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China's progress in cleantech is outpacing the rest of the world

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CHINA DAILY

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Nation's space breeding research reaps benefits

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and ZHOU HUIYING

Dong Qi, an agricultural expert, was thrilled to reap a batch of upland rice in a special experimental field in the Jinzhong National Agricultural High-Tech Industry Demonstration Zone in Shanxi province.

Different from other rice varieties, seeds in the high-tech zone are the descendants of upland rice seeds that were carried into space by the Shenzhou XVI crew in May 2023 and underwent a genetic mutation process called "space breeding" inside the Tiangong space station.

A total of nine crop seeds, including upland rice, sorghum, corn and wheat, from the high-tech zone were sent to space for mutagenesis experiments. They were exposed to cosmic radiation and microgravity during the mission, resulting in genetic mutations.

Back on Earth, scientists evaluated these mutations, some of which gave the seeds properties favored by farmers such as greater yield and better resistance to diseases.

The upland rice seeds returned to Earth on Oct 31 last year, after more than 150 days in space, and were sent to be multiplied at the national seed breeding base in Hainan province.

"Space breeding is a fundamental method, similar to hybrid breeding and radiation breeding. But for space breeding, the environment holds more value, which cannot be replicated on Earth," said Dong, a professor at Shanxi Agricultural University.

"Traditional breeding usually takes eight to 10 years, but space breeding has the potential to reduce the time by half. Such seeds do not look any different, but undergo important genetic variations internally," he added.

Jia Yuchen, head of the organic dryland agriculture project at the high-tech zone, said that Shanxi, located on the Loess Plateau, which has an arid climate and low rainfall, is highly suitable for the cultivation and promotion of new varieties of upland rice.

"We plan to select new varieties suitable for the climate and soil characteristics of Shanxi within the next

five or six years after verifying aspects such as yield, resistance and quality," he said, adding that it is of great significance to increase grain production and farmers' income in China.

The high-tech demonstration zone in Jinzhong has been a long-term collaborative partner of China's manned space program, which shoulders the important mission of promoting the development of organic dryland agriculture.

The zone has established a high-standard experimental field, covering 667 hectares, for the selection and promotion of seeds for space breeding. The aim is to explore high-yielding and stress-resistant genes and further implement the selection and promotion of organic upland rice varieties.

Yun Weihua, deputy director of the high-tech zone's management committee, said that research on breeding is their priority area.

"We have successively established research institutes for millet and quinoa, and introduced a slew of high-tech enterprises to accelerate the development of the seed industry," he said.

In August 1987, a retrievable scientific experiment satellite carried a batch of seeds into space, marking the first space journey of Chinese crop seeds.

After the seeds returned to Earth, scientists found significant genetic changes and initiated a series of experiments involving crossbreeding.

Data from the China Manned Space Engineering Office shows that over 3,000 space breeding experiments have been conducted, resulting in more than 240 approved main grain varieties and over 400 new varieties of vegetables, fruits, trees, grasses and flowers.

The experiments have also resulted in an annual increase in grain production of approximately 2.6 million metric tons.

Dong, the professor, said they were striving to bring high-quality upland rice varieties mutated through space breeding to the table of the ordinary person soon.

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Dong Qi (right), an agricultural expert, investigates the progeny of upland rice in a special experimental field in the Jinzhong National Agricultural High-Tech Industry Demonstration Zone in Shanxi province. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



Residents help clear the streets of mud and muck on Saturday in the flood-ravaged town of Paiporta in the Valencia region of Spain. Of the 214 people confirmed dead in the deadliest floods in Spain's history, at least 62 victims were from Paiporta. On Tuesday, an isolated low-pressure area caused a year's worth of precipitation in southeastern Spain, triggering devastating flash floods. MANU FERNANDEZ / AP

Xi offers sympathy to Spain over deadly floods

President expresses hope for people in affected areas to rebuild homes

President Xi Jinping has sent a message of sympathy to Spanish King Felipe VI over Spain's deadliest flash floods in decades, which have killed more than 200 people, including two Chinese citizens, and left many others missing.

In his message sent on Saturday, Xi said he was shocked to learn that severe rainstorms and floods had hit many parts in Spain, causing heavy casualties and loss of property.

The Chinese president, on behalf of the Chinese government and people, expressed deep condolences to the victims and sincere sympathy to the bereaved families and the injured.

Xi also said it is believed that under the leadership of the king and the Spanish government, the people in the flood-hit areas will overcome the disaster and rebuild their homes at an early date.

Almost all the deaths have been in the eastern Valencia region, where thousands of security and emergency services personnel frantically cleared debris and mud in search of bodies.

The Spanish government was deploying 10,000 more troops and police officers to the Valencia region, where hopes of finding survivors ebbed after torrents of muddy water submerged towns and wrecked infrastructure.

Spanish media reported that King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia visited the Valencia area on Sunday, accompanied by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

Describing the situation as "the worst natural disaster in the recent history of our country", Sanchez said it was the second-deadliest flood in Europe this century.

Sanchez said the government had accepted the Valencia region leader's request for 5,000 more troops and informed him of a further deployment of 5,000 police officers and civil guards.

Spain was carrying out its largest deployment of military and security forces personnel in peacetime, he added.

Valencia's regional authorities said on Saturday night that the total number of deaths in the

region was 211, plus two from Castilla La Mancha and one in Andalusia, Reuters reported.

The floods have killed two Chinese citizens and left two others missing, the Chinese embassy in Spain confirmed on Saturday.

Restoring order and distributing aid to destroyed towns and villages, some of which have no food, water and power supplies since Tuesday's torrent, is a priority.

Sanchez said that electricity had been restored to 94 percent of homes affected by power outages, and that around half of the cut-off telephone lines had been repaired.

Susana Camarero, deputy head of the Valencia region, said that people in some areas were "overwhelmed" by the show of solidarity and the food aid that they had received.

Ordinary citizens carrying food, water and cleaning equipment continued their grassroots initiative to assist the recovery on Saturday. Around 1,000 had set off from the Mediterranean coastal city of

Valencia toward nearby towns laid waste by the floods, Agence France-Presse reported.

Thousands of volunteers were helping to clear away the thick layers of mud and debris that still covered houses, streets and roads, all while facing power and water cuts as well as shortages of some basic goods. Inside some of the vehicles that floodwaters had washed into piles or slammed into buildings, there were still bodies awaiting identification.

Authorities have urged people to stay at home to avoid congestion on the roads, which would hamper the emergency services work.

Regional leader Carlos Mazon laid out a series of proposals on Saturday to help his region recover, ranging from infrastructure repair to economic support.

Scientists warn that climate change driven by human activity is increasing the ferocity, length and frequency of such extreme weather events.

Spain's national weather service said that in the hard-hit locality of Chiva, it rained more in eight hours than it had in the preceding 20 months, and it called the deluge "extraordinary".

The flooding came after Spain had battled with prolonged droughts in 2022 and 2023. Experts have said that drought and flood cycles are increasing with climate change.

XINHUA-AGENCIES

Wider collaborations key to future amid challenges

As the People's Republic of China celebrates its 75th anniversary, I am struck by the transformation that this country has undergone, which is likely one of the most profound changes in global history. Equally striking is China's unique and long-standing recognition of the global community of thinkers, innovators and educators. The people of this country are not only committed to progress, but they also recognize that their path from ancient roots to modern success is intertwined with the fabric of global cooperation and knowledge sharing.

