financial system was established more than half a century ago and thus needs to be modernized and the financial requirements of developing countries need to be met by new organizations, instead of the weakening IMF and World Bank.

Jim O'Neill, the British economist who coined the term "BRIC" (Brazil, Russia, India and China), has said that the BRICS New Development Bank has been performing well and hoped the grouping will take measures to ensure the bank plays a bigger role in multilateral trade, climate action and tackling the infectious disease challenge.

This means BRICS and its organizations, despite working to improve global governance, have a long way to go before ensuring emerging market economies and developing countries get their due. Hence, member states need to work together to make BRICS a more powerful and truly multilateral and representative grouping.

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Kang Bing

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## Grouping promises to bring more benefits to the world

About two dozen heads of state or government have gathered in Kazan, Russia, for the three-day BRICS Summit which opened on Tuesday. This is the grouping's first summit since it formally admitted five new members on Jan 1. The fact that the leaders of some non-member countries are also attending the meeting signifies BRICS' increasing influence in the world arena.

With the cumulative population and GDP of BRICS member states accounting for 46 percent and 28 percent of the global total, any discussion the summit holds, any statement it issues or any decision it makes will have an impact on a world fraught with conflicts, disputes, divisions and economic crisis.

The acronym BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) was first used by British economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 to describe the four economies which could, if they maintained their growth, dominate the global economy by 2050. The world readily accepted the new term, which was extended to include "S" when South Africa joined the grouping in 2011. However, the first summit of the grouping was held two years before that, in 2009.

The name BRICS continues to be used for the grouping even after the inclusion of five new members.

With more than 30 countries applying to join BRICS, the grouping promises to bring more benefits to the member states as well as the rest of the world.

I wonder if the British economist used the term BRIC as a metaphor for "brick", which signifies strength and longevity. Bricks have been used for thousands of years to build houses and other structures. Bricks have also been used as weapons. Useful as they are, bricks are mostly made of humble clay. They can also be made of concrete or expanded clay aggregate. Although bricks normally mean fired bricks, there are also air- or sun-dried bricks, popularly known as mud bricks, whose history is older than that of fired bricks.

China embraced BRICS just like ancient civilizations embraced bricks as an essential construction material thousands of years ago. Such was the enthusiasm over BRICS that translating the term BRICS into Chinese, the translators added an adjective "golden" before it. Since then, it has been known as *Jin Zhuan* (Golden Bricks) in Chinese, which conveys good wishes to the grouping to create a better future for the world.

The heads of state and government, as well as leaders of the invited non-member developing countries, representing almost half of the global population, have gathered in Kazan to discuss how to stabilize global economic recovery, counter rising protectionism, and help bring peace to Eurasia and the Middle East, and I hope they succeed in their endeavor.

The US-led West has been accusing the developing countries, particularly China, of violating the rules of or trying to destroy the world order. But the existing world order and its rules were established by the club of rich and industrialized countries to suit their own interests, leaving little say for the developing countries. I hope the leaders assembled in Kazan will find ways to let the developing world's voice be heard loud and clear in international forums and to reform the existing world order to make it fairer and truly representative of the developing countries.

Many of the leaders are expected to hold bilateral talks on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit, which will likely help deepen their mutual trust and strengthen their economic and political cooperation. Lending each other warmth is, in a way, what the grouping is designed for. In fact, the grouping's journey shows the member states have been doing exactly that ever since the inception of BRICS. It is to be hoped that the BRICS members and invitee developing countries, which follow different political systems and are at different development levels, will lay aside their disputes and differences, and work together to create a better future for their peoples.

The fact that BRICS has been expanding its membership and may continue to cautiously do so shows that it is an open platform ready to take measures to become more representative of the developing world. With more than 30 countries applying to join BRICS, the grouping promises to bring more benefits to the member states as well as the rest of the world.

And hopefully, BRICS passes the trial by fire to become a real *Jin Zhuan* (Golden Bricks), a symbol of fortune in China.

# CHINA



## Tennis: Success inspires young hopefuls

**Top:** A child receives coaching at a tennis class in Dongyang, Zhejiang province on Aug 31. HU YANGHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY  
**Below:** A young player in action during provincial junior tennis championships in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, on Aug 19. SHI BAIRONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

**From page 1**

Earlier this year, Mengxiao watched Zheng compete against Aryna Sabalenka in the Australian Open women's singles final. At the Wuhan Open, with the two facing off again, she had the chance to observe Zheng even more closely.

"I learned a lot about how top players adjust during matches, especially when they're not at their best. Zheng, for instance, would give herself pep talks before stepping back on court, while Sabalenka took a break to change clothes after dropping a set," Mengxiao said.

Sabalenka eventually defeated Zheng 6-3, 5-7, 6-3 in a thriller to claim her third consecutive Wuhan women's title.

**Passion ignited**

Following Zheng's Olympic triumph, tennis fever has swept across China, and Wuhan and Hubei in particular, sparking a surge in interest. Tennis training centers have been overwhelmed with inquiries, equipment sales have skyrocketed, and the excitement surrounding the Wuhan Open reached new heights.

As the final WTA 1000 event of the season, the recently concluded Wuhan Open broke records for both single-day and total ticket sales. Revenue surpassed 25 million yuan (\$3.52 million), a 4.88-fold increase compared with 2019, and more than 180,000 spectators attended — a rise of over 80 percent from five years ago.

The tournament also ignited local youths' interest through player visits to schools and ball boy and ball girl recruitment.

Mengxiao, who has played tennis for more than five years, was selected as a ball girl. Having attended the Australian Open and China Open as a spectator, she had always admired how sharp and poised the ball kids looked on court.

So when her hometown tournament began recruiting, she wasted no time asking her parents to sign her up.

After two rounds of a rigorous selection process and eight days of focused training, Mengxiao secured a spot among the 86 official ball kids. The experience of living away from her parents for over 10 days made a lasting impression.

Beyond observing how top players adjust their strategies mid-match, Mengxiao deepened her understanding of tennis rules and made many new friends who share her passion for the sport. "Some of the ball kids are people I've competed against in past tourna-

ments. On the court, we're rivals, but off the court, we're friends," she said.

Mengxiao and Zheng also share another connection: they both train under the same coach. Mengxiao has been training with Yu Liqiao for more than four years. Yu, the women's singles champion at the 5th National Games in 1983, has been coaching in Hubei since her retirement, with both multiple Grand Slam winner Li Na and Zheng among her former charges.

Mengxiao trains four times a week, with each session lasting three hours. She understands the strictness of Yu's approach and strives to meet the coach's high expectations.

"I enjoy the feeling of chasing down every ball on the court and the thrill of winning," Mengxiao said. "If I lose a match I should have won, I end up crying. But if I can't beat someone, it just shows I need to work harder and keep improving."

At just 11 years of age, Mengxiao has already adopted a professional approach to her tennis career, traveling across the country to compete in tournaments and earn youth ranking points.

**Intense competition**

Accompanying her every step is her mother, Dong Yi, who plays an integral role in Mengxiao's journey. Dong handles all logistics, from booking accommodation to transportation, while also providing support during matches and assisting with physical recovery.

"Since the Chinese New Year until the National Day holiday, we've been competing almost every weekend in various cities. The domestic tournament and ranking system is quite developed, and the competition is intense. As parents, we've become experts in calculating points," Dong said.

"This competition-based training has proved beneficial for Mengxiao. We identify challenges through matches and then work to address them in practice."

While it remains uncertain whether Mengxiao will pursue a professional tennis career, Dong acknowledges the challenges that lie ahead. Having already claimed several tournament victories, Mengxiao's recent experience as a ball girl temporarily removed her from competition and the opportunity to accumulate points, causing her to drop several ranks and jeopardizing her chances of making the year-end finals.

Dong plans to discuss future tournament participation with Mengxiao, but emphasizes

es that the decision to serve as a ball girl is ultimately her child's choice, and the family fully supports it.

"Since she returned from her experience as a ball girl, I've seen remarkable growth in her. It seems her capacity for independent thinking has matured significantly, which I consider a tremendous gain," Dong said.

Huang Yanhong, the director of the tennis management center at the Hubei Provincial Sports Bureau, said that nurturing a "phenomenal athlete" is a significant challenge.

"The success of such athletes is rooted in a legacy passed down through generations of tennis players. Great coaches cultivate exceptional students, who, upon retiring, often become excellent coaches themselves. This cycle fosters the continuous growth and development of the sport," she noted.

"We have effectively established a professional, international, and commercial model for training tennis players," Huang added.

To provide young athletes with ample opportunities for competition, Hubei has secured several international tournaments, including the WTA 1000 Wuhan Open. Additionally, the province hosts the ITF Junior Tour in Wuhan and Jingshan, while local youth tennis competitions are held nearly every week in Wuhan.

The annual Youth Tennis Championships in Hubei are a key event for players aged 8 to 18. This year's tournament attracted over 500 participants, with matches taking place from 8 am to 10 pm daily.

"Our organizational structure is now robust. Each city has its own association, weekly tournaments are scheduled, and there's tennis available every day," Huang said.

In 2014, Wuhan native Li Na made history as the first Asian player to win the Australian Open singles title. Zheng, then 11, and her teammates cheered in front of the TV. A decade later the wheel turned full circle,

when Zheng's Olympic victory was witnessed by young fans like 11-year-old Mengxiao, who watched from their homes.

**Courting fame**

Over the past decade Wuhan Open has not only generated significant economic and social benefits for the city, but also established itself as a shining symbol of Wuhan's identity.

Wang Tao, general manager of the Wuhan Culture Tourism Group Sports Development Investment Co and co-tournament director of the tournament, said fans from across the country flocked to Wuhan this year to watch Zheng's matches. Forty-six percent of the spectators came from outside the city.

"The nationwide audience is not only a boost to the tournament's profile but also a substantial enhancement of Wuhan city's image," Wang said.

"Hubei holds a special place in Chinese tennis, producing champions like Li Na, Olympic gold medalist Li Ting, and now Zheng," he added.

"We have a strong coaching system, ample facilities, and our tournaments foster talent by training ball kids and volunteers, expanding tennis' reach among young people."

Wang has also witnessed the steady development of Wuhan's youth tennis coaching system, the growth of training institutions, and an increase in both professional and amateur competitions.

Wuhan has developed a "pyramid" model to cultivate tennis talent. Since 2015, the city has piloted a "Tennis in Schools" program in 42 primary and secondary schools, and tennis skills training is now part of the city's youth sports summer camps. By 2023, nearly 13,000 young people had received free tennis lessons.

In 2013, Wuhan established a tennis training base at its sports academy, attracting top talent from across the country to develop elite players. Today, Wuhan boasts over 2,300 tennis courts, more than 100 schools offering tennis programs, and 270 registered young tennis players.

**Inspiring youngsters**

No 2 Primary School of Wuhan Optics Valley has embraced tennis for over six years, growing alongside the Wuhan Open, which takes place nearby at the Optics Valley International Tennis Center.

Deputy principal Zhang Yongming recalls the school's modest beginnings, when lessons were conducted on the playground with portable nets due to a lack of proper courts.

Today, the school boasts two regulation courts, two smaller ones for tennis instruction, and a dedicated team of three full-time tennis instructors. Every year, hundreds of students sign up for tennis classes, which are in high demand.

"The Wuhan Open, held right here in our district, has energized the entire local tennis scene," said Zhang.

Tennis instructor Yu Xiaoguang said the school provides introductory classes for all students, and selects those who exhibit a greater passion for tennis to participate in daily morning training sessions aimed at advancing their skills.

Yu sees tennis as a sport that fosters children's development, enhancing physical fitness, strength, character, and decision-making skills. "During matches, kids learn patience and how to problem-solve. But the true benefits of tennis only reveal themselves through long-term commitment," he said.

On Oct 10, during the Wuhan Open, United States tennis player Nicole Melichar-Martinez and Australia's Ellen Perez, the second-seeded women's doubles pair, visited the school. The visit fell on Perez's birthday, and the students celebrated warmly with her.

The duo joined the school's tennis students for a practice session. Zhang Xiyu, an 11-year-old who has been playing for over three years and was recently a runner-up in the girls' doubles at the Wuhan Youth Games, was the first to step on the court.

"This was my first time playing with world-class players. I was nervous at first, but later I relaxed. Melichar was really strong, but she smiled the whole time and was so friendly. I had so much fun," she said.

Xiyu watched every one of Zheng's matches at the Wuhan Open, to learn from the professional players. "After watching them play, I felt like a pro myself when I hit the court," she said.

Melichar was surprised the school offered tennis lessons. "At home, we didn't have tennis in school. I had to find coaches or train at clubs, often playing with my family," she said.

Yu, the school's tennis coach, noted the students were more excited and focused after meeting the players. "Seeing top athletes live is inspiring, but training with them in person is something special. It motivates them to dream of becoming professionals," Yu said.

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**From left:** Children and their instructor watch the final of the Wuhan Open at a sports school in Yichang, Hubei province, on Oct 13. LI YALONG / FOR CHINA DAILY A girl receives tennis coaching during a winter camp in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, on Jan 8. YU JING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Children are taught tennis during a free summer camp in Yinchuan on July 9. WANG PENG / XINHUA

## CHINA

# Symbol of fidelity hides little secret

Study reveals surprising mating behaviors of black-necked cranes in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

By CHEN LIANG  
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The black-necked crane, a symbol of fidelity on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and a species historically perceived as loyal, are often seen in pairs in wetlands or highland barley fields.

However, a recent groundbreaking study has shattered this long-held belief, unveiling that the traditional notion surrounding these majestic birds is nothing more than a human illusion.

The study, conducted by a team of Chinese researchers, sheds light on the mysterious mating strategies and group dynamics of the black-necked crane (*Grus nigricollis*), a species mainly found on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

Utilizing advanced DNA analysis techniques and meticulous field observations, the study challenges conventional views of crane monogamy and unveils intriguing insights into the species' reproductive behavior.

