

Unbreakable bond

Multiple partnerships help cities draw closer CITYDANCE, PAGES 8-9



Tactics change seen in China's coffee market

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Israeli ban on Palestinian lifeline triggers international outcry WORLD, PAGE 10

# CHINA DAILY

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President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, welcome Finnish President Alexander Stubb and his wife, Suzanne Innes-Stubb, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## China, Finland to expand ties

Xi: Nations set example of state-to-state relations that transcend differences

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

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President Xi Jinping and Finnish President Alexander Stubb lauded the development of China-Finland relationship over decades during their talks in Beijing on Tuesday, and agreed to deepen practical cooperation as well as expand people-to-people exchanges for greater progress in bilateral ties. Stubb, who took office in March, started his four-day state visit to China on Monday, which marked the 74th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Finland was one of the first Western countries to establish diplomatic ties with China and the first Western country to sign an intergovernmental trade agreement with China. Xi said that China and Finland have respected and trusted each other over the years, setting a fine example of state-to-state relations that transcend historical, cultural and institutional differences. Recalling his meeting with Xi in 2009, Stubb said the world was a very different place back then, and China has grown in the past 15 years in a way that was unimaginable for many. The Finnish president said his country adheres to the one-China

two-way trade volume reached \$8.2 billion. Xi told Stubb that China welcomes Finland to actively participate in China's modernization drive and to expand cooperation in emerging industries such as green transition, the digital economy and new energy. He also announced China's decision to implement a unilateral visa-free policy for Finland, saying that more Finnish friends are welcome to start business, travel and study in China. Noting that both China and Finland are peace-loving nations that advocate multilateralism and free trade, Xi called on the two countries to jointly address issues such as climate change and the governance of artificial intelligence, in order to promote an equal and orderly multipolar world. Recalling his meeting with Xi in 2009, Stubb said the world was a very different place back then, and China has grown in the past 15 years in a way that was unimaginable for many. The Finnish president said his country adheres to the one-China

principle and values China's important influence and its stabilizing and constructive role in international affairs. Noting that China and the European Union are closely interconnected in terms of economy, Stubb said the "decoupling and disruption of industrial and supply chains" or a new Cold War would not serve the interests of any party. Finland is willing to play an active role in promoting the smooth development of EU-China relations, he added. The two leaders also exchanged in-depth views on issues including the Ukraine crisis and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Xi said that China is ready to make joint efforts with Finland and other relevant parties to continue working for a peaceful settlement. After their talks, Xi and Stubb witnessed the signing of multiple cooperative documents covering areas such as education, environmental protection and the circular economy, and issued a joint working plan to advance the China-Finland future-oriented new-type cooperative partnership. Wang Yiwei, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of International Studies and director of the university's Institute of International Affairs, said

this is the first time a Finnish president is visiting China since the Nordic country officially became a NATO member last year. Wang noted that Finland and some European countries are looking forward to learn from China's experience in green transition and the digital economy, given the country's remarkable achievements in recent years. "The two sides enjoy great potential for cooperation in environmental protection and climate response," he said. On Tuesday, Premier Li Qiang and Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, also met separately with Stubb in Beijing. Vice-President Han Zheng and the Finnish president attended the 5th China-Finland Committee for Innovative Business Cooperation Meeting in Beijing, along with more than 100 government and business representatives from the two countries. During his trip, Stubb will make a stop in Shanghai, where he will visit Fudan University and attend a business summit, among others. The last time a Finnish president visited China was five years ago. In 2019, then president of Finland Sauli Niinisto led a Finnish delegation to Beijing.

## Tiangong space station to welcome new inhabitants

By ZHAO LEI at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

Inside

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China's Shenzhou XIX crew members are set to begin six months of living aboard the Tiangong space station, as the country's 14th manned spaceflight was successfully launched early Wednesday morning. Onboard the Shenzhou spaceship are three crew members — mission commander Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe, Lieutenant Colonel Song Lingdong and Lieutenant Colonel Wang Haoze, said Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the China Manned Space Agency, at a news conference Tuesday morning at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China. The spaceship, atop a Long March 2F carrier rocket, blasted off at 4:27 am Beijing time (4:27 pm ET) from the oasis-like Jiuquan spaceport in the Gobi Desert. The three astronauts will later replace the Shenzhou XVIII crew aboard Tiangong. Cai was part of the six-month Shenzhou XIV mission, which lasted from June 2022 to December that year. The flight will be the first journey in space for Song and Wang. Notably, Wang will be the third Chinese woman to fly into space, after Liu Yang and Wang Yaping, and the first female spaceflight engineer. Zhu Yangzhu, a male astronaut who took part in the Shenzhou XVI mission, was China's first spaceflight engineer. Wang Haoze is also the only woman in the country's third generation of astronauts. The 18 third-generation astronauts were selected in September 2020 from about 2,500 applicants and announced in October 2020. Before joining the astronaut team, Wang was a senior researcher at the Academy of Aerospace Propulsion Technology, a subsidiary of the State-owned conglomerate China Aero-

space Science and Technology Corp. Lin said that "after the Shenzhou XIX spacecraft enters its preset orbital position, it will activate the rapid rendezvous-docking mode and use about six-and-a-half hours to approach and connect with the front port of the Tianhe core module." Orbiting about 400 kilometers above Earth, the Tiangong has three permanent components — the Tianhe core module and Wentian and Mengtian science lab modules — and is currently connected with two visiting craft, the Shenzhou XVIII crew ship and the Tianzhou 7 cargo ship. It is one of the largest and most complex structures ever established in space. The Shenzhou XIX team will take over the massive orbital outpost from their peers in the Shenzhou XVIII — mission commander Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu and crew members Lieutenant Colonel Li Cong and Lieutenant Colonel Li Guangsu — who arrived on April 26 and have been in orbit for six months. The two groups will work together for about four days for the hand-over process, and then the Shenzhou XVIII astronauts will depart and fly back to Earth on Monday, according to Lin. The Shenzhou XIX team will be the eighth group of astronauts to inhabit Tiangong, which was completed in late 2022. Lin said the Shenzhou XIX crew will perform a host of tasks, including carrying out scientific experiments and technological demonstrations, conducting spacewalks to install space debris shield equipment and other external devices, retrieving instruments from outside the space station, and giving science lectures.

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Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe (center), Lieutenant Colonel Song Lingdong (right) and Lieutenant Colonel Wang Haoze, are taking part in the Shenzhou XIX spaceflight mission. XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## A transformative shift in African political systems

The deepening cooperation between China and Africa in the area of political governance marks a significant milestone in the historical relationship between the two regions. This partnership reflects the evolving dynamics of global politics, where the rise of the Global South is reshaping geopolitical landscapes. As highlighted by the 2024 Summit of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in September, China's offer to enhance governance collaboration with Africa — through experience-sharing, leadership academies and cross-continental studies — signifies a transformative shift in African political systems. China's relationship with Africa

WORLD WATCH By Booker Ngesa Omole

is not a recent development. Since the era of decolonization, China has supported Africa with infrastructure, trade and education. However, the focus has now expanded to governance, reflecting a maturing relationship that moves beyond economic ties to deeper political engagement. This new phase builds on decades of mutual trust, established during Africa's liberation struggles, when China provided moral, political and material support to various African liberation movements seeking independence.

The significance of this shift is profound, especially as it aligns with the growing aspirations of African nations to chart their governance paths while learning from China's experiences. With the rise of the Global South, countries in Africa seek governance models that reflect their unique political realities, and China's success in maintaining political stability and economic growth offers invaluable lessons. One of the most striking developments from the FOCAC summit in Beijing in September is China's commitment to build a platform for governance experience sharing with African countries. This platform, backed by the establishment of 25 centers focused on China-Africa studies, represents a critical step toward building a knowledge network that can foster African autonomy in political governance. See Governance, page 3

## AVIATION-RELATED INDUSTRIES READY FOR TAKEOFF IN HUNAN

Province pioneers management program, pilot training, aircraft building

Editor's note: In a series of reports titled "Claims to Fame", China Daily looks at how some regions have earned wealth and recognition through specific products to advance economic development.

By ZOU SHUO and HE CHUN in Zhuzhou, Hunan

In-depth

Deng Yanpei, 59, has dreamed of flying since he was a child. At the age of 7, he held up an umbrella and jumped off a second-floor platform onto a mound of sand. All he did was injure his feet,

which after more than 50 years still sometimes aches. Last year, Deng obtained a pilot's license for general aviation after training at Hunan Sunward

General Aviation Co in Zhuzhou, Hunan province, realizing his dream of one day flying an aircraft. "I was about to retire soon, and as I had more time and financial means, I decided to chase my dream," he said. "You cannot realize all of your childhood dreams, but once you achieve one of them, the sense of happiness is overwhelming," Deng added. See Aviation, page 2

# PAGE TWO



Aurora lightweight sports aircraft made by Starair Aircraft Co. perform during the 2023 Aero Asia show in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Aviation: A revolution in the skies

From page 1

As China steps up its efforts to develop the low-altitude economy and general aviation industry, more people have enjoyed the opportunity to fly.

Meanwhile, various aerial craft, such as large airships for low-altitude tourism, drones for express delivery, and aircraft used in emergency rescues, are being more widely deployed across the country, providing exciting new development opportunities.

The central leadership recently reiterated its determination to improve the institutions and mechanisms for modernizing infrastructure, according to a resolution adopted at the third plenum of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee.

It is estimated that the market size of the low-altitude economy will surge from over 500 billion yuan (\$70.3 billion) in 2023 to 2 trillion yuan by 2030, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

### Pilot program

Hunan is the first province to pilot the reform of low-altitude airspace management. In Zhuzhou, the city where China's first aircraft engine was made, development of the low-altitude economy has accelerated in recent years.

Zhuzhou has more than 120 enterprises involved in the aviation industry. The city is home to Zhuzhou Lusong Airport, the only A1, or highest-level general aviation airport, in the province.

Dong Rui, a marketing manager for the airport, said it has opened two sightseeing routes flying to Zhangjiajie in Hunan and Jinggangshan in Jiangxi province.

About 30 to 50 aspiring pilots train at the airport every year. The airport also tests and licenses operators of large-scale drones. Hundreds of people take such tests every month, Dong said.

Wang Jingyi, general manager of the airport, said they are planning to add a new runway to meet the burgeoning demands of the general aviation industry.

More people are eager to do pilot or drone-operator training, while aircraft manufacturers need more space to test their products, she said. "Although it is still a niche market, we are optimistic about its prospects," Wang said.

### Reach for the sky

Deng obtained his pilot's license at the airport on Oct 10 last year, after signing up for training in July of the same year.

Any Chinese citizen aged 17 or above and with at least a junior high school education, can apply for a private pilot's license. After receiving a certified report of their physical fitness, they have to go through 40 hours of theoretical studies, five hours of simulation studies if a flight simulator is present, and 40 hours of flying training before they take the relevant tests.

Deng said in the beginning, the weightless feeling from doing different flying moves made him uncomfortable, but he quickly got used to it. "After getting over the discomfort, excitement kicked in and I was able

“I am very optimistic about the industry and I believe it will take three to five years for flying to become common in people's lives.”

**Yu Zhangchang,**  
general manager of Hunan Sunward General Aviation Co

to make more difficult moves," he said.

He has flown almost 500 times and is getting more relaxed and skilled as a pilot.

"Rather than being at a loss navigating so many things simultaneously, as I was in the beginning, I can enjoy flying now and I feel happier," he said.

Deng said many of his friends envy him for getting his pilot's license, and he has re-posted videos of himself practicing flying.

He views the pilot's license as a retirement gift to himself. "You are never too old to get out of your comfort zone and realize decades-old dreams," he said.

Zeng Qinglun, 25, who works for a media outlet in Zhuzhou, obtained a pilot's license at the airport in July.

When he was in high school he tried a flight simulator at the airport, and after he started work he decided to fulfill his dream of learning how to pilot a plane.

"What I like most about flying is that it is so free and relaxed, and I feel that I belong in the air once the aircraft takes off," he said.

Yu Zhangchang, general manager of Hunan Sunward General Aviation Co, said the company has trained more than 300 pilots and more than 4,000 people have used their flight simulators.

With more support from the government for the general aviation industry, Yu said he is witnessing an increasing number of people wanting to experience flying.

"I am very optimistic about the industry and I believe it will take three to five years for flying to become common in people's lives," he said.

### Homegrown thrills

To popularize flying, the company established China's first civil aerobatic team in 2014, which has since performed at more than 40 air shows in 16 provincial regions.

Yu, also a retired flyer of People's Liberation Army Air Force, is a member of the team.

"We are the first civil aerobatic team in China piloting aircraft developed by Chinese companies, and we are very proud to have led the development of civil aerobatic shows in the country," he said.

The team is very proud of its aerobatic routine, which is renowned for its precision and creativity, he said.

Starair Aircraft Co's Aurora — the first lightweight sports aircraft developed domestically — is the only model flown by Yu's team.

The first Aurora was manufactured by the company in October

2008. As of Sept 20 this year, the company had made 300 of the aircraft, which is sold to clients in 28 provincial-level regions across the country.

The plane also won flying approval from aviation authorities in the United States in 2019, and Australia in 2023.

Weighting only 350 kilograms, the two-seat airplane has a maximum flying distance of 1,200 kilometers and can fly at a speed of up to 265 km per hour.

Deng Yu, general manager of Starair Aircraft, said the company is very optimistic about the future commercial prospects of the plane.

"In the beginning, we named the plane the Aurora because we wanted to sell it to overseas market, but it is the Chinese market where we first realized a breakthrough," he said.

Deng said the company is striving to improve the quality of the Aurora while lowering its price, so it is competitive in the international market.

"The design and technology of the airplane are among the top levels in the world," he said. "We want to further cut the manufacturing costs so that after the costs of tariffs, shipping, and sales agents are factored in, the airplane is still competitive in overseas markets."

The company wants to expand the Aurora's sales to markets including North America, Europe, Oceania and Southeast Asia, he said.

Despite the progress in the domestic general aviation industry, Deng believes there is still a wide gap to other countries in infrastructure building and the opening of lower-altitude space. The US, for example, has more than 20,000 airports for general aviation, while China only has around 400, he said.

While the central government has encouraged the development of the low-altitude economy and general aviation, safety is still its top priority, so opening up low-altitude airspace has been done in an incremental way, he said.

### Aerial rescue services

Starair Aircraft has also spent three years in research and development of a firefighting truck equipped with drones to put out fires in high-rise buildings.

The drones, which carry fire hoses as well as electric wires for power, can fly as high as 280 meters to fight a building fire.

Deng is optimistic the sales prospects of the drone-equipped fire-

truck, and believes it can exceed the sales revenue of the Aurora in one to two years.

The drone-equipped truck is expected to hit the market by the end of this year, and is predicted to become one of Starair Aircraft's flagship products.

Deng said the company expects to sell more than 1,000 firetrucks, with forecast sales revenue of up to 10 billion yuan.

The low-altitude space economy is an important part of China's new-quality productive forces and has a very bright future, which is why the company has stayed in the industry for such a long time, he said.

However, the development of aircraft requires a large amount of investment and time. It also takes time to build the required infrastructure and popularize a "flying culture," Deng added. Companies operating in the industry, therefore, still need to take a rational approach to development and not be too impulsive, he said. "It is an industry worth the long-term investment," he added.

Emergency rescue is another area where general aviation companies are making a big difference.

Ou Deqing, president of Xiangwei General Aviation in Zhuzhou, said that during the disastrous landslides in Zixing, Hunan, in July — which left 50 people dead and 15 others missing — roads and communications were cut, and the company's helicopters transported emergency goods and lifted stranded people to safety.

The helicopters were deployed in Zixing for more than 10 days and made more than 600 trips, he said. "People said that they had hope with the arrival of each aircraft and we are very proud of our work," he said.

In cooperation with emergency response, firefighting and public security authorities in Hunan, the company established the first flight teams in the province for emergency rescues, firefighting and air police work, he said.

It has also conducted fire rescue operations, forest firefighting, flood rescues, and agricultural seeding and spraying across the country, he added.

"There is much more that we can do and we believe we are on the right track of business development," Ou said.

Zhu Youfang contributed to this story.

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### FIRST PERSON

## Record-breaking flight leaves lasting memory of scenic beauty, comradery

**Wu Wei,**  
pilot in  
Zhuhai,  
Guangdong  
province



efforts in environmental protection.

We traveled through different general airports, with the aircraft shortening the traveling time it usually takes in a car by 30 to 50 percent.

With the rapid development of the low-altitude economy in China, policy support, and the improvement of laws and regulations, there are more general aviation airports and flying camps in the country. In the future, it will be more convenient to fly in light aircraft across different provincial regions.

We stopped at three airports to refresh ourselves and were greeted with the hospitality of fellow flyers and colleagues in the industry. As I look back on the extraordinary journey, it felt like we were visiting family and old friends.

In the aviation industry, there is a common phrase that people involved in general aviation are all one big family, and I gained a new perspective on this belief through the journey.

The long flight came to an end when we touched down at Lusong Airport in Zhuzhou.

Flying is attractive to anyone who loves life and wants to expand their perspectives and horizons.

Through the journey, I appreciated the beautiful diverse scenery of the country, whilst also experiencing the freedom and excitement of flying.

The memory is ingrained in me and the experience has also deepened my resolve to further explore the unknown.

If you also have a dream of flying and want to explore the seemingly untouchable sky, don't be afraid to make the first move. Life is all about new experiences and we write our stories together in the blue sky.

On a beautiful day recently, I flew more than 2,300 kilometers from the Alxa League in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region to Zhuzhou, Hunan province, and was part of a team that set a record for the longest flight distance of a light aircraft in China.

The Shanhe Aerobatic Team had completed its performance at an airshow in Alxa and I joined three of the team members who flew two Aurora planes back to their company headquarters in Zhuzhou.

One of the co-pilots, Wang Cheng, served in the People's Liberation Army Air Force for 21 years and flew a fighter jet over Tian'anmen Square during the National Day parade in 2009.

The two other pilots are also seasoned flyers who shared their valuable flying experience and skills with me.

The four of us flew over eight provincial-level regions, crossed the Yellow River three times, and also soared past deserts, mountains, plains and the Yangtze River.

The planes cruised at an altitude of 3,600 to 4,200 meters and their performance remained stable throughout the flight.

It is one of the happiest journeys I can remember, as I got to experience and view different landscapes without going abroad. I was most impressed with the unique landscape of the Loess Plateau, which has added a large amount of vegetation and greenery thanks to China's



Left: After rolling off the production line, the 300th Aurora model is delivered at the base of Starair Aircraft Co in Zhuzhou, Hunan province, on Sept 20. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Right: A technician works at the factory of Starair Aircraft Co in 2019. LIU ZHIYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



## TOP NEWS

## High-level meeting

Xuan Changneng (center, left row), deputy head of the People's Bank of China, and United States Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (third from right, right row) attend a Financial Working Group Meeting at the Treasury Department in Washington, DC, on Monday.

SAUL LOEB / AFP



## Ten astronauts train for moon missions

By ZHAO LEI

at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center  
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China's fourth generation of astronauts have been training in Beijing since August, according to Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the China Manned Space Agency.