I attended a reception in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Having visited

WORLD WATCH

By John Quelch

over 90 countries, nowhere else have I seen such a wide appreciation for foreign expertise and know-how. At the reception, I met a French scientist conducting cancer research in Beijing, a Madagascar-born engineering professor teaching at Nanjing University, and a Dutch-born Chinese history professor who divides his time between Cambridge University and Peking University. Many foreign experts, including myself, first visited China in the 1980s and have maintained a keen interest in China's revitalization.

My first trip to China was in 1981 as a Harvard Business School professor. Then, I discovered a poor nation but one eager to forge its own path, with welcoming people evoking the warmth of a rich and ancient culture. In the 1980s and 1990s, I traveled to China for economic and business discussions at government ministries in Beijing. Later, I served as the dean of China Europe International Business School in Shanghai from 2011 to 2013. I recently returned to China and am now the executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University, a research-oriented liberal arts and sciences institution in Kunshan, Jiangsu province.

Over the past 40 years, I have witnessed firsthand how China has undergone a significant and rapid transformation, lifting about 800 million people out of abject poverty and becoming the world's second-largest economy.

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MAHJONG EXTENDS GLOBAL REACH AS CANADA HOSTS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Popularity as competitive sport continues to grow, digital platforms entice young players

By YANG GAO in Toronto gaoyang@chinadailyusa.com



Not even a painful knee could deter 83-year-old Deng Wenfeng from competing in the 7th World Mahjong Championship, which was held recently in North America for the first time.

Deng was the oldest player at the tournament, where she was affectionately called "Mahjong Grand-

ma", and drew the attention of many contestants and spectators.

The championship was held in Mississauga, Canada, from Oct 11 to 15. Hosted by the World Mahjong Organization and organized by the Canada MCR (mahjong

competition rules) Sports Association, the event brought together mahjong masters from around the world.

Mahjong is a game that originated in China in the 19th century. Typically, it is played by four people with 144 tiles. The tiles are drawn and discarded until one player gets a winning hand.

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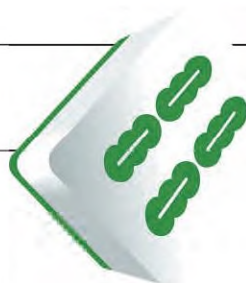
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PAGE TWO



Mahjong: Masters unite in cultural fusion



Right: A man learns how to play mahjong during a class taught in English in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in 2017. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Far right: Players compete during the 7th World Mahjong Championship in Mississauga, Canada, on Oct 12. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From page 1

Deng even postponed knee surgery to participate.

"This is my third time participating in a World Mahjong Championship. I will never miss the opportunity to participate in the competition," she said with a smile. She took painkillers to ease the pain in her knee, and played her games standing on crutches.

Part of daily life

Born in Wuhan, Hubei province, Deng began playing mahjong in the 1960s during her lunch breaks.

"At the time, I played mahjong just for fun," she recalled. After moving to Canada in 2011 to be with her daughter, she wasted little time becoming part of the local mahjong scene. "I play mahjong every day; it has become an integral part of my daily life," she said.

Deng does not shy away from competing against younger players, but concedes, they "are faster, their mindsets are sharper, and their strategies sharper". She said she enjoys the challenge. "I like playing against young people. I am not sad when I don't win," she said. "I just enjoy the game and try to do my best."

For Deng, mahjong is about friendship, quick thinking and clarity of mind. "It keeps me thinking fast and reacting quickly. You've got to pay attention to the game's changes, that is, observe the tiles, master your hand and predict your opponent's move," she explained.

Over the years, mahjong has helped her build a strong group of friends in Canada, and also in China when she visits. Her most cherished championship memories, however, have nothing to do with winning or losing. Two memories stand out in particular.

The first is the friendship she developed with a Japanese player who after each match came over to her, hugged her

and shouted excitedly: "See you tomorrow." The second was her chemistry with a young Canadian competitor. Throughout the championships, they cheered each other on.

Although Deng finished 119th with 14 points, she was still happy. "Winning or losing doesn't matter. At my age, just being here is an achievement," she said.

"We wanted to bring mahjong to North America because there are so many mahjong fans here, especially among the Chinese diaspora," Max Ma, chairman of the Canada MCR Sports Association, told China Daily. "Mahjong has been highly recognized for many years in Europe and Asia. This is our opportunity to expand its popularity here."

Fierce competition

The bid by Ma and his team to host the event was ultimately successful over several other countries, including Japan.

"We promised to make this the best championship," Ma explained.

This year's championship attracted 160 competitors from 17 countries and regions, but China, the traditional mahjong powerhouse, had to withdraw because of visa issues. The competition was still fierce, with Canadian players capturing two of the top three places.

Team Canada featured champion Gao Erfei and the third-place finisher, Lin Hai. Gao said mahjong has become an indispensable part of his life, although he just started playing international standard mahjong last year.

"I've been playing mahjong for over 30 years," said Gao. "But international standard mahjong is different from traditional mahjong. It's more of a mental game, which attracted me a lot."

This victory surprised Gao, who admitted that he depended more on luck than preparation. "I didn't do anything special to prepare," he said.

Gao's calm demeanor served him well. "I always stay calm," he said. "Even if I got penalized in a round, I was able to compose myself and continue to play. That's the nature

of the game; there are wins and losses."

Gao said that playing mahjong at a competitive level requires mental sharpness and physical stamina.

"You need brainpower and stamina to compete, especially in long matches," he said.

Lin agreed that international standard mahjong is complicated. "I have been playing mahjong since college, but only got into international standard mahjong about a decade ago," he said.

He said he found the challenges of the international rules more appealing than traditional mahjong.

"There's a lot of calculation involved, and that's what makes it fun," he said.

Lin did well in the early rounds, but things got tougher toward the end of the championship. "My luck turned in the eighth and ninth rounds," he explained.

"There were problems with the mahjong table, and we had to change tables several times. That disrupted my rhythm," Lin said.

International appeal

Alex Levin, a 59-year-old software developer and mahjong enthusiast who was born in Russia and has been living in Canada for more than 20 years, was part of the Canadian team.

"Mahjong has been a big part of my life for the last eight years," said Levin, adding that his love of the game began on a family vacation in 2016. His introduction to mahjong was at a ski resort, where he noticed

people playing in a restaurant.

Levin and his family were impressed by the colorful tiles and bought a mahjong set to teach themselves how to play. But Levin soon realized that learning the game was not that easy.

"We opened the box and saw the rules, but couldn't understand them at all," Levin said. He then studied the game online, as well as the international standard rules, and has continued playing by them since.

"It's not really about winning; it's more about the experience of doing something challenging and learning from it," he said. "In today's world, with all the trouble, I think people should sit down and play mahjong. It's a peaceful way to communicate."

He has created several mahjong-related websites and participates in projects that benefit the mahjong community.

Levin also hopes to compete in tournaments in Europe in the future. "I've never been to Europe to compete, but I'd love to go," he said.

Ma said hosting the event had its own challenges. "It's not easy to host an event like this without a lot of sponsorship," he said.

More than 40 mahjong tables were set up, and each table had 10 games played on it.

Ma noted that "mahjong has traditionally been a game for the Chinese and Asian communities at large, but there is growing interest in mahjong from non-Asian players".

"This is just the beginning," he said. "We've proven that mahjong can flourish here. Now we need to carry the momentum on, not just within the Chinese community, but throughout Canada."