The research, spanning four years and focusing on breeding pairs in important bird habitats such as Flower Marsh and Nalecho Marsh in Zoige Wetland National Nature Reserve in Sichuan province, revealed a complex tapestry of mating strategies among this wetland species.

Contrary to expectations of strict monogamy, the study found a significant tendency for extra-pair copulation, with no pair maintaining monogamy throughout the observation period. Notably, the extra-pair fertilization rate was found to be 16.6 percent, a figure higher than in many other territorial bird species.

The research, titled "Mechanisms of enhancing genetic fitness in non-kinship-based groups: insights from black-necked cranes", was published online on Thursday on the open access, peer-reviewed science journal, *The Ecological Indicator*.

"Our findings are kind of contrary to our traditional understanding," said Li Yuhang, a researcher from Sichuan University in Chengdu, Sichuan province, who is one of the article's two first authors. "The crane is considered a symbol of fidelity, not only in China but also in Bhutan and India."

The black-necked crane mainly summers in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The breeding areas are alpine meadows, lakesides and riverine marshes and river valleys. Their wintering areas extend to parts of Yunnan and Guizhou province in China, Bhutan and the northern plains of India. According to the article, the crane is recognized as a unique representative of high-altitude cranes. It has maintained its status as one of the least-studied cranes.



**Clockwise from top:** Black-necked cranes gather in Zoige Wetland National Nature Reserve in Sichuan province before starting their autumn migration south. TAN XI / FOR CHINA DAILY An egg gestates in a black-necked crane nest at Flower Marsh. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Jin Yuyi, a researcher from Sichuan University, collects data and samples from a black-necked crane nest in Zoige. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Li and his research partners from Sichuan University, Nanjing University and Zoige nature reserve focused their study on cranes during breeding season, when the birds establish sparsely spaced colonies, suggesting the potential for high mate fidelity due to low breeding density, according to the article.

From 2017 to 2020, the researchers conducted annual fieldwork in Flower Marsh from March to October, rigorously monitoring the cranes. "The cranes we studied in Zoige are considered to be part of the bird's eastern population," Li told China Daily. "They usually winter in Guizhou and Yunnan provinces."

They identified and tagged each breeding pair, located their nests and recorded satellite navigation coordinates. Over these four breeding seasons, they documented nine nests in Flower Marsh. In addition to the nest-area samples from Flower Marsh, they expanded their dataset to include tissue samples, egg membrane samples and nine blood samples from both Nalecho Marsh and Flower Marsh.

In total, 48 egg membrane samples from offspring, nine blood samples, four tissue samples and 65 adult feather samples were collected in Zoige for DNA extraction.

The researchers identified 58 individual birds over the four-year

period — seven female and eight male adults, and 25 male and 18 female offspring.

"Black-necked cranes are large birds under State first-class protection," said Professor Li Zhongqiu from Nanjing University's School of Life Science in Jiangsu province, who is one of the article's co-authors. "In the past, if we wanted to study their tendency for extra-pair copulation, we had to try to catch the breeding pairs and put satellite tracking devices on them, and wait to see whether the same pairs would return to the same nest the next year. The method is actually hard to carry out and is unreliable."

Documenting nine nests and col-

lecting samples for analysis posed a different challenge, the professor said.

"Each nest was far from the others. Our colleagues had to drive a long distance to monitor the birds in the nests," Li Zhongqiu said. "Also, they must be very careful to collect the samples so as not to disturb the breeding birds."

Their findings indicated a 100 percent probability that at least one parent from the nests they studied returned in subsequent seasons, demonstrating high nest-site fidelity among the cranes in their study area.

"Based on our defined criteria for nest-site fidelity, we considered an

individual exhibiting fidelity if it utilized the same nest at least twice during the observation period," Li Yuhang said.

Overall, the article revealed that nest-site fidelity was 100 percent for males and 71 percent for females.

The migration of the black-necked crane from wintering to breeding grounds, covering distances from about 200 kilometers to as much as 1,500 km, underscores the remarkable feat of their nest-site fidelity.

"As we know, this is the first report describing nest-site fidelity in this elusive species," Li Yuhang said, adding that high fidelity to a nesting area offers several benefits, including familiarity with foraging and shelter sites, mating partners and neighbors.

Among the seven breeding pairs documented with at least two breeding instances, none maintained fidelity to each other throughout the entire observation period. "In simple words, no pairing endured throughout four years," Li Yuhang said.

In cases where two eggs were identified in the same nest during the same breeding season, the proportion of extra-pair fertilization eggs was 16.6 percent.

This rate is notably higher than in many other territorial bird species, according to the article.

The significant incidence of extra-pair fertilization may have been a critical factor in the rapid recovery of the black-necked crane population, which grew from an estimated 100 to 300 individuals at the end of the 20th century to nearly 15,000 by 2020.

"Such behaviors likely facilitated enhanced gene flow and maintained genetic diversity within the species' confined breeding ranges, contributing to the resilience and growth of the population," Li Yuhang said, adding that studies have shown that climate change can also influence the proportion of extra-pair breeding, where such mating behaviors increase offspring genetic diversity, enhancing population resilience to environmental changes.

Despite the significant findings, the researchers also said that their findings must be interpreted cautiously due to the relatively small sample size. Future research with long-term observations to obtain larger sample sizes, combined with more robust statistical methods, is necessary to confirm these findings and provide more definitive conclusions.

"It will help refine conservation strategies and improve our understanding of the ecological dynamics affecting black-necked cranes in the face of environmental changes," said professor Li Zhongqiu.

## Teacher's experiments enthrall students

YINCHUAN — Two students on a stage held opposite ends of a long plank, while at the center of the plank two others chopped onions as quickly as they could, with one boy's skillful knife work earning him a round of applause.

Soon, these four students, as well as some in rows near the stage, were reaching for tissues to wipe away tears. "My students, why do they tear up when cutting onions? Do you know what this phenomenon is called?" After the lively demonstration, Hu Yongxiang, a physics teacher at Third Middle School of Hongsibu district, in Wuzhong, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, introduced the concept of thermal motion, which was the focus of the day's lesson.

Hu's classes are known for transforming abstract physics concepts into engaging experiments and games, helping to instill his students with enthusiasm for learning physics. "His classes are fun and lively. These experiments are etched in our minds — so we don't just memorize, but learn to apply principles," said Wang Tao, one of Hu's students.

Beyond the classroom, Hu has also brought his experiments to the internet through short videos, which have become a sensation among Chinese netizens, with com-

ments such as "Definitely no dozing off in such a class", and "If I had met this physics teacher in my youth, I would have made it to college!!"

Faced with overwhelming praise online, Hu nonetheless remains humble. "I'm not really exceptional. It's just that I have a passion for this job, so I might put in a bit more effort than others," he said.

The 45-year-old became a primary school teacher in Hongsibu district after graduating from college in 2005, and has taught in several rural primary schools. In 2012, he was transferred to the newly established middle school through a selection exam.

From elementary to junior high, Hu was always eager to make his mark, but reality hit hard when he realized some students were sound asleep at their desks even though he thought he was teaching well. "I was very frustrated because our vice-principal at that time told me that if students sleep in class, it's not the students' fault but the teachers," Hu said.

After that, Hu began to reflect and tried to make his classes more engaging. He brought experiments from textbooks into the classroom and learned physics experiments from watching TV and online.

Additionally, he bought new



Hu Yongxiang teaches a physics class to his students at Third Middle School of Hongsibu district, in Wuzhong, Ningxia Hui autonomous region. XINHUA

equipment at his own expense and even took home discarded bottles, cans, wire and other items that might be needed in class.

To achieve the best results, Hu always conducts experiments repeatedly, learning from trial and error. For example, to explain force and pressure, he remade the teaching appliance several times and finally created a simple pegboard out of cement and wood.

To demonstrate the conversion between kinetic energy and potential energy, he first used plastic to make a model roller coaster, but it didn't meet his expectations, so he switched to stainless steel tubes and finally succeeded.

"I have the belief that interest is the best teacher. Only if students like the teacher and his class can

they learn the subject well," Hu said.

In his nearly 20-year career, Hu has never felt burnout. Now, as both a physics teacher and the school's vice-principal, his responsibilities are much heavier.

Last year, Hu received a special package containing nearly 300 notebooks with blessings written by a whole class of former students already admitted to college. These students didn't forget Hu, who often offered incentives such as lollipops and pens to those who made great progress. "Education is a process where one heart lights up another, and a good teacher is the one who can ignite students' curiosity, furthering them toward achieving their dreams," he said.

XINHUA

## Installation of antenna system a milestone

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai  
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The main reflector of a 40-meter-aperture radio telescope's antenna system was hoisted on Oct 8 in Shigatse city, Xizang autonomous region, marking a milestone in the construction of the device that will provide stronger support for the country's lunar and deep-space probe missions as well as manned moon landing.

The Shanghai Astronomical Observatory of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, one of the institutions that developed the telescope, said that the device is part of the fourth phase of the nation's lunar exploration project.

Together with the radio telescope on the Changbai Mountains, Jilin province, which completed the hoisting of its main reflector of the antenna system in August, the Shigatse station, at an elevation of about 4,100 meters, will join China's Very Long Baseline Interferometry network upon its completion.

The VLBI measures the time difference between the arrival of signals at multiple Earth-based antennas, simulating a virtual telescope with a size equal to the maxi-

mum separation between the telescopes.

The country's VLBI network currently has observatories in Beijing, Shanghai, Urumqi in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and Kunming in Yunnan province. The inclusion of the two new telescopes is expected to strengthen the network's observation capability.

It will allow simultaneous observation of the moon in two celestial regions, and be able to determine the orbit of deep space probes, said the Shanghai Astronomical Observatory.

Construction of the fully movable, high-precision and multipurpose radio telescope in Shigatse, which kicked off last September, is scheduled to be completed at the end of this year, and may be able to realize observations for the VLBI early next year.

The construction of the telescope on the Changbai Mountains is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, Xinhua News Agency reported. These new big science installations are also expected to facilitate more scientific findings of supermassive black holes and the dynamics of the galaxy.

## BUSINESS

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# Revitalizing property, shares high on agenda

Stance clearly signaled by larger-than-expected lending rate cut

By ZHOU LANXU  
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China's monetary policymakers are likely to continue next year to prioritize revitalizing market expectations for the ailing property sector and an undervalued capital market to help bring about a steady economic recovery, economists and market mavens said.

Such a policy stance was clearly signaled by the larger-than-expected lending rate reduction on Monday and the country's first monetary policy tools that channel funds to the capital market, which will substantially alleviate homebuyer burdens while repairing the valuation of Chinese equities.

"Shoring up the real estate sector and stabilizing the capital market have become the critical premise for China to expand domestic demand," said Liu Yuanchun, president of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.

On Monday, China cut its market-based benchmark lending rates, with the one-year loan prime rate down to 3.1 percent and the over-five-year LPR, on which lenders base their mortgage rates, to 3.6 percent, both 25 basis points below September levels.

The cut was slightly larger than expected and marked the biggest cut since 2019 when LPRs became benchmarks.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic



A view of an exhibition held during Sibos 2024 in Beijing on Monday. CHENG GONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, said the considerable LPR reduction reflects that the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, is putting into place the "impactful interest rate cuts" outlined by the country's top leadership, a move that will effectively ease homebuyers' and enterprises' financing costs.

"To ensure that the real estate market stops falling, boosts economic momentum and drives price levels to recover moderately, there remains some room for LPR reductions in 2025," Wang said.

China's A-share market ended higher following the cut, led by smaller-cap stocks, with Shanghai's tech-heavy STAR 50 index up 2.22 percent to close at 1000.37 points. The market was also lifted by the implementation of a special central bank lending program to buy back shares and boost share holdings.

The program, starting Friday, offers 300 billion yuan (\$42.18 billion) in loans at a rate of 1.75 percent

to 21 eligible banks, which will then lend to qualified companies and shareholders at a rate no higher than 2.25 percent.

As of Sunday, 23 listed companies had applied for over 10 billion yuan of the loans, and more are expected to follow suit.

Liu, the SUFE president, said the program signals a "significant paradigm shift" that the PBOC is now striving to correct a systemic stock pricing distortion.

"This will help establish a floor for China's capital market, addressing the widespread, persistent issue of stock market values falling below book values."

Addressing Sibos 2024, a financial services event organized by Swift on Monday, Lu Lei, deputy governor of the PBOC, said the country's financial sector will continue to embrace opening-up and cooperation, vowing to encourage Chinese sovereign wealth funds and financial institutions to invest abroad.

# Nation modernizing border ports to boost trade, business activities

By ZHONG NAN  
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China will modernize its border ports, focusing on strengthening connectivity with neighboring countries to boost foreign trade and foster new business activities, a senior Customs official said on Monday.

Zhang Baofeng, director of the National Office of Port Administration at the General Administration of Customs (GAC), said that a robust ecosystem of smart interconnection, collaborative coordination and efficient operations among all ports will be established by 2030, in order to further facilitate cross-border trade.

Ports, including border ports, seaports and international airports, are gateways to a country's external engagement and serve as vital bridges for foreign exchange, economic collaboration and trade. They are essential infrastructure for fostering openness to the outside world.

"We will actively leverage the role of border ports in promoting the import and export of goods and the movement of people, ensuring smooth logistics flows

and boosting economic and trade exchanges," said Zhang.

Yunnan province, for example, has a border stretching over 4,000 kilometers, shared with neighboring Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar. It has established 22 border trade markets, covering all border prefectures and cities, Zhang added.

In 2023, Yunnan's border trade amounted to 20.03 billion yuan (\$2.82 billion), up 55.3 percent year-on-year, promoting the economic and social development of border areas, data from Kunming Customs show.