Lin said the 10 new astronauts, including two from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, have participated in lectures on manned spaceflight programs and have been given specifically designed physical training.

In addition, they have taken part in guided tours, workshops and cultural activities — all of which are intended to help them fit into their new roles.

During their next training sessions, the astronauts will gradually be exposed to more than 200 pro-

grams in eight categories and will be taught how to work on the lunar surface, because they will be tasked with realizing the country's manned lunar exploration, the official said.

Talking about the two new astronauts from Hong Kong and Macao, Lin said they joined other astronauts at the Astronaut Center of China, located in a northwestern suburb of Beijing, on Aug 8.

"In addition to common training, trainers have arranged targeted lectures for the two, ranging from the history and spirit of China's manned spaceflight programs to spoken Mandarin. Both of them have fit in well with the team and are training with passion and energy," he said.

China started selecting the country's fourth generation of astronauts in October 2022, and in June this year, it announced the comple-

tion of the procedure with 10 candidates on the final list — eight spacecraft pilots and two science payload specialists.

Both science payload specialists were chosen from among Hong Kong and Macao applicants. This is the first time that candidates from Hong Kong and Macao have had the opportunity to join the nation's astronaut group.

According to Huang Weifen, chief trainer of Chinese astronauts, the spacecraft pilots in the fourth group of astronauts have been chosen from among aviators serving in the People's Liberation Army.

She noted that this was the first time that pilots from the PLA Ground Force and PLA Navy have been given an opportunity to become astronauts. Previously, only aviators from the PLA Air Force were chosen for space missions.

Wang Ya'n, chief editor of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, said the fourth generation of astronauts and their trainers will have to overcome some new challenges, because landing on the moon and working on the lunar surface will be much more sophisticated and difficult than arriving at and operating inside a space station.

"Chinese astronauts now have rich experience in living and working inside a space station, but landing on the lunar surface involves another level of complexity and difficulties," Wang said.

"Those tasked with moon missions will need to grasp a great deal of new knowledge and learn special maneuvers. They will also spend a lot of time familiarizing themselves with much of the latest hardware that no one has ever used," he added.

## Detailed fiscal package set to be unveiled

Steps aim to address local govt debt issue and facilitate a steady economic recovery

By WANG KEJU

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Detailed stimulus policies, including proactive fiscal expansion, are likely to be rolled out to address China's local government debt issue and facilitate a steady economic recovery, as China's top legislature is set to convene a highly anticipated session next month.

The Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress will convene its 12th session from Nov 4 to 8 in Beijing, and analysts said the meeting is widely expected to flesh out details of the fiscal package, including a swap program for local government hidden debt, and sales of government bonds to inject capital into banks.

Vice-Minister of Finance Liao Min said during the World Bank's 110th Development Committee meeting on Friday in Washington, DC, that China will leverage more fiscal firepower to strengthen its countercyclical adjustments.

Countercyclical adjustments are macroeconomic tools used to neutralize possible negative effects of economic cycles.

Liao said that details of China's fiscal initiatives would be announced after the conclusion of the meeting of the NPC Standing Committee, as fiscal policy in China requires going through legislative procedures.

Through government spending, China aims to catalyze investment from the private sector and shore up consumer spending, thereby increasing effective demand, Liao said, adding that the country is confident of achieving its annual growth target of around 5 percent.

In October last year, China's top legislature approved a plan to increase treasury bond issuance by 1 trillion yuan (\$140 billion).

Moreover, earlier this month, Finance Minister Lan Fo'an said at a news conference that the central government plans to significantly increase the debt ceiling to conduct a one-time swap of local governments' existing hidden debt.

This policy is the largest support measure introduced in recent years to aid the debt resolution process, and is pending legislative approval, Lan added.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, said, "This means that the local government debt quota, currently at around 46.79 trillion yuan, will be raised substantially this year."

The quota increase will pave the way for the issuance of large-scale special local government refinancing bonds in the fourth quarter, which is estimated to reach around 2 to 3 trillion yuan and will be used to swap out the existing hidden local debt. This pro-

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New yuan-denominated loans in the fourth quarter are expected to reverse the previous trend of slowdown and return to a growth trajectory.”

Wang Qing,  
chief macroeconomic  
analyst at Golden Credit  
Rating International

cess is unlikely to be slow, Wang added.

The government's debt restructuring program has extended repayment periods and reduced financing costs, enabling local authorities to free up more funds for current economic development and public service provision, said Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities.

Furthermore, the easing of local government debt helps optimize the local business environment, which is a significant boon for foreign companies investing in China, Luo added.

Meanwhile, analysts said the current round of fiscal initiatives also includes measures to replenish bank capital, which will boost the lending and bond-purchasing abilities of large commercial banks, with the aim of driving these major banks to further enhance support for the real economy.

The volume of special treasury bonds issued to replenish the core tier 1 capital of State-owned commercial banks could potentially reach around 1 trillion yuan, said Wang of Golden Credit Rating International.

"As a result, new yuan-denominated loans in the fourth quarter are expected to reverse the previous trend of slowdown and return to a growth trajectory, which is an important focus area for the current economic stabilization efforts," Wang added.

While Lan, the finance minister, has hinted at the considerable headroom the central government has to raise debt levels and increase the fiscal deficit, analysts said that increases in the government deficit and treasury bond issuance are likely to be outlined in next year's Government Work Report.

Tao Chuan, chief economist at Minsheng Securities Research Institute, said that given the relatively slower pace of issuance of special treasury bonds and local government bonds at the moment, the current fiscal policy thinking is likely tilting more toward effectively utilizing existing policy tools and larger-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins.

## Space: New tasks include experiments, spacewalks, lectures

From page 1

Their work will be related to multiple research disciplines such as microgravity physics, material science, space medicine, spacecraft technology and life sciences, he said, adding that the team is scheduled to return to Earth in late April or early May.

## Lunar exploration

Responding to questions on China's crewed lunar exploration plan, Lin said that Chinese scientists and engineers have been conducting comprehensive research

and development of the Long March 10 heavy-lift carrier rocket, the Mengzhou crew spaceship and the Lanyue lunar lander, as well as other hardware necessary for a manned mission to the moon.

He noted that his agency has given contracts for two design concepts for the crewed lunar rover, developed separately by the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology and the China Academy of Space Technology, and will conduct evaluations and tests of the prototypes to make the final choice.

## Cargo mission

In another development, Lin said at the news conference that the launch of Tianzhou 8, China's next cargo mission to the Tiangong space station, has been rescheduled to mid-November.

The official said the rearrangement was made by mission headquarters after considering the impact of Super Typhoon Yagi. The storm wreaked havoc in September in Hainan province, which is home to the Wenchang Space Launch Center.

The original launch was scheduled to take place before the

Shenzhou XIX mission, Lin's office previously said.

The prelaunch preparations for Tianzhou 8 have been proceeding according to the new plan, the official said, noting that there currently are sufficient daily living and work supplies onboard the space station, because a scenario such as the postponement had been considered when making plans.

According to Lin, although workers at the Wenchang spaceport had tried their best to prepare for the typhoon, the storm had caused some damage to the center's launch and living facilities.

## Governance: Africa learns from China model

From page 1

African nations have diverse political systems mainly hinged on the failed liberal democracy imposed upon us by imperialist powers, from one-party states to multiparty democracies, each with its own unique serious challenges. The China-Africa governance platform offers African leaders the chance to draw lessons from China's governance structure — particularly its capacity to maintain stability, execute long-term plans, and implement policies with remarkable efficiency.

China's ability to manage its development process while maintaining political cohesion, despite the challenges posed by rapid industrialization and modernization, resonates deeply with many African nations. The opportunity to exchange ideas, policies and strategies within this platform allows African leaders to enhance governance while adapting lessons to their local contexts.

China's offer to train 1,000 members of African political parties and leverage African leadership academies to cultivate governance talent marks a significant assistance to the future of African leadership. This initiative recognizes that governance reforms cannot be successfully implemented without the participation of well-trained and

visionary leaders.

One of the key aspects of China's governance model is its long-term vision, embodied in initiatives like its five-year plans. African leaders trained under this program would be exposed to China's meticulous planning process and experience firsthand how China manages to marry political direction with developmental goals. Moreover, the training of political cadres would not only bolster governance in individual countries but also foster a shared sense of purpose across the continent. The collective training of leaders from different nations could encourage regional collaboration and unity, which are crucial for addressing transnational challenges like conflict, migration, and economic disparities.

China's growing influence in African governance should be understood within the larger context of global power shifts. For years, Africa has largely relied on Western models of governance, which often came with stringent conditions. However, the African political landscape is complex, and these models have not always produced the desired outcomes, sometimes leading to instability and governance failures. China's engagement presents a refreshing alternative. It promotes a more pragmatic

approach, emphasizing development and stability married to ideology-driven governance.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's remarks about building a China-Africa knowledge network for development illustrate that this partnership is not about imposing China's model on Africa but about creating a dialogue where African nations can learn from China's experiences while maintaining their own agency. In a world where Western powers still exercise significant influence over African political systems, the rise of China offers African countries a more diversified pool of governance ideas.

As the global order becomes more multipolar, Africa's role in international politics will increasingly depend on its internal political stability and governance structures. Strengthening governance through collaboration with China can place African nations in a better position to engage on the global stage. As the region becomes more politically stable and economically vibrant, it can offer more cohesive policies, making it a stronger player in international negotiations.

Furthermore, Africa's collaboration with China in governance reflects the aspirations of a new generation of African leaders who are keen on moving away from

external dependencies and toward self-reliance. The knowledge-sharing network proposed by China aligns well with these aspirations, enabling Africa to craft governance models that reflect its own values, priorities, and realities.

The deepening cooperation between China and Africa in governance is a landmark development that should be celebrated. It moves the relationship beyond mere economic exchanges into a realm that touches the core of African development — political governance. While some may argue that China's involvement could come with risks, particularly concerning political autonomy, the partnership's focus on experience-sharing, training and dialogue suggests that it is based on mutual respect and benefit.

For African nations, this collaboration with China presents an opportunity to break free from outdated governance models that have stifled progress. By learning from China's successes — and its challenges — African leaders can gain invaluable insights that will help them steer their nations toward political stability, development, and sustainable growth in the 21st century. This partnership could, in time, prove to be a turning point in Africa's quest for self-governance and global relevance.

The author is the National Vice-Chairperson of the Communist Party of Kenya. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Technical cooperation



Chinese and Kyrgyz representatives visit a smart classroom of a Luban Workshop as the workshop opens on the campus of Kyrgyz State Technical University in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Saturday. Luban Workshop is a China-initiated vocational training program that serves as a platform of hands-on learning and technical skills development for workers worldwide. ROMAN GAINANOV / XINHUA

## CHINA



Shenzhou XIX astronauts Song Lingdong (from left), Cai Xuzhe and Wang Haoze undergo training on May 23. KONG FANGZHOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Commander Cai gears up for his record-breaking mission

Senior colonel to return to Tiangong space station after only 22 months

By ZHAO LEI  
at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center  
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Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe, commander of the Shenzhou XIX mission, said he has been looking forward to returning to the Tiangong space station since his last orbital journey, during which he helped complete the massive outpost.

"I clearly remember that right before we left Tiangong with our Shenzhou XIV spaceship, I lingered a while to visit every corner of the space station. I am very familiar with them," the astronaut said. "When we arrived at Tiangong, it only had the Tianhe core module, and by the time we finished our mission, it consisted of three permanent components that established its current T-shaped configuration. It is fair to say we witnessed the completion of the space station."

Cai said that in the days after he came back to Earth, he often thought about flying to orbit again, which motivated him to train hard and make all-out efforts to prepare for his next spaceflight.

When he takes off with Shenzhou XIX mission, he will have participated in two spaceflights in a span of only 22 months, a new record among Chinese astronauts.

Senior Colonel Tang Hongbo is the current record holder, with two spaceflights in a 25-month interval between the Shenzhou XII and Shenzhou XVII missions.

### Long-held aspiration

Born in May 1976 to a farmer's family in Caizhang village in Shenzhou, Hebei province, Cai started hearing stories about communist revolutionaries when he was just 3 years old from his grandfather, a devoted communist who joined the Party during wartime.

Cai said that he admired one of his uncles, who was a People's Liberation Army soldier, and told the uncle that he wished to join the military as well.

There was an Air Force base nearby, and many combat aircraft often flew over Cai's family home. Each time he heard the thundering sounds of the planes roaring by, he would run outside and gaze up at them until they were out of sight.

The aircraft instilled in him a desire to fly, an aspiration he clung to as he grew older. He was a diligent student and strived to do well in school in order to achieve his dream.



Top: Workers and Shenzhou XIX crew members take part in an underwater training exercise on August 26. Above: Astronauts Cai (from left), Song, and Wang participate in an extravehicular activity training for the Shenzhou XIX mission on May 29.

PHOTOS BY KONG FANGZHOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

When he was in high school, Cai managed to come up with enough money to subscribe to a monthly magazine called China Air Force and read each issue painstakingly. He made up his mind to try his best to join the military and become a combat aviator.

During his senior year, he heard that the Air Force was recruiting students to learn how to fly. He immediately applied for selection.

Following rounds of strict tests and selection procedures, the young man was admitted to the Aviation University of Air Force at age 19 and began to learn to fly at the university's branch in Baoding, Hebei.

At the flight school, Cai trained hard and was honored upon graduation for his outstanding performance.

After receiving his diploma, the aviator was assigned to a flight training base, where he gradually became a veteran pilot and decorated flight trainer.

During his years at the base, he accumulated a total of 1,523 hours of flight time in fighter jets and was promoted to first-grade pilot.

In the spring of 2009, Cai heard about the selection of the country's

second generation of astronauts and decided to take part in the initial recruitment that began in May that year.

Due to his good scores in the physical, knowledge and skills examinations, he was one of seven people selected to join that crop of astronauts in May 2010.

### Shenzhou selection

When they arrived at the PLA Astronaut Division in northwestern Beijing, Cai and his peers were exposed to nearly 100 subjects they needed to be well-versed in as part of their training, including physics, astronomy, astronautics, space medicine and spacecraft operations.

He spared no efforts to acquire new knowledge and skills to prepare himself for a chance to join a spaceflight.

After waiting nine years, Cai was picked in December 2019 for the Shenzhou XIV mission and started undergoing training specially designed for the flight.

In June 2022, together with mission commander Chen Dong and Liu Yang, Cai embarked on his first space expedition and entered the Tiangong space station. They spent

six months working inside the colossal base.

During their orbital stay, the Shenzhou XIV crew, dubbed "the busiest team" by many Chinese fans at the time, oversaw the arrival and docking of two large science lab modules — Wentian and Mengtian — and assembled experimental apparatuses inside them.

The astronauts conducted three spacewalks to install and fine-tune equipment and perform extravehicular rescue drills.

At the end of their mission, Cai and his teammates were joined by the three astronauts in the Shenzhou XV flight, who arrived in late November 2022. Their meeting was the first time that as many as six Chinese people were traveling in orbit at the same time, and was also the first in-orbit gathering between two Chinese crews.

After handing over the Tiangong's control to the newcomers, the Shenzhou XIV crew flew back to Earth in early December 2022.

### Memorable experience

Recalling his experience in space, Cai said that during his downtime, he was able to enjoy his personal hobbies, including gardening and reading.

"I brought seeds of lettuce, wheat and tomato and planted them inside the space station. That is why people saw many video clips of me taking care of those plants," the astronaut said. "I also brought some books. I thought about bringing an e-book, but I dropped that idea because I prefer printed copies. Moreover, I brought some movies and TV series to Tiangong, and I watched them while doing exercise."

He also enjoyed peering down at Earth, which gave him a sense of home and belonging.

"Whenever we had spare time, we liked to take some time to look at our mother planet and other beautiful scenes in the universe. Watching through the windows always made me feel comfortable," he recalled.

Back on the ground, Cai spent half a year in quarantine and participating in recuperation programs, which are standard procedures for Chinese astronauts returning from space, and restarted regular training.

Speaking about the Shenzhou XIX mission, the commander said his team has worked very hard to prepare for the challenges awaiting them in orbit.

"We are scheduled to carry out several spacewalks to mount shield devices that will protect the space station from the impact of space debris," Cai said. "We are fully ready with our minds, bodies and skills for this coming mission, and we have the confidence, determination and ability to make it a success."

## Sole female member prepares for 1st flight

By ZHAO LEI  
at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center

Lieutenant Colonel Wang Haoze, a crew member of the Shenzhou XIX mission and China's first female spaceflight engineer, thanked her postgraduate mentor as she prepares for her maiden spaceflight.

"I think I'm lucky to be part of the country's space program because I didn't major in any field pertaining to spacecraft or space sciences in my undergraduate and postgraduate programs," the 34-year-old astronaut said.

Wang said that she studied energy and power engineering at Southeast University's School of Energy and Environment before receiving a bachelor's degree in 2012 and then continued to take part in a three-year postgraduate program in thermal engineering at the same school.

"It was my postgraduate mentor who led me to a career in the space industry. Professor Gu Fan is very interested in spaceflight and often discussed relevant topics with us. He also encouraged his postgraduate students to apply for jobs in the space industry," Wang recalled, explaining that she was influenced by the professor and decided to join the spacecraft research community.

As her graduation approached, Wang submitted her resume to the Beijing Aerospace Propulsion Institute, China's major research body of liquid-propellant rocket engines and a subsidiary of the Academy of Aerospace Propulsion Technology.

After tests and selection procedures, she received an offer and started her job at the institute in the summer of 2015 as an engine designer.

Wang added that another reason she is grateful to Gu is because he taught her to treat every piece of work with attention and earnestness.

At the institute, Wang was part of the research and development of new models of rocket engines, a new field that she had never been involved in. Faced with new challenges and knowledge, she enjoyed learning and overcoming difficulties, which appeared as an intriguing game to her.

Hard work and perseverance always pay off. The first product designed by Wang was praised by a renowned expert. She gradually became the backbone of her team.

Three years after working on rocket engines, the designer was told by human resources colleagues that the country would recruit the third generation of astronauts.

"They convened a meeting of all institute employees who they believed were qualified, telling us

“My mom used to tell me since I was a little girl that there is nothing in the so-called belief that only boys can do certain things and girls can't.”

Wang Haoze, crew member of the Shenzhou XIX mission

about the recruitment and encouraging us to have a try. I was thinking, 'well, it's cool', but I had never imagined I would have an opportunity to become an astronaut," Wang said, adding she felt very lucky to be there at a time of rapid advances in China's space industry.

The selection of the third generation of astronauts began in May 2018 and involved three rounds of tests. About 2,500 applicants participated in the process that concluded in September 2020.

Finally, Wang and 17 male candidates were selected and divided into three groups: seven spacecraft pilots, another seven spaceflight engineers and four mission payload specialists.

At the Astronaut Center of China, Wang has faced grueling challenges. She has spent tough times with teammates in survival drills in deserts and at sea, and has endured a 72-hour sleep deprivation test.