Growth in popularity

The popularity of mahjong as a competitive sport has grown quickly. The game is now played in more than 40 countries, expanding since the first World Mahjong Championship in 2007.

"We are committed to promoting the Olympic spirit and advocating a healthy, scientific and friendly mahjong culture," Zhang

Yanying, director of the World Mahjong Organization secretariat, told China Daily. "Mahjong is no longer just a game; it is a symbol of intellectual competition, cultural exchange and global friendship."

"Canada's enthusiasm has been unmatched," Zhang said. "With many European countries already hosting (the event), we saw an opportunity to extend Mahjong's reach further into the Western world."

Although the mahjong competition rules established by the WMO have been well received, cultural misunderstandings persist. The negative association of mahjong with gambling is one of the biggest misunderstandings the WMO has been trying to eradicate.

"We need to introduce the ideological and cultural meaning of mahjong and get rid of the bad stereotype," Zhang said. Zhang said that the WMO plans to expand into South America and Southeast Asia.

The organization also wants to use digital platforms more to make mahjong more accessible to young people.

"We are exploring online tournaments and electronic formats to attract a new generation of players," said Zhang. "Our goal is to give more opportunities to enter a fair competition regardless of geographical or economical constraints."

Zhang expressed optimism about how the sport could be expanded to include live broadcasts, esports elements and online tournament qualifiers.

One of the most ambitious objectives of the WMO is for mahjong to be recognized as an Olympic sport, although Zhang said that the road to the Olympics is complicated.

"Mahjong is fundamentally a mind sport, which distinguishes it from all other traditional sports," he said. "We still have a very long way to go to achieve our dream, but we firmly believe in the potential of mahjong to develop globally."



Left: Two judges (center) review the result of a game during the 7th World Mahjong Championship in Mississauga, Canada, on Oct 12. ZOU ZHENG / XINHUA
Right: A woman learns about tiles during a Mahjong class for foreigners in Chengdu in 2017. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



TOP NEWS

Brief reunion



Ana Laura Munoz kisses her son Ian Munoz, from whom she has been separated due to migration, on Saturday in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, along the border with the United States. Nearly 200 families gathered on a stretch of the Rio Grande for a reunification meeting called "Hugs, Not Walls" on Saturday to reunite briefly with loved ones they had not seen in years because they live in different countries. JOSE LUIS GONZALEZ / REUTERS

China's effort brings stability, certainty amid global challenges

Nation's economic growth potential projected to boost 'a new pattern', expert says

By ZHU WENQIAN in Haikou and ZHONG NAN in Beijing

China's commitment to higher-level opening-up is strengthening fair competition in the global market, and its push to establish a high-standard socialist market economy is bringing much-needed stability and certainty amid the challenges facing the global economy, experts said.

The Chinese and foreign experts made the remarks during the 90th International Forum on China Reform in Haikou, Hainan province, which was held by the China Institute for Reform and Development and China Daily. The two-day event concluded on Sunday.

Chi Fulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development, said that China's economic growth potential is projected to boost the formation of a new pattern of economic growth in Asia, and Asia's role and advantages in promoting free trade and global economic growth will become even more pronounced.

"This is fueled by favorable cooperation mechanisms such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a free trade agreement that has created the world's largest trading group, and the free trade agreement 3.0 version between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations," he said.

Qu Yingpu, publisher and edi-

tor-in-chief of China Daily, said via video link at the forum that Hainan serves as China's gateway from land to sea and as a new highland of free trade. The building of the Hainan Free Trade Port is progressing steadily, he noted, and it is expected to further expand the advantages of China's opening-up to the outside world.

(China's economic growth) is fueled by favorable cooperation mechanisms such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a free trade agreement that has created the world's largest trading group, and the free trade agreement 3.0 version between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations."

Chi Fulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development

the future — for China and the international community it influences — is equally fascinating. One key to realizing this potential is transforming competition into collaboration, particularly between China and the United States. As leaders like President Xi Jinping and late US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger have emphasized, this mission requires mutual recognition of accomplishments, both economic and cultural.

Global collaboration can have a significant impact on our collective future, especially in the face of challenges like climate change, pandemics and the governance of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

President Xi has stated that the world can accommodate China and the US and that our successes pro-

The development of the Hainan FTP has provided policy support and faster channels for closer economic and trade exchanges between Hainan and ASEAN member states.

In the first three quarters of this year, the import and export value of trade in goods between Hainan and ASEAN members reached a record high of 43.49 billion yuan (\$6.1 billion), up 70 percent year-on-year. The trade value has already surpassed the figure for the entirety of last year, according to data from Haikou Customs.

Speaking at the Haikou forum, Zhang Jun, secretary-general of the Boao Forum for Asia, said that sticking to economic globalization and building a higher level of an open world economy is not a matter of choice, but a necessary path to achieve win-win and sustainable development.

Ong Tee Keat, president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific in Malaysia, said at the forum that what China's trading partners value the most is the openness of the Chinese market and the peace and stability dividends that are brought by regional development.

Pascal Lamy, former director-general of the World Trade Organization, told the forum that trade opening is the way to go, and it has to be done in a way that takes into account the specific challenges of developing countries.

He said via video link that the multilateral, rule-based trading system is under stress with growing geopolitical tensions, and this is a very serious matter, adding that the trade measures that have been taken by some industrialized countries are not WTO-compliant.

"Fairness has to remain the main principle, taking into account the fact that we have different capacities and different comparative advantages," Lamy said.

China is strengthening policy support to bolster foreign trade and investment, and the China International Import Expo will be held for the seventh consecutive year, from Tuesday to Nov 10, with representatives of global companies gathering in Shanghai.

Express service provider FedEx from the United States, a participant in the import expo this year, said China's commitment to continue opening up and its efforts to build a modern industrial system will further facilitate global trade.

The company announced in late October a major upgrade of its international express and cargo hub at Shanghai Pudong International Airport. The upgrade will transform the facility into an intercontinental transit hub, said Poh-Yian Koh, senior vice-president of FedEx Express and president of FedEx China.

Contact the writers at zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Steps urged to curb wild boar population to prevent incidents

By YAN DONGJIE

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2 million

Several recent incidents across China of wild boars entering cities and causing damage to property or injuring people have prompted experts to call for measures to control the population of this invasive species and stem the escalating human-wildlife conflicts.

On Oct 27, a wild boar rammed into a train on a high-speed railway line in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. As the train stopped and a mechanic stepped down to inspect if there was any equipment malfunction, he was killed by a train passing on the adjoining tracks.

On the same day, an injured wild boar barged into a house in Mentougou district of Beijing. Fortunately, no resident was hurt.

With China's ecological environment continuously improving, there has been a steady rise in wild boar populations across the country, which in turn has increased the occurrence of human-wildlife conflicts.

Data from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration shows that a total of 2 million wild boars inhabit 28 provincial-level regions in China, and accidents or attacks involving boars have been reported in 26 of them.

Xie Yi, a professor at Beijing Forestry University, said that due to the wild boars' strong adaptability and high reproductive capacity, their population growth rate is faster than that of their natural enemies, such as jackals, wolves and leopards, which has resulted in an expansion in their activity range.

In addition, wild boars tend to forage downhill more frequently in spring and autumn, which is a key reason for their recent frequent sightings.