The total import and export cargo volume through China's border ports reached 181 million metric tons last year, accounting for 4.16 percent of the national total, said the GAC.

China has 311 ports open to the outside world across the country. They include 125 seaports, 85 airports, 17 railway ports and 84 road ports.

Among these, 95 are border ports, which serve as important channels for the movement of people and trade between China and its neighboring countries. China currently has established

border ports with 11 neighboring countries.

Zhang said these border ports have brought in a substantial flow of people, goods and capital to border regions, strengthening China's economic ties with neighboring countries, promoting regional economic integration, and becoming key nodes in the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as powerful engines for the growth of border provinces and autonomous regions.

For instance, the China-Laos Railway, which opened in 2021, has become a landmark BRI project, quickly developing into a "golden corridor" between China and Southeast Asia, supporting mutual cooperation and benefiting surrounding regions, he said.

As of Sept 16, more than 10 million tons of goods have been imported and exported via the China-Laos Railway. China-made mechanical and electrical products, agricultural goods, as well as natural rubber and tropical fruits from Laos and Thailand are also being transported in both directions, significantly boosting trade exchanges along the route, according to the GAC.

## Briefly

### Renminbi strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 292 pips to 7.0982 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate

of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

### BMW Brilliance kicks off energy project

German carmaker BMW Group's joint venture in China on Monday kicked off a geothermal energy project aimed at realizing 100 per-

cent non-fossil energy heating for its factories in Shenyang, capital of Northeast China's Liaoning province. Under the project, BMW Brilliance Automotive Ltd will drill 28 medium-deep geothermal wells, which will be completed and provide a total heating area of approximately 580,000 square meters by the 2025 heating season.

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## BUSINESSFOCUS

## CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Emerging markets boosting export orders

Jan-Sept trade value with over 160 economies continued to grow

By ZHONG NAN  
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With just two months until Christmas, workers at a factory owned by Jurong Baoli Crafts Co Ltd, a Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province-based toys and giftware manufacturer, were busy assembling stuffed fabric Santa dolls.

The Christmas-related giftware items are being packed for shipment to the Netherlands and Germany.

In recent years, the Chinese exporter has added electronic components and other alluring features to align with global trends and meet customer needs.

"Our orders have surged significantly this year, especially from countries like Singapore, Brazil, New Zealand and Finland," said Wang Hui, the company's business director. "This batch is the last of our Christmas orders. We must complete production and ship immediately to ensure on-time arrivals for the holiday season."

"After mid-October, we will focus on non-Christmas-themed toys and expanding into emerging markets," said Wang, adding the company's total export orders for the Christmas season have reached 6.95 million yuan (\$977,200) this year, a 37 percent increase over the same period in 2023.

China's foreign trade grew 5.3 percent year-on-year to 32.33 trillion yuan in the first three quarters, with exports up 6.2 percent, said the General Administration of Customs.

This growth is driven by several factors, including the diversification of China's export markets, increasing business and consumer demand in emerging regions, and changing global trade dynamics.

As Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and South America play a larger role in global supply chains, these trends are boosting China's trade expansion, said Xiao Lu, deputy director-general of the department of foreign trade at the Ministry of Commerce.

China's foreign trade value with over 160 countries and regions continued to grow during the January-September period. In the meantime, its imports and exports with economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative rose 6.3 percent year-on-year to 15.21 trillion yuan, accounting for 47.1 percent of the country's foreign trade, Customs data show.

As emerging markets such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America boast large, young populations and growing middle-



View of Chinese-made vehicles to be exported at Yantai Port in Shandong province on Oct 14. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

come groups, Peng Bo, a researcher specializing in foreign trade at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said these factors will further drive demand for consumer goods, technology and infrastructure — areas where Chinese companies excel.

For example, China saw its foreign trade value with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations soar 9.4 percent year-on-year to 5.09 trillion yuan between January and September, Customs data show.

"As these economies continue to grow, they offer substantial market potential for Chinese exports, providing an avenue for China to diversify its trade partnerships beyond developed economies," said Peng.

That sentiment also aligns with the latest market trend. At the 136th session of the China Import and Export Fair, or the Canton Fair, buyers from emerging markets have steadily taken the lead, surpassing those from Europe and North America as the primary participants, according to the Guangzhou, Guangdong province-based China Foreign Trade Center, a Canton Fair organizer under the Ministry of Commerce.

The global trade event, held twice a year in spring and autumn, is being held from Oct 15 through Nov 4 in Guangzhou.

A total of 125,000 overseas buyers had registered for the 136th session of the fair by Oct 9. Among them, about 76 percent are from countries and regions involved in the BRI, while 12.5 percent are from North America and Europe, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Liu Yonghui, a sales manager at Guangzhou Jetinno Intelligent Equipment Co Ltd, a coffee machine manufacturer, said this is the company's fourth time participating in the Canton Fair and it hopes to secure more orders from overseas customers through the event.

Despite the current slowdown in global economic growth and the rise of protectionism and unilateralism, he said that Europe remains the company's most important overseas market. Moreover, markets in Asia, the Middle East and South America have also been growing quickly in the past two years.

Huang Zhimin, chairman of Fujian Time and Tianhe Industrial Co Ltd, a Quanzhou, Fujian province-based maternal and infant product



Traders from around the world discuss business orders at the 136th Canton Fair in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Oct 15. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

manufacturer, said that the company's export value grew by 20 percent year-on-year from January to September.

"In addition to running OEM (original equipment manufacturer) business, we plan to leverage both domestic and international trade shows to expand our own brands into more emerging markets and attract new clients in the fourth quarter," said Huang.

Emerging markets, with their substantial market potential and promising growth prospects, are also drawing an increasing number of Chinese businesses in search of business opportunities, said Liu Qian, deputy dean of the Belt and Road School at Beijing Normal University.

Viewing the ASEAN markets as crucial to its global business strategy, Chinese electric vehicle maker

Avatr entered the Thai market in September, joining a long list of Chinese automakers, including BYD, Zhejiang Geely Holding Group and SAIC Motor Corp Ltd, exploring that country.

"We aim to establish Thailand as a strategic market for our business growth in Southeast Asia," said Chen Zhuo, the company's president.

In 2023, nearly 80 percent of China's outbound direct investment flowed into Asia, a 13.9 percent increase compared with the previous year. Of this, Chinese companies' investment in ASEAN reached \$25.12 billion, an increase of 34.7 percent on a yearly basis, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Han Yonghui, a professor specializing in foreign trade at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, said that Chinese companies, once heavily reliant on customer demand to drive production and often passive in the competitive landscape, are now leveraging accumulated capital and technology to demonstrate their innovation and technological prowess.

For instance, around 390,000 digital and smart products are being showcased during the 136th Canton Fair, a 300 percent surge compared to the previous edition, while the number of green and low-carbon products has risen 130 percent to over 1.04 million, said the fair's organizer.

By embracing digital and green concepts, Chinese manufacturers are actively shaping the market's future direction, said Han.

Similar views were expressed by Lyu Daliang, director-general of the GAC's department of statistics and analysis, who said that as the global new energy sector is undergoing rapid development, China's exports of tech-intensive green products have strengthened global supplies and contributed to the easing of inflationary pressure.

These exports are also instrumental in addressing climate change and supporting the global green transition, said Lyu.

Collectively, exports of China's "new trio" — namely electric vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products — totaled 757.83 billion yuan in the first nine months, accounting for 4.1 percent of the country's total exports. These products have reached over 200 countries and regions and are widely welcomed worldwide, according to information released by the GAC.

Wang Lingjun, vice-minister of the GAC, said that with the continued implementation of existing policies and the introduction of new policies, the positive factors for foreign trade development have accumulated. China has the foundation for stable trade growth in the fourth quarter.

## SOE forges on with shale oil extraction

By ZHONG NAN

The second drilling unit of CNPC Greatwall Drilling Co completed a drilling task in the Gulong shale oil formation in Daqing, Heilongjiang province, in late September, laying a solid foundation for the efficient extraction of shale oil from Daqing Oil Field.

The company — a unit of State-owned China National Petroleum Corp — completed the project in 20 days, achieving a section depth of 3,065 meters.

As an important energy source, the development and utilization of shale oil can significantly alleviate the pressure on China's energy consumption and reduce its dependence on foreign oil.

The new drilling technology and short drilling cycle will effectively lower extraction costs of shale oil from Daqing Oil Field, ensuring national energy security, said Du Lei, a project manager at the second drilling unit of Beijing-based GWDC.

The accomplishment will also stimulate growth in related sectors, such as petroleum equipment manufacturing and technical services, creating more jobs and economic growth points, said Du.

"The successful completion of

this project highlights China's strength in global energy development," Du said.

The advances in the extraction of shale oil will ensure stable energy supplies for China, bolstering the country's economic growth, Du added.

China's energy self-sufficiency rate continued to rise in 2023, increasing to 85.6 percent, up 7.2 percentage points compared to 2016 levels, said Wu Mouyuan, vice-president of CNPC's Economics and Technology Research Institute in Beijing.

"The robust support of energy supply additions has contributed significantly to economic recovery," said Wu.

The implementation of economic stimulus policies and the rapid market recovery last year drove consumption demand for energy like petroleum and natural gas, Wu said.

China's imports of energy products such as crude oil, natural gas and coal amounted to 901 million metric tons in the first three quarters of 2024, an increase of 4.8 percent year-on-year, statistics from the General Administration of Customs show.

In recent years, China has been stepping up efforts in ultra-deep

oil well drilling to ensure energy self-sufficiency. The country's first scientific exploration well with a depth of over 10,000 meters — in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region — broke through the 10,000-meter mark in March, making it the second-deepest onshore well globally and the deepest in Asia, said its operator CNPC.

Located in the Taklimakan Desert in the Tarim Basin, the Shenditake 1 well, a milestone in deep-earth scientific research and ultra-deep oil and gas exploration, is expected to reach a designed depth of 11,100 meters upon completion, it said.

China's three major oil producers — CNPC, China Petroleum and Chemical Corp and China National Offshore Oil Corp — reported record production of oil and gas equivalent at 906 million barrels, 258 million barrels and 362 million barrels, respectively, during the first half, up 1.3 percent, 3 percent and 9.3 percent year-on-year, statistics from the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council show.

The second drilling unit of the GWDC has been providing drilling engineering services for multiple oil and gas fields domestically and



An employee from the second drilling unit of CNPC Greatwall Drilling Co works on a drilling site in the Gulong shale oil formation in Daqing, Heilongjiang province, in late September. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

internationally for nearly five decades. It possesses various types of drilling rigs and supporting equipment.

With an annual drilling capacity of 1.7 million meters, its scope of services primarily includes drilling, pre-drilling engineering and well

completion operations, capable of handling various types of drilling and well-servicing projects for oil, natural gas, coal-bed methane, geothermal and water resources up to 9,000 meters in depth.

Domestically, the company operates across 20 provinces, municipa-

lities and autonomous regions, forming long-term, stable partnerships with oil fields such as Liaohe Oilfield in Liaoning province and Changqing oilfield in Shaanxi province. It has also built a market presence in 11 countries and regions.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

Destination  
from history  
to treasure

Greater number of tourists are discovering the charms and architecture of ancient Zhengding, reports **Zhang Yu** in Shijiazhuang.

One day as the sun was setting in April 1933, Liang Sicheng (1901-72), the architect, architectural historian and educator, also known as the "father of modern Chinese architecture", arrived at Zhengding Railway Station by train from Beijing. The journey was the beginning of his exploration of the ancient county of Zhengding in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province.

"I was struck by the grandeur of Zhengding within minutes of arriving, which came as a surprise to me. However, at the time, I was unaware that amid the densely packed houses there were many treasures waiting to be discovered," Liang was quoted as saying in *Pindu Zhengding* ("savoring Zhengding"), a book by Sun Wanyong, a former Party secretary of the county.

Located about 250 kilometers southwest of central Beijing, the ancient county that took Liang 10 hours to reach in the 1930s sits beside the Hutuo River in the northern part of Shijiazhuang city.

With a long and impressive history, Zhengding was designated a national historical and cultural city by the State Council in 1994.

Setting it apart from many other ancient towns and cities in China, Zhengding is remarkable in that many of its ancient buildings have survived war and natural disasters.

Within the small historical county, which covers less than 10 square kilometers, there are dozens of ancient structures, including 10 national-level key cultural heritage protection units, five provincial-level cultural protection units, and more than 7,600 cultural artifacts in the local museum collection. Today, 38 ancient buildings still exist in the county seat.

Zhengding was mainly known for its "nine towers, four pagodas, and eight major temples, along with 24 ornamental archways", evidence of its abundance of famous historical sites dating back to as early as the Sui Dynasty (581-618).

The "four pagodas" refers to the four ancient pagodas in four temples, while the "eight major temples" were those built during Zhengding's prosperous historical periods, as early as the Sui and Tang (618-907) dynasties, and were renovated throughout history. Five are still well-preserved.

#### Graceful presence

Among them, Liang referred to Longxing Temple as one of the most well-known temples outside Beijing. Built in 586, it is one of the earliest and largest well-preserved Buddhist temples in China, and it left a deep impression on him.

In his later research on ancient architecture, he repeatedly referred to Longxing as "brilliant", "magnificent" and "profound", according to Sun.

"It has the only surviving revolving Buddhist scripture bookcase from the 10th century in China. The structure of the bookcase pavilion is particularly exquisite, a masterpiece of wooden architecture... It made us ecstatic, and happily thrilled," Liang was quoted as saying, upon seeing the Zhuanlunzang Ge, or revolving bookcase pavilion, at Longxing Temple. The quote is recorded in Sun's book.

Liang was also surprised by the temple's other treasures, including the Moni Dian, or Hall of Manichaean, from the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) period, in which there's another treasure — a multicolored statue of Avalokitesvara (Guanyin).