Despite the difficulties, she said she has never considered quitting.

"My mom used to tell me since I was a little girl that there is nothing in the so-called belief that only boys can do certain things and girls can't. Though I am the only female in the group of third-generation astronauts and everyone here is very kind to me, I have never thought about getting privileges just because of my gender," she said.

The two female astronauts who have already made spaceflights, Liu Yang and Wang Yaping, often share their experiences in space missions with her, especially their knowledge about spacewalks, Wang added.

Looking into her first orbital journey, the astronaut said: "We have practiced our maneuvers so many times on the ground. I wish to fly to the space station as soon as possible to see what it looks like. I want to float inside Tiangong to experience the excitement of weightlessness. I also hope that I can complete each and every task successfully and make our 'space home' better."

## For Gen Y astronaut, space dream comes true

By ZHAO LEI  
at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center

Lieutenant Colonel Song Lingdong will soon become one of the first astronauts from the post-1990s generation in China to embark on a space journey.

Born in August 1990 to a farmer's family in Caoxian county, Shandong province, Song was recruited by the People's Liberation Army Air Force in September 2008 and was sent to learn flying.

In the first months at the Air Force's flight school, the young man had bad scores in his physical tests because of long-time malnutrition. He also had a tough time while sitting in his first flights inside basic trainer aircraft due to airsickness.

Knowing clearly about his weaknesses, Song decided to rely on perseverance and rigorous training to offset them. He soon became the one student in his class who always appeared on the exercise field and often asked the trainers to double the amount of his training.

Thanks to his hard work, he received the top score in his solo flight examination and was commended for his excellent performance.

After graduation, Song was sent to a fighter jet brigade and moved up through the ranks.

At a comparatively young age, he was promoted to a first-grade pilot.

In the spring of 2018, Song was told about the PLA Astronaut Division beginning to pick new members and soon applied.

He said the desire to fly above the atmosphere was inspired by a TV news report he saw with his classmates about China's first spaceflight in October 2003, when he was just 13 years old.

In September 2020, the elite aviator was selected as one of the third group of astronauts and started undergoing intensive training in Beijing.

Not long after assuming the new post, Song found he was trapped by one of his own character traits: his impatient disposition. He soon realized that what a successful astronaut really needs is calmness and team spirit.

He learned to slow down and even started going fishing to improve his patience.

In the eyes of mission commander Cai Xuzhe and teammate Wang Haoze, Song is now fully capable of fulfilling a spaceflight and can be relied upon.

## BUSINESS

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## Yangling agri fair brings innovation to doorstep

By LI JIAYING in Beijing and QIN FENG in Xi'an

With an expanded global reach and commitment to pushing the boundaries of agricultural progress, the 31st China Yangling Agricultural High-Tech Fair, held from Friday to Tuesday, brought a fresh wave of global agricultural innovation and cooperation to Shaanxi province's Yangling demonstration zone.

The latest edition of the fair featured a round table on modern agricultural development within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This is the first time that all 26 SCO countries — including nine member states, 14 dialogue partners, and three observer nations — participated in the fair, said Liu Zhongshan, deputy director of Yangling's management committee.

The participation of all SCO countries in the fair to discuss major agricultural issues is of great significance for deepening international agricultural cooperation, said Nuran Niyazaliyev, SCO deputy secretary general.

The SCO, he added, has always prioritized exchanges and cooperation in agriculture within its framework, which is crucial for ensuring food security.

The growing participation of both new and returning global exhibitors has highlighted the increasing internationalization of the Yangling fair.

Mohammad Amir, head of the handicrafts section of Pakistan pavilion, this year's guest country, made his debut at the Yangling expo for the first time, presenting a range of traditional crafts. Amir said he hoped the expo would help Pakistani products gain recognition and facilitate their entry into the Chinese market.

Through the fair, Pakistan aspires to learn from the Yangling demonstration zone and Shaanxi in critical technological areas, including agricultural innovation, high-tech applications within the sector, high-yield seed cultivation and more, as the platform provides an invaluable opportunity for the

country to engage with distinguished experts in China, said Khalil Hashmi, ambassador of Pakistan to China, during the Pakistan pavilion inauguration ceremony last week.

The Netherlands, a long-time participant at the fair, marked its 10th year of attendance this time. "This year, the Dutch delegation consists of 16 companies and organizations, the largest number so far," said Hu Xizhe, an agricultural adviser at the Dutch embassy in China.

Hu added that the Netherlands has showcased advanced agricultural technologies and equipment, including smart greenhouse design, horticulture and livestock lighting, tomato breeding, fruit sorting and orchard management data platforms at the fair.

In addition, after 31 years of development, the Yangling expo has expanded its reach beyond China's borders, hosting overseas exhibitions in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, for the second consecutive year.

The latest overseas exhibition opened on Oct 16, featuring a range of agricultural innovations and products. New apple varieties and specialty fig products from China, for example, garnered attention from local farmers and business representatives.

"The apples from Shaanxi taste great. I grow apples on my farm too, and I'm interested in learning more about these new varieties in the hope of introducing them back home," said Makhmudov Abduvakhob, a grower from the Syrdarya region of Uzbekistan during the expo.

The fair has also set up an exhibition area at the agricultural product commodity trading center within the SCO agricultural base in Uzbekistan, showcasing agricultural technologies, specialty products, machinery and biopharmaceuticals.

This year's event featured over 1,800 exhibitors from 28 Chinese provincial-level regions, nine national agricultural high-tech zones and 49 countries, said its organizer.

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A view of the 31st China Yangling Agricultural High-Tech Fair held in Shaanxi province's Yangling demonstration zone. MA ZHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY



A technician checks a power transmission line in Taizhou, Jiangsu province. SHI JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Equipment makers, high-tech lift power

China saw its electricity consumption rise 7.9% y-o-y in first three quarters

By ZHENG XIN [zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn)

Driven by the rapid development of the high-tech and equipment manufacturing sectors, China saw its electricity consumption, a key barometer of economic activity, rise 7.9 percent year-on-year in the first three quarters, said the China Electricity Council.

Electricity consumption in the two key sectors grew 11.4 percent year-on-year during the period, a 1.3 percentage point increase from the same period last year, said Jiang Debin, deputy director of the council's statistics and data center. Soaring electricity consumption in these advanced sectors and the production of specialized equipment and machinery reflect an ongoing trend of transformation and upgrade within manufacturing, Jiang said.

High-tech and equipment manufacturing sectors include areas involved in electronics, aerospace, robotics, precision machinery and other high-value tech-intensive manufacturing activities. These sectors typically require advanced engineering, specialized manufacturing techniques, and often high levels of automation to meet the demands for quality and precision.

Within these key sectors, electrical machinery and equipment manufacturing led with a robust 19.1 percent increase, while computers, communications and elec-

tronics equipment manufacturing saw a 14.4 percent uptick. Instrumentation manufacturing followed closely behind, posting an 11.6 percent rise, and the auto industry grew by 11.1 percent, said the council.

In a sign of the growing emphasis on renewable energy, electricity consumption for photovoltaic equipment and component manufacturing surged 36.2 percent compared to last year. Additionally, wind power equipment production in the general equipment sector climbed 19.6 percent, underscoring China's commitment to supporting green technology development as part of its broader industrial upgrade, it said.

Jiang said that driven by mobile internet, big data and cloud computing sectors, electricity consumption for internet data services also increased 24.4 percent year-on-year during the first nine months.

The rapid growth of electric vehicles, meanwhile, led to a 56.7 percent year-on-year increase in electricity consumption for charging and battery swapping services, he said.

Analysts say that given the country's ambitious targets of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, the power sector is likely to keep investing in the development of new energy sources.

The energy sector is poised to

accelerate investment in new energy sources, driven by the strong policy support for renewable energy as solar and wind power remain central to reducing emissions across the grid, said Wang Lining, director of the oil market department of the Economics and Technology Research Institute under China National Petroleum Corp.

As these technologies mature, we're likely to see power consumption being increasingly driven by the expansion of these sectors and the transition will fuel substantial infrastructure investment, Wang said.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said solar and wind are expected to be major growth engines in the next decade with continuous investment in the power sector.

"As these investments intensify, the energy sector will need to develop robust power storage solutions and grid modernization efforts to support an influx of intermittent renewable sources, paving the way for a more resilient and greener energy landscape, Lin said.

The council said earlier that total electricity consumption is expected to grow by approximately 6.5 percent year-on-year in 2024.

According to the council, power investment continues to grow rapidly, with new wind and solar power installations reaching a combined 200 gigawatts, accounting for over 80 percent of total newly installed capacity.

## Bayer seeks fruitful harvest in agritech

By OUYANG SHIJIA [ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn)

Bayer Crop Science, one of the three divisions of Germany-based life sciences enterprise Bayer, is doubling down on its drive to bring more innovation to Chinese farmers, recognizing the country as a pivotal growth market for its agricultural initiatives.

"Asia is around 10 percent of our entire business, which gives us a very important and big opportunity to grow," said Malu Nachreiner, head of the Region Asia for the Crop Science Division of Bayer. "And growing in China is one of the key growth drivers that we have in the vision."

With a history of operations in China spanning over 60 years, Bayer Crop Science focuses on crops such as rice, corn, wheat, fruits and vegetables, and is dedicated to providing customized products and solutions for Chinese farmers.

"We hope to continue working closely with the Chinese government to make even more contribution to China's development of agriculture and Malu the farmers in Nachreiner China," Nachreiner said during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

Nachreiner said she takes a rosy view of the long-term growth prospects of the Chinese economy. She believes China's agricultural industry holds great potential for development given the country's steady economic growth and its vast agricultural resources, offering foreign companies like Bayer a significant opportunity for expansion in one of the world's largest agricultural markets.

"China's economy will be the one that will be growing steadily. We believe that it's a market for us to invest..." she added. "China is a key market for agriculture and Bayer is to keep investing in China. That's the long-term prospect that we have."

Currently, Bayer is actively responding to China's direction of boosting sustainable agricultural development and fostering new quality productive forces, with considerable progress in promoting regenerative agricultural practices in China.

Li Lin, deputy head of the Beijing Plant Protection Station, said regenerative agriculture offers a path to greater food security and ecological balance. With China being an agricultural powerhouse, Li explained, the country is urgently seeking ways to shift toward a more sustainable, low-carbon model.

Bayer launched Bayer ForwardFarming Initiative, which offers customized regenerative agricultural solutions to farmers around the world. Yinhuang Farm in Beijing is the first Bayer ForwardFarm in the Asia-Pacific region.

From 2021 to 2023, farmers at Yinhuang Farm achieved an annual income increase of 10 percent, with cost savings of 20 percent, and approximately 4,000 liters of pesticide-containing wastewater processed.

"When we talk about producing more, restoring nature, using less resources, bringing technology and innovation as part of the umbrella of regenerative agriculture, this is pretty connected to the new quality productive forces," said Nachreiner. "I really believe that everything that we are trying to achieve in our vision, we can contribute to China's vision for agriculture in the future."

The company has recently launched its global initiative Bayer ForwardFarming in India, the newest of its 29 ForwardFarms worldwide, as part of ongoing efforts to promote regenerative agriculture around the world.



## Briefly

## PBOC conducts reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 382.8 billion yuan (\$53.7 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.5 percent on Tuesday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system at the end of the month, the People's Bank of China said. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

## Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 24 pips to 7.283 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

## Agri-food trading center to start construction

By LI WENFANG and ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou

Construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Agricultural Produce Trading Center will commence after a launch ceremony was held in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, on Tuesday.

Located in Zhongtuotan township in Guangzhou's Baiyun district, the center which covers more than 1.3 million square meters will become the largest "vegetable basket" project in the GBA when operation starts.

The project, which is funded by Kingold Group and focuses on promoting comprehensively digital, green and international development, will also become a dual hub for national agricultural and food product distribution and cross-border agricultural and food product trade in the following years.

The first phase of the project covers an area of more than 351,333 square meters, with construction floor space of over 910,000 square meters. It includes

construction of a multi-level trading center, a global food display and experience center, a smart cold chain center, a low-altitude urban distribution center, an international exhibition center, and a new food and cultural tourism distribution center.

Chau Chak Wing, chairman of Kingold Group, said his group will construct the project from an advanced starting point and to a high standard in order to create a high quality agricultural produce trading center in GBA.

Chau said the center will help "famous, special and excellent" Chinese products to go global and introduce more high-quality agricultural and food products from France and the European Union to GBA, further expanding global trade to provide a strong economic support and development engine for enhancing new quality productive forces and accelerating high-quality development to promote the development of Chinese modernization in the months to come.

Chau said he believes the center will attract more than 2,000 profes-

sional merchants from around the world and would be able to reach an annual transaction volume of more than 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) when the first phase starts operation.

Sylvain Fourriere, consul general of France in Guangzhou, said he was pleased to see the deep strategic cooperation between Kingold and Rungis International Market, the largest fresh produce market in the world, on the occasion of commemorating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and China.

"As the operator of the world's largest wholesale market for agricultural and food products, Rungis International Market, the first project in China, we look forward to working with Kingold Group to integrate the best management and food safety practices in the world," he said. "And we believe the center in GBA will be able to achieve from French farms to Chinese dining tables in the following months."

The project constitutes a concrete example of partnership and

friendship between our two countries. It will strengthen economic relations and agri-food trade for the satisfaction of our two nations and peoples," he added.

According to Thierry Febvay, executive director of Semmaris, it is a win-win project between his company and Kingold that will bring management experience synchronized with the international market and the ability to link global industrial chains, actively practicing the supply chain concept from French farms to Chinese dining tables.

He Jingqing, Party secretary of Baiyun district, said his district will spare no effort to support the construction of the project and join hands with Kingold Group to build the center into an important hub and demonstration benchmark for the global distribution and trading of high-quality agricultural and food products, contributing to rural vitalization and integrated development of agriculture, culture and tourism.

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# BUSINESS

## Sinopec's geothermal plant connects to grid

By ZHENG XIN  
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China Petroleum and Chemical Corp's first geothermal power generation demonstration project was connected to the grid and started generating electricity recently, in a strategic pivot toward renewable energy amid the nation's commitment to diversify from traditional oil and gas sources.

Located in a geothermal field in Xianyang, Shaanxi province, the project — combining low-temperature power generation, helium gas extraction from geothermal water, and heating — is significant in expanding the geothermal energy industry chain and optimizing the energy structure, said the company, also known as Sinopec.

Sinopec is the world's largest refiner by volume and the country's biggest geothermal developer.

The project has a heating capacity of 170,000 square meters and an annual power generation capacity of about 700,000 kilowatt-hours, which will provide a consistent energy source that will enhance China's energy security while reducing dependence on fossil fuels, it said.

Geothermal energy, a clean and renewable source with low carbon emissions, offers several benefits, including widespread resource availability, minimal environmental impact, low operating costs and high reliability. This heat can be utilized from natural hot water sources, underground rock heated by the Earth's core, and molten rock known as magma.

In China, geothermal resources are abundant, particularly in the eastern regions where energy demand is highest. This geographic advantage allows for local development and consumption, helping to address the imbalance between energy resource distribution and demand between the eastern and western parts of the country.

According to Sinopec, during the heating season, the geothermal water is extracted for low-load power generation, while helium gas is simultaneously extracted from the geothermal water. After power generation, the geothermal water is reused for heating through heat exchange.

The project will operate at full

load power generation during the non-heating season, extracting helium gas simultaneously, and the used geothermal water is re-injected into the original heat reservoir for reheating via a recharge well, it said.

Analysts believe geothermal energy, a reliable and sustainable power source, offers a consistent output compared to more intermittent renewables like solar and wind. By tapping into this energy source, Sinopec is leveraging China's geothermal potential, particularly in regions rich in geothermal resources, reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Sinopec's entry into geothermal power reflects a strategic move toward diversifying its energy portfolio, said Wang Lining, director of the oil market department under the economics and technology research institute, China National Petroleum Corp.

Traditionally focusing on oil and gas, Sinopec's embrace of renewable energy signals alignment with China's broader goals of transitioning to cleaner energy sources and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, he said.

Geothermal heating is currently among the most cost-effective heating methods available and represents a viable path toward achieving China's carbon neutrality goal, said Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute.

However, China faces challenges in geothermal development due to relatively weak foundational research in deep geothermal energy, as well as the engineering complexities and high costs associated with developing high-temperature, high-pressure geothermal reservoirs in hard rock formations, Luo said.

According to Sinopec, helium is a critical strategic resource and is widely used in fields such as aerospace, research, healthcare and industry. As a major manufacturing country, China has a high demand for helium but has long relied heavily on imports. Currently, helium extraction mainly comes from helium-rich natural gas, coal-bed methane and byproducts of air separation units.

The region where the project is located has exceptionally high helium content, Sinopec said.



An employee checks products at an oilseed crushing factory of Louis Dreyfus Company in Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Louis Dreyfus bullish on agri-biz in nation

MNC's net 2023 China sales stand at \$12.6 billion, 25% of its global total

By ZHONG NAN  
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC), the Netherlands-based processor and merchant of agricultural goods, will launch a new specialty feed production line in Tianjin in the second half of 2025 and expand its oilseed crushing capacity in China, said its top executive.

This new line will focus on producing fermented soybean meal as a feed ingredient that can help to improve the health status and growth rate of several animal species, and contribute to more efficient livestock farming, said Michael Gelchie, CEO of LDC.

"To support our core merchandising activities, we are making important investments to enhance our oilseed crushing capacity in East China's Jiangsu and South China's Guangdong provinces. Through our newly established research and development center in Shanghai, we will continue to develop various food, feed and ingredient products for both the Chinese and global markets," Gelchie said.

LDC, also a seven-time participant in the China International Import Expo, will showcase its latest cooking oil, juice and coffee products at the grand event in Shanghai next month.

Along with Archer-Daniels-Midland Co, Bunge Global SA and Cargill Inc from the United States, LDC is one of the four "ABCD" groups that are highly influential in global agricultural commodity trading.

As China continues to play a key role in global trade, its vast market

“Through our newly established research and development center in Shanghai, we will continue to develop various food, feed and ingredient products for both the Chinese and global markets.”

Michael Gelchie, CEO of Louis Dreyfus Co

drives opportunities by stimulating domestic demand and fueling market growth. This also boosts imports of quality products and services, including high-quality protein sources — a sector in which LDC is actively involved, he added.

According to its 2023 annual financial report, LDC's net sales in the Chinese market reached \$12.6 billion, representing 25 percent of its total global net sales. The group currently employs 18,000 people and operates in more than 100 countries and regions.

In addition to importing agricultural commodities into China, LDC operates several oilseed crushing plants in Tianjin, the Yangtze River Delta and the Pearl River Delta regions, as well as a joint venture in Tianjin that provides feed products to North China.

Despite heightened geopolitical tensions this year, which have add-

ed uncertainty to the global economy and impacted agricultural commodity markets — compounding issues like port congestion and climate challenges — Gelchie confirmed the group's commitment to its growth plans in China and globally, as it continues to invest in its core operations to support global access to food and agricultural products.

He stressed that open global food trade and international cooperation are essential to strengthening partnerships and fostering open dialogue across food supply chains, helping to address challenges and ensure food access for all countries and regions.