Sun Quanhui, a scientist with the World Animal Protection organization, said that wild boars are omnivorous and can eat anything from plant shoots, roots and fruits to insects, mollusks and animal carcasses.

"They are not picky eaters and will consume anything edible. Therefore, they are an important part of the ecosystem and biodiversity. Their increasing numbers reflect an overall improvement in the domestic ecological environment," he said.

wild boars inhabit 28 provincial-level regions in China, and accidents or attacks involving boars have been reported in 26 of them.

Sun added that in the absence of natural enemies, "the only way to control the wild boar population and bring it to a reasonable level is by hunting".

In June last year, the grassland administration removed wild boars from the List of Terrestrial Wildlife with Important Ecological, Scientific and Social Value, eliminating the need for a license to hunt or capture them.

Several provinces and regions such as Shaanxi province and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region have recruited bounty hunters to curb wild boar populations.

However, Sun noted that hunting is only a temporary measure that is not only time-consuming and labor-intensive but also difficult to sustain. "In the long run, the natural populations of wild boar predators need to be gradually restored to control wild boar populations. Expanding the wild boar habitat can also reduce human-wildlife conflicts," he said.

In February, the grassland administration issued a work plan for preventing and controlling damage caused by terrestrial wildlife, including wild boars.

The plan aims to establish by next year a legal framework for preventing and controlling damage caused by wildlife. It also aims to enhance the ability to prevent and control damage and improve the compensation and assistance mechanism.

Sun said that although wild boars generally do not attack humans unless they feel threatened, adult males are powerful creatures with pointed tusks, and a close encounter could lead to serious consequences.

"Wild boars usually choose to avoid humans. However, if humans frequently feed wild boars, they may lose their fear of humans, potentially associating humans with food and approaching them, increasing the risk of conflicts," he said.

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Exchanges: Academic, educational ties vital to Sino-US relations

From page 1

This transformation is also evident in the hallways of educational institutions. My university, Duke Kunshan University, is a global community with around 60 percent foreign faculty and 30 percent international students. These figures reflect the inclusive vision championed by Jiangsu province, China's Ministry of Education, and Kunshan and Suzhou — modern cities that also embrace their history amid the tranquility of ancient water towns.

The long arc of history that has guided this country from its inception to its current position is a testament to China's spirit and the world-changing innovations spawned by its 5,000-year-old civilization. The potential for

the future — for China and the international community it influences — is equally fascinating.

One key to realizing this potential is transforming competition into collaboration, particularly between China and the United States. As leaders like President Xi Jinping and late US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger have emphasized, this mission requires mutual recognition of accomplishments, both economic and cultural.

Global collaboration can have a significant impact on our collective future, especially in the face of challenges like climate change, pandemics and the governance of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

President Xi has stated that the world can accommodate China and the US and that our successes pro-

vide opportunities for each other. If both sides focus on mutual appreciation, peaceful coexistence and

Global collaboration can have a significant impact on our collective future, especially in the face of challenges like climate change, pandemics and the governance of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

vide opportunities for each other. If both sides focus on mutual appreciation, peaceful coexistence and

win-win cooperation, they can work out their differences. Kissinger also highlighted the importance of China-US relations in shaping world order and ensuring global peace and prosperity.

Academic and educational exchanges are critical during this complex period in our relationship. These help students — future leaders of their respective countries — understand and value international cooperation in addressing global issues. More incentives, such as scholarships and post-college employment opportunities in China, could encourage US students to study in China, providing them with a deeper understanding of its transformation and cultural complexity. These international students can become lifelong cultural ambassa-

dors by sharing their firsthand experiences.

Joint research, academic and business conferences on global issues such as public health and environmental conservation are also beneficial. DKU has hosted international conferences on sustainable development, global health and green finance. Such forums and collaborations between China and the US can help combat pandemics, address climate change and advance human development.

Finally, as more Chinese businesses expand globally, international universities in China can help Chinese entrepreneurs and managers understand global markets. For example, DKU's executive education program combines business and leadership education with global insights via the Duke net-

work — Duke Kunshan University, Duke University in the US, and Duke-NUS in Singapore — assisting Chinese companies to add value globally and compete at world-class levels.

In summary, the reception commemorating China's 75th anniversary was more than an event to recognize the contributions of foreign experts; it exemplified the ongoing recognition that incorporating global expertise into China's development will unlock the vast potential of shared human endeavors and advance China's future.

The author is executive vice chancellor and distinguished professor of social science at Duke Kunshan University in China and the John DeButts professor of practice at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business in the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA



Experts from Guangdong province provide free medical services in the outpatient hall of Kashgar No 1 People's Hospital in Kashgar city, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, during a "Guangdong Expert Outpatient Day". PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Guangdong medical experts treat patients in Xinjiang

Team receives honor as model group for ethnic unity and progress

By ZHENG CAIXIONG
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Xiao Fei said he was very excited to receive the special honor that listed his medical aid team from Guangdong province among the model groups for ethnic unity and progress.

Leader of the Guangdong medical aid team to the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Xiao said the accolade was the result of the combined efforts of his team. "The honor will give the medical team and the hospital more confidence to take root in Xinjiang and serve the people of all ethnic groups," he said.

Xiao, who is president of Kashgar No 1 People's Hospital, which is also known as the Affiliated Kashgar Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University, received the special honor during the National Conference on Commending Models for Ethnic Unity and Progress that was held in Beijing on Sept 27, as the country celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

A total of 352 model groups and 368 model individuals were honored at the event. Xiao's hospital is the only medical institution to

receive such an honor in the region. He said since a new division, or the National Regional Medical Center, opened in September last year, the center has rapidly developed into a comprehensive institution treating infectious diseases and serious and critical illnesses.

He said many of the center's departments — including the departments for infectious diseases, respiratory illnesses, the intensive care unit, cardiology, neurology, general surgery, ultrasound, imaging, nutrition, traditional Chinese medicine and digestion — have entered the trial operation stage.

The center provides 415 beds and receives more than 2,357 emergency visits monthly.

According to official statistics, the number of outpatient visits exceeded 12,000, with more than 5,600 inpatients having been discharged in the first half of the year. A total of 872 surgeries, including 52 major ones, were performed in the first six months, which raised the region's medical diagnosis, treatment and service level, he said.

Meanwhile, Xiao's team has helped train more than 50 doctors for the local hospitals and more than 7,000 grassroots medical workers.

Located in Kashgar, the hospital

radiates into Central Asia to serve patients from countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, as Kashgar is a hub of the country's land Silk Road.

Local doctor Gulmira Alim said that under the guidance of the medical experts from the Guangdong medical aid team, her diagnostic ability has greatly improved.

Gulmira said that many local doctors including herself have learned to use advanced methods such as liver biopsy and genetic sequencing to diagnose rare and difficult genetic metabolic liver diseases and develop standardized treatment plans.

"We can provide the patients in the Kashgar area with good treatment prospects even without leaving Kashgar," she said.

Xiao's team has designated every Wednesday as "Guangdong Expert Outpatient Day", arranging for experts from his team to offer free medical services. On Wednesday, the outpatient hall of the hospital is usually filled with people.

Chen Yingbei, director of the center's medical department, said that Guangdong Expert Outpatient Day provides multidisciplinary services, where patients only need to sign up with a single account to utilize the

diagnosis and treatment services of multiple experts.

The special outpatient day has provided better medical treatment for people of all ethnic groups in southern Xinjiang, said Chen.