The statue, in a sitting posture, wears a crown, draped in ornaments. One foot rests on a lotus, while the other rests on the thigh. Both hands are placed natural-



**Clockwise from top left:** Zhengding county of Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, boasts many examples of ancient architecture, including the eave of a main hall of the Confucius Temple built in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960); top corner of the Kaiyuan Temple of the Tang Dynasty (618-907); and a ceremonial gate of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Performers dance at the Rong Mansion. A statue of Avalokitesvara (Guanyin) in Longxing Temple. Longxing Temple, first built during the Sui Dynasty (581-618). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY AND BY WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY **Bottom:** The county's famous four pagodas. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

ly on the knee, exuding a sense of tranquility. The statue breaks with the stiffness often associated with religious images, and embodies a more natural and graceful presence.

The Lingxiao pagoda, a brick-and-wood hybrid tower in neighboring Tianning Temple that is built in the form of an octagonal pavilion-style structure and is 40.98 meters high, and the Xumi (or Sumeru) pagoda, built in 636 of the Tang Dynasty at the Kaiyuan Temple, also caught Liang's eye.

After this initial journey, Liang found himself drawn repeatedly to Zhengding by these treasures and visited many buildings again on several occasions, measuring, photographing and even discovering new buildings, according to records.

He also made detailed architectural drawings of eight structures, including the Moni Dian, and the Zhuanlunzang Ge.

#### Stunning vista

Liang's research led to Zhengding's ancient architecture becoming known as exemplary models, and they served as teaching materials for students majoring in architecture.

"If all of this reflects Liang's love for Zhengding's ancient buildings, then the meticulous restoration and protection

of these ancient buildings embodies his earnest hopes and expectations," Sun says.

The county has not let Liang down. Since the 1980s, its ancient buildings have been protected, and buildings like the Moni Dian in Longxing Temple and the Xumi pagoda have been restored.

Fast-forward to 2024, and this small county has transformed itself into one of the most famous tourist attractions in North China, attracting visitors from all around the country, and even from overseas.

What draws them is the county's cultural heritage.

Walk along Yanzhao South Street, a major historical and cultural street in Zhengding lined with temples on both sides, which leads to the Nanchengmen ("south gate") area, and you'll see tourists dressed in hanfu (traditional Chinese clothing), strolling along the street, joking, and posing for photos against the backdrop of red brick walls.

At night, the Nanchengmen area becomes one of the liveliest spots in Zhengding. During holidays, crowds of people walk onto the city gate to enjoy beautiful night views.

Looking from south to north reveals a stunning vista of the county, with the most eye-catching elements being the illuminated ancient pagodas.

"I have never felt more proud that my hometown could become so popular, with

more and more outsiders coming to appreciate its culture, including ancient sites, and also our specialty foods," says Wang Yafeng, a 40-year-old resident of Muzhuang village.

When he was young, Wang often came to the downtown area with his mother to pray in the temples, at a time when there were not many tourists.

"However nowadays, especially during holidays like Spring Festival at the start of the Chinese Lunar Year or the National Day holiday at the start of October, Zhengding becomes very lively. Everywhere you can see bustling crowds, either visiting attractions, admiring ancient architecture, or enjoying delicious food in restaurants," Wang says.

#### Charging stations

Zhengding county received an average of 500,000 tourists a day during the National Day holiday this month, nearly three times more than the same period last year, according to a report by the China Media Group.

With more and more tourists coming to Zhengding, the local government has rolled out measures in recent years to improve public services.

These include 44,800 free parking spaces, clean and tidy public toilets, free sightseeing buses, convenient charging stations for electronic vehicles, and free drinking fountains.

For Li Nan, a 36-year-old tourist from Beijing, Zhengding was the best weekend choice for her family on Oct 12 and 13. Unlike Liang, who took 10 hours to get to Zhengding in the 1930s, Li's train journey took just over an hour.

"The first day, we traveled to the county by high-speed train, and then visited many scenic spots, such as the Longxing Temple, and Rong Mansion," Li says, talking about the trip she and her family of four took. "We also tasted many types of traditional local cuisine, like Badawan ("eight big bowls" of steamed dishes). At night, we enjoyed the view and ate snacks at the famous Zhengding night market."

Her itinerary is typical of a one-day tour of Zhengding. Rong Mansion, or Rongguo Fu is a group of buildings built in the 1980s in the style of the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), and is based on the classical novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Qing-era writer Cao Xueqin.

"The food was delicious, while the ancient buildings were magnificent, but you can only get to know them better if you go with a guide, who can tell you details and stories about the old buildings," she says.

On their second day in Zhengding, the family toured other temples. "The journey was short, but the culture was deep. We appreciated it a lot," Li says.

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## LIFE



Collections of the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow are on show at the Capital Museum in Beijing. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

## Art collector's legacy puts generosity in the frame

The State Tretyakov Gallery paintings allow visitors a glimpse into Moscow's people and history, **Lin Qi** reports.

In 1856, 24-year-old Moscow merchant Pavel Tretyakov (1832-98) acquired the oil works of two Russian painters — *Skirmish with Finnish Smugglers* by V.G. Khudyakov and *Temptation* by N.G. Schilder.

It was his first purchase of "serious" works of art.

Before that, Tretyakov, who had been long fascinated by music, literature and art, bought books and drawings at the market.

The possession of the two oil paintings led to buying a large number of paintings in the years before his death, with a focus on "work that would reflect the face of Russian painting."

That year marked the beginning of a fine collection, with the painstaking process costing Tretyakov a great deal of time and money.

He built a gallery to house and display the paintings, and turned it into a public museum. Before he died, he donated the collection and gallery to the Moscow city government to benefit as many people as possible.

Now, 56 paintings from Tretyakov's legacy of the State Tretyakov Gallery — some added to the gallery collection after he passed — have arrived in Beijing.

*The Soul of Russia* exhibition at the Capital Museum on Chang'an Avenue is the first stop on its China tour and runs until Dec 8. It introduces audiences to Tretyakov's decades-long commitment to popularizing Russian art and unfolding the many aspects of the country and its people.

The show celebrates the 75th anniversary of Sino-Russian diplomatic relations and the China-Russia Years of Culture (2024-25).

In 2015, the State Tretyakov Gallery brought its collection to the National Museum of China, also located on Chang'an Avenue. The exhibition displayed the works of Peredvizhniki, or "The Wanderers", a group of like-minded artists who emerged in the second half of the 19th century to establish the Society for Traveling Exhibitions and a new style that depicts the contemporary life of ordinary Russian people.

This time, at the Capital Museum, the gallery presents an even more extensive picture of Russia, its art and its people, since the 16th century through to today, of which the core idea may be summarized in the words of Russian painter Ivan Shishkin (1832-98): "Expanse,

space, land. Rye. God's grace. Russian wealth?"

Shishkin, one of the most celebrated landscape artists of the Peredvizhniki movement, is recognized as the "tsar of the woods" for his fine presentations of trees and forests. His piece *In the Park* is on display at *The Soul of Russia*.

The exhibited paintings are broken down into sections not in chronological order but under four themes — the expansive and diverse landscapes of Russia, the representative faces of the country that reflect its soul, life scenes of animation and their traditions, and historic narratives.

Chen Jingjing, the exhibition's curator, says the arrangement directs audiences to "a broad view of the country and its people as a whole, epitomized by the vivid depictions from different angles by artists from different periods."

"Not only does it show the tradition of art in Russia, but also the images of Russia — natural environments, a crisscross of Eastern and Western cultures and daily scenarios — have been presented by its artists over time," Chen adds.

"These works are on show in Beijing, which allows people in China to form their own perspectives of the country," she says.

Works on show include a 17th-century replica of *The Virgin of Vladimir*, by Ivan Mikhailov, the earliest painting featured at the exhibition according to Elena Pronicheva, the general director of the State Tretyakov Gallery; *Nasty Sea*, a convincing example of Ivan Aivazovsky's ability to reenact nature's eternal beauty and dignity on canvas. The display also has *Head of Boyarynya Morozova*, a preparatory study work that Vasily Surikov, a historical painter and also a Peredvizhniki member, made for his iconic piece *Boyarynya Morozova*, which is included in the State Tretyakov Gallery's collection.

Some of the artists on show were frequent guests at the house of Tretyakov.

Pronicheva says Tretyakov "set a good example of how to show the soul of Russia, as he viewed preserving Russian art in the means of building a collection and a gallery, now one of the richest in Russia, and gifting it to the public — a most important commitment!"

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Clockwise from top left: Portraits of A.M. Gorky and Anton Chekhov grab a young girl's attention. *Head of Boyarynya Morozova*, a work by Vasily Surikov. *Yuriev Monastery* (left) by Petr Konchalovsky and *Village Andreikovo* (right) by Vladimir Stozharov. Also on show is *Lenin at Smolny*, a work by Isaak Brodsky.

## Thangka artist's work imbued with tradition

By **YANG GAO** in Toronto  
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A master of the art of *thangka* says it is "not only the heritage of China, but also that of the world."

Sangye Tsering recently concluded a *thangka* art exhibition in Toronto on Oct 6. The show, his first in Canada, featured more than 50 *thangka* paintings.

Sangye Tsering, 36, is from the Regong region of Northwest China's Qinghai province and is one of the youngest inheritors of *thangka* art in China.

At the exhibition, he was awarded Cultural Ambassador of Chinese Culture by the National Artists Association of Canada for his contribution to sharing and passing on Chinese culture on the international stage.

*Thangka* is a unique form of painting in Tibetan culture. The pigments used are precious minerals and plants such as saffron, which are not only

colorful but can be maintained for hundreds of years.

"This is my life's work, my mission," Sangye Tsering told China Daily. "*Thangka* is not just about technique; its spirit has long been integrated into my life."

At the age of 8, Sangye Tsering became a disciple of Master Xiawu Cairang, a respected *thangka* artist and disciple of the famous Chinese painter Zhang Daqian. From his mentor, Sangye Tsering learned the importance of mastering technique and spiritual depth.

"My teacher always said that if you want to create great art, you must master the traditions and classics first," said Sangye Tsering. "He told me that innovation can only come from a solid foundation of tradition. Unless you first understand and respect the tradition, you cannot innovate."

In *thangka* art, the line is at the core of expression, and solid line skills



Sangye Tsering, a master of the art of *thangka*, speaks at the exhibition venue at the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto on Oct 6. Behind him, three of his sophisticated *thangka* paintings are mounted on the wall, showing the traditional style of the Tibetan art.

GAO YANG / CHINA DAILY

are the foundation for excellence. His teacher told him that "a single line is worth a horse", which had a profound influence on him. He said that *thangka* also requires skill in mixing colors.

Sangye Tsering said that studying different artistic styles and cultures, such as ancient Egypt, Greek and Roman painting, has enriched his artistry.

By comparing the techniques and concepts of different genres, he said he has been able to better understand the uniqueness of *thangka* art and build upon it.

"For example, the early introduction of Buddhism into Tibet was not only a spread of religion, but also an exchange and fusion of different cultures," he said. Such exchanges enabled *thangka* art to absorb and integrate various cultural elements and form a unique artistic style.

The experience of living in Fujian, especially learning about Mazu culture, also had a significant impact on Sangye Tsering's art.

Mazu is a revered goddess of the sea who is worshipped on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

He said that a trip to a Mazu temple inspired him. The artist originally planned to paint a portrait of Mazu, but the visit to the temple motivated him to produce a larger-scale work.

He created a work called *Shen Zhao*

*Hai Biao* that had more than 500 figures. The title means "the divine apparition over the ocean."

"When creating works related to Mazu, it's very important to value the inheritance of traditional culture while also emphasizing innovation," he said.

Sangye Tsering is also committed to the training of the next generation of *thangka* artists, as he said it's getting more difficult to find young people who want to embrace the challenging art.

"*Thangka* is not just an art form, it's a way of life," he said. "Through it, we can bring truth, goodness and beauty, which is the essence of what I wish to share with the world."

Sangye Tsering is looking to build a bridge between tradition and innovation.

"My art is about finding that balance," he said. "I believe that when people see the beauty in a *thangka*, they see something deeper than just a painting."

## LIFE

Chinese sci-fi writer  
Liu Cixin.

## Sci-fi author finds productive forces a 'shocking leap'

Liu Cixin believes despite misgivings on AI, the right choices can usher in a brand-new era, **Yang Yang** and **Zhu Xingxin** report.

New quality productive forces might be related to and shaped by scientific breakthroughs, said Liu Cixin, when asked about his understanding of this concept that is key to China's economic development at the launch ceremony of a celebratory week of sci-fi events in his hometown of Yangquan in Shanxi province on Oct 13.

Liu, born in Beijing, moved with his parents to Yangquan when he was a child. At 22, he started working at the Niangziguan Power Plant in Shanxi. In June 1999, he published his first short stories including *The Whale's Song* in Science Fiction World magazine. In 2006, his novel *The Three-Body Problem* was serialized in the magazine.

A representative of sci-fi in contemporary China, Liu, 61, has written 40 short stories and seven novels, including the best-selling novels *The Three-Body Trilogy*, *Ball Lightning* and *Supernova Era* and short stories such as *The Wandering Earth*, *Time Migration* and *The Village Teacher*.

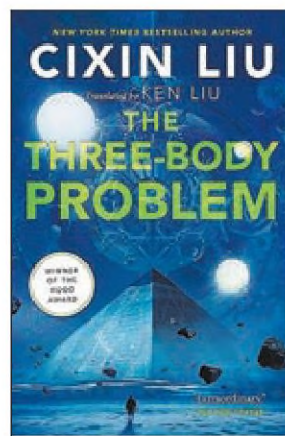
In 2015, *The Three-Body Problem*, the first volume of *The Three-Body Trilogy*, translated by Ken Liu, won the Hugo Award for best novel at the 73rd World Science Fiction Convention, making Liu the first Asian to receive this award. So far, the trilogy has been translated into 35 languages, selling more than 4 million copies overseas.