In 2023, China imported 160 million metric tons of grain, an increase of 11.7 percent year-on-year. In terms of composition, soybeans still accounted for the majority, representing over 60 percent of the country's total grain imports, said the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Importing agricultural products helps China manage market volatility, ensuring domestic food price stability amid global climatic and geopolitical shifts. This measure helps mitigate risks that could disrupt local markets or lead to food scarcity, said Li Guoxiang, a researcher at the rural development institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

To meet the diverse consumption demand within the domestic market, China saw its imports of coffee and tea jump 24.6 percent year-on-year to 19.56 billion yuan (\$2.75 billion) in the first quarter of this year, while imports of honey, sugar and sugar products grew 27.2 percent on a yearly basis to 22 billion yuan, said the General Administration of Customs.

## MSC takes delivery of luxury Ro-Pax ferry

By ZHENG CAIXIONG  
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Guangzhou Shipyard International Co Ltd (GSI) delivered a new luxury Ro-Pax ferry — *GNV Polaris* — to Italian company Grandi Navi Veloci (GNV), a ferry operator under MSC Group, in Guangzhou's Nansha district in Guangdong province on Thursday.

The ro-ro ferry, built by GSI of the China State Shipbuilding Corp Ltd (CSSC), leaves Guangzhou on Wednesday for Europe, and is set to commence operations in Europe starting in January, serving routes across the Mediterranean.

Covering shipping and logistics businesses, MSC Group said it recognizes China as a key strategic market and has consistently expanded MSC Group's investments in China for more than two decades, said Pierfrancesco Vago, executive chairman of MSC Group's passenger division.

"We are committed to long-term, sustainable development and seek to collaborate with industry peers for mutual growth," Vago said. "We look forward to achieving further milestones as we continue to expand our investment here, promoting the development of high-end, environmentally advanced vessels in line with our commitment to the Chinese market."

Zhou Xuhui, president of GSI, said *GNV Polaris* is one of the most advanced ro-ro passenger vessels in the world, as it is equipped with cutting-edge green technologies and equipment.

“We are committed to long-term, sustainable development and seek to collaborate with industry peers for mutual growth.”

Pierfrancesco Vago, executive chairman of MSC Group's passenger division

"The vessel boasts 100 percent localization of its interior materials and meets advanced international standards in speed, maneuverability and other performance metrics, showcasing the exceptional quality and capabilities of the Chinese shipbuilding industry," Zhou said.

GSI is the major shipbuilder for luxury ro-ro vessels in the world, said Zhou.

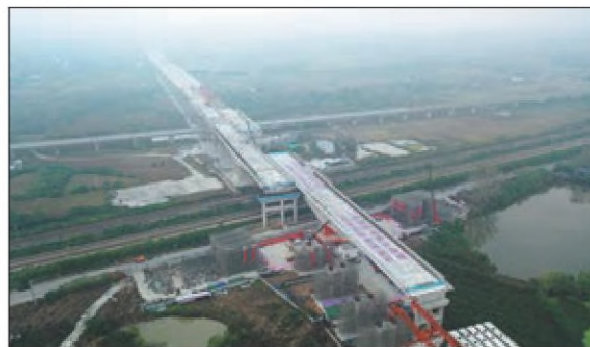
*GNV Polaris* is the first of four GNV Ro-Pax vessels contracted between GSI and MSC Group, and the first large-scale Ro-Pax vessel that has been fully built in China for operation in Europe, marking an important milestone for MSC Group's strategic investment in China and promoting high-quality development of China's shipbuilding and repairing industry.

The successful delivery of GSI's first Ro-Pax vessel for GNV symbolizes the expansion of MSC Group's cooperation with CSSC from traditional container vessels to the passenger ship sector. The achievement also represents a significant milestone for GSI in the design and construction of luxury Ro-Pax vessels.

The ship, which has a total of 12 decks and 298 cabins of various types, is designed to reach a speed of 25 knots, equivalent to 46.3 kilometers an hour.

The vessel has various leisure and entertainment venues available, including buffet restaurants, cafes, sightseeing halls, pizza shops, duty-free shops, aviation-style seating areas, children's play areas and open-air bars.

## Grand spin



After several rounds of rotation, beams of a major overpass are in place on the Chuzhou-Hefei-Zhoukou expressway in Anhui province. Built by China Railway Construction Corp's 24th bureau, the expressway surrounding Hefei aims to enhance links between the provincial capital and neighboring cities. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Octopus looks to further expand presence in Chinese mainland

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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Octopus Holdings Ltd, a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region-based electronic payment system, said it plans to further strengthen its cooperation with Chinese mainland industrial players, as people from the mainland and the city are traveling more frequently, especially in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Octopus recently launched a service in 336 Chinese mainland cities that enables Hong Kong residents to swipe their cards when taking public transport such as buses and subways in those cities.

As the world's first transport card that allows single-balance dual currency usage, the service will automatically convert to renminbi when used in the Chinese mainland after consumers deposit Hong Kong dollars in the card.

"More than 60,000 Octopus cards that are designed to be used in the Chinese mainland have been sold, and the accumulated transaction amount has exceeded HK\$40 million (\$5.14 million)," said Tim Ying, CEO of Octopus. "In Chinese mainland cities such as Urumqi of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the cards are also being used."

In the past few years, fueled by the GBA's development and the deepening of economic and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland, more Hong Kong residents have been traveling to the Chinese mainland for business and leisure, as they pursue more diversified lifestyles.

Last year, residents from the SAR made 53 million visits to the Chinese mainland, equivalent to an average of seven trips per year, per person, according to the local government.

"Convenient payment methods stand as a necessary tool for the flow and development of society and the economy. The integration of infrastructure such as easier payment methods has helped promote economic exchanges between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland," said Wang Pengbo, a senior analyst at market consultancy Botong Ansysys.

"More convenient payment methods can help increase transaction frequencies and strengthen economic and social connections between different regions. It will also help raise the sense of identification and belonging of consumers involved."

Wang added that the usage of the digital renminbi, mobile payments, bank card payments and cash is constantly being optimized, especially for Hong Kong residents who frequently visit and use subways, restaurants and supermarkets in the mainland.

In 2022, Octopus partnered with China UnionPay to launch a QR payment mobile app in the Chinese mainland, as well as in overseas markets such as Southeast Asia, Japan and South Korea.

During the recent National Day holiday break this year, the usage rate of Octopus UnionPay QR codes by Hong Kong residents in the Chinese mainland jumped by 50 percent year-on-year, Octopus said.

"We are actively exploring more consumption scenarios to further expand the acceptance of Octopus in the mainland. Besides public transportation, we hope to develop more usage methods in retail, dining and other sectors," Ying said.

In another development, Octopus recently partnered with WeChat Pay to launch a mini program on WeChat that allows mainland consumers to deposit renminbi in their Octopus cards through WeChat Pay before they arrive in Hong Kong,

saving them from having to exchange currencies and wait in lines for the top-up.

The service, launched in late October, only supports Android phones for the moment, though Octopus has said that it is evaluating the possibility of expanding the service to more phone models and systems in the future.

More Chinese mainland travelers are visiting Hong Kong. During the National Day holiday in early October, Chinese mainland travelers made over 1.2 million visits to Hong Kong, an addition of 100,000 visits over the same period of last year, according to the immigration department of the local government of Hong Kong.

Over the period, Octopus said it recorded \$100 million in transaction value by inbound tourists.

Its retail spending jumped by nearly 30 percent year-on-year among tourists using Octopus mobile apps.

## BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Coffee market bubbles as brands tweak strategy

Partnerships with retailers, investing in supply chains to support faster outlet expansion

By WANG ZHUOQIONG

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Major players in China's growing coffee market are pivoting their strategies in order to stay competitive.

Shifting away from price-focused tactics to a quality-driven approach, brands like Cotti Coffee, Luckin Coffee, Tims China and Starbucks are finding unique ways to capture market share in a rapidly expanding sector.

The World Federation of Chinese Catering Industry recently released its "China Coffee Industry Report 2024", highlighting the robust growth of the nation's coffee market and its shifting consumption patterns.

Coffee cultivation in China is centered in Yunnan province, producing just over 100,000 metric tons annually. However, with demand outstripping domestic supply, coffee imports saw a 20 percent year-on-year growth in 2023, totaling 150,000 tons valued at nearly 6 billion yuan (\$840.6 million).

According to the report, China's coffee consumption has surged by 167 percent over the past decade, reaching 350,000 tons. Freshly ground and retail coffee has emerged as leading categories, with freshly ground coffee accounting for a market value of over 120 billion yuan and the total coffee market exceeding 150 billion yuan.

This growth aligns with an increasing shift toward freshly ground coffee, which is expected to rise from a 40 percent market share to over 80 percent in the near future.

Cotti Coffee, one of the fastest-growing coffee chains in China, recently announced an ambitious expansion plan to operate 50,000 stores by 2025, up from the current 10,000.

To reach this milestone, the chain aims to open 40,000 new locations within the next 18 months. This massive scale-up depends heavily on collaborations with 51 local retailers and catering partners, including convenience store operator Meiyijia, which had operated more than 33,000 chain stores in the country by 2023, burger and chicken restaurant chain Wallace, electronics store Suning, and budget hospitality chain Home Inn.

These partners bring more than 100,000 retail locations across the country into the fold, helping Cotti gain significant reach in both urban and rural markets.

In addition to partnerships, Cotti Coffee is investing in its supply chain infrastructure to support this rapid expansion. The company is building factories and enhancing store operations systems to ensure scalability and consistent service quality.

According to CEO Li Yingbo, Cotti plans to stick with its low-price strategy for at least three years, hoping to capture a larger share of the Chinese market by appealing to budget-conscious consumers.



A contestant checks coffee beans during a coffee processing contest in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Oct 15.

LIU RANYANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

"The 9.9 yuan strategy will remain at least for three years," Li told Foodic, a food and beverage sector portal.

However, Cotti stands nearly alone in embracing this low-cost model even as other brands shift toward a quality-first approach.

This shift underscores the difficulty of sustaining profit margins through low pricing alone, especially given the high operational costs associated with coffee production and retail.

"The low-price strategy is difficult for coffee companies to sustain. Without profits, there's no room for service, innovation, or customer engagement, which ultimately means no sales or margins," said Zhu Danpeng, an independent food and beverage analyst.

Luckin Coffee, once known for its aggressive pricing, is now moving toward quality-focused operations.

The company quickly captured market attention with quality coffee priced at 9.9 yuan, significantly below market rates. This strategy helped Luckin become one of China's largest coffee chains, with "cheap and delicious" becoming a catchphrase among consumers.

However, as Luckin's footprint grew and market competition intensified, the brand started feeling the financial strain of its low-price model.

Luckin's second quarter financial results highlighted these changes. Net revenue reached 8.403 billion yuan, marking a 35.5 percent increase year-on-year.

However, the brand faced challenges with a same-store sales decline of 20.9 percent for self-operated stores. This reflects the impact of shifting



View of a Tims coffee shop in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, in January. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

away from a low-price strategy in an increasingly competitive market.

Realizing that price cuts could only drive growth for so long, Luckin has begun to scale back on its low-price promotions. Instead, the company is refining its supply chain and quality control to position itself as a high-quality, value-driven brand.

To support this transition, Luckin has invested heavily in its sourcing network.

In July 2024, it opened its 20,000th store in Beijing. The company sources coffee beans from top-producing regions worldwide, including Brazil, Ethiopia and Yunnan, ensuring that customers receive a consistent and

high-quality product.

In June, Luckin signed agreements to purchase 120,000 tons of coffee beans from Brazil through 2025.

Luckin has also strengthened its processing capabilities, with a Green Coffee Bean Processing Plant in Baoshan, Yunnan, and roasting plants in Jiangsu and Fujian provinces that give it an annual roasting capacity of 45,000 tons. With a 3 billion yuan investment in a new Innovation and Production Center in Qingdao, Shandong province, Luckin plans to further expand its roasting capacity to 55,000 tons, integrating its supply chain to fuel long-term growth.

While Luckin and Cotti rely on rapid expansion, Tims China has opted to stay out of the pricing battle, focusing instead on quality and value-driven combo offers. With 907 stores across 71 cities, Tims China provides a value proposition through set meal offerings that combine coffee with freshly prepared food, said the company.

"We offer a high-value product with every meal, creating an edge in a crowded market," said CEO Lu Yongchen. "We prioritize quality over quantity, building our brand without blindly chasing expansion."

Tims China had attracted 21.4 million members as of its second-

quarter results. Lu said that Tims will not follow the industry's "involution", or the race to the bottom on pricing, instead focusing on sustainability and quality for long-term success.

As the coffee industry leader in China, Starbucks has embraced local partnerships and sustainability initiatives to strengthen its brand.

According to its preliminary fourth quarter results, China comparable store sales declined 14 percent, driven by an 8 percent decline in average ticket, compounded by a 6 percent decline in comparable transactions, weighed down by intensified competition and a soft macro environment that impacted consumer spending.

"Our fourth quarter performance makes it clear that we need to fundamentally change our strategy so we can get back to growth and that's exactly what we are doing with our 'Back to Starbucks' plan," said Brian Niccol, chairman and chief executive officer.

Its efforts to gain more customers in China have been intensified with its expansion into university campuses, including new stores in Fudan University in Shanghai, University of International Business and Economics in Beijing and Guangzhou College of Commerce.

The company aims to operate 9,000 stores across 300 cities by 2025, a goal that aligns with its broader strategy of supporting China's coffee-growing regions and creating new jobs.

Recently, Starbucks enhanced its local supply chain with a supplier convention in Yunnan. Around 1,500 coffee bean growers attended the event, where Starbucks China CEO Liu Wenjuan announced that every cup of Starbucks classic espresso coffee sold on the Chinese mainland would be made from Yunnan-grown beans.

This partnership reflects Starbucks' commitment to sustainability and quality. The company's Farmer Support Center in Pu'er, Yunnan, has been operating for over a decade, training over 36,800 farmers and certifying 3,411 farms through its C.A.F.E. Practices, a program aimed at responsible sourcing. Over the past 12 years, Starbucks has purchased more than 65,000 tons of coffee from Yunnan.

Starbucks is also focusing on leadership to drive growth, with Molly Liu, or Liu Wenjuan, recently promoted to global executive vice-president and co-CEO of Starbucks China. Under her leadership, the company continues to innovate in store management, quality control, and customer experience. Chairwoman and CEO Belinda Wong, who has led Starbucks China's growth since 2011, remains at the helm, aiming to create over 10,000 jobs annually by 2025.

"As these brands redefine their strategies, China's coffee market is evolving from a battleground of low prices to a space where quality, brand reputation and innovation are becoming increasingly important," said Zhu, the analyst. "The overall number of coffee consumers is ever expanding, contributing to a more diversified and dynamic coffee experience."

## CITIC Capital hikes stake in McDonald's China

By WANG ZHUOQIONG

CITIC Capital Holdings Ltd has announced that its private equity arm, Trustar Capital, has signed an agreement with CITIC Group to acquire its shares in McDonald's businesses on the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macao.

Following this transaction, the CITIC Capital consortium, including CITIC Capital and its private equity division, Trustar Capital, will remain the controlling shareholder with 52 percent ownership of McDonald's China, while McDonald's Corporation owns 48 percent.

This increased stake underscores the consortium's strong, long-term confidence in the potential of McDonald's China, said the company.

CITIC Capital has been instrumental in McDonald's China's significant expansion and localization efforts since 2017, helping to transform it into the second-largest mar-

ket for McDonald's worldwide.

"We are pleased to see that, based on a strong confidence in the growth prospects of the Chinese economy and consumer market, as well as McDonald's China's development potential, CITIC Capital's private equity arm, Trustar Capital, has increased its investment in McDonald's China," according to McDonald's China.

"The transaction further simplifies the ownership structure. Our vision of 'Bigger, Better, Smarter' to reach 10,000 restaurants remains unchanged, and with the support of our shareholders, we will continue to drive the future growth of our business," said the company.

Since CITIC Group and CITIC Capital's 2017 investment in McDonald's China, the fast-food giant has seen expansion and localization in China.

McDonald's has more than doubled its presence, reaching 6,500

restaurants as of September 2024—over 2.5 times the number in 2017.

This growth has solidified China as McDonald's second-largest and fastest-growing market globally.

CITIC Group's resources and network have provided McDonald's China with support for its brand-building and operational expansion. Through CITIC Capital, McDonald's has forged strategic partnerships with major real estate developers, resulting in hundreds of new prime store locations each year.

This strategic real estate alignment has been instrumental in McDonald's rapid market penetration across various cities, from high-traffic urban centers to emerging areas.

Beyond expansion, CITIC Capital has helped McDonald's tailor its store formats to meet the needs of diverse consumer groups. By adapting store designs based on local demographics and development

stages, McDonald's China has been able to innovate and upgrade its in-store experiences, further enhancing customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Under CITIC Capital's guidance, McDonald's China has undergone a major digital transformation. CITIC Capital collaborated with Tencent to launch a WeChat mini program for McDonald's China in six weeks. From the mini program to the current digital ecosystem, the company now has an omnichannel app, nationwide delivery service and an integrated membership system.

McDonald's China's digital platforms boast over 300 million registered members, serving more than 1 billion customers annually. Digital orders now account for over 90 percent of total orders at McDonald's China.

The McDonald's China R&D Center in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, has developed localized digital solu-



Visitors gather at McDonald's booth during a coffee culture fair in Shanghai in May. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

tions, such as the McDonald's App, RGM Boss (restaurant management system) and advanced digital food safety systems. The company plans to invest 4 billion yuan (\$560 million) in digital research over the next five years.

In July 2024, McDonald's China

opened a Supply Chain Smart Industry Park in collaboration with four key suppliers in Hubei province. This 1.5-billion-yuan investment is aimed at enhancing productivity and promoting green development within the central and western regions.

Editor's note: Amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. China Daily will come out with a series of stories highlighting Chinese cities' special connections with sister cities, mutual understanding, trust and friendship between peoples of different countries and cultural backgrounds, and shining light on "city diplomacy".

# BONDS THAT EVOKE FEELINGS OF DEJA VU

## Beijing, Moscow draw closer under multiple partnership programs

By YANG RAN and DU JUAN in Beijing, and REN QI in Moscow

**D**aria Romadina, a Moscow native studying in Beijing, sometimes finds the lines between her two worlds blurring. As she walks on the bustling streets of these two world capitals she often feels as though she has momentarily stepped into the other city.

"The Beijing Exhibition Center and the All-Russian Exhibition Center in Moscow look remarkably similar," said Romadina, 22, who has studied at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing for two years. "Near the Russian embassy in Beijing are many Russian restaurants and supermarkets, which makes it feel like I'm back in Moscow."

This summer she returned to Moscow and was surprised by the growing presence of Chinese culture there.

"Strolling through the streets of Moscow I noticed Chinese restaurants that used to be found only near the Chinese embassy have now spread across the city. You can find everything from roasted skewers to Lanzhou noodles and even Peking duck on the streets. "A friend in Moscow suggested I visit a place in the north of the city called Huaming Park. Walking into it was like stepping back into those parks in Beijing because it incorporates many traditional Chinese garden elements."