Dinar Ablat, a 58-year-old local patient, previously suffered from a lung disease and occasionally coughed up blood.

"The experts from Guangdong are very skilled and attentive, allowing me to enjoy high-quality medical resources near my home," she said.

Chong Yutian, executive director of the center, said Guangdong's medical aid team is also building the center's multidisciplinary treatment platform, promoting the synchronous improvement and optimization of hardware and software to make it a high-level medical platform that benefits people in southern Xinjiang.

Relying on 5G, artificial intelligence, big data and related advanced technologies, the center has built a smart medical service system, connected with hospitals in Guangdong. It has optimized its medical services to become an international remote consultation center, bringing high-quality medical treatment to patients from countries involved in the BRI.

Regulations provide extra protection for glaciers

By PALDEN NYIMA
and DAQJIONG in Lhasa

The glaciers of the Xizang autonomous region will receive better legal protection with the implementation of regulations that came into effect on Oct 1.

This legislation marks a crucial step toward preserving the rich glacier resources of Xizang, one of China's most glacier-abundant regions.

The Xizang Development and Reform Commission highlighted the necessity of these regulations, adding that the protection of glaciers is not only vital for Xizang but also holds significance for the ecological security of the entire Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the nation.

According to Sodron, director of XDRC's department of resource conservation and environmental protection, existing policies and regulations concerning glacier protection were deemed inadequate, lacking effective oversight and management mechanisms.

"The formulation of the Xizang Autonomous Region Glacier Protection Regulations is a targeted response to address these shortcomings and provides clear and comprehensive guidelines for glacier protection efforts in Xizang," she said.

The regulations delineate specific responsibilities for departments, protection planning strategies, rights confirmation through investigation, classification of management frameworks, safeguard measures, ecological environment protection protocols, disaster response strategies and monitoring mechanisms.

Key provisions stipulate that governments at or above county level must integrate glacier protection initiatives into economic and social development plans, while township authorities are mandated to oversee glacier protection within their jurisdictions.

The regulations categorize glaciers into those within natural reserves, national parks, nature reserves, ecological protection red lines and areas outside designated

regions. Specific directives outline tailored protection measures.

The regulations impose penalties on construction units or permit holders engaging in activities such as infrastructure development or resource extraction in glacier-adjacent areas without proper mitigation measures. Violators face fines ranging from 20,000 yuan (\$2,800) to 100,000 yuan, underscoring the stringent enforcement mechanisms embedded within the legislation.

In recent months, research from scientific institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Northwest Institute of Eco-Environment and Resources and the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research has underscored the alarming rate of glacier retreat, attributing it to the escalating impacts of global climate change. These revelations further emphasize the urgency of robust glacier protection measures.

He Xiaobo, head of the Tangua Mountains Cryosphere and Environment Observation and Research Station of Xizang, said that the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, known as the "Roof of the World", plays an irreplaceable role in ecological security.

"Glaciers, as crucial components of the plateau's ecosystem, serve not only as the source of many major rivers in Asia but also play a vital role in regulating regional climate and maintaining biodiversity," he said.

Based on the Second Chinese Glacier Inventory, China has 48,571 glaciers, with approximately 82 percent in a state of retreat.

He said, adding that this poses challenges to water resource management and the health of ecosystems in the country. There are more than 21,800 glaciers in Xizang, representing 45 percent of glaciers distributed in China. They cover nearly 23,800 square kilometers, He added.

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An aerial photo of a glacier in Drongba county, Xizang autonomous region, on Aug 24. TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA

China details work on biodiversity at COP16

By CHEN LIANG
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Representatives from government institutions, enterprises, conservation organizations and other stakeholders from China gathered at the China Pavilion of the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Cali, Colombia, and successfully held a side event on the theme of "Strategies and Actions for Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation" on Oct 23.

They exchanged views at the event, hosted by the All-China Environment Federation with the support of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and Tencent Corporation, contributing Chinese wisdom to COP16.

Academician Wang Jinnan of the Chinese Academy of Engineering shared the policy progress on the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation in China. He said that following the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed upon at COP15, China has clarified its strategy and action plan for biodiversity conservation, deploying priority areas such as biodiversity mainstreaming, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of biodiversity, and modernizing biodiversity governance capacity to establish policies, laws, regulations,

standards and monitoring systems for biodiversity conservation.

Zhou Yilin, a product manager of Tencent's sustainable social value initiative, shared the corporation's latest practices in biodiversity conservation, including AI species recognition, an infrared camera app for wildlife photography and a universal software development tool kit. Xu Xin, a representative from The Nature Conservancy's China Program, analyzed the complex societal challenges currently faced by biodiversity conservation from an international organization's perspective.

State Grid Yangzhou Power Supply Company shared the story of how its workers have protected birds while maintaining the grid. Zhu Jie, a volunteer of the company's Bird's Guardian Grid project, told how young volunteers from the company protected the Oriental white stork, a nationally protected bird, in Gaoyou, Jiangsu province.

From the initial line failure caused by the stork nesting on power towers, to the development of barriers that prevent droppings and nesting debris from falling onto electrical wires and causing shorts and the refinement of the transmission tower design, they have promoted Gaoyou to become the first Protected Area for Oriental White Stork in Jiangsu.

Rural tourism increasingly popular in Chongqing

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI
in Chongqing

A themed tour featuring joyful autumn countryside vistas, harvest activities, outdoor adventures and culinary delights was launched on Oct 19 in Baoluan township, in Chongqing's Fengdu county.

In recent years, rural tourism destinations have seen surging numbers of visitors during the holidays across China as people become more interested in farming culture.

"Boasting rich culture, beautiful rural scenery and comprehensive tourism facilities, Baoluan offers tourists a unique countryside tour experience," said Tan Mingquan, Party secretary of the township.

Located 20 kilometers from Fengdu county town, Baoluan has abundant tourism resources, including the Nantianhu Nature Reserve and Shipping Forest Farm.

The county is also renowned for its agricultural products such as rice, soybeans and fish, as the local soil and water are abundant in selenium and strontium, two trace elements essential for human health.

In recent years, the local government has been working to build



Farmers take part in a competition to see who can harvest rice the fastest in Baoluan township in Chongqing's Fengdu county. XIONG BO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Baoluan, a rural vitalization demonstration township, into a tourism destination that combines modern agriculture, rural tourism and cultural experiences.

A variety of events, such as a marathon, rice field fishing, a countryside music concert and a mountain hiking expedition, attracted over 3,000 tourists.

The marathon drew enthusiastic

participants such as Cai Yuting and Wang Yuting, two girls from a local junior high school.

"Participating in the mini-marathon proved to be both challenging and rewarding. The sight of vibrant fields, colorful flowers and a sparkling fountain along the way offered us a fresh experience," Wang said.

As China vitalizes its farming culture, Fengdu has also actively partic-

ipated in the development of the Bashu Cultural Tourism Corridor and has worked toward establishing a national demonstration zone for the advancement of cultural and tourism industries, local authorities said.

In mid-August, Fengdu launched the digital Bayu farming culture map, the first of its kind in the country.

Available as a WeChat mini-program, the map showcases information about over 1,000 local agricultural heritage spots in Chongqing and tourist services associated with them. It makes full use of local farming culture, promotes agricultural development and creates more jobs for farmers.

"Agriculture is the root and soul of our rural culture, as well as an invaluable asset," said the county's Party chief Zhang Guozhong.