At the ceremony, he said, "Artificial intelligence might exert great influence on productive forces, boosting them — or a more complicated influence."

Liu cited the 2024 Nobel Prize winners for chemistry for example, of whom Demis Hassabis and



**Above:** Visitors at the recently launched Liu Cixin Sci-fi Museum in Yangquan, Shanxi province. **Below:** Cover of the English version of Liu's novel *The Three-Body Problem*.  
ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



John Jumper were awarded for the AI model they created that fundamentally changes the way a protein's structure is studied. He said that, in the past, it might have taken scientists years to crack one protein's structure, but AI can crack nine proteins within one second, which is what is called new quality productive forces. "It's a shocking leap. Its biggest meaning is that it changes ways of doing scientific studies and also our ways to learn the laws of the cosmos and nature," he says.

Another technology that comes out of sci-fi works is self-driving technology, he says. In Wuhan, Hubei province, Baidu's Apollo

Go robotaxi service has raised concern among taxi drivers.

When a new technology replaces an old one, it will always cause fluctuations, Liu said. For instance, at the start of the 19th century, the Luddite Movement took place in Britain, in which organized British workers destroyed the textile machinery that was displacing them, he said.

"Now we are facing a similar historical turning point. But if we can make the right choices, we can usher in a brand-new era of new quality productive forces," he said.

Liu's works have been adapted into movies, TV series and comic books, including the movie adaptations of *The Wandering Earth* in 2019 and *The Wandering Earth II*

in 2023, and two TV drama adaptations of *The Three-Body Problem*, released by Chinese streaming platform Tencent Video and the United States' Netflix.

"Both adaptations, targeting different audiences in China and overseas, are successful for me. I expect bigger success in the adaptations of the next two volumes," he said.

When readers asked whether there will be sequels to *The Three-Body Trilogy*, Liu said that the story is complete.

"Judging from my age, I can only write for another 10 years, not very long. I want to try out some new and different ideas. I'm not sure whether I can complete the novels or they are worth publishing, but I have been trying hard to write," he said.

In the years since Liu won the Hugo Award, the sci-fi industry in China has kept growing. At the 82nd World Science Fiction Convention in August, Chinese authors received a record nine nominations.

The 2024 China Science Fiction Industry Report shows that in 2023, the industry generated 113.29 billion yuan (\$15.93 billion), surpassing 100 billion yuan for the first time.

At the same ceremony, the Liu Cixin Sci-fi Museum was launched. Located in a cultural park in Yangquan, the 700-square-meter museum presents a space for audiences to learn about Liu's life, writing and achievements as well as the adaptations of his works.

Yan Jingming, vice-president of the China Writers Association, said that he hoped the museum will be an inspirational source for more sci-fi creations.

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## Ceramic expo draws international artisans in Jingdezhen

NANCHANG — The 2024 China Jingdezhen International Ceramic Expo kicked off on Friday in Jingdezhen, renowned worldwide as the "porcelain capital", in Jiangxi province. The event ends on Tuesday.

This year's exhibition area has expanded by 33 percent from last year to 140,000 square meters. It includes eight major sections, including international brands, renowned kilns and artistic ceramics.

Over 1,100 exhibitors are showcasing products from international brands, traditional kilns, and local Jingdezhen ceramic enterprises and art studios.

With an emphasis on integrated development in trade, investment and culture, the event features brands from 12 countries, including Japan, Germany and the United States.

To foster innovation, the expo has also enlarged its zone for entrepreneurship and innovation to provide a platform for young artists and local entrepreneurs.

In addition to the main expo, a series of high-profile events have been held, including forums on ceramic cultural heritage and innovation, and art exhibitions.

"I've brought a range of lifestyle artworks, including ceramics, leather goods and jewelry designed by various designers in Italy," said Italian Gregorio Dall'Asta, who attended the expo for the first time.

"We hope to strengthen our connection with Chinese designers and promote the Italian lifestyle in China, as many designers and companies at home are excited about Chinese ceramics and culture and see significant potential in this market," said the designer.

Jingdezhen's ceramic industry is increasingly becoming more creative, culturally diverse and influential worldwide, establishing itself as a hub for the creative ceramic sector, said Du Tonghe, president of the China Ceramic Industry Association, at the opening ceremony.

In September, the online platform for Jingdezhen ceramic trading operations center based in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, was officially launched. The platform is set to evolve into a ceramic trading platform worth over 10 billion yuan (\$1.41 billion) in the next three to five years.

Ye Fengchun, deputy director of the Jingdezhen development and reform commission, noted during the event that last year, the total output value of Jingdezhen's ceramic industry surpassed 86.12 billion yuan. Furthermore, between January and August this year, the value added by major ceramic enterprises reached around 2.97 billion yuan, up 11.8 percent.

First held in 2004, the expo, formerly the China Jingdezhen International Ceramic Fair, has become a significant platform to showcase the world's finest porcelain.

Over the past 20 years, the event has drawn around 2,500 overseas enterprises from 49 countries and regions, according to the organizers.

XINHUA

## Land of 'incredible development' impresses Latvian travel couple

RIGA — "China is a land rich in ancient secrets and incredible development, where warmhearted people make visitors feel at home," says Laine Perse, a Latvian travel writer.

Laine Perse and Arturs Drinins, both 34, have been hitchhiking around the world, endearing themselves to young Latvians as a celebrity travel couple in the Baltic country.

Their journey began in 2015, just after the couple graduated from college and fell in love. Over 17 months, they traveled through 64 countries, with hitchhiking as their primary means of transportation.

In 2018, Perse and Drinins got married and set off on an ambitious journey that has since led them to 90 countries. To fund their travels, they took up temporary jobs, diving deep into local

cultures and experiences along the way.

In their eyes, China is a special country where they came for the first time in 2018 and visited most provinces and cities within a month. They were impressed by China's scientific and technological progress.

"When we first arrived in China as tourists, it was a bit challenging because China was so modern that we couldn't keep up. Most places required mobile phone apps for navigation and payments, and we were unfamiliar with WeChat or AliPay at the time," says Perse.

"We were taken aback by the clean streets, modern infrastructure and gleaming shops — it was different from what we had imagined. Many people still hold misconceptions about China and can't imagine the rapid develop-

ment the country has experienced in the past few years. The first days there broke all our prejudices," she adds.

The wide use of electronic payments was the most urgent "new thing" they needed to adapt to in China. "We were surprised that even on the top of the highest mountain there would be a lady selling cucumbers and receiving money by electronic payment. Incredible!" Perse says.

The couple returned to China in 2020. "Even during the epidemic, we managed to reach China. Now we can say it was the best decision we ever made," she says.

Since November 2020, they have worked as English teachers at a foreign language training school in Manzhouli in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region. "We are travelers and, until we came to China, we never had a

job for so long. But this experience was so enjoyable and rewarding that we didn't even notice how time flew by," Perse says.

In June this year, Perse and Drinins returned to their hometown where they were interviewed by Latvian TV and radio about their trip to China.

In an interview on Latvian Radio's *Good Morning* program, Drinins said that while working in China, he was deeply impressed by the studiousness of Chinese students and their great respect for teachers.

"What we never forget to mention is that Chinese students respect teachers and young kids respect elders. It is something we're starting to miss in Europe. The kids were incredibly fun and nice and it was a pleasure teaching them," says Perse.

Perse has also published seven

books documenting the culture, cuisine and traditions of the places they have traveled. Her latest book *Land of the Red Dragon: Adventures and Discoveries in Modern China* was published this summer in Riga, Latvia.

Asked why it is the "Land of the Red Dragon", Perse smiled. "First of all, this is the year of the Dragon. As we have heard from the Chinese, this is the luckiest animal among all 12 zodiac signs because it's the only one that is not real so it can bring fortune, good health, luck and love. Why the red dragon? Oh, red is the lucky color in China! Red dragon should be double luck, right?"

"Whenever someone reads it, they're stunned — 'Is that China?' We've done several interviews and storytelling events here in Europe about our life in China. Many people are curious about Chinese tradi-

tions and the real experiences of living there. While guidebooks often highlight what to see in China, few capture what it's truly like to live among the Chinese and be part of this country," Perse adds.

Now, Perse and Drinins are making videos and have written stories about China. Some people dismiss them as "propaganda", but that's often from those "who've never been there," Perse says.

"Some say we are paid to say good things, but it's not true. We can't tell the story from a local Chinese point of view but we can tell our experience being in China as foreigners! Why are foreigners coming to China? Why are they staying or trying to get back? Because life is very pleasant in China for a foreigner. We felt great there!" she adds.

XINHUA

## COMMENT

## Editorial

## BRICS heralds new era of unity and self-improvement for Global South

The 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, from Tuesday to Thursday, the first leaders' meeting after the grouping's expansion, has drawn the attention of different countries for different reasons.

Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates were formally welcomed into the BRICS' fold on Jan 1.

For those countries longing for a fair and just world order — especially the countries of the Global South such as Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cuba, Syria, Belarus and Pakistan which want to join the grouping — the summit in Kazan might open new channels to contribute to the cause of BRICS and enjoy the benefits of being a member of it.

It is the BRICS member states' technological progress, huge development potential, and common commitment to multilateralism — BRICS contributed more than 40 percent to global economic growth in the past decade — that have made the grouping capable of efficiently promoting the reform of the global governance system and clearing the bottlenecks that obstruct their respective development path and hinder common development.

Apart from trying to establish a more inclusive international financial settlement system to reduce the US dollar's dominance in global trade, the BRICS members are also building new and more cohesive communication channels and developing mechanisms that would sustain long-term investment, which are likely to be the subjects of discussion in Kazan. That more than 30 countries and regions, including non-BRICS members, are taking part in the meeting shows the grouping's agenda is conducive to meeting their needs.

But for countries trying to portray their "rules-based world order" as best suited to good global governance, particularly those that have been benefiting from the world order they built and BRICS Plus is trying to reform, the meeting in Kazan is like a thorn in their side.

The fact, however, is that the increasingly important roles BRICS and its member states are playing on the world stage have cheated off the big cheese, which for long has taken it for granted that it will always be a winner-takes-it-all world. The developed world has now adopted a more vigilant approach toward BRICS because the grouping is not what they had thought it to be — an empty talk shop — but a resolute executor of plans and projects.

However, given the rise of hegemony, protectionism, unilateralism and bloc confrontation, and the efforts of some countries to drag the world into a new Cold War, BRICS should firmly resist the acts that undermine the world order, and focus on helping build a truly equal and multipolar world. The BRICS member states, in the process, should strengthen their coordination and cooperation with the rest of the Global South.

Besides, BRICS should safeguard food and energy security, and oppose the politicization and weaponization of food and energy issues, explore the possibility of establishing an inclusive supply and demand system, and industry and supply chains.

The grouping, with members like China, Russia and India, has the capability and means to lead a technological revolution by strengthening intra-BRICS cooperation and promoting innovation in the fields of artificial intelligence, new industrialization, deep-sea resource exploration, digital education and connectivity, and should consider doing so.

Since the inception of BRICS, the member states have been committed to upholding multilateralism and becoming a positive, stabilizing and benevolent force in international relations. And as one of the founding members of the grouping, China is ready to work with all parties to deepen cooperation within BRICS to ensure the grouping heralds a new era of unity and self-improvement for the Global South, and promotes global peace and development.

## Denuclearization must not be derailed

China has fulfilled its due responsibility to push for efforts to make the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free, and fully and strictly implemented the United Nations resolutions in that regard. As tensions on the peninsula escalate, it is all the more necessary for related parties to exercise restraint, rather than making provocative moves. After all, maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula aligns with the common interests of all parties.

It is counterproductive therefore for the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea to launch a new multinational team to monitor the enforcement of sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in place of a monitoring mechanism at the UN, rather than returning to the track of dialogue and negotiation, which has proved the most effective means of calming the peninsula situation.

The so-called Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team has been introduced after Russia in March rejected the annual renewal of the UN panel of experts that had over the past 15 years overseen the implementation of sanctions aimed at curbing the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs.

The team, to be joined by eight other countries including the United Kingdom, France and Germany, is supposedly to continue with the UN panel's work including issuing regular reports on sanctions enforcement. Yet since it lacks the international legitimacy granted to UN-backed operations, how the team will be able to reinstate the UN's denuclearization plan remains in question. It also bears all the hallmarks of the US' penchant for forming cliques to impose its will on other countries.

The DPRK has already denounced the move as "utterly unlawful and illegitimate", describing it as "the most undisguised violation" of the country's sovereignty. It has also warned that countries involved in the "smear campaign" against Pyongyang "will have to pay a dear price".

Over the past nearly 20 years, the UN has passed nine resolutions imposing sanctions on the DPRK for its nuclear program and related activities, which range from a ban on the trade of arms and military equipment and the freezing of assets of individuals to restrictions on imports of oil and natural gas. The measures have taken a heavy toll on the country's economy. With the US continuously mounting pressure on it, Pyongyang has no choice but to use all necessary means to safeguard the country's security.

Rather, the sanctions have prompted Pyongyang, which withdrew from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in 2003, to press ahead with its nuclear program with firmer determination as it has increasingly seen US military bases in the ROK and the war games the two countries regularly hold as an existential threat. The fact that the governments in Libya and Iraq were toppled by the US and its allies after giving up their nuclear weapons program has made Pyongyang believe nuclear weapons are the only means to ensure its survival in the face of what it perceives to be growing external security threats. The DPRK has conducted more missile and nuclear tests since Kim Jong-un came to power in 2012 than it had done in all the years since its first nuclear test.