Romadina's observations highlight a deeper cultural exchange between the two cities, which have been sister cities since 1995. In fact, Beijing and Moscow have a tapestry of connec-

tions that transcend mere architectural similarities.

The Forbidden City and the Kremlin, both central to their respective cities, are surrounded by ring roads and crisscrossed by webs of underground railway lines. These complex subway systems are eloquent symbols of how closely entwined the two cities are with one another.

Formal exchanges and collaboration between the two cities began when diplomatic relations were established between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union in October 1949.

In the 1950s, as Beijing was gearing up to build its subway system, experts from Moscow came to lend a hand, sharing the expertise they had gained in building and running the Moscow Metro, which had opened in 1935.

According to the newspaper Beijing Daily, engineers from Moscow visited Beijing in 1956. Two years later, a subway design institute was set up that would become what is now Beijing Urban Construction Design and Development Group. Many of the institute's engineers were trained by Soviet experts, and several studied subway engineering in the Soviet Union as the Beijing system took shape.

Fast forward more than 60 years, and the influence has come full circle. Chinese elements can now be found in the Moscow Metro as well. In 2016 the Beijing Urban Construction Design and Development Group won a contract to design a section of the

Moscow Metro, including three stations on a line stretching over 5 kilometers.

This section, designed by the Beijing group and built by the China Railway Construction Corporation, opened toward the end of 2021. As a gesture of gratitude, the newly built Michurinsky Prospekt station was designed with Chinese cultural elements.

The station's platforms are dominated by the color red and feature plum blossoms and The Eight Immortals, figures from Chinese folklore and Taoism. The lamps depicted are decorated with auspicious clouds, and the suspended ceiling resembles a Chinese chessboard.

When Michurinsky Prospekt station opened, it quickly became a social media sensation, attracting Instagram users and influencers eager to capture its unique blend of Russian and Chinese aesthetics. The station is now hailed as a new landmark of China-Russia friendship.

While subway systems may be the domain of industry experts, for the everyday Beijinger, the first thing that may come to mind when talk turns to Moscow is a restaurant called the Moscow Restaurant, known among locals as Lao Mo.

**Nostalgia symbol**

Luan Jufeng, deputy general manager of the Beijing Exhibition Center Co Ltd, said: "The nickname stems from the restaurant's long history and its special place in the hearts of Beijing residents or those born in the last century. Almost everyone knows about the Moscow Restaurant. For many, Lao Mo is more than just a restaurant; it's a cherished symbol of nostalgia and a witness to the city's development and changes in recent decades."

The Moscow Restaurant, which opened in October 1954 next to the Beijing Exhibition Center, was the capital's first high-end Russian restaurant. It is the place where many had their first taste of Western cuisine. In a specific historical context, the Moscow Restaurant left an indelible mark, carrying the memories and feelings of a generation. "The restaurant's unique Russian paintings and artist performances pro-



"Russian culture is an indelible memory for older Beijingers through classic songs such as *Moscow Nights* and *Katyusha*, and Russian-style architecture such as the Beijing Exhibition Center and Moscow Restaurant are part of modern Beijing."

Xiong Juling, director-general of the Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality



Passengers are seen in the Michurinsky Prospekt metro station in Moscow on Dec 7, 2021. EVGENY SMITSYN / XINHUA



People practice tai chi moves in Moscow during an activity on Jan 16, 2022, to welcome the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. TIAN BING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Visitors experience Russian weaving techniques during a cultural and art festival at the Beijing Exhibition Center on June 14. DU JIANPO / FOR CHINA DAILY



A freight train departs for Moscow from Beijing's Mafang Station in Pinggu district on July 1. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

vide Beijingers with a window into Russian culture," Luan said. "It has also hosted many guests from Moscow, fostering friendship and interaction between the people of the two cities." Of course, cultural exchanges between Beijing and Moscow come in

many more forms than in transport and gastronomy. For example, through dynamic exchanges in tourism and education, Beijingers and Muscovites are gaining deeper insights into each other's worlds, igniting an enthusiasm for cross-cultural communication.

Russia's Sputnik news agency said that in the 2024-25 academic year, 98 primary and secondary schools in Moscow had introduced Chinese-language courses. The Moscow government said more than 16,000 of its residents are learning Chinese, reflecting a growing

interest in the language and the Chinese culture. Andrey Karaykin, deputy director of the Russian-Chinese International School in Moscow, said that over the past decade, the number of Russians studying Chinese has risen sevenfold.

"The remarkable thing is that some Russian children already have a basic grasp of the language when they enroll for the school. Parents encourage their children to speak Chinese, confident in the bright future of tourism and economic exchanges between the two countries."

## Musical medley strikes right notes

By YANG RAN and DU JUAN in Beijing

When audiences start singing along with Irina Pratsyuk she truly knows her performance has hit its mark.

"That brings me immense joy," said Pratsyuk, 53, of her shows at the Moscow Restaurant in Beijing, where she has performed for 15 years. "The patrons have a deep appreciation for Russian culture, and it's heartening to see them resonate with the emotions I convey through my performances." Pratsyuk's passion and dedication have not only made her a cherished figure at the restaurant, which many affectionately call Lao Mo, but have also attracted many Russian performers.

"They come to Beijing not just to perform, but to immerse themselves in Chinese culture," Pratsyuk said. "They appreciate my role in introducing them to traditional Chinese music and customs because I have lived here for many years and have developed a deep interest in the culture." She first visited China with her family in 1995, she said. "I remember the bustling streets and the vibrant energy everywhere we went. "Ten years later, work brought her back to China, and now, nearly 20 years on, she feels she has found happiness in Beijing.

"Our regulars are like family. Many of them visit monthly, bringing their children and even grandchildren along. They love singing songs like *Moscow Nights* and *Katyusha* along with me in both Chinese and Russian, and that amazes our newer Russian performers, never having

imagined Russian songs being sung in Chinese by diners." The cultural exchange is not one-sided. Pratsyuk has also embraced Chinese culture, learning to play the *ruan*, a traditional Chinese string instrument. She works with local musicians, blending traditional Chinese instruments with Russian melodies, and vice versa. "The result is magical. We sing together, helping each other grasp the essence of the songs, like one big family." Beyond her performances at the Moscow Restaurant, she also wants to introduce Chinese culture to Moscow. Many renowned professors from the Central Conservatory of Music, such as Du Mingxin, celebrated for his contributions to concertos and ballets such as *The Red Detachment of Women*, have pursued their studies in Moscow.

In 2017, representatives of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory visited Beijing and joined the music education alliance along the Belt and Road, further strengthening these ties.

Beyond music, the two cities enjoy vibrant exchanges in dance, painting and other cultural fields. In July 1956, the first complete classical ballet performed in China, *La Fille Mal Gardée* (The Wayward Daughter), directed by an expert from Moscow, premiered at the Tianqiao Theater in Beijing. Yao Xiaoli, deputy general manager of Beijing Exhibition Center Co Ltd, said dance troupes from Moscow performed in the Beijing Exhibition Theater in 1992 with sections of consecutive days of ballet performances drawing full houses and enthusiastic responses from the audience.

Recently, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Beijing Exhibition Center, a special Russian ballet season was held in its theater hall, which was enthusiastically welcomed by Beijing audiences. "Artistic exchange plays a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding between our cities and countries," Yao said.

"Art, as a language that transcends borders, can touch people's hearts and create resonance, paving the way for friendly interactions and shared growth."

Beyond music, the two cities enjoy vibrant exchanges in dance, painting and other cultural fields.

## Russia expects rise in Chinese tourists

By REN QI in Moscow renqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Moscow is actively interacting with Beijing both at the government and business levels, while the Russian capital is expecting a significant increase in the number of Chinese visitors next year, said a senior Moscow tourism official.

Russia is becoming a popular tourist destination for Chinese visitors, whose numbers last year saw a fivefold rise from 2022. According to official data, a record 244,000 Chinese tourists visited Moscow in 2023, and there were 55 direct flights every week to the Russian capital from the Chinese cities.

Moscow and Beijing are both capitals and top tourist destinations, providing a unique experience for travelers from all over the world, each with its unique history and culture, said Bulat Nurmukhanov, deputy chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee.



Bulat Nurmukhanov, deputy chairman of the Moscow City Tourism Committee

Authorities of the two cities have maintained close cooperation. Nurmukhanov said the Moscow City Tourism Committee has established close ties with the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism and the local representatives of the tourism industry. In 2023, the Moscow City Tourism Committee led a business mission to Beijing. Representatives of the committee and Moscow's tour-

ism companies met with their Chinese counterparts in Shanghai and Guangzhou. He said this year, both countries organized roundtable conferences in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai as part of the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions or MICE tourism, where Moscow had invited 125 market leaders in tourism.

**Joint projects**

"In June 2024, Moscow and Beijing signed a program of cooperation. The main areas of cooperation were the exchange of experience and implementation of joint projects in trade, technology, healthcare and education, as well as culture and tourism," Nurmukhanov told China Daily.

Last year, China became the leading country in terms of tourist numbers to the Russian capital from non-CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. The introduction of electronic visas and

the introduction of a visa-free program for tourist groups from Aug 1, 2023, are some of the reasons for the increase in tourist numbers, Nurmukhanov noted.

A large number of Chinese tourists visited Russia, many of them businesspeople, who came to participate in commercial events. It seemed they knew what they wanted, and they were excited to see through their own eyes what they wanted to see.

"Chinese tourists are actively using these mechanisms to visit Moscow, and the country leads in terms of the number of e-visas issued in January-February 2024. China accounts for 53 percent of the e-visas issued in two months," Nurmukhanov added.

China and Russia decided to set 2024 and 2025 as China-Russia Years of Culture, with hundreds of cultural performances, including theater tours, exhibitions, stage arts, movies and library activities, scheduled to be held in both countries. Culture and tourism activities help promote each other, Nurmukhanov said.

Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality. Beijing plans to strengthen intergovernmental exchanges with Moscow, deepen collaboration in scientific and technological innovation and promote cultural exchanges, she said.

"We will take full advantage of the China-Russia Year of Culture and the 30th anniversary of Beijing-Moscow sister-city relations to host more cultural, tourism, sports and art exchange activities with Moscow to better promote mutual understanding and friendship between the people of the two countries and cities."

Contact the writers at yangran@chinadaily.com.cn.



Watch the video by scanning the code



## WORLD

# China-India ties brought back on track

Meeting of Xi and Modi in Kazan a 'new chapter' in bilateral relations, experts say

By APARAJIT CHAKRABORTY in New Delhi and XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong

India and China are expected to work closer together on tackling multiple bilateral, regional and global challenges following a milestone meeting of their leaders last week, analysts said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia. The meeting came days after China and India reached an accord on border issues following close communication through diplomatic and military channels.

"It is an important breakthrough in India-China relations and ... put bilateral relations back on track after a border standoff for four years," said Sudheendra Kulkarni, who served as an aide to former Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The meeting between the two top leaders has also triggered hope that cooperation in all areas between the countries will resume soon, he said.

At the meeting, President Xi said that the two sides should continue to uphold their important understandings, including that China and India are each other's development opportunities rather than threats, as well as cooperation partners rather than competitors.

"The hectic pace of interactions that preceded, and the way Modi and Xi's body language showed during their Kazan meeting had all the makings of starting a new chapter in their bilateral relations," said Swaran Singh, a professor of international relations at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

The recent significant progress made by China and India on resolving issues along the border is "significant given their rising stature and levers, which can transform global governance if they are able to work together rather than against each other or even at variance from each other," Singh said.

"The meeting is a very positive development and will expand the cooperation between the two coun-

tries," said Manoranjan Mohanty, a former professor of political science and director of the Developing Countries Research Centre at the University of Delhi.

Another important development is that it will instill confidence among Chinese businesses to invest in India and do business with the country, Mohanty stressed.

In the meeting, both sides also agreed to jointly assume international responsibilities, set an example for developing countries to unite, and contribute to promoting world multipolarity and democratization of international relations.

"It will have an impact on international politics and relations, especially in the Global South," Varaprasad Sekhar Dolla, a professor at the Center for East Asian Studies of the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

## Benefiting the world

Avijit Banerjee, head of the Department of Chinese Language and Culture at Visva-Bharati University, said the present global scenario demands that India and China should cooperate. "This will not only be beneficial for our two countries but also the entire Asia, and the world," he said.

The total population of India and China together account for about one-third of the world's total population, mentioned Wang Shida, acting director of the Institute of South Asian Studies at the Beijing-based China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations.

"If China and India jointly speak out on any international issue, the world will inevitably pay attention to them," he said. "At the same time, as two major countries of Global South, if the two work together, it will be conducive to safeguarding the overall interests of developing countries, promoting the process of world multipolarity, and maintaining peace and stability in the region and even the world."

Aparajit Chakraborty is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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## Venting their anger



People stage a protest in the town of Onagawa in Miyagi Prefecture, northeastern Japan, on Tuesday, ahead of the restart of the No 2 unit of the Onagawa Nuclear Plant in the town, which was damaged by the 2011 earthquake-tsunami disaster. It will be the first time a nuclear reactor has been restarted in the area since the Fukushima nuclear disaster. KYODO NEWS VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Israel's ban on UNRWA sparks outcry

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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The international community has decried Israel's ban on the United Nations' Palestinian aid agency from operating within Israel and Palestinian areas under Israeli control.

Considered a lifeline for Palestinians, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, which was founded in 1949, has seen its future thrown into jeopardy following the "unprecedented" passing of a law by the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, on Monday, with observers saying the sanction could have far-reaching humanitarian, legal and political implications and set a dangerous precedent.

Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the UN, said preventing UNRWA from continuing its essential work in the occupied Palestinian territory would have "devastating consequences for the Palestinian refugees", and called on Israel to act consistently with its obligations under the Charter of the UN and international law.

"National legislation cannot alter those obligations. ... There is no alternative to UNRWA," said Guterres.

Palestinian Presidential Spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh rejected and condemned the new Israeli legislation, which he said "aims to liq-

uidate the issue of refugees and their right to return and compensation" and that "we will not allow it".

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was "gravely concerned", and the law risks making UNRWA's "essential work for Palestinians impossible, jeopardizing the entire international humanitarian response in Gaza".

Several countries including Australia, Jordan, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain also condemned the Israeli legislation.

Philippe Lazzarini, commissioner-general of UNRWA, said in a post on social media platform X that the Knesset's vote was the "latest in the ongoing campaign to discredit UNRWA and delegitimize its role towards providing human-development assistance and services to Palestine Refugees".

## Common mechanism

"Failing to push back these bills will weaken our common multilateral mechanism established after World War II. This should be a concern to all," he added.

Walaa Sabah, director of operations at We Are Not Numbers in Gaza, a youth-led Palestinian nonprofit, told China Daily the Israeli parliament's move delivers a clear message denying the right of return for Palestinians with refugee status, directly violating the UN charter and international law.

"The UN stands as the primary

advocate for refugee rights in Gaza. Without its support, Palestinians in Gaza would lose all humanitarian aid, effectively placing their lives under Israeli government control, and enabling a more systematic and complete erasure of Palestinian identity," said Sabah.

Arie Afriansyah, associate professor at the Faculty of Law at Universitas Indonesia, told China Daily such a policy "will only make clearer" how desperate Israel is to "blame any party".

Israel's justification for the legislation cited past UNRWA staff members for their alleged involvement in the Hamas-led Oct 7 attacks against Israel last year, which killed 1,200 people and took about 240 hostages.

On the battlefield, an Israeli strike on a five-story building where displaced Palestinians were sheltering in the northern Gaza Strip killed at least 60 people early on Tuesday, more than half of them women and children, Gaza's Health Ministry said. Israel's operation has killed more than 43,000 Palestinians, according to the ministry.

In a separate development, Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah said it has chosen Naim Qassem to succeed longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike last month. Hezbollah vowed to continue with Nasrallah's policies "until victory is achieved".

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Germany's GDP set to shrink by 0.2%: DIHK

By EARLE GALE in London  
earle@mail.chinadaily.com

Germany's gross domestic product, or GDP, is on course to shrink by 0.2 percent in 2024, according to the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, or DIHK.

The organization predicted on Tuesday, revising its May forecast that GDP would neither expand nor contract during 2024.

And the DIHK had more bad news for Germany's government, predicting GDP will be stagnant during 2025. If that happens, it would mean Europe's largest economy had failed to grow for three consecutive years.

Martin Wansleben, chief executive of the DIHK, said: "We are not just dealing with a cyclical, but a stubborn structural crisis in Germany."

His report said there is little to suggest business expectations will improve in the immediate future.

"We are greatly concerned about how much Germany is becoming an economic burden for Europe and can no longer fulfill its role as an economic workhorse," the Reuters news agency quoted him as saying.

We are greatly concerned about how much Germany is becoming an economic burden for Europe and can no longer fulfill its role as an economic workhorse."

Martin Wansleben, chief executive of the DIHK

The DIHK report was based on a survey of 25,000 companies operating in a wide range of sectors and German regions.

Some 31 percent of respondents said they expect the business situation in Germany to worsen. In the previous survey, 26 percent made such a prediction. And, in the latest survey, only 13 percent of companies said they expect the economic situation to soon improve.

The survey showed that a third of companies plan to reduce their investments in Germany. In the industry, it is even 40 percent.

Companies are worried about the location conditions in Germany. The survey showed that 57 percent of the companies see uncertain economic policy framework conditions as a risk, followed by labor costs with 54 percent of the companies and a shortage of skilled workers with 57 percent of the companies surveyed.

"This is a clear alarm signal," Wansleben said, as he called on the German government to champion "profound reforms" of the business environment.

The report will be disappointing reading for Germany's coalition government led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz ahead of federal elections next September and amid poor performances in recent opinion polls.

But the DIHK report was partially offset by the latest Forward-Looking Consumer-Climate Index for Germany compiled by research group GfK and the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions, which was also published on Tuesday.

The latest edition of the monthly survey said German consumers are becoming increasingly confident because of lower inflation rates and higher salaries, despite their pessimism about the economy.

The report said it expects consumer confidence to grow by 2.7 points, to minus 18.3 points, during November, an improvement on previous expectations of it hitting minus 20.5 points.

The report said consumer confidence has reached its highest level since April 2022.

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## Toasting an NYC fashion brand with Tsingtao beer

By MINGMEILI in New York  
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The founder of a fashion brand and an iconic beer company recently united in a celebration of their shared home city.

New York-based fashion brand Dawang and Tsingtao Brewery Co Ltd presented a runway show Oct 23 that combined traditional heritage with contemporary appeal, appealing to young audiences drawn to Chinese craftsmanship and culture.

Dawang's founder Wang Jingwen (Daisy), who was born and raised in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, said she takes pride in her hometown — the birthplace of Tsingtao.

"Every time my foreign friends ask me where I'm from, I tell them, 'the same place as the beer', and people recognize it instantly," Wang told China Daily.