Known for its rich agricultural heritage spanning over 2,000 years, Fengdu aims to pioneer a novel agriculture paradigm by fostering sightseeing, farming experiences and field study tours, Zhang said.

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CHINA

International Forum on China Reform

Balance needed to achieve goals

Experts seek fair approach to govt intervention and market forces

By WANG KEJU
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As China moves forward with its vision for a high-standard socialist market economy, the pivotal issue of balancing the relationship between the government and the market should be addressed so that a facilitating government serves an efficient market, experts said during the 90th International Forum on China Reform.

Efforts to foster a unified national market where domestic and foreign businesses can thrive on an equal footing to help unleash internal driving forces and creativity will also be high on the agenda, they said during the two-day event in Haikou, Hainan province, which ended on Sunday.

At the core of an advanced socialist market economy is the goal of achieving highly efficient resource distribution through market-based mechanisms. This will allow supply and demand to play a decisive role in guiding economic activities, said Cao Li, vice-president of the Party School of the Communist Party of China Qinghai Provincial Committee.

Meanwhile, the government will strengthen its macroeconomic management capabilities, employing a range of fiscal, monetary and industrial policies to maintain overall stability and steer the economy's development, Cao added.

The push for a unified national market aligns with China's goals to further bring out the market's role in allocating resources.



The 90th International Forum on China Reform attracts a large number of experts from both home and abroad to discuss the challenges China is facing on its road to reform. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The sheer scale and diversity of China's market, with a burgeoning middle-income group and a thriving private sector, presents a unique opportunity for robust economic expansion. Yet, underlying obstacles have cast shadows on the seamless functioning of this mammoth market.

Tamas Hajba, senior adviser for China and head of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Beijing office, said it is crucial to ensure fair competition across all levels of the market, from the local to the national.

He stressed that this requires harmonizing legal and regulatory frameworks to enable equitable

treatment of all market players.

Cao said, however, that gaps in the enforcement of laws and regulations at the local level are creating a fragmented business environment, making it difficult for companies to navigate the complex regulatory landscape.

In August, China brought into force new regulations for fair competition reviews, bringing all government policy measures that intervene in economic activities under the purview of the review framework.

Hu Min, director of the National Academy of Governance Press, said the free and efficient flow of labor, capital, technology, data and other

production factors is a key pillar of a high-standard socialist market economy.

A number of Chinese manufacturing enterprises, for example, are now relocating their production facilities to the country's central and western regions, where abundant land and labor resources are on offer that can help manufacturing firms optimize their cost structure.

The construction of a unified national market can help break down the fragmentation of regional markets, enabling the rational flow and optimal allocation of resources across different areas of the country, Hu added.

Financial system reform could help enhance economic resilience

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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Optimizing financial regulatory systems and greater reform to advance urbanization should be high on the agenda for China's ongoing economic structural reforms, according to experts who attended the 90th International Forum on China Reform in Haikou, Hainan province.

As China navigates a turbulent global landscape, the country's ongoing efforts to deepen reforms and strengthen stimulus measures are proof of its commitment to stabilizing the economy and enhancing resilience against external uncertainties, they said.

"The instability and unpredictability in the global economy have noticeably increased compared to the past," said He Dexu, director of the National Academy of Economic Strategy, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"In this context, our primary focus must be on fortifying our financial sector to effectively navigate external pressures and challenges."

He advocated for bolstering financial support for the real economy by establishing a more effective mechanism that aligns financial services with the needs of businesses and creating incentives that encourage financial institutions to serve the real economy more efficiently.

Highlighting the need for an overhaul of the financial regulatory framework, he noted that China still faces severe risks from external shocks and domestic challenges, including real estate sector woes as well as the risks associated with local government debt and small and medium-sized financial institutions.

"We must strengthen our regulatory system to effectively prevent current risks and shocks from escalating into systemic financial risks," he said.

Stressing the importance of revitalizing the capital markets, He called for measures to not only stimulate activity but also ensure sustainable market development to attract foreign investment.

"We need not only to stimulate and activate the capital market, but also to establish effective mechanisms for the long-term, sustainable development of the capital market," He said.

"This will not only allow the capital market to fulfill its financing and investment functions, but also make it an attractive and valuable market for foreign investment."

He made the remarks at a parallel forum on deepening macroeconomic system reform held on Saturday during the 90th International Forum on China Reform.

Jointly organized by the China Institute for Reform and Development, China Daily and the China Public Diplomacy Association, the two-day forum ended on Sunday.

Chheng Kimlong, president of

Our fiscal policies must focus on addressing the asset liability challenges faced by households and businesses, effectively ensuring a healthy economic environment."

Wang Zhongmin, former vice-chairman of the National Council for Social Security Fund

the Asian Vision Institute in Cambodia, underscored the importance of enhancing financial integration, saying fostering mutual trust among various governmental departments is key to overcoming current challenges.

"By establishing stronger bilateral and multilateral cooperation — particularly among China, Japan, South Korea and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — we can effectively address financial challenges and reduce regional tensions," he said.

He also hailed the Chinese government's intensified efforts to boost domestic demand and build a dual-circulation development pattern, which will help solve financial issues and better optimize the financial environment.

Cao Yuanzheng, former chief economist at the Bank of China, emphasized that addressing structural issues in urbanization is crucial for bolstering China's long-term growth.

"We must facilitate the integration of migrant workers into urban life, ensuring they have access to the same public services as city residents," said Cao, who argued that this approach would not only stabilize the housing market, but also promote consumer spending.

When it comes to the challenges facing China's broader economy, Wang Zhongmin, former vice-chairman of the National Council for Social Security Fund, suggested that expanding central government borrowing could be directed toward alleviating the financial burdens on households and private enterprises.

"Our fiscal policies must focus on addressing the asset liability challenges faced by households and businesses, effectively ensuring a healthy economic environment," Wang said.

Looking ahead to 2025, Chen Wenling, chief economist of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said that the forthcoming fiscal stimulus package is set to be substantial.

"We are likely to see a deficit rate that does not fall below that of 2023, reflecting a significant expansion in fiscal policy," Chen said.

Long-term thinking needed to ensure RCEP success

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
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Two years on from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership taking effect, the trade pact has shown signs of early progress, but the full benefits of the agreement will require a longer transition period due to the varying economic sizes and stages of development of its member countries, Zhao Jinping, former director-general of the Department of Foreign Economic Relations at the Development Research Center of the State Council, said at a seminar on Sunday.

Speaking during the 90th Forum for China Reform in Haikou, Hainan province, Zhao emphasized that while the initial gains of the RCEP have been observed, the diverse economic landscapes of the 15 Asia-Pacific nations involved mean that some countries will need more time to adapt to the demands of further trade liberalization.

To capitalize on the RCEP, investment in ASEAN countries is crucial, said Hidenobu Ishibashi, principal economist at the Japan Center for Economic Research.

"However, a one-size-fits-all strat-

egy will not suffice, given the different stages of development among these countries," the economist said.

As competition for direct investment in ASEAN countries intensifies, it will become more important to move beyond short-term economic relationships that cater only to the needs of the investing country. Instead, it will be essential to address the specific needs of each ASEAN country, Ishibashi added.

According to Chaiwat Meesanthan, director of the Institute of East Asian Studies at Thailand's Thammasat University, the RCEP offers a source of stability and cooperation in a world marked by rising geopolitical tensions and increasing trade barriers.