Moreover, global geopolitical changes have further compromised international efforts aimed at making the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free. The breakdown in relations between Russia and the US-led West following the Russia-Ukraine conflict was believed to be the main reason behind Russia vetoing the renewal of the UN panel of experts. Since then, Russia and the DPRK have vowed to boost military ties, with the signing of a mutual defense treaty at a summit in June. There have also been reports that the DPRK has sent troops to Russia for training and will likely be deployed on the front line in Ukraine. All this makes the objective of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula even more difficult to achieve.

China, which abstained from the vote on the UN panel mandate, has made it clear that it supports the stable and sustainable development of the DPRK, not only because of the friendly relations between the two countries but also because it will contribute to regional and global peace.

The members of the new monitoring team should adopt the same approach, rather than exacerbating tensions on the peninsula.

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Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Beijing and Jakarta uphold true multilateralism for region's good

Vice-President Han Zheng's presence at Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's inauguration in Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, on Sunday, and his visit to the country from Saturday to Monday are expected to further boost China-Indonesia relations at a time of changing regional and global dynamics.

The past 10 years have seen high-level development in China-Indonesia relations, with the heads of the two countries jointly leading the upgrading of bilateral ties to build a community with a shared future. When China and Indonesia mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties next year, it will create new opportunities to advance bilateral cooperation on the basis of mutual benefits and win-win outcomes.

In recent years, China has been advancing cooperation with countries around the world under the Belt and Road Initiative, in which Indonesia is an important participant. As a land-

mark project under the initiative, the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway, which became operational in October last year, has demonstrated the far-reaching significance of China-Indonesia cooperation at multiple levels.

While greatly shortening the travel time between Jakarta and Bandung, reducing logistics costs and promoting economic development in areas along the route, the high-speed railway has also injected new vitality into Indonesia's overall economy.

The fruits of the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway show the huge potential of China-Indonesia cooperation, and its steady progress in the future will inject new impetus into the continuous development of relations, apart from creating new opportunities for closer regional connectivity in Southeast Asia, while further enhancing economic integration within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

China always attaches importance to the development of ties with Indonesia

as a key member of ASEAN, and the two countries established a dialogue mechanism for foreign and defense ministers in 2023. This is China's first "2 plus 2" ministerial dialogue mechanism with a foreign country, showing that the development of comprehensive strategic cooperative relations between China and Indonesia has reached a new level.

A good relationship between China and Indonesia is also necessary for the stability, development and solidarity of Southeast Asia and the vast developing community. As two major emerging economies and important members of the Global South, China and Indonesia should pursue strategic autonomy in the international arena and uphold multilateralism, which is also a foundation for the further advancement of bilateral relations. At the same time, the two countries should avoid interfering in and sabotaging bilateral ties by any third-party force with ulterior motives.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

## Schools cannot be lax about students' food

Although the authorities in Kunming, capital of Yunnan province, have announced the dismissal of the principal and legal representative of the local Changfeng School and slapped a nearly 5.8 million yuan (\$816,568) fine on the school's cafeteria after an investigation found it had served stale meat to its students, the punishment doesn't seem to be enough.

According to a news release, the school had contracted its cafeteria's management to a company in August without reporting the contract to the local education department.

Media reports quoted managers of other private schools as saying they don't have to follow bidding procedures when employing people to run their cafeteria.

It is necessary to point out here that a national regulation on school food safety and nutrition management had said that schools should employ qualified contractors in their cafeterias

through a bidding process.

Moreover, various levels of education department officials, who are empowered to regulate both public and private schools, need to establish stricter systems so that the school managers who thought they could skip the bidding process are taught a lesson. Education department officials cannot afford to be lackadaisical about any food that's served to schoolchildren.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## US paying lip service to Taiwan Strait stability

One week after the People's Liberation Army concluded its large-scale military drills around Taiwan island in response to the "new separatism" the regional leader Lai Ching-te peddled in his speech in Taipei on Oct 10, the US destroyer USS *Higgins* and Canadian frigate HMCS *Vancouver* passed through the Taiwan Strait.

The PLA Eastern Theater Command monitored the vessels throughout the transit, handling the situation according to laws and regulations, the PLA said in a statement.

The ships' transit through the Taiwan Strait "demonstrated the United States' and Canada's commitment to upholding freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle", the US Navy's 7th Fleet said in a statement.

But that is just candy to sweeten the aggressive nature of such naval operations. Naval vessels of the United States and its allies regularly transit the

180-kilometer strait separating Taiwan and the Chinese mainland supposedly to reinforce the Strait's status as an international waterway, under the excuse of "upholding freedom of navigation". But in reality, such transits are Washington playing the "Taiwan card".

Although the "interactions" between Beijing and Washington and its allies in the busy waterway seem to be in a controllable state, the rising frequency of such "freedom of navigation" operations shows the US is merely paying lip service to its professed desire for stability.

This is further evidenced by the US' arms sales to the island in violation of its solemn promise to Beijing that the US does not support "Taiwan independence".

These reckless moves of the US side have not only caused unnecessary friction with Beijing, they have also seriously undermined the efforts of Beijing to realize the island's peaceful reunification with the motherland.

The US and Canadian battleships' transit through the waters happened

shortly after Lai poured separatist wine from a bottle seemingly labeled pro-peace, pro-development and pro-democracy. Ironically, Washington urged Beijing to practice restraint immediately after Lai's perfidious performance.

To Lai and his US patrons, peace is a veneer covering the nature of the former's pro-independence stance, development is a means to realize his secessionist cause, and democracy is a pretext to justify their collusion.

The US is not trying to maintain the status quo across the Strait or protect "democracy". Instead, it is preparing to initiate a war in the Asia-Pacific to fish for its own narrow gains, just as it has done in Europe and the Middle East.

The Taiwan question is China's internal affair and core interest. It brooks no interference or meddling by any external forces. The PLA will take all necessary means to resolutely safeguard the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as regional peace and stability.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## GLOBAL VIEWS

JEAN PAUL VARGAS

## In pursuit of communal unity

People flourish when they can combine material and spiritual prosperity with a sense of belonging and esteem, which is one of the secrets of this successful society in the East

We live in a global community where the recurrent use of strategies, which instill fear and uncertainty about the future, are increasingly becoming the main rhetoric of geopolitical projects or movements that tolerate if not coddle fragmentation and polarization.



The decline of the West is the result of its fragile identity, and the excess of its narratives. The West's obsession with the improvement of obsolete institutions becomes the fracture of their systems to adapt to a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous reality.

In contrast, China's rise gravitates in the identity and clarity of the values and social principles. China's cultural confidence lies in its ambition and constant struggle for excellence, in making communal solidarity a way of life, and in its openness and flexibility to learn the best from the experiences of other civilizations.

Cultural trust has led the Chinese people to remain on the path of righteousness, respecting the past without repeating mistakes of the past, and combining a fearless spirit with an exceptional and unwavering willpower that enables them to address new challenges with inexorable historical responsibility. The goal is to achieve a systemic cultural innovation in the social, economic, intellectual and international dimensions, and to learn the best from other civilizations without affecting their own identity.

China has demonstrated its significant commitment to a shared global vision in its initiatives in recent years, with the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative launched in 2013 to strengthen projects aimed at connectivity between nations, and, later, accompanied with development, security and global civilization initiatives. China seeks to strengthen economic and trade relations with countries around the

world, promoting connectivity and cooperation through investments in key sectors, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

These efforts help China assume transformative leadership on global issues such as climate change, as it is actively promoting the transition to cleaner energy sources and enhancing international cooperation on environmental matters. These efforts demonstrate China's willingness to actively participate in the international community and promote a cooperative and collaborative approach to address the shared global challenges.

To understand China in the new era is to open oneself to understanding how norms, values and affections are articulated with social dynamics. This vision, far from defining an institutional form in which relations should take place in the global village, seeks to disembody relations of domination and inequality, with a broad capacity to elucidate the unknown and interrogate the obvious.

Many of the developing countries are at a crossroads, between continuing to do things as they have been done before and continuing to be subsumed under hegemonic influences, perpetuating underdevelopment and poverty; or recognizing the rise of China, joining the Chinese dream, and opening the doors to investment, connectivity, innovation and with it the prosperity of our peoples.

The West's inability to lead and coordinate international collective action toward reasonable levels of integration, equality, protection and social security seems to be overcome by the social, economic and technological transformations of peoples; Western conceptions of development are the echo of a colonial past, where different paths and levels of civilizations are subjected to the uniform, rigid model of progress. For this reason, many of their responses are and will continue to be ineffective, counterproductive and obsolete. Therefore, there is the need to

build a scientific alternative, a narrative capable of integrating all civilizations to address collective issues for the construction of a community with a shared future for humanity.

We must return to the paths of human dignity, because in it we find the fundamental pillars of peace and faith in humanity. We need to not only base education on tolerance and integration, but also innovate various ways that facilitate connectivity, growth and economic development.

From the experience of the Chinese dream, people flourish when they can combine material and spiritual prosperity with a sense of belonging and esteem, which is one of the secrets of this successful society. It is essential to learn to prioritize the desire for satisfaction. All efforts will be sterile if not done within the framework of a clarity of social values. This is how ideas and values are mixed to reinforce each other, strengthening a shared identity with a goal and a proposal on how to achieve it.

History, exceptionally, is written as it is lived. The rule has been that passions cloud progress and achievements, but the leisurely sedimentation of time ends up doing justice to the facts. Hence, the importance of the weight of responsibility and of taking firm steps one by one, is always on the right side of history. Tolerance and the integration of civilizations require us to recognize the greatness of our times and the urgency that our challenges demonstrate. Let us never forget that the weight of responsibility is the duty of those who wish to take the path to peace gloriously.

*The author is director and a PhD in public and business management at the Central American Institute of Public Administration, and a researcher at the Center for Historical Research of Central America at University of Costa Rica. 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.*



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

ZHAO MINGHAO

## Maintaining 'Southern Solidarity'

Given its long-term competition with the US, China should use the BRI and the Global Development Initiative to further coordinate with other Global South countries

The term "Global South" — which refers to the vast number of developing countries across the world — has become a global hot topic in recent years. As an international cooperation mechanism comprising countries of the Global South, BRICS now has 10 members following its expansion this year, with another 30 countries having expressed interest in cooperating with the organization, giving it ever-increasing larger global influence. And the 16th BRICS summit will be held in Kazan, Russia, from Oct 22 to 24.

The Brandt Report issued by the Independent Commission on International Developmental Issues in 1980 underscored the drastic differences in the economic development of the Global South and the Global North.

Kishore Mahbubani, a distinguished fellow at the National University of Singapore, said the Global South represents 88 percent of the world's population, and those countries are "no longer passive participants on the world stage". And "the coming decade may belong to the Global South".

According to estimates by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, by 2060 the combined GDP of China, India and Indonesia will reach \$116.7 trillion, accounting for 49 percent of the global total.

The rise of the Global South has geopolitical reasons. Since the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out in 2022, the Global South refused to blindly toe the West's line. Major developing countries, such as Brazil, India, South Africa and Indonesia, have rejected applying the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies on Russia. Their call against double standards and a new Cold War has grown louder.

As Sarang Shidore, director of the South Program at Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, said, Global South states seek "strategic autonomy", and gain leverage through the "power of denial". According to Shidore, Global South states have realized that "a new Cold War would endanger their interests".

David Miliband, former foreign secretary of the United Kingdom, pointed out that "the preferred Western framing of the war in Ukraine — as a contest between autocracy and democracy — has not resonated well outside Europe and North America".

The US is concerned about its declining influence in the Global South, and there are deeper reasons for this. Matias Spektor, a professor of international relations at Fundacao Getulio Vargas in Brazil, said countries of the Global South have long accused Western countries of being

hypocritical in their dealings with developing states, and they find it hard to accept the West-defined "rules-based international order" when the US and its allies themselves breach these rules.

In this backdrop, the Global South has become a new battlefield of China-US competition. The National Security Strategy issued by the Joe Biden administration in 2022 stated the US will not "see the world solely through the prism of strategic competition" and will continue to engage more broadly with countries in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, while meeting the economic and development needs of the US' allies to ensure their autonomy in front of China.

Thanks to rapid development over the past several decades, China has become the world's second-largest economy. At the same time, it is still the world's largest developing country.

Based on World Bank standards, China does not qualify as a high-income country. China's gross national income per capita has not yet crossed the threshold for high-income countries. In 2022, the country's GDP per capita was \$12,741, 16.6 percent that of the US.

According to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2022, China ranked 79th globally in the Human Development Index, roughly on a par with other major developing countries. Therefore, China's status as a developing country is unquestionable. To some extent, China faces the dilemma of being both a global power and a developing country. As Philippe Benoit, an adjunct senior research scholar with Columbia University's Center on Global Energy, said: "China is the world's lone 'hybrid superpower'".

China's status dilemma has become a useful tool for the US. By questioning and undermining China's status as a developing country, the US can create greater obstacles to China's economic growth and alienate it from other developing states. As Michael Schuman, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub, pointed out: "Global South will be one of the great battlefields of the growing China-US competition".

To undermine China's status as a member of the Global South, the US and its allies label China as a member of the "Global East".

According to the "Three Worlds" theory of John Ikenberry, a professor at Princeton University, the world is divided into the Global West, the Global East and the Global South. One is led by the US and Europe, the second by China and Russia, and the third by an amorphous grouping of non-Western developing nations. Ikenberry said it would be a "nightmare coalition" for China if the Global

West and the Global South were to align.

The US tries to "divide and rule" the Global South. It supports India's efforts to contend with China for the leadership of the Global South. Suzanne Nossel, a former US deputy assistant secretary of state for international organizations, said that the US can win support from Global South countries including India by "jump-starting the long-stalled debate over expanding the UN Security Council" and "by pushing the reform, the US would draw Global South countries closer to the inner circle of international governance", which will force China and Russia to make concessions. In January 2023, India hosted the Voice of Global South Summit, which gathered more than 120 developing countries, and China was not invited to the event.