"For this collaboration, we blended Dawang's signature brocade designs with Tsingtao beer's brand vibe and iconic elements from Qingdao, adding details like wheat, hops, ocean waves, and Laoshan Mountain to tie it all together," Wang said, pointing to a tattoo of the Tsingtao beer logo on her calf.

Wang, a graduate of the Parsons School of Design, who established Dawang in 2018, said she wants to create contemporary streetwear that blends Eastern and Western influences while celebrating a modern take on traditional Chinese aesthetics — much like herself, having studied abroad in the United States since she was 15.

The brand, Dawang — derived

“Every time my foreign friends ask me where I'm from, I tell them, 'the same place as the beer', and people recognize it instantly.”

Wang Jingwen, founder of fashion brand Dawang

from her first and last names — means "big king" in Chinese, reflecting her ambition to become the "best" brand in the market.

"I feel like I always wanted to incorporate Chinese elements and cultural aesthetics into my daily wardrobe," she said. "By that time, modern Chinese style was already emerging in China — people were exploring new ways to celebrate it. But in the Western world, Chinese fashion seemed stuck in the past, like 50 or 70 years ago. You'd see the same dresses, the same fabrics, often bought from tourist shops, instead of being viewed as lifestyle fashion."

"So that gave me the motivation. I'm always looking for a more modern, wearable style," she said. Wang explained that she incorporates traditional Chinese brocade techniques, along with Chinese buttons and layered styling, into her designs as part of her "brand image".

"To us, we want to invite people from all cultural backgrounds to appreciate and embrace this modern Chinese lifestyle," Wang said. She said she hopes the brand will

spark curiosity among customers, encouraging them to explore the fabrics used in the clothing, learn about the history and craftsmanship of Chinese brocade — which remains vibrant even after bleaching — and wear Chinese-inspired styles confidently as everyday attire.

"Incorporating Chinese culture and background-related designs doesn't mean the clothes are a 'costume' or 'traditional dress,'" Wang said.

Wang said that she wants more people to celebrate Chinese aesthetics as an accessible, meaningful lifestyle choice without fear of being culturally inappropriate, especially overseas.

She said that all of her products are made in China, and she proudly shares that with her customers.

"You can see the quality of the clothes firsthand, and this reflects the quality of made in China products," she said. "I'm proud that Chinese factories can produce high-quality clothing, and I always feel proud of my hometown and its unique heritage."

Wang said she feels similarly about Tsingtao beer and its reach to international markets.

Tsingtao, established in 1903 by German and British merchants as Germania-Brauerei Tsingtao Co Ltd, was one of the first breweries in China and is currently the sixth-largest brewer in the world. Tsingtao won the World Beer Championship Gold Award in the US in 2018 and 2019.

"Tsingtao has its own international recipe, just like Dawang; we both absorb the cultures of East

and West. It's a perfect match," said Teng Wenyan, brand manager of Paulaner USA, the exclusive US importer of Tsingtao beer.

Originally using German brewing techniques and mineral water and ingredients from Laoshan in eastern Qingdao, Tsingtao beer had a foreign recipe that quickly gained popularity among Westerners and local Chinese. Since entering the US market in 1972, it has become the best-selling Chinese beer in America.

"We're bringing the original Tsingtao taste to you wherever you are. No matter where you're enjoying it, you're getting that same authentic flavor as back home in China," Teng said.

"Back in China and across East Asia, we're refreshing the brand to appeal more to younger audiences. It may be a slower shift in the US, but we're getting there," she said. "We don't want Tsingtao to just be a drink you find in Chinatown; we're hoping more young people join in on the fun with us."

Teng said the company plans to bring Tsingtao beer fans to next year's Qingdao Beer Festival, where they can experience Chinese beer culture, savor the fresh taste of Tsingtao's original draft beer with its 14-day shelf life, and take in the local tradition of grabbing beer to go in plastic bags from "beer stations" on nearly every corner.

"It feels like we have a community here in New York. We're collaborating and building a network to promote Chinese culture together," Wang said. "Through design and beer, I want to introduce my city and inspire more people to visit."

# COMMENT

## Editorials

### Visit injects fresh vigor into Sino-Finnish ties, hoped to stabilize relations with EU

Finland President Alexander Stubb's four-day visit to China beginning on Monday — the 74th anniversary of the establishment of Sino-Finnish diplomatic relations — is expected to inject new vitality into bilateral relations by strengthening their economic ties, deepening pragmatic cooperation, promoting joint ventures in green sectors, and helping improve China-EU relations.

That Stubb is not only meeting President Xi Jinping, and the heads of the Chinese central government and top legislature, but also representatives of the business community and social sectors indicates the extent to which the two sides hope to expand the bilateral ties.

Being a typical export-oriented economy, Finland stands to gain by deepening cooperation with the world's second-largest economy and superlarge market, not least because the two economies are complementary in terms of their economic structure, trade and technology.

The first Western country to sign an intergovernmental trade deal with China, Finland is China's third-largest trading partner in Scandinavia, while China has been Finland's largest trading partner in Asia for many years. According to Chinese customs data, the bilateral trade volume reached \$8.2 billion in 2023. But the importance of Sino-Finnish relations goes much beyond the trade volume.

Finland is a leader in research and development in advanced technology, excelling in fields such as information and communications technology, healthcare and green energy, while China offers a vast market and a formidable manufacturing base, creating a dynamic landscape for economic collaboration. The complementarity between Finland's cutting-edge technology and China's extensive production capacity presents abundant opportunities for bilateral cooperation, as shown in the 2025-29 action plan the two sides signed on Tuesday to enhance their new type of future-oriented partnership.

Despite the rise of protectionism and unilateralism in recent years, it's good to hear Stubb say Finland opposes a new Cold War, advocates for free and open trade, and appreciates the important role China has been playing to promote global peace and common development.

China's top decision-makers can use Stubb's visit to listen to what Finland, as a member of the EU, has to say about China-EU relations, especially about their trade disputes. On his part, the Finnish president can also take advantage of his face-to-face exchanges with Chinese leaders to compare notes on common interest, and understand China's core concerns and demands.

This approach could enhance mutual understanding between not only the two countries but also China and the EU, and prompt the two sides to have more objective expectations from each other when it comes to handling trade disputes and economic relations, particularly when the Beijing-Brussels negotiations on the EU's "anti-subsidy" tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles are at a critical juncture.

In fact, observers expect Stubb's visit to not only add momentum to the steady and sound development of bilateral ties but also contribute to the improvement of China-EU relations at a time of economic and geopolitical turbulence. Known for its strategic autonomy, Finland was among the first Western countries to recognize the People's Republic of China. And thanks to the joint efforts of the two sides, the development of bilateral relations over the years has been sound and stable, contributing to the steady development of relations between China and Europe.

The healthy development of Sino-Finnish ties is a good example of how countries, despite being separated by thousands of kilometers and adopting different political systems, can build a thriving relationship based on their common understanding of some basic principles of international relations such as mutual respect, equality and win-win cooperation. Differences should never be allowed to become the cause of discord between the two countries; instead, they should prompt them to enhance their mutual learning and understanding in order to resolve those differences.

China is willing to share its development opportunities with Finland, strengthen the future-oriented new type of mutually beneficial partnership with the Nordic country, and jointly safeguard free trade and promote peace and stability across the world, while upholding multilateralism.

### US cornered in its own 'small yard'

In its bid to ensure the United States wins the technological competition with China, the Joe Biden administration has been continually ramping up its efforts to transform the "high fence" of its "small yard" strategy into a de facto wall.

It has therefore been striving to effectively cut off meaningful connections between the two countries' technological sectors in fields that are at the cutting-edge.

As part of its push to prevent US products, capital and know-how from helping China out-compete the US in these cutting-edge technologies, the United States Treasury Department published a final rule on Monday for the implementation of President Joe Biden's August 2023 Executive Order to restrict US investments in specific Chinese technologies.

This is not "de-risking", but decoupling, and the antagonistic way the US is pursuing it will further poison the overall bilateral relationship, which is already in a thick shadow of fears of a new Cold War. Despite its rather general title, Biden's Executive Order on Addressing United States Investments in Certain National Security Technologies and Products in Countries of Concern was tailor-made for China.

Announced on Aug 9, 2023, the order is targeted at advancements in sensitive technologies and products that accelerate the development of advanced computational capabilities. It focuses specifically on semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technologies and certain AI systems, "sensitive technologies and products" identified as critical for the next generation of military, cybersecurity, surveillance, and intelligence applications.

The Treasury Department's Final Rule to implement Executive Order 14105, which will take effect on Jan 2, provides the operative regulations and a detailed explanatory discussion on their intent and application, which for all intents and purposes is aimed at restricting investments by US individuals and companies in advanced technologies and products in the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions. It features an additional move against outbound investments in China.

Since the Donald Trump administration, Washington has made continuous attempts to build an ever-higher fence to curtail the momentum of Chinese technological breakthroughs. Following export controls, financial sanctions, high tariffs, and inbound investment screening, the White House has now taken a decisive new step to bring outbound investment under government oversight and control. Although the final rule does allow certain exceptions, they are largely nominal, as observers have pointed out. After all, no matter who gets elected in the impending presidential election, no matter which party controls the House or/and Senate, there is little chance this "small yard, castelated wall" approach will change any time soon. After all, containing Chinese scientific and technological progress has become a bipartisan consensus in US domestic politics, and a key pillar of US geopolitical strategy. Through continuous endeavors by both the present and previous US presidencies, Beijing has been cast as the foremost threat to US national security. And national security has been a handy rallying cry for US politicians to concentrate support both at home and abroad.

It remains to be seen how and to what extent the new rule will affect the US' allies and partners. Considering Washington's historical obsession with long-arm jurisdiction, it is very likely such restrictions will at some point be applied to critical third parties in one way or another. This is because, as Paul Rosen, assistant Treasury secretary for investment security, said in a news release, US investments include the intangible benefits such as managerial assistance and access to investment and talent networks that often accompany such capital flows.

On releasing the rule, the US Treasury stated the US was committed to "an open investment environment". And in a speech at Brookings Institution on Oct 23, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan denied popular perception that the US is abandoning the "positive-sum" world outlook. Instead of substantiating these claims, the new rule is evidence to the contrary.



## Opinion Line

### New policies must address 'pain points' to help raise fertility rate

Whether or not to have kids, or how many children to have, is a personal matter best left to the couples, but the introduction of favorable supportive policies at the national level can surely enhance their willingness to have kids.

According to a recent circular issued by the central authorities, China is determined to build a childbearing-friendly society and weave a stronger safety net for families looking to have a baby by strengthening support for childbearing parents, building a better childcare service system and offering education, housing, employment and other support.

It can be said that these specific measures, if implemented to the letter, will to a large extent mitigate the "pain points" that discourage many couples from having children.

China's population has experienced negative growth since 2022, with only 9.02 million newborns nationwide in 2023. At the same time, the country is grappling with a rapidly aging popula-

tion, with elderly people aged 60 or above reaching 297 million by the end of 2023. There is a rising consensus that the country should double down efforts to improve support policies for childbearing parents.

Targeting the continuous rise in reproductive costs and the heavy economic burden of raising and educating children, the guideline rolls out some supportive measures. They include strengthening maternity insurance — which expands the scope of medical reimbursement to cover certain labor pain relief methods, assisted reproductive technologies and more pediatric medicines — increasing maternity leave, establishing maternity subsidies, and strengthening reproductive health services.

This is the first time the establishment of a maternity subsidy system has been put forward at the national level. The circular vows to increase the supply of government-subsidized, afford-

able childcare services and develop childcare centers and facilities at workplaces and neighborhoods.

Fertility support policy is a systematic project, and considering the varying needs of different families, it is correct for the guideline to take into account marriage, childbearing, parenting and education as a whole, and put forward specific measures to address these aforementioned concerns.

Facts prove that when a country enters an era of aging population and low fertility, it is difficult to encourage couples to have more children. For that, joint efforts from families, society and the State are needed.

It is believed that only when the country addresses the "pain points" responsible for the low birthrate, increases inputs and takes practical measures to build a childbearing-friendly society can the willingness of couples to have more than one child gradually increase.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

### Restore habitat to protect humans from wild boars

The number of wild boars in China is estimated to have reached 2 million. The fast rising number of the animal is becoming a headache for residents at some places.

Currently, wild boars are seen as a problem in 857 counties across 26 provincial-level administrative regions, particularly in South China and Southwest China.

Wild boars have strong reproductive capacity and strong adaptability, so their numbers are growing rapidly.

Due to historical reasons, some areas lack natural predators of wild boars, such as tigers, leopards and wolves, leading to a rapid growth of the wild boar population. In addition,

the intensity of human interference has also decreased, making the environment more suitable for the animal's survival and growth in numbers.

Earlier, pilot projects have achieved good results in the prevention and control of damage caused by wild boars, payment of insurance compensation for such damage, and allowing for appropriate hunting in areas where the animals have caused serious damage, thus addressing the practical problems faced by farmers.

The next steps are mainly based on the work plan for the prevention and control of damage caused by wild boars and other terrestrial wild ani-

mals, jointly issued by 15 departments including the National Forestry and Grassland Administration. It is necessary to protect the lives and property of the people, ensure the order of production and life, and maintain ecological balance and protect biodiversity.

The threat from wild boars is an example of animal-human conflict for space, but it also reflects some imbalance in the ecological environment. As some experts suggest, it's necessary to restore the animal's habitat and food chain to achieve harmonious coexistence between humans and wild boars.

— CHINA MEDIA GROUP

## What They Say

### Israel steps up weaponizing of humanitarian aid

Israeli lawmakers passed two laws on Monday that could threaten the work of the main United Nations agency providing aid to people in Gaza by barring it from operating on Israeli soil, severing ties with it and labeling it a terror organization.

Although they have not yet come into force, the laws' potential impact on Palestinians, as the humanitarian toll in Gaza worsens, cannot be underestimated.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East would be prevented from doing critical UN General Assembly-mandated work if the laws are implemented. "There is no alternative to UNRWA," he said in a statement issued on Monday night.

UNRWA provides education, healthcare and other basic services to millions of Palestinian refugees across the region,

including in the Israel-occupied West Bank.

The legislative move, which UNRWA's chief, Philippe Lazzarini, called "a dangerous precedent", risks collapsing the already fragile process for distributing aid in the Gaza Strip and represents Israel's open challenge to the UN-centered multilateral system in international relations.

Lazzarini correctly pointed out that the new laws were part of an "ongoing campaign to discredit UNRWA". Israel has smeared and attacked the UNRWA long before the Gaza war broke out in October last year. Since then, Israel has killed more than 200 UNRWA employees during its conflict with Hamas in Gaza.

The laws are by no means what Israeli lawmaker Boaz Bismuth, who cosponsored one of the bills, hailed as "a call for justice and a wake-up call" but a crucial move Tel Aviv has long envisioned taking to overcome domestic legal obstacles to actions to eliminate the UN agency from Gaza by force once and for all.

The legislative move is an integral

part of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's overall plan to annex the Palestinian enclave.

Israel has been trying to weaponize its control of the provision of humanitarian aid to the refugees in Gaza in the hope that the lack of food, water and medicines can spur the civilians to oppose Hamas. But in practice, the brutal actions have only served to deepen local people's hatred against Israel.

As a UN member, Israel should "act consistently with its obligations" under the UN Charter and international law. "National legislation cannot alter those obligations," Guterres said in his statement. That also explains why even Israel's allies, including the United States, have strongly opposed the move. US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller, speaking to reporters in Washington before the votes, said the administration was "deeply concerned" by the legislation. "There's nobody that can replace them (the UNRWA) right now in the middle of the crisis."

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Achim Steiner

## China a key player in global climate action

The world is experiencing the planetary red flags that, without collective action, may confront humanity with unwinnable odds. Each and every country must go bigger, with action, with ambition, and with investment, to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius and protect Earth's biodiversity.

The ongoing COP16 biodiversity summit in Colombia marks the beginning of a critical period for global environmental diplomacy. In the coming weeks, COP29 on climate change will then convene in Azerbaijan, followed by COP16 on desertification in Saudi Arabia. Together, these three UN environmental summits represent an unprecedented convergence, and a golden opportunity to build on the momentum from the Summit of the Future, and its Pact for the Future, by collectively raising ambition levels, including on finance, and committing to concrete, transformative actions to protect our planet.

The challenges we face are deeply intertwined and globally felt, so much so that our solutions must be equally interconnected.

As a large and growing economy with sizable emissions, but also a leader in the green transition and biodiversity protection, China has the potential to play a central role.

During my recent official visit to the country, I engaged with government officials and thought leaders on China's impressive progress in green development. In particular, I learned about the intensification of efforts to realize its concept of an "ecological civilization"—a vision for the future where decarbonization and environmental protection do not come at the cost of economic growth, but rather strengthen it.

Indeed, China has already made important strides. Its fully protected areas now span approximately 1.73 million square kilometers, or 18 percent of the nation's landmass and this is set to increase.

Non-fossil fuel sources make up over 50 percent of China's total energy generation capacity, and 41 percent of all jobs in renewables globally are in China.

Technological innovation has been key to China's green transformation, particularly in the mobility sector. In 2009, fewer than 500 electric vehicles were sold in China.



JINDING / CHINA DAILY

Last year, there were over 8 million new EV registrations, and today one out of every two vehicles sold in China is either electric or a hybrid.

These advancements are the result of a systematic approach, deliberate policies, and strategic decisions, as well as consistent

monitoring of interventions that cut across economy, governance and society, and can adapt to a rapidly evolving context.

Despite this remarkable progress, however, China can continue to build on, and expand its efforts moving forward.

Most notably, by pursuing enhanced

commitments in its next generation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) due in 2025, China can point the way toward more ambitious targets and accelerated actions globally — the only way for the world to keep the 1.5 degree Celsius target of the Paris Agreement alive. The

NDCs are a critical tool for countries to demonstrate agency in pursuing climate action, while also building accountability and trust, and strengthening international environmental governance.

China can also consider integrating biodiversity considerations into its next NDCs. Nature and climate are two sides of the same coin, and as such, efforts to address these challenges must happen simultaneously, and in harmony with one another. This will also be critical to meeting targets under the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, agreed to at COP15 — the last UN biodiversity summit two years ago presided over by China.

As China accelerates its green transformation, it will likewise be critical to ensure that pathways to a low-carbon future are also inclusive, with new opportunities accessible to everyone. This will require expanded social protection mechanisms and programs to retrain affected workers for green jobs, so that no one is left behind.

Finally, the magnitude of the planetary crises facing the world means that no single country can tackle them alone. China's continued commitment to ecological civilization presents increasingly more opportunities to support other developing countries in adopting nature- and climate-positive approaches by sharing experience, knowledge, low-carbon technologies, and financing through international cooperation.

As the discussions unfold at the three COPs over the following weeks, UNDP remains fully committed to supporting international cooperation to advance sustainable development, and is ready to work together with China, and all countries, in advancing global efforts towards a green, inclusive future. To do this, the world must navigate significant hurdles, including balancing climate commitments, energy security and socio-economic concerns, but shared challenges can, and must, bring shared resolve.