The RCEP encompasses a large market that includes various economies from ASEAN, as well as major economic powerhouses such as China, Japan and South Korea.

"This partnership lays a strong foundation for regional economic collaboration and has the potential to become a new center for global growth," Meesanthan said.

Since its implementation on Jan 1, 2022, the RCEP has significantly transformed Thailand's economic

landscape, Meesanthan noted, adding that key industries such as manufacturing, agriculture and technology have reaped substantial benefits.

The country's manufacturing sector — particularly automobiles and electronics — has gained better access to raw materials at competitive prices, leading to more efficient production and increased exports. The agricultural sector has improved market access across Asia, boosting demand for Thai rice, fruits and seafood.

Additionally, the technology sector has used the RCEP to foster cross-border cooperation, driving growth in tech startups and innovation, Meesanthan said.

Zhang Jianping, deputy director of the academic committee at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said: "The RCEP represents a victory for multilateralism and free trade. Regional economic integration is a global development trend, with the international division of labor becoming increasingly detailed."

Looking ahead, cooperation among member countries is expected to foster better development for each nation while contributing to

the global economy. To better implement and ensure adherence to RCEP rules, Zhang suggested enhancing the education and training of enterprises on these regulations. Proactively learning and applying these rules will improve the level of trade facilitation, he said.

Enhancing the mechanisms of the RCEP is crucial for its success, said Wang Sheng, president of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies. He suggested establishing a coordinating secretariat for the RCEP, increasing the frequency of meetings, improving communication platforms and enhancing the efficiency of the dispute resolution mechanism.

Strengthening information sharing, policy coordination and project cooperation among member countries is also essential, Wang said.

"These measures will create a stable and efficient cooperation framework and smooth communication channels, better equipping member nations to face challenges and advance trade liberalization and economic integration, hence bringing greater benefits and development opportunities to RCEP member countries," he said.

What they say



In a move to support Chinese enterprises to expand their global footprint, the government needs to ramp up financial assistance to their overseas investment projects on the premise of ensuring authenticity. The initiative is expected to provide a significant boost to China's private sector and empower homegrown businesses to compete more effectively on the global stage.

Chang Ka Mun, senior adviser at Fung Business Intelligence, managing director of Li & Fung Development (China)



Hainan province is pioneering the implementation of China's first negative list for service trade management, which restricts access to sectors explicitly listed. More pilot regions will follow suit to expand openness in the service sector, which will help China transition from the positive list approach to the negative list approach for service trade and improve its competitiveness.

Zhang Jianping, deputy director of the Academic Committee of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce



Opening-up and cooperation have been the distinguished features of development through a Chinese path to modernization. With the Belt and Road Initiative, China has established cooperation platforms with more than 150 countries, and the surrounding regions boast enormous potential and opportunities for further cooperation. For instance, the potential for cooperation between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is enormous in emerging industries such as the digital economy, green economy, information communication and artificial intelligence.

Wu Hallong, president of the China Public Diplomacy Association



Standing at the crossroads of the global economy, China has made it clear that it will build a high-level socialist market economy to stimulate market vitality and unleash the immense potential of medium- and long-term economic growth. If China makes major breakthroughs in the structural transformation and upgrading of its industrial structure, consumption structure and urban-rural structure, it will be well positioned to achieve an average annual economic growth of around 5 percent over the next decade.

Chi Fulin, president of China Institute for Reform and Development



A crucial part of financial reform is to build an effective system and mechanism for supporting the real economy, which also includes how to create effective incentive and constraint mechanisms to better serve the real economy. We still face severe challenges such as the real estate sector woes and risks associated with local government debt and small and medium-sized financial institutions. So we need to further improve our financial regulatory system to effectively control risks, especially preventing risks and shocks from escalating into systemic financial risks.

He Dexu, director of the National Academy of Economic Strategy, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences



I believe one important outcome of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China is the construction of integrated urban and rural development to better serve the real economy, specifically the equalization of basic public services. Meanwhile, the current difficulties in the real estate market are acknowledged; the government is taking measures to stabilize and stop declines, addressing unfinished housing projects and improving affordable housing to solve migrant workers' housing problems, and that will also help facilitate family reunification and promote consumption.

Cao Yuanzheng, former chief economist at the Bank of China

Editor's note: As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.



LEARNING TO LIVE WITH ELEPHANTS

Early warning apps, teams of rangers help locals in Yunnan get along with their wild neighbors

By CUI JIA in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan
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For many residents of Dahuangba village in Xishuangbanna, wild Asian elephants were the neighbors from hell.

With their farms located on the edge of the rainforest where the elephants live, the locals could only watch in despair as marauding herds ate their fill.

Some unlucky residents have even found themselves trapped in their cars as curious pachyderms shook them back and forth as if they were toys. While it's all just fun and games for the elephants, experiences like these were terrifying for the average resident.

As such, the people of Dahuangba in Southwest China's Yunnan province used to hate wild Asian elephants.

However, attitudes are beginning to change in these rural communities thanks to the use of modern technologies such as early warning apps that track the whereabouts of these elephants, and dedicated teams of rangers who keep a close eye on the movements of herds.

A temporary sign sits at the side of the village's main road, ready to be used in the event of elephant sightings, reading:

"Wild elephants spotted ahead. Do not approach. Do not pass. Do not take photos. Do not try and chase them away."

Dahuangba local Tao Daqiang said that packs of elephants have become frequent visitors to his farmland, especially during harvest season, as they know where the good food is.

It doesn't help that the village is closely located to the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve — a lush 241,000-hectare tropical forest and an area about one and a half times the size of London — a major habitat of wild Asian elephants.

"Almost all villagers have encountered the wild elephants one way or another in the past," Tao said. "I think the best way to achieve harmonious coexistence between the elephants and the villagers is to keep each other out of sight because no encounter with a wild elephant is pleasant."

China, which is among the world's 13 major habitats for wild Asian elephants, has made an outstanding contribution to protecting the species. Despite the global decline in elephant numbers, the country has witnessed a remarkable increase in its wild Asian elephant population, soaring from around 150 to over 300 in the past three decades, according to the Yunnan Forestry and Grassland Bureau.

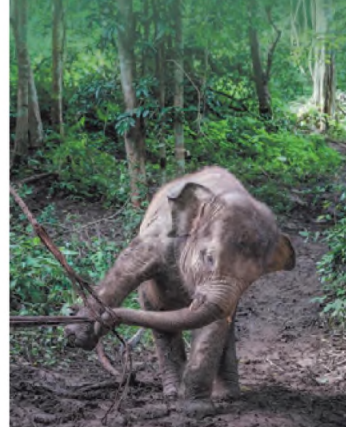
The Asian elephant, the continent's largest land animal, is under first-class protection in China. The species is mainly scattered in Yunnan's Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Pu'er and Lincang. Its habitat has expanded from covering 14 townships in the



Left: Elephants appear in thermal imaging captured by a ranger's drone in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province.

Below: Wild Asian elephant Long Long plays with tree branches in Xishuangbanna in August.

Right: A ranger prepares a drone for a monitoring task.



province in the 1990s to 61 in 2020.

More than two-thirds of the wild elephant herds in Xishuangbanna and neighboring Pu'er regularly roam outside nature reserves, making trips to surrounding villages and farmlands for food and causing conflicts between the elephants and people, the bureau added.