In addition, the US has been bolstering its relations with the Global South in areas such as energy transition, public health, food security and infrastructure, with particular attention paid to forging closer ties with "swing states" which have rich natural resources, geostrategic importance, and vast market potential, such as Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The US has boosted its influence in the Global South through initiatives such as Minerals Security Partnership, Just Energy Transition Partnership, Roadmap for Global Food Security and Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation. Relying on the strength of its allies and platforms such as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, the US aims to deepen its relationship with developing countries to counterbalance the influence of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative. But the US faces multiple constraints in implementing its Global South strategy, such as polarized domestic politics, inconsistent policies, limited resources, and divergent interests with its allies.

Good relations with other developing countries are crucial to China's global diplomacy and underpin its long-term competition with the US. Given the differences among developing countries and the challenges they face, it is a daunting task to maintain "Southern Solidarity". China should use cooperation mechanisms and initiatives such as the BRI and the Global Development Initiative to further coordinate with other Global South countries and jointly ensure that development is at the top of the global governance agenda.

*The author is a professor at the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University and a China Forum expert. 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.*

## WORLD

# China not taking sides on Ukraine

UN envoy: Beijing has consistently called for political settlement to conflict

By **MINLU ZHANG**  
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China's envoy to the United Nations on Monday reiterated China's position on the Ukraine issue and called it "objective and fair, not supporting one side or favoring another."



China's position on the Ukraine issue is open and aboveboard, with no intention of seeking self-interest or creating confrontation.

**Geng Shuang**, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations

China has consistently adhered to the direction of a political settlement to the Ukraine crisis and has maintained contact with all relevant parties, including both Russia and Ukraine, Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the UN, told a Security Council meeting on the Ukraine crisis.

"China's position on the Ukraine issue is open and aboveboard, with no intention of seeking self-interest or creating confrontation," said Geng. "China has never supplied weapons to either party, and we have consistent and rigorous controls over dual-use items," he added.

On Thursday, the United States imposed sanctions on two Chinese companies accused of "directly assisting" Russia in developing long-range attack drones used in the Ukraine war. The US Treasury Department said it was the first time the US had sanctioned Chinese entities directly developing and producing complete weapons systems in partnership with Russian firms.

In response, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China firmly opposes the US imposing illegal unilateral sanctions against Chinese companies and does not accept "groundless" accusation and pressure from the US.

"Let me stress that China is not a creator of or a party to the Ukraine crisis. We are always committed to promoting talks for peace and playing a constructive role for the political settlement," she said.

The spokesperson said China exercised strict export control over dual-use articles, including drones, and opposed using civilian drones for military purposes.

Geng also said China opposes the US using the Ukraine issue to "smear and pressure China, impose illegal unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction on Chinese entities and individuals."

"China will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of its enterprises and citizens," Geng said.

He noted that during the 79th

session of the UN General Assembly's General Debate, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held separate meetings with the foreign ministers of Russia and Ukraine.

On September 27, a ministerial meeting of the "Friends for Peace" group on the Ukraine crisis took place at the UN headquarters in New York. The meeting was co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, and Celso Amorim, chief advisor to the Brazilian presidency.

Representatives from 17 Global South countries, including Egypt, South Africa, Indonesia, Türkiye, Mexico and other countries attended the meeting. France, Hungary and Switzerland sent observers.

A joint communique was released after the meeting urging adherence to the UN Charter, respect for sovereignty, de-escalation of the conflict and prevention of battlefield spillover. It emphasized avoiding the use or threat of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and called for efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation.

Switzerland's foreign affairs ministry expressed support for the China-led peace plan following the meeting.

"We took part in this meeting as an observer and we support this dynamic," Nicolas Bideau, chief spokesperson for the Foreign Affairs Ministry, told Reuters. "For us, this translates into a significant change in our view of these initiatives," Bideau said. "A concrete diplomatic effort organized by the Sino-Brazilian group could be of interest to us."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy questioned China's and Brazil's efforts, asking why they were proposing an alternative to his peace plan.

The "Friends for Peace" group "does not aim to influence, interfere with or replace existing platforms or mechanisms, nor to negotiate on behalf of Russia or Ukraine, or impose any peace plan," Geng told the Security Council.

"The group will work flexibly, engage in inclusive dialogue and maintain open communication with all parties. It welcomes like-minded countries, especially those from the Global South, to join efforts for peace," Geng said.

China's stance on the Ukraine issue remains consistent, which is to achieve a ceasefire and a political resolution, Geng emphasized.

He noted that China has put forward four principles emphasizing that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, and that the purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be upheld.

China released a paper stating its position on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. In May, a six-point consensus was jointly issued by China and Brazil.

China and several Global South countries initiated the "Friends for Peace" group with a single goal: achieving a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine crisis and restoring peace in Europe, said Geng.

"We hope the US representative will correctly understand these efforts and join this positive political process," the Chinese ambassador said.



Palestinians seeking refuge in Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp because of Israeli attacks stand in long lines to receive food distributed by a charity on Sunday. IMAGO / PIN

## UN warns of civilian devastation in Gaza

By **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong  
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Israel's aggression in northern Gaza may be leading to the destruction of the population through "death or forced displacement," said the UN Human Rights Office, echoing similar concerns raised by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other groups.

Two weeks of Israeli siege has heavily affected northern Gaza, particularly the cities of Jabalia, Beit Lahya and Beit Hanoun, as Israel continues to defy international calls for a cease-fire following the death of Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said on Sunday that since Oct 6, the Israeli military has taken measures "that make life in north Gaza impossible for Palestinians" while "repeatedly ordering the displacement" of the entire region.

Between Oct 1 and 14, Israel blocked essential goods from entering northern Gaza, worsening the already dire situation, with fuel and food supplies dwindling and many facing starvation, it said.

Although a token amount of aid seemed to have entered the region after Oct 15, this "does not commensurate with the needs of the population," it added.

"While the Israeli military has demanded that all civilians leave north Gaza, it has continued to relentlessly bomb and attack the area, especially in and around

Jabalia camp. These attacks have made it extremely dangerous for civilians to flee, and the UN Human Rights Office has received reports over the last weeks of Palestinians targeted while fleeing."

Israeli troops have also destroyed residential buildings and attacked schools serving as shelters, with one strike at a residential block in Beit Lahya killing at least 87 people on Saturday, it said.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has condemned in the strongest terms the killings committed by the Israeli occupation forces in northern Gaza, citing Israeli operations as "a stain on the conscience of humanity."

### Flagrant violation

In a statement on Sunday, it said such atrocities are in flagrant violation of international values, conventions, UN resolutions and orders issued by the International Court of Justice.

The UN Human Rights Office also urged Israel to observe provisional measures ordered by the ICJ on Jan 26 and that "as the occupying power," it must "ensure the provision of food, medical supplies and shelter for the population of Gaza."

Echoing the same view, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL, said the breaching of the UN position and damaging of UN assets by Israel Defense Forces was "a flagrant violation of international law and Security Council Resolution

1701," alleging that an IDF bulldozer "deliberately demolished an observation tower and perimeter fence of a UN position in Marwahin" in southern Lebanon.

"Despite the pressure being exerted on the mission and our troop-contributing countries, peacekeepers remain in all positions," UNIFIL said on Sunday.

Muhammad Al-Aklouk, Palestine's permanent representative to the Arab League, has requested an emergency meeting of the Arab League Council, the official Wafa news agency reported on Sunday.

In a statement to Wafa, Al-Aklouk called on the Arab League members "to uphold their historical responsibility in addressing these unprecedented Israeli crimes."

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi condemned Israel's actions in northern Gaza as "inhuman" and "pure evil and a war crime that humanity should not tolerate," urging immediate international action to stop the aggression.

Gokhan Erel, a Gulf studies coordinator at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Türkiye, told China Daily that Safadi's remarks suggest Jordan, along with other Arab countries, may push the Arab League to convene and present a unified stance.

He said Jordan's reference to war crimes could open the doors to renewed efforts to bring Israeli leaders before international courts, such as the International Criminal Court.

## Beijing condemns attack on consulate

By **WANG QINGYUN**  
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China has strongly condemned a recent attack on its consulate-general in Mandalay, Myanmar, and called for a thorough investigation into the incident.

The consulate office building was hit by an explosive device around 5 pm on Friday, damaging part of the consulate compound but causing no casualties, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a regular news conference on Monday.

The ministry immediately launched an emergency response, Lin added.

China is "deeply shocked" by the attack, he said. "China has lodged solemn representations to Myanmar and urged it to get to the bottom of the incident, make all-out efforts to hunt down the perpetrators and bring them to justice according to law."

China has also asked Myanmar to step up efforts to protect the Chinese embassy, consulate-general, projects and citizens and make sure similar incidents do not happen again, he said.

Myanmar has expressed "shock and pain" over the incident and vowed to take necessary measures to implement its commitment and obligations under international law and take on the principal responsibilities to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and institutions in the country, Lin added.

### Briefly

#### VIETNAM Luong Cuong elected president

Luong Cuong, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and permanent member of the CPV Central Committee Secretariat, was elected Vietnam's president on Monday, local media reported. All the 440 deputies who attended the parliament session on Monday voted to elect Cuong, 67.

#### UNITED STATES 2 Navy aviators killed in jet crash

Two crew members who were missing following the crash of a fighter jet in Washington state during a routine training flight have been declared dead, the US Navy said on Sunday. The EA-18G Growler jet from the Electronic Attack Squadron crashed east of Mount Rainier on Tuesday afternoon, according to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. The cause of the crash is still being investigated, the Navy said. Last year, eight US Air Force service members were killed when a CV-22B Osprey aircraft they were flying in crashed off the coast of Japan.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



## Voices for the Earth

Brazilian indigenous groups take part in the United Nations biodiversity summit in Cali, Colombia, on Sunday. The world's biggest nature protection conference, COP16, opened with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calling for "significant investment" in the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund created last year.

JOAQUIN SARMIENTO / AFP

## Prabowo swears in 109-member Indonesia cabinet

By **LEONARDUS JEGHO** in Jakarta  
For China Daily

Newly inaugurated Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on Monday swore in the largest cabinet the country has seen in six decades, indicating a continuation of his predecessor's pragmatic approach to economic growth.

The lineup, which includes 48 ministers, 56 vice-ministers and five heads of ministerial state agencies along with their deputies, was unveiled late on Sunday following Prabowo's inauguration alongside Vice-President Gibran Rakabuming Raka.

The cabinet with 109 officials is the largest since 1966 when Indonesia's first president Sukarno formed a lineup of 132 ministers. The previous administration of Joko Widodo had about 60 cabinet members in total.

Visiting Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng met with Gibran on

Monday, congratulating the latter on his inauguration. Han said China and Indonesia are good neighbors and good partners, adding bilateral cooperation is highly complementary and mutually beneficial, which has brought tangible benefits to both countries.

For his part, Gibran said the new Indonesian government is willing to work with China to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state.

Prabowo named his cabinet "Kabinet Merah Putih" (Red and White Cabinet), reflecting the colors of the national flag, and said he looks forward to a strong government to serve the nation's development needs.

"I want to create a strong government that would unite our multicultural society and diverse political interests," he said on Sunday.

The cabinet comprises not only members of his Gerindra party and coalition partners but also inde-

pendent experts with specialized knowledge.

More than a dozen ministers from the Widodo administration have been retained in Prabowo's cabinet, either in their previous roles or new positions. Notable figures include Sri Mulyani Indrawati, who will continue as finance minister; Airlangga Hartarto, coordinating minister for economic affairs; and Tito Karnavian, home affairs minister.

A new appointment is Sugiono, a former army lieutenant general and deputy chair of the Gerindra party, who steps in as foreign minister. He was a military cadet at Norwich University, the oldest military academy in the United States.

Additionally, former army lieutenant general Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin has been named defense minister.

Prabowo had repeatedly emphasized his intention to form a *zaken* cabinet — one composed of ministers with expertise in specific areas,

appointed based on qualifications rather than political affiliations.

Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, a former army member and chairman of the Democratic Party, has been named coordinating minister for infrastructure and regional development. He is the eldest son of former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Luhut Pandjaitan, a senior minister under Widodo who spearheaded Indonesia's mineral processing industry, has been appointed head of the National Economic Council.

While some analysts said a large cabinet is not easy to keep control, others argue that a strong government can still function effectively with a broad array of members.

Prabowo is expected to hold meetings with cabinet members in Central Java Province in the coming days.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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# SPORTS

## CULTURE EXCHANGE

# Traditional events enjoy a festival of celebration

Kunming hosts a brilliant showcase of culture for a global audience



By LI YINGXUE  
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At the edge of Dianchi Lake in Yunnan province, more than 700 athletes from around the world gathered last Thursday to kick off the second Traditional Sports International Festival.

Set against a backdrop of lush green mountains and clear waters, the event featured dragon and lion dances, Peking opera, martial arts, and traditional Yunnan ethnic performances. Athletes didn't just watch — they joined in, dancing alongside performers in a spirited celebration of Chinese culture.

The festival, which concluded on Monday in Kunming's ethnic square, offered a vivid showcase of traditions, including the music and dance of the Miao, Yi, Wa, and Lisu peoples. The closing ceremony ended with a bonfire party, capping off a week that brought together sports and cultural heritage for a global audience.

The event, organized by the All-China Sports Federation and co-hosted by International Sports Exchange Center of General Administration of Sport of China, Yunnan

Provincial Sports Bureau, and Kunming Municipal People's Government, saw a significant increase in international participation this year.

Out of 723 athletes, 353 hailed from 27 countries and regions, including Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, the United States, Germany, Canada, Mexico, India, South Korea, and Japan.

In addition to core competitions in wushu, health *qigong*, and Go, the festival introduced dragon and lion dancing — one of China's most iconic traditional sports, which has gained a strong international following.