It is time for bold measures, and collective, concerted efforts to reverse our current trajectory, and safeguard both humanity and the natural world before it is too late. Our planet is sounding the alarm — louder and clearer than ever before. The question is, are we finally ready to listen?

The author is UN under-secretary general and UNDP administrator. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Vyacheslav Seliverstov

## Potential for Sino-Russian cross-border cooperation high

The science forums I attend in China every year leave me wondering how great the potential for cross-border interactions between Russia and China is, and how insufficiently we have used it so far. Russian-Chinese relations, officially defined by the two sides as comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era, have made many achievements, but also left untapped many cooperation opportunities.

I believe the biggest problem of Russian-Chinese interactions in recent decades is the insufficient number of joint investment projects. Why are Chinese businesses very active in working with Belarus but not with Russia on similar projects?

## Huge potential along the border

When speaking about Russian-Chinese cooperation potential, it is necessary to take into account the long border, which can become the strongest strategic resource of large countries such as Russia and China. There is a watershed along the West-East line in Russia, and the North-South line in China. The vast regions of the two countries, including Asian Russia, and North China and Northeast China, are rich in resources, but less developed in economic terms that border each other. This has great potential for cross-border cooperation, but also imposes objective restrictions on them.

Previously, the Russian Far East was considered the main partner for China due to its geographic proximity. But now Siberia has begun to play the role of the central link in the triangle of interactions between the west, east and south of Eurasia as a macro-region with unique natural resources and strong scientific and innovative potential.

Siberia is acquiring the functions of the most important regional reserve of Russia and the core of a new configuration of Eurasian economic, and scientific and technological interactions, with the city of Novosibirsk becoming the main transport, logistics and scientific and innovative hub for all of Asian Russia.

I participated in a business symposium and the 2024 annual expert forum on "economic opening of the North" in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in August. The forum was held under the theme "Moving to



**The formation of new transport and logistics infrastructure along the railway will create the basis for the construction of the northern and western railway corridors.**

the North", which is no coincidence.

Economic, scientific, technological and humanitarian cooperation between China, Russia and Mongolia along the "northern vector" has great potential and prospects.

It can be carried out in the largest macro-region in the world — North Asia — which we propose to use both for scientific research and state regional policy of our countries. It includes Siberia and the Russian Far East, the northern and northeastern provinces and autonomous regions of China, and Mongolia.

## Key areas for 'Northern cooperation'

The "supporting land" of North Asia, spread across Russia, China and Mongolia, have many common features. But in order to activate spatial interactions between our countries, it is advisable to open a new corridor of opportunities for "Northern cooperation", among which three key areas stand out.

First, in coordination of economic strategies for cooperation and modernization, I see joint work in three vectors:

\* The alignment of major strategic initiatives of China and Russia in political, regulatory, institutional and investment aspects.

\* Using the best practices of strategic planning, management and implementation of effective development models that take into account the specifics of China, Russia and their regions. Our analysis of the

Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 shows that in its strategic plans it is China that is actually oriented toward the development model that we propose for implementation in Siberia.

For example, Russia should pay close attention to the Inner Mongolia autonomous region as a pilot region of the resource type, successfully implementing its own program of modernization and diversification of production.

The experience of Inner Mongolia is especially important for the regions of Siberia — for instance, for the Kemerovo Region as an example of the development of coal chemistry based on large coal deposits; for the Altai Territory, Omsk and Novosibirsk regions as an example of the formation of the world's largest center of the dairy industry; for all regions as an example of the effective development of sectors such as the "green economy" and wind and solar energy.

\* The coordination of customs, migration and infrastructure policies and their regulatory framework, as well as regional and municipal programs and strategies of the border areas of China and Russia, and the implementation of local integration projects of inter-municipal interaction of border areas of Russia and China.

Second, in joint efforts to increase the connectivity of the Asian space, connectivity of territories is not only about transport and infrastructure connection among regions. It is also about the unity of economic, social, scientific and technological, environmental, cultural and communication processes. It is in this broad context that the construction of cross-border transport corridors in Northern Asia should be assessed. The idea is not only to form new transport and logistics plans for cross-border interactions among countries, but also to establish new centers of economic activity around these transport corridors. The plan can be implemented on the basis of the formation of "economic corridors" in Eurasia (in particular, the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor) with specific projects.

It is obvious that the greatest importance of strengthening connectivity in Northern

Asia is for the bordering territories — the southern regions of Siberia and the Far East, and the northern and northeastern territories of China.

Thus, the issue of building two new railway routes from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region of China to Siberia is being studied. The formation of new transport and logistics infrastructure along the railway will create the basis for the construction of the northern and western railway corridors.

In particular, the role of the "Northern Sea Route" (NSR) in strengthening the connectivity of Eurasia should be noted. The implementation of this major transport and logistics project is entering its final stage. For this purpose, Russia has built the world's most powerful icebreaker fleet and port infrastructure, and the year-round navigation route along the NSR with large-scale transportation is becoming a reality. China has shown particular interest in the NSR, because on its basis the fastest and most efficient sea route from China to the northern ports of Russia and European countries is being created.

Third, when it comes to cooperation between regional scientific and innovation systems, one of the most competitive products on the Chinese market is Russian science, which is concentrated in Siberian and Far Eastern regional scientific and innovation ecosystem. The most famous among them is the Novosibirsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences — Novosibirsk Akademgorodok.

## Tap R&amp;D for commercialization

China's science and technology sector has huge potential for rapid commercialization. The results of Russia's science and technology R&D implemented on the basis of the Chinese "innovation conveyor" should subsequently find application in the regions and industries of Russia. Therefore, given Russia's goal of achieving "sovereignty in technology", it is advisable to use the Chinese "tailwind" of scientific and technological modernization for the "take-off" of development of the science and technology sector and promotion of innovation.

But Russian-Chinese cooperation on sci-

ence and technology is still focused on different priorities. In Russia, using large-scale Chinese investment to build infrastructure to facilitate the development of the science and technology sector and promote innovations, expedite high-tech production and implement joint Russian-Chinese scientific project is of the utmost importance.

As for China, it is more interested in attracting talented Russian scientists to conduct research, and purchasing promising Russian scientific and innovative technologies and patents for their use in its technological sphere.

But it is necessary to maintain a balance between these priorities and devise a policy for cooperation on science and technology based on the equal distribution of the resulting fruits among all participants and better protecting intellectual property rights.

Leading institutes of the Siberian Branch of the RAS are implementing joint projects with Chinese research institutes and enterprises in key areas of science and technology. The Institute of Nuclear Physics of the Siberian Branch of the RAS has delivered dozens of industrial accelerators to China, and a boron neutron capture cancer therapy facility to Xiamen, Fujian province, which has no analogues in the world, in 2018. And next year, the Siberian Ring Photon Source, a mega-science facility, will start operating at the Novosibirsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of the RAS, where Chinese scientists, too, can conduct experiments.

Of course, in the process of defending national, regional and corporate interests in cross-border cooperation between China and Russia, conflicting situations may arise (for example, in water use). But these conflicting situations are not antagonistic.

Siberian science and education, Siberian businesses and the Siberian region's authorities are ready to cooperate with China along the "northern vector", which, too, is in the interest of Chinese enterprises and partners.

The author is director of Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## GLOBAL VIEWS

MWANGI WACHIRA

## In the face of an existential threat

A well-functioning multilateral global order can serve as Africa's lifeline

The pursuit of interests by individuals, communities or nations can lead to conflict when the objects of interest are in limited supply. Hence, we create organizations and give them rules and norms for resolving conflict.



death and destruction, including the capacity to delete life itself.

To avoid such an outcome, the United Nations and its specialized agencies were created. The UN is at the heart of the post-World War II multilateral global order. But this global order demands reform.

Africa has a stake in a truly multilateral global order because, of all regions, it is the most reliant on a well-functioning global system.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa was the region most dependent on multilateral and bilateral sources for vaccines and medical supplies. Today, as the Russia-Ukraine conflict has disrupted supply chains worldwide, the resulting high food prices have wiped out a generation of progress in Africa. So, a well-functioning multilateral global order can serve as Africa's lifeline.

Hence, Africa will resist attempts to reduce multilateralism to a contest.

We have all heard the claim that African countries are in a "debt trap". According to the World Bank, at the start of 2024, nine African countries were in debt distress, 15 at high risk of debt distress, and another 14 in moderate risk. In 2024, debt service will cost Africa an estimated \$74 billion compared to \$17 billion in 2014.

A closer look shows that the debt is the cumulative result of many factors: the global financial crisis of 2008, the 2014 terms-of-trade shock, an increase in private borrowing on non-concessional terms, private lenders seeking higher yields in new markets, and falling exchange rates raising the domestic currency value of unhedged foreign currency debt.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

There are other factors, too. Such as rising US interest rates, the use of foreign currency bonds with short maturities to pay for projects which typically take many years to show returns, illicit capital flows, slow post-COVID-19 recovery and climate change shocks.

To suggest that these factors were marshalled and engineered by China, or any other creditor, to create a "debt trap" for African countries is absurd.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck,

many countries, including African countries, offered stimulus packages to support critical health infrastructure, and vital businesses. These emergency measures left African economies with new debts, diminished debt-servicing capacity, downgraded credit ratings, limited foreign exchange reserves, and depreciated currencies.

Was COVID-19 designed to trap Africa under mountains of debt? Of course not.

In 2021, the US Federal Reserve interest rate was zero to 0.25 percent. By the end of

2022, the rate was 4.25 percent to 4.50 percent. By the end of 2023, the rate reached a 23-year high of 5.25 percent to 5.50 percent. The rate remained unchanged for over a year, before the Federal Reserve initiated its first rate cut in nearly three years in September 2024.

Were these rate hikes designed to push Africa into debt? Of course not.

In truth, in the negotiations which led to the debt, both Africans and their creditors acted in good faith. To blame the debt on the deviousness of the creditors and Africa's lack of acuity denigrates both.

Empirical evidence shows that African countries pay a premium to access capital markets, despite data showing that Africa's default rates are lower than those of other regions.

We all recall the decade-long praise of African statecraft that was labeled "Africa Rising" in professional journals worldwide before it was interrupted by COVID-19 pandemic and climate shocks.

Even this skilled management of African economies did not impress the global risk analysis industry. It was quick to downgrade and slow to upgrade sub-Saharan Africa as an investment destination.

This ingrained bias leads to higher costs of borrowing, as do the social engineering conditionalities that are routinely attached to African obligations, but not to those of other regions.

Reforms of the global financial architecture, such as the proposed G20 Common Framework, are useful only to the extent that they address such systemic biases.

We should focus on rectifying flaws in the global financial architecture, a vital part of the multilateral global order, rather than on disingenuous claims of debt traps. To create an equitable multilateral global order, we face a basic challenge: self-restraint on the part of nations. Perhaps it is inevitable that the more economically and militarily powerful a country is, the harder it is to yield to multilateral institutions, the greater the temptation to manipulate those institutions, and the easier to conflate national interests with the global common good.

These tendencies undermine the credibility of global institutions if they are perceived to be imposing exclusively the wills

and the values of powerful countries on weaker ones.

This encourages the creation of economic, political, and security clubs whose de jure or de facto relation to the UN and its specialized agencies is often vague or situational.

For global governance to flourish, major countries should respect economic, social, political and cultural diversity in humanity, avoid the pursuit of one universal culture, and focus on shared challenges which demand coordinated global action, foremost of which is climate change.

To support either the reform of the current global order or the creation of a new truly equitable and multilateral global order, Africa must not allow itself to become a theater for contests between unilateralism and multilateralism. That would repeat the Cold War of the 1950s and '60s which undermined Africa's modernization agenda and wasted a generation of Africans.

Africa's refusal to be carved again into zones of influence is part of promoting its agenda within a global order. That agenda has three tasks.

First, crafting binding social contracts to foster stability in all African countries. Second, producing goods on the continent to meet Africa's basic needs through trade. Both tasks are urgent because climate change might reduce large parts of the continent to wastelands, increasing instability, ruling out meeting our basic needs, and making us more dependent.

Therefore, Africa's third task is to modernize faster than the onslaught of climate change.

As failure in any of these three tasks will pose an existential threat to Africa, it should not get distracted by competing major countries. Africa played a minimal role in the creation of the United Nations. Hopefully, it will have more than a token role in the ongoing drive for an equitable multilateral global order.

*The author is a former economist with the World Bank and an advisor for the Kenyan government. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

ZHOU YINGXIN AND SHEN CHEN

## Larger vision for Global South

BRI and greater BRICS cooperation can promote Africa's development by reducing external risks, coordinating members' relations and improving mechanism construction

BRICS countries represent the emerging powers among developing nations, and Africa is the continent with the highest concentration of developing countries. Since the 21st century, Africa's actual GDP grew at an average annual rate of 5 percent from 2000 to 2008, which is more than



Zhou Yingxin

double the growth rate in the 1980s and 1990s. The continent, together with the BRICS states, forms an interconnected growth of the Global South. As the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative and the BRICS cooperation mechanism keep developing and improving, Africa is not only increasingly becoming a key player in Global South cooperation but also bringing sustained momentum to its own economic growth.



Shen Chen

Over the past 11 years, 52 African economies have signed memorandums of understanding for Belt and Road cooperation with China. In terms of infrastructure connectivity, China and Africa have continuously promoted an interconnection layout integrating land, sea, air and cyberspace, completing a number of landmark projects such as the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Kenya, the Addis Ababa-Adama Expressway, and the Lekki Deepwater Port in Nigeria.

China has implemented zero-tariff policies for 100 percent of the tariff items from 33 least-developed African countries, signed bilateral agreements to protect investment with 34 nations, and inked double-taxation avoidance agreements with 21 states. Under the joint guarantee of "soft" and "hard" connectivity, China has maintained its status as Africa's largest trading

partner for 15 consecutive years. Trade between the two sides rose 5.5 percent year-on-year to 1.19 trillion yuan (\$166 billion) in the January-July period this year, setting a new historical high.

Africa is also an important direction for the bloc's expansion. The most recent expansion took place during the 15th BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2023 when Egypt, Ethiopia and three other countries were invited to join as new members. Committed to expanding the "BRICS+" model by building broader partnerships through mechanisms such as the New Development Bank, more than 30 countries including Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal have expressed interest in applying for or have formally proposed joining various BRICS cooperation mechanisms.

Participating in the joint construction of the Belt and Road and BRICS cooperation mechanisms aligns with Africa's actual development needs. Due to great challenges brought about by geopolitical conflicts such as the Ukraine crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the African region faces systemic difficulties including food shortages, surging energy prices, increased debt repayment pressures, and contracting global trade. The International Monetary Fund estimated that the growth rate for sub-Saharan Africa would fall from 4 percent in 2022 to 3.3 percent in 2023, and there was a slim chance to realize all-round poverty eradication by 2030.

However, it is also important to recognize that African countries generally have significant economic potential. According to the African Development Bank's Africa Economic Outlook 2024, the region's economic growth will rebound to 3.7 percent this year, higher than the global average of 3.2 percent, and is expected to further rise to 4.3 percent in 2025.

Among the world's 20 fastest-growing economies, 11 are in Africa. This indicates that the region is poised to become an

important engine for global economic growth and brings new opportunities for the quality enhancement and upgrading of the BRI and BRICS mechanisms.

The BRI and "greater BRICS cooperation" are both important platforms for coordination among the Global South countries, boasting fundamental conditions for coordinated, complementary and joint development. The BRI involves a wide range of areas, but its cooperation mechanisms need to be further improved. The BRICS has already established a multi-sectoral, multi-level and multi-stakeholder mechanism, which can serve as a platform to provide a solid foundation for the BRI and African development. Specifically, the BRI and greater BRICS cooperation can coordinate to promote African development at three levels.

The first is to reduce external risks. In recent years, the monetary policies of developed economies such as the United States have brought about the issues of currency devaluation, capital outflows and financial market turbulence for developing countries. This has prompted countries to accelerate efforts to reduce their dependence on the US dollar. BRICS nations can build upon the local currency settlement infrastructure already established by China, Russia and India to promote the interconnection of settlement systems and invite more African countries to join. Considering the urgent liquidity needs of some African members such as Ethiopia and Egypt, it is timely to promote the revision of the Treaty for the Establishment of the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement, and to update the regulations on the eligibility and usage methods of the emergency reserve arrangement in a prompt manner, providing a more robust financial safety network for African development.

The second is to coordinate its members' relations. China's Belt and Road projects in Africa mainly rely on Chinese investment, technology and personnel. Meanwhile,



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

BRICS countries such as Brazil, Saudi Arabia and India also have cooperation platforms targeting Africa, which overlap with the BRI to some extent. This is not only conducive to coordinating all parties to avoid overlapped projects but also enhances diversified financing and the sharing of project costs. Furthermore, dialogues on rules and standards under the BRICS cooperation framework can be held to form new rules and norms that are recognized by all parties, especially Africa. This also benefits the high-quality and sustainable development of the BRI.

The third is to improve mechanism construction. The cooperation with Africa under the BRICS framework is a pioneering step, which can lay the foundation for future Belt and Road and Global South mechanism construction. After the expansion, the bloc also faces issues such as innovation in mechanism and system,

regulation of cooperation scale, and expansion of cooperation fields. It also confronts the pressure of competition from international rules and norms dominated by Western countries. Priority can be given to fields where African states have urgent needs, such as trade, energy, and food, to promote the coordinated interaction between the BRI and greater BRICS cooperation, to consolidate the Global South's consensus on mechanism construction and its participation in global governance, and to strengthen internal and external support for African development.

*The authors are associate researchers at the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The authors contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

## Z WEEKLY

## Social Media Digest

## Freedom to rent

With the rise of the sharing economy, renting has become increasingly popular among young people. After all, why clutter closets and max out credit cards when you can rent today, swap tomorrow, and keep life refreshingly commitment-free?

For example, a DJI Air 3S drone can be rented for less than 100 yuan (\$14.04) for two days, while purchasing one costs over 8,000 yuan. Similarly, many young people now prefer to rent designer outfits for special occasions rather than buy pieces that would sit unused in their wardrobes most of the year.

"Renting luxury handbags or designer dresses allows you to switch up styles often, keeps costs manageable, and saves on storage space at home," Mickey (pseudonym), a style-conscious Gen Z graduate student told New Retail Business Review.

Renting also enables people to try larger items — such as home appliances or equipment — before committing to a purchase. For instance, one can rent a Nintendo Switch for 80 yuan per week or a tent for 21 yuan per day. For products like baby strollers, which are quickly outgrown, renting offers more environmentally friendly choices.

However, renting does have its downsides. Many consumers are concerned about issues like hidden fees and product quality. To address these concerns, the rental market must continue to improve its regulations and services.

As more young people embrace renting, it's clear that owning is no longer the ultimate goal. In a world that's constantly changing, perhaps "having it all" is less about ownership and more about the freedom to let things go.



Renting, rather than buying, designer outfits has become a popular choice for many young people. vcs

## Alpha slang revolution

Generation Alpha, born after 2010, is reshaping the English language with what some call "brainrot" slang. Terms like "Ohio" (meaning weird or cringe), "rizz" (referring to charisma), and "fanum tax" (to steal food from your friends) have become popular among Gen Alpha, leaving many parents baffled.

According to Harvard graduate and linguist Adam Aleksic, Gen Alpha's slang is a way to create an in-group, fostering a sense of belonging among younger users while often alienating older generations.

"That's part of the appeal," he told NBC News. "These memes wouldn't be funny if your grandma was saying them."

Just as older terms like "cool" faced criticism when they first emerged, Gen Alpha's slang is also subject to misunderstanding and ridicule.

"One of the easiest ways to tell if someone's brain has been destroyed by social media is to notice how often they reference internet jargon," TikTokker Joel Cave told LADbible, a UK digital publisher. "If you're that person, maybe you should put down the phone for a bit and go outside."

Adding to the generational divide, Gen Alpha's terms are spreading fast and evolving rapidly through platforms like TikTok, Roblox, and Twitch, thanks to social media algorithms that amplify trending phrases, according to Aleksic.

However, he noted that historically, people have always complained about younger generations "ruining" language with invented slang. "That's why they're doing it: because they're building identity. They're differentiating themselves," Aleksic said.

CHEN XUE



Generation Alpha is inventing its own English vocabulary. rucshona

## Young innovators take center stage

Competition showcases groundbreaking projects from global students, spotlighting youth creativity and technological prowess across diverse fields.



A team from Shanghai Jiao Tong University secured the first prize for developing a cross-domain unmanned vehicle for sea and air at the 2024 China International College Students' Innovation Competition held in Shanghai on Oct 15, 2024. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

By HE QI in Shanghai  
heqi@chinadaily.com.cn

The grand final of the 2024 China International College Students' Innovation Competition concluded on Oct 15 at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), drawing young innovators from around the world.

Teams of aspiring students from some of the world's top universities showcased their projects that address challenging issues in various fields, including engineering, medicine, and artificial intelligence (AI).

A team from SJTU won the championship for developing a hybrid aerial-underwater vehicle capable of operating in the air, on the water's surface, and underwater.

"Our product is a new type of multifunctional equipment that can be applied to both aerial detection and underwater exploration. We initially aimed to tackle the challenges that oceanographers face in marine observation and data collection," said Lyu Chenxin, the team's representative and a doctoral student at SJTU's School of Oceanography.

The team has explored a diverse range of applications for their product, including marine engineering, resource exploration, search and rescue, and environmental monitoring.

"This competition gave us the opportunity to showcase the incremental progress we've achieved over years of effort," Lyu said. "We are also honored to spread our project globally, letting the world know what Chinese youth are doing and where our strength lies."

Another team from SJTU has also achieved notable results in the

We are also honored to spread our project globally, letting the world know what Chinese youth are doing and where our strength lies."

Lyu Chenxin, a doctoral student at Shanghai Jiao Tong University

application of their lightweight and stainless magnesium materials.

Their magnesium alloy materials have been used in Lenovo laptops, BYD electric vehicles, as well as components and devices in the aerospace and optical telecommunication industries.

"Looking back at the course of industrial development, we found that the role of common metal materials has constantly evolved, whether it is steel or aluminum. Magnesium and its alloys offer advantages over other conventional metals such as low density and good ductility," said Gu Lidong, the team representative and a doctoral candidate in materials science at SJTU.

"Based on our studies, we have published more than 30 papers in key research journals and obtained over 20 certified patents. In the future, we will continue to innovate and promote China's self-developed magnesium materials to the world." Apart from outstanding graduate

students, undergraduate teams also impressed judges and audiences with their innovative projects.

A team from Zhejiang University developed a new type of hemostatic gel intended to replace traditional sutures in surgery, addressing the issue of biogels that fail to dissolve in the human body.

"Nowadays, it's estimated that one person dies from blood vessel injuries every eight seconds. Surgeons urgently need high-performance hemostatic gels that ensure patient safety during and after vessel suturing," said Huang Chaoyu, a team member and student at the School of Materials Science and Engineering.

This year's competition introduced an "AI+" category, spotlighting AI-empowered innovations that integrate multiple fields and disciplines.

A group of college students from the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications developed a teaching platform equipped with AI tools to assist teachers with answering questions, checking homework, and more.

Leveraging their expertise in AI, education, computer engineering, and communication technology, the team enables instant, heuristic, and personalized tutoring for students, as well as online educational support for teachers.

In addition to these impressive tech-driven projects, students competing in the new liberal arts category also demonstrated strengths in management and communication.

A team of 14 undergraduate students from Beijing Sport University set up a company that organizes international fitness and bodybuild-

ing competitions and promotes its own sports equipment brand, "Loong Fitness".

"We focus on research in physical health promotion, aiming to raise people's awareness of fitness and encourage greater participation in sports by expanding the influence of bodybuilding competitions in China," said Luo Xiao, a team member.

Co-hosted by 12 departments, including the Ministry of Education and the Shanghai Municipal People's Government, the competition has attracted a total of 5.14 million entries from 5,406 schools across 153 countries and regions since its launch in May. A total of 20.83 million participants have signed up to compete.

Among them are 1,993 international schools, including 152 of the world's top universities such as Harvard, Oxford, Stanford, MIT, and Cambridge.

As a platform that connects academia and industry, the event also organized a resource-matching meeting to facilitate opportunities for outstanding projects, bringing together over 400 representatives from participating projects, investment institutions, and enterprises, with the total intended investment reaching 6.8 billion yuan (\$954 million).

Zhang Zile contributed to this story.



Online  
Watch the video  
by scanning  
the code.

## Z WEEKLY

## Chasing trails, running wild

Young people are embracing trail running for its blend of challenges, connection to nature, and personal growth. **Gui Qian** reports.

In most parts of China, autumn is an ideal season for trail running. Temperatures are mild, humidity is perfect for outdoor activities, and the risk of slick, rain-soaked paths is lower. Many thorny plants have withered, but the foliage still offers plenty of shade. Trail runners weave through forests, enjoying the combined pleasures of nature and exercise.

For 22-year-old semiprofessional trail runner Cai Bo, this season is particularly important.

Over recent months, he has been rigorously training on various mountains in East China's Jiangsu province, covering about 400 kilometers and achieving a total elevation gain of 10,000 to 15,000 meters each month.

In addition to his domestic training and competitions, Cai recently participated in a major international event — the inaugural Asia Pacific Trail Running Championships, held in Uju, South Korea, from Oct. 23 to 27.

Originally from Qionghai in Hainan province, Cai has just graduated from Nanjing University Of Aeronautics And Astronautics in Jiangsu this summer. Despite having taken up trail running only a year and a half ago, he has already participated in over 20 official races.

These experiences have earned him a place in the prestigious International Trail Running Association (ITRA) rankings and have transformed him from an ordinary student into a semiprofessional athlete.

Cai is not an exception. In recent years, a growing number of city dwellers in China have fallen in love with trail running. By early 2024, over 30 professional trail running events had been scheduled, with many races even resorting to lotteries to select participants.

Many runners who have gained public attention and followers on social media, like Cai, do not come from professional athletic backgrounds.

"Early adopters may have transitioned from traditional running, but now more enthusiasts are emerging from other outdoor sports like hiking and skiing," Cai said.

He pointed out that, unlike professional athletes who are driven by competition, many people involved in trail running simply enjoy the outdoors. One such example is Xu Luyan.

#### Passion in motion

Also a semiprofessional trail runner, Xu, 21, grew up in rural Jinan, East China's Shandong province. From a young age, he developed a natural affinity for the mountains, often accompanying older children to pick peaches and pears.

After graduating from high school, Xu began serious long-distance hiking, completing classic routes in Sichuan and Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. He later became an outdoor leader in Mogaoshan, Zhejiang province. These experiences led him to win first place in his first trail running competition in September 2022.

"Although it was a small amateur competition, I realized at that moment that this is truly my sport," he said. "Trail running is an endurance sport that best showcases a person's willpower."

For Xu, the continuous challenge is what draws him to trail running. "After completing a



The mountains are a medium. Perhaps we love trail running not just for the activity itself, but for the state of being it brings us."

**Cai Bo**, a semiprofessional trail runner



I also feel more mentally energetic. The negative emotions that used to weigh me down naturally dissipate during trail running."

**Du Aoran**, a trail running enthusiast

25-kilometer race, my goal is to tackle 40 kilometers, and then I immediately sign up for the next 60-kilometer race. One day, when I can run 100 kilometers, what other challenges could possibly daunt me?" he said.

However, for Du Aoran, it was the cool gear associated with trail running that first attracted her to the sport.

"I started with casual hiking before trying trail running," said the 28-year-old from Zhengzhou, Central China's Henan province. "Even though it was just a three-kilometer hike on a mountain road, I prepared professional trekking poles, trail running shoes, a hiking backpack, and a sun hat for myself," she laughed.

According to her, the rise of social media is closely linked to the growing outdoor trend in recent years. "When we complete an event, it's natural to want to post beautiful photos online to commemorate it — or, to put it bluntly, I want to show off," she admitted.

Du noted that in the past, people tended to post photos of culinary delights or luxury items, but now there's a shift toward sharing outdoor activities. "We prefer to convey a vibe of strength, vitality, and power," she said.

Before discovering trail running, Du didn't have a regular exercise routine, but now sports have become "an indispensable part" of her life.

To prepare for her trail runs, Du commits to daily running and strength training. After about three months, she has noticed significant changes in her body.

"My core strength and leg muscles have improved a lot. Even my walking is more stable, and I don't sway anymore," she said. "I also feel more mentally energetic. The negative emotions that used to weigh me down naturally dissipate during trail running. I enjoy the feeling of running alone in the mountains, listening to music or admiring the flowers and plants. It's very soothing."

#### Beyond the hype

While enthusiasts like Du find trail running fun and relaxing, some people perceive the sport as

dangerous.

After graduating from university, Cai not only continued his career as an athlete but also became a trail running course designer. His role involves creating unique and safe trail running routes that meet the expectations of racers.

"If you promise a scenic route, you must do your best to deliver it. If you assure runners that they can withdraw from the race if they feel unwell, you need to ensure that rescue operations are feasible. If you promise ample supplies, the aid stations should not be located in remote, desolate areas," he explained.

According to Cai, most trail running events in China are managed with a "nanny-level" of care, making sure that every runner is looked after as much as possible.

"Safety considerations in China are world-class. Whether it's the local government, event organizers, or the runners themselves, everyone prioritizes safety," he said.

However, beyond controllable risks, trail running inherently involves hardship, and Cai believes this hardship holds its own significance.

"When both your mental and physical strength are pushed to their limits and you still see no end in sight, do you choose to persevere or give up? Alone in the mountains, do you casually discard your used energy gels, or do you carry them back down? If you encounter an injured fellow runner, do you help them, or do you focus solely on your own race? You won't know the answers until you experience the trails for yourself," he explained. "Mountain running allows us to confront our true selves."

Cai sees this as the essence of enduring the hardships of trail running. "It's fascinating to explore and discover yourself amid so many uncertainties," he said. "The mountains are a medium. Perhaps we love trail running not just for the activity itself, but for the state of being it brings us."

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Xu Luyan competing at the Trail Donghai in Zhoushan, Zhejiang, in April 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



# Z WEEKLY

## Animating tradition

*Unfinished*, the animated finale of *Black Myth: Wukong*, resonates with audiences worldwide.

By XU WANYANG  
and LI XINRAN

The first Chinese AAA game, *Black Myth: Wukong*, inspired by the classic novel *Journey to the West*, has become a global sensation since its release in August this year. Every aspect of the game — from its music and songs to its animations — has been in the spotlight, including *Unfinished*, the ending clip of chapter six, and its director Yang Tingmu.

"I've watched several reaction videos from international fans, and I was surprised to see that many of them were moved to tears," said Yang, founder of Fantasier Animation.

For him, the ability of something so inherently Chinese to resonate with global audiences lies in the uniqueness of the animation.

"When you truly incorporate your emotions and cultural identity as a Chinese person, this sentiment can reach foreigners too. Even if they aren't familiar with the story of *Journey to the West* or the visual style we used, they can sense that the product is cohesive in every aspect and feel emotionally connected to it," he explained.

Yang credits the success of the clip and its reflection of Chinese culture to a collaborative effort: the dialogue is taken from the original novel, the music is inspired by the theme song of the 1986 TV adaptation of *Journey to the West*, and the character Wukong is influenced by its Peking Opera portrayal.



Yang Tingmu

However, the unique animation of the Chinese *lianhuanhua* (palm-sized comic books) is solely the work of Yang and his team. They initially explored various painting styles, including traditional Chinese water and ink, before ultimately choosing the *lianhuanhua* aesthetic.

"*Lianhuanhua*-style illustrations are familiar to most Chinese people, but no one has seen them animated before," Yang noted. "This blend of familiarity and novelty creates a unique effect."

Yang conducted extensive research, drawing inspiration primarily from traditional *baibiao*, or ink line drawing. One of his main sources was the work of Li Gonglin (1049-1106), a Northern Song Dynasty painter renowned for this technique.

"My goal is to restore the ancient essence of *Journey to the West*," Yang explained. "I wanted to steer clear of contemporary animation techniques, and Li Gonglin's style was exactly what I needed."

Yang was also deeply inspired by the murals in Dunhuang, Gansu province, which he studied to capture intricate details, like the folds in clothing. Another major influence was the artist Dai Dunbang, who created an entire set of artworks based on *Journey to the West*.

"I have several of Dai's painting albums and would carefully study how he uses specific symbols and images in his work," Yang said.

Even with thorough research and preparation, the project remained challenging for Yang and his team, as they were not only reviving a traditional style but also pioneering a new approach: animating *lianhuanhua*.

Yang described how his team was "building a new animation technique from scratch." One example was animating a large cluster of auspicious clouds, something never attempted before. According to Yang, the final version of the clouds features multiple circular lines that rotate independently, with the overall outline moving alongside the inner circles. This creates a dynamic effect as cloud clusters merge, separate, and then merge again.

"While it may appear to be a single pattern, it actually contains many layers of motion, making this technique a breakthrough for us," explained Yang.

Illustrating animals like snakes, turtles, and chickens pecking at grain also presented challenges for Yang and his team. Despite their industry experience, it was their first time animating some of these animals.

"We looked for references from books and videos, and some team members even visited the zoo. We needed to see the actual ani-

mals and capture their appearances from different angles before bringing them to life in animation," Yang said.

As *Unfinished* received attention and praise, many netizens suggested that if expanded into a feature-length film, it could become the next "classic." Yang's response was practical. He noted that his combined team of about 70 people took six months to complete the later production stages for the short film. "Creating a full-length film would require two to three hundred staff," he said.

He added that innovative techniques, like the new movement patterns, are mastered by only a small number of specialists. "Making short films is like using experimental technology in a lab, not yet ready for mass production," Yang explained. "While we've developed the method in a lab setting, scaling it up would pose numerous challenges — standardization issues, a limited pool of skilled personnel, and the training of a larger talent base are all practical obstacles."

However, he is optimistic about the broader animation industry. He highlighted that over the past decade, Chinese animation has made huge progress.

"In 3D technology, we're second globally, behind only the United States. In 2D, we're just behind Japan. This means that in the lab environment of short film animation, we're quite strong," he said.

Yang pointed out that Japanese animation stands out because of its mature and well-established industry, with standardization across all areas and a deep talent pool.

"For feature-length films, we need a much larger talent base. This is the reality for China's animation industry: a handful of skilled artists isn't enough — we need a fully developed ecosystem of talent," he said.

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Scenes from  
*Unfinished*, the  
animated finale of *Black  
Myth: Wukong*. PROVIDED  
TO CHINA DAILY



**Top:** Long Haifen (front center) in the classroom at Weimin Elementary School in Xinghe village, Guizhou, in 2017. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY  
**Above:** Xu Benyu (far right), deputy secretary of the Hubei provincial committee of the Communist Youth League, visits Long (second from right) in her new dormitory at Huazhong Agricultural University in August. YAN HUAHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY

## A legacy of education and compassion

By LIU KUN in Wuhan  
and LI XINRAN

Long Haifen, from Xinghe village in the mountains of Southwest China's Guizhou province, is now a freshman at Huazhong Agricultural University (HZAU) in Central China's Hubei province. While she may seem like an ordinary student, she represents the strong bond between her hometown and the university, as well as the transformative power of education and compassion.

In July 2002, Xu Benyu, then a junior student at HZAU, volunteered to teach in the rural areas of Guizhou during his summer break. The following year, he chose to forgo postgraduate studies and returned to the villages, teaching at two schools for two years, including Weimin Elementary School, which Long would later attend. In 2005, HZAU established the "Benyu Volunteer Service Team", recruiting students annually to continue providing educational support.

Long began receiving instruction from HZAU volunteer teachers in the fourth grade. In 2017, during her final year of elementary school, the 19th group of volunteers arrived, including Cao Yuanyan and Li Zongqing.

Weimin Elementary School had 174 students from kindergarten to sixth grade but only six classrooms. The school was severely understaffed, with just seven teachers, including the volunteers. Cao had to teach four subjects, including Chinese and English, while Li at one point managed 23 classes per week.

Adding to the challenge was the single winding, muddy mountain road, forcing most students to walk one to two hours to reach the school. Despite these difficulties, Long and her classmates cherished the opportunity to learn and worked diligently.

The volunteers not only imparted knowledge to Long but also nurtured her personal growth. They encouraged her to deliver speeches at the school's flag-raising ceremonies and to serve as the flag bearer during the spring field trip, helping to build her confidence.

They also broadened her horizons beyond the mountains. In August 2017, Long participated in an educational excursion to Beijing organized by the volunteers. It was her first time riding an intercity bus, taking a train, and staying in a hotel — an eye-opening experience.

"The volunteer teachers told me the world is fascinating, but I found it hard to imagine. Only when I saw it with my own eyes did I truly appreciate its beauty," Long said. "I started to wonder that perhaps one day, I could study my way out of the mountains and explore the cities. They connected me with better educational resources and a wider world."

After Long graduated from elementary school, the volunteers left, but their bond endured beyond the classroom. In 2020, just before Long entered ninth grade, tragedy struck when her father was involved in a car accident, placing the family in financial difficulty.

"If my family can't afford it, I'll have to drop out of school," Long confided to her former teachers from HZAU. Upon hearing this, Cao and the other volunteers quickly raised 2,750 yuan in a single day, ensuring that Long could continue her education.

Throughout high school, Long's former teachers went on to guide her, offering support in choosing academic paths and filling out college applications.

"We were overjoyed by her performance in the *gaokao* (national college entrance exam)," said Li. "When we learned she had been admitted to our alma mater, we were so proud and elated."

Over 22 years of volunteer service, more than 200 volunteers dedicated themselves to educating students in Guizhou. Many students advanced to middle school, high school, and even college.

Looking ahead, Long is excited to embrace college life. She hopes to give back to society and become part of the volunteering community. "I would love to participate in volunteer activities like my teachers and help more children plant the seeds to grow and thrive," Long said.

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Watch the video  
by scanning  
the code.