Zhang Xiaojing, deputy director of the Yunnan Provincial Sports Bureau, emphasized the significance of this year's addition of dragon and lion dance competitions. "Not only does it promote traditional Chinese culture, but it also combines competition with performance, adding artistic and visual appeal to the event," Zhang said.

The dragon and lion dance events wrapped up on Saturday, with Guangzhou Sport University's Dragon and Lion Dance Team taking

home the gold in the traditional dragon dance category. Held in Ancient Town of Guandu, one of the cradles of "Dian culture", the competition was accompanied by a vibrant dragon and lion dance parade through the scenic town.

"Our goal is to bring sports closer to the people. That means taking our competitions into communities, business districts, and scenic spots, so that more people can experience

the sense of participation, fulfillment, and happiness that sports bring," Zhang added.

The Go competition was held at the Yunzi Go Academy, which is a public museum that primarily highlights the various achievements of Chinese Go. Meanwhile, the Wushu and health *qigong* competitions were staged at the National Sports Training Center of Haigeng in Kunming. This renowned "meritorious

training base" for China's national teams once again served as a vital platform for preserving and promoting traditional Chinese sports.

Yunnan team member Xiao Ruiqi emphasized that health *qigong* is accessible to people of all ages, including younger generations. "After practicing, you feel relaxed, happy, and recharged — it helps to relieve physical fatigue," Xiao noted.

"We warmly welcome all health *qigong* enthusiasts to Yunnan to participate. It's not about chasing rankings; it's about gaining health," he added.

This festival provides a platform for domestic and international participants to engage in communication and competition while connecting traditional Chinese sports enthusiasts worldwide.

The event also featured various cultural and sports exhibitions, including a traditional sports culture exhibition, and interactive displays of ethnic costumes in the Ancient Town of Guandu.

Wei Daishun, director of the International Sports Exchange Center of General Administration of Sport of China, emphasized that traditional Chinese sports embody the

history and culture of the nation, acting as a bridge between China and the world.

"The competition utilizes traditional Chinese sports as a medium for cultural exchange, providing a platform for enthusiasts globally to share skills, foster cultural connections, and enhance mutual understanding," he stated.

The Traditional Sports International Festival returns to Yunnan province for the second consecutive year, following its inaugural event last December in Qujing.

Tao Zhong, deputy secretary-general of the Yunnan Provincial Government, highlighted that the province has not only hosted this festival but also organized significant events such as the Kunming marathon and a cycling festival. Additionally, Yunnan has facilitated unique bilateral events as well as two consecutive China Outdoor Sports Industry Conferences.

Looking to the future, Yunnan aims to establish itself as a "highland training destination, outdoor sports paradise, and year-round event playground", with plans to attract more national and international events, he said.



Traditional Chinese sports and activities have been attracting overseas visitors. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From top (clockwise): Chinese traditional sports such as dragon and lion dances, health *qigong*, wushu and Go chess are disciplines at the second Traditional Sports International Festival in Kunming, Yunnan province. The event attracted 723 athletes and performers from 27 countries and regions over the past five days. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## BASEBALL

# Yankees and Dodgers meet in World Series for 12th time

NEW YORK — Broadway vs Hollywood. Subway vs Freeway. Judge vs Ohtani.

New York neighbors who became cross-country rivals, the Yankees and Dodgers renew their starry struggle in the World Series for the first time in 43 years.

"When you're playing for the Dodgers and playing for the Yankees, it better feel different," LA manager Dave Roberts said at Yankee Stadium last June. "If not, you better do something different for a profession."

Two of baseball's most successful teams face each other starting Friday at Dodger Stadium, the Yankees coming off their 41st American League pennant and the Dodgers their 25th National League championship. New York is seeking its 28th World Series title but first since 2009, the Dodgers their eighth and second in a five-year span.

Yankees pinstripes vs Dodgers Pantone 294. The Bronx Bombers vs the Dem Bums' descendants. The granite-and-limestone of new Yankee Stadium on chilly autumn nights vs Dodger Stadium in sunny Chavez Ravine, with the San Gabriel Mountains beyond the pavilions.

"It's kind of what the people wanted, what we all wanted," Dodgers star Mookie Betts said. "It's going to be a battle of two good teams, a lot of



Aaron Judge (left) of the New York Yankees and Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Dodgers are set to square off in the MLB World Series starting on Friday in Los Angeles. AFP / AP



long flights across the country."

New York is 8-3 against the Dodgers in the most frequent World Series matchup, including 6-1 against Brooklyn and 2-2 since the rivalry became Big Apple against Tinseltown.

Mickey Owen, Al Gionfriddo, Cookie Lavagetto, Sandy Amoros, Johnny Podres, Don Larsen, Sandy Koufax and Reggie Jackson created indelible images in the matchup, which started in 1941 with one of the wackiest World Series turns.

Trailing 2-1 in the Series, Brooklyn led 4-3 with two outs in the ninth inning at Ebbets Field when Timmy

Henrich swung and missed at strike three from Hugh Casey. The ball bounced away from Owen and rolled toward the Dodgers dugout as Henrich reached on the dropped third strike. Joe DiMaggio singled, Charlie Keller hit a two-run double and Joe Gordon added another two-run double later in the inning as the Yankees won 7-4 and went on to win the title in five games.

Lavagetto's two-out, pinch walk-off double in the ninth ended Bill Bevens' no-hit bid in 1947's Game 4 and two games later Gionfriddo robbed DiMaggio of a tying three-run homer.

New York beat the Dodgers again in 1949, 1952 and 1953, frustrating the fans in Flatbush, but Brooklyn finally won the title in 1955 when Podres pitched a Game 7 shutout at Yankee Stadium and Gil Hodges drove in both runs. Amoros preserved the lead when he made a running catch of Yogi Berra's sixth-inning drive in the left-field corner with two on and relayed to shortstop Pee Wee Reese, who threw to Hodges at first and doubled up Gil McDougald. Those players were celebrated in Roger Kahn's 1972 book *The Boys of Summer*.

Larsen pitched the World Series'

only perfect game in 1956's fifth game in the Bronx, Berra jumping into his arms after the final out, and the Yankees won Game 7 behind Johnny Kucks' three-hit shutout in what turned out to be the last World Series game at Ebbets Field.

Walter O'Malley moved the Dodgers to California after the 1957 season, and Koufax had an interlocking "LA" on his cap instead of a "B" when he struck out a then-Series record 15 in the 1963 opener at Yankee Stadium. The rivalry didn't resume until 1977 with the first of three matchups in a five-year span.

Jackson's three home runs led the

Yankees to a clinching win in 1977's Game 6. The Yankees won another six-game Series the following year, highlighted by third baseman Graig Nettles' diving stops on Reggie Smith, Steve Garvey and Davey Lopes.

Los Angeles lost the first two games in the Bronx in 1981, and then won four in a row — capped by a 9-2 victory that had Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda dancing. The defeat prompted Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, his right hand bandaged after an alleged fight with Dodgers fans in a hotel elevator, to issue a written apology "to the people of New York and to the fans of the New York Yankees everywhere".

Both teams feel the history created by their predecessors.

"You put that jersey on and those pinstripes, it just feels different," Yankees slugger Juan Soto said.

Los Angeles took two of three when they met in a much-hyped series in June.

Roberts is reminded of the history when he approaches Dodger Stadium.

"I can't believe I'm driving up Vin Scully Way, when I go to work," he said. "It's overwhelming, but I try not to let my head go there too often; I just try to do my job."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

# SPORTS

## BASKETBALL

# Liberty capture first WNBA crown

New York rallies to defeat Minnesota 67-62 in an overtime classic in Game 5



NEW YORK — As confetti fell and Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" blared through the arena, the New York Liberty celebrated the end of a 27-year odyssey.

The team that always fell short, starting from its days in Madison Square Garden, through detours to Radio City Music Hall and Westchester County Center, finally found its way to the top.

Start spreading the news, indeed: There's finally a pro basketball champion in New York again after a 67-62 overtime win over Minnesota in Game 5 of the WNBA Finals on Sunday night.

"I've been manifesting this moment for awhile. There's no feeling like it," Breanna Stewart said. "Credit to Minnesota, they gave us a tough series. The fans have been amazing everywhere we've gone. To bring a championship to New York, first ever in franchise history it's an incredible feeling. I can't wait to continue to celebrate with the city. It's going to be bonkers."

Jonquel Jones scored 17 points to lead New York, which was one of the original franchises in the league. The Liberty made the WNBA Finals five times before, losing each one, including last season. This time they wouldn't be denied, although it took an extra five minutes.

With stars Stewart and Sabrina Ionescu struggling on offense, other players stepped up. Leonie Fiebich started off OT with a 3-pointer, and then Nyara Sabally had a steal for a layup to make it 65-60 and bring the sellout crowd to a frenzied state.

"Whoever scores in overtime first usually wins," Liberty coach Sandy Brondello said.

Minnesota didn't score in OT until Kayla McBride hit two free throws with 1:51 left. The Lynx missed all six of their field goal attempts in overtime. After Ionescu missed a shot with 21 seconds left, her 18th miss on 19 shot attempts, the Lynx had one last chance, but Bridget Carleton missed a 3-pointer with 16 seconds left.

Stewart, who missed a free throw with 0.8 seconds left in the end of regulation in Game 1, hit two free throws with 10.1 seconds left in overtime to seal the victory.

As the final seconds ticked off the clock the players hugged and streamers fell from the rafters. Stewart and Jones hugged. The two prize free agent signees two years ago that helped get this team its first title.

New York trailed by two in regulation when Stewart was fouled with



New York Liberty players hold up the championship trophy after defeating the Minnesota Lynx in Game 5 of the WNBA Finals, on Sunday, in New York. The Liberty won their first championship after falling in the title round in their previous five appearances. AP



New York Liberty guard Sabrina Ionescu puts up a shot against Minnesota Lynx guard Natisha Hiedeman during the fourth quarter of Game 5 of the Finals, on Sunday, in New York. AP



Jonquel Jones of the New York Liberty celebrates with the WNBA Finals MVP trophy after winning Game 5 of the Finals at Barclays Center on Sunday in New York. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

5.2 seconds left. After a lengthy video review, Stewart calmly hit two free throws to tie the game at 60.

McBride, who finished with 21 points, had an open look for a 3, but it fell off the rim and the game went to OT.

Many of the former Liberty greats were in the audience, including Teresa Weatherspoon, who hit a half-court heave in the 1999 WNBA Finals to force a decisive Game 3 that year. That was the last time that New York had a chance to play in a champion-

ship-deciding game until this year.

Jones, who was the only player on the Liberty to compete in a Game 5 before when she was with Connecticut in 2019, earned MVP honors.

"I could never dream of this. You know how many times I've been denied. It was delayed. I am so happy to do it here," she said.

Napheesa Collier scored 22 points to lead Minnesota before fouling out with 13 seconds left in OT.

The WNBA's Defensive Player of the Year played all but 35 seconds of

the 45-minute game, and most of what she missed is because she committed the foul to stop the clock with 13 seconds remaining in OT.

It was clearly a fantastic season for the forward, who averaged 20.4 points and 9.7 rebounds in her sixth year out of UConn. She also won a gold medal with the US Olympic team and helped the Lynx notch a franchise-record 30 wins and earn the No 2 seed.

But if Game 5 plays out differently, she might have also picked up a

WNBA Finals MVP trophy, joining the elite Lynx players from the past to have done so.

The Lynx were trying for a record fifth WNBA title, breaking a tie with the Seattle Storm and Houston Comets. Minnesota won four titles from 2011-17 behind the core group of Lindsay Whalen, Seimone Augustus, Rebekkah Brunson, Sylvia Fowles and Maya Moore. That was the team's last appearance in the WNBA Finals until this year.

"Congratulations to the Liberty

on their first championship," Minnesota coach Cheryl Reeve said. "It took them 28 years, congrats to them. We were that close to our fifth, it just didn't happen."

This is the first time since 2019 that the WNBA Finals have gone the distance. Since the league switched to a best-of-five format in 2005, seven other series have gone to a Game 5 and the home team had won five of those previous contests, including in 2019.

The first three games each had over a million viewers on average, with the audience growing for each contest. They also have had huge crowds in attendance.

Liberty fan Spike Lee was court-side over an hour before tipoff chatting with the media while wearing his Ionescu jersey. Once Ionescu finished warming up pregame, the pair had a brief exchange and hugged. Lee was part of a sellout crowd of 18,090 that helped this series set both the overall attendance record for a WNBA Finals as well as the average attendance mark.

### Title was 'stolen'

Coach Reeve said the championship was "stolen" from the Lynx during her complaints about the officiating Sunday night.

The New York Liberty beat the Lynx in overtime, getting there after a disputed foul gave Stewart two free throws that tied the game with 5.2 seconds remaining in regulation.

"We know we could have done some things, right, but you shouldn't have to overcome to that extent," Reeve said. "This s--- ain't that hard. Officiating is not that hard."

Reeve, who has led the Lynx to four WNBA championships and coached the US women to an Olympic gold medal this summer in Paris, said she was aware there would be headlines about her complaining.

"Bring it on," she said, "because that s--- was stolen from us."

The Liberty shot 25 free throws, while the Lynx went 7 for 8. Minnesota was called for 21 fouls to New York's 17, with All-Star forward Collier, the WNBA's Defensive Player of the Year, fouling out.

Reeve took particular issue with the foul on Alanna Smith with Minnesota holding a 60-58 lead. Stewart drove into the lane and appeared to take the shot before there was any contact. The Lynx challenged the call, but it was upheld after video review.

Reeve called the contact "marginal at best."

"This sucks," she said, after mentioning faulty officiating in Minnesota's loss in the 2016 WNBA Finals. "This is for a championship, for both teams. Let them decide it. What contact is legal should be the same for both teams."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

I don't remember what was said, I just remember the smiles as we walked to our destination.

GO blue 向蓝 | I'll take the lead on this one. Feel the joy of green transport.

WILDAID

AD