"The wild elephants are highly intelligent. Once they've had the taste of delicious corn or fruits planted by us, they always come back for more. We tried to install electric fences around the farmland to stop them from getting in, but they can easily find the power supply, shut it down and pull the fences out of the ground," Tao said. "There is literally nothing we can do when we find them eating the crops because we all know how aggressive and dangerous the elephants can be once they are disturbed."

The villagers have tried to grow agricultural products that aren't traditionally included in the elephants' diet. However, they quickly discovered that these elephants were also fond of the new items on the menu such as bananas, passion fruit and jackfruit. In fact, these wild Asian elephants have eaten more than 400 different varieties of crops, said Tao.

Real-time monitoring

Before heading to his farmland for work, Tao pulls out his cellphone and taps the wild Asian elephant watch app. This handy piece of tech shows the movements of nearby herds and sends out early warnings.

"The nearest herd is about 2 kilometers away. It will send me a warning when they reach a 1-km radius from where I am. Many villagers now have the habit of checking the location of the herds before going out," Tao said.

Considering the elderly villagers who aren't used to using cellphones, warnings are also broadcast via loudspeakers and warning signs also get put out, he added.

Launched in August 2020, the early warning system monitors any presence of wild Asian elephants near the villages surrounding the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve.

With the help of 600 infrared cameras and 177 intelligent broadcasting systems, 38 areas where the wild species frequently appears are

covered. The system uses artificial intelligence image recognition to identify the elephants, and the entire process from image capture to the sending of early warnings only takes about 15 seconds, according to the reserve.

Meanwhile, in Xishuangbanna and Pu'er, a team of 55 Asian elephant rangers monitor their activity, especially the larger herds.

On an afternoon in July in Xishuangbanna's Mengman village, ranger Zheng Xuan, launches a drone equipped with an infrared camera to monitor a patch of forest near farmland and the rail line linking China and Laos.

"The Ran Ran family slept there overnight, so we sent out a warning to the villagers via the mobile phone app at 3 am," Zheng said. "It's now around 4 pm and just about time for them to wake up."

Within minutes, infrared images show the elephants moving near the edge of the forest, their body heat captured in pink.

Zheng then flew the drone above them at a safe distance and switched on the normal camera. The herd of 31, consisting of adults and calves, was seen casually on the move in the forest. Each herd is led by the oldest female elephant, the matriarch, which decides where to move, eat and rest.

"Without a doubt, China is the safest place for Asian elephants to live," said Zheng, citing the many protections for them within the country. "There has been a baby boom among wild elephants in the country in recent years."

Zheng and a team of rangers have been monitoring the Ran Ran family of wild Asian elephants since 2016. He prefers to be called a guardian of the elephants, rather than a ranger. "The family is very used to finding food in villages, so we must monitor them closely 24/7 to prevent conflicts between them and the villagers. If the elephants get near the road or railway, we then have to approach them and guide them away," he said.

Also, it's important to prevent the herds from migrating further north like the odyssey taken by a group of 15 elephants four years ago that caught global attention, Zheng said.

In March 2020, the Short Nose family of elephants left their home in the nature reserve in Xishuangbanna. They headed northward and roamed all the way to the provincial capital of Kunming before returning home on Aug 12, 2021. As they crashed into people's houses, munched on their crops and guzzled their water along the journey of more than 1,300 km, an emergency task force was set up, marshaling a cast of thousands to guide the elephants away from villages and cities.

"It remains a mystery as to why the herd migrated so far in 2020, and it may happen again so we must be prepared," Zheng said.

An adult Asian elephant consumes about 150 kilograms of food each day, and a herd of elephants can easily devour an entire field of crops in one sitting. To reduce losses, Xishuangbanna launched a wild animal accident public liability insurance plan in 2011.

As of July, more than 215 million yuan (\$30.2 million) has been paid to villagers for damage to their agricultural products caused by wild animals. A total of 87 percent of the payouts have been made to cover the losses caused by Asian elephants. More than 37,400 insurance claims for wild animal-related incidents were made

between 2021 and 2023 in Xishuangbanna, according to provincial authorities.

Tao said: "Last October, wild elephants ate 0.27 hectares of corn that I had grown. I received 3,000 yuan in compensation."

Since 2022, the compensation standards for agricultural products, including corn, rice and sugarcane have been raised as their market values have increased. "I could have made more than 6,000 yuan from selling that corn, so the villagers still wish the compensation standards can be further lifted," said Tao.

There are many videos of wild elephants feasting on farmland crops on Lyu Kebo's cellphone. As an insurance specialist from China Pacific Property Insurance's Xishuangbanna branch, Lyu often has to inspect the aftermath of the farmland destroyed by the elephants to determine the exact economic losses.

"It's easy to tell the work of the wild elephants because nothing is left standing in the field after their visit. No people or other animals can cause such damage," Lyu said.

He added that because of the warning systems, there have rarely been any incidents of elephants attacking people causing injuries or even death.

Since Feb 23, protocols on restoring the Asian elephants' habitats, elephant rescue, reintroducing rescued elephants to the wild, and the construction of the warning system have been introduced in Yunnan.

These protocols can offer technical support for better protecting Asian elephants and further increasing their population in China, said Chen Fei, director of the Asian Elephant Research Center of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

To enhance the protection of Asian elephants, Yunnan is pushing for the construction of a national park for them in 2022, Chen said.

According to a plan for the national park, the primary objectives are to protect the area's tropical rainforests, enhance conservation efforts for the Asian elephant population and their habitats, and mitigate conflicts between humans and elephants.

"Unlike other wild animals, the elephants need a complex ecosystem consisting of the rainforest and farmland because they are so used to living around villages and people. How we can ensure harmonious coexistence between humans and the Asian elephants will always be an issue," Chen said.



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A'Bao doing well after return to nature

By CUI JIA
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China has made greater efforts to reintroduce rescued Asian elephants back into the wild in recent years. One rescued Asian elephant recently reintroduced back into the wild in Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, has shown signs of successfully integrating into a wild elephant herd, a milestone achievement of this reintroduction experiment.

A male wild Asian elephant named A'Bao, who was rescued in the city of Pu'er in Yunnan in 2018, was successfully released back into its habitat earlier this year after rehabilitation, Chen Fei, director of the Asian Elephant Research Center of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, said in September.

On the evening of Sept 5, A'Bao, wearing a collar that sends positioning data, was spotted drinking water and taking a bath together with 34 other wild elephants in Wild Elephant Valley located in Xishuangbanna, according to the Asian Elephant Protection and Management Center.

"The fact that A'Bao has been moving about with other wild elephants indicates that he has gradually adapt-

ed to the wilderness and integrated into the wild elephant herd," Chen said. "The case is a milestone achievement of this reintroduction experiment. It also paves the way for the future reintroduction of other individual elephants into the wild."

In 2018, the then 12-year-old A'Bao became estranged from his herd and had to be rescued. Researchers in July 2022 launched the pilot project of returning the rescued Asian elephant to nature.

Earlier this year, A'Bao was released into the wild following years of meticulous training and preparation.

To prepare A'Bao, the center in Xishuangbanna crafted a meticulous dietary and training plan. He was then solely trained in the wilderness zone from April 14 until May 17 when it was finally released into the wild.

"Our ultimate hope is for A'Bao to successfully integrate into a wild elephant herd and have offspring of his own," Chen said.

Researchers will continue to closely monitor A'Bao, and based on his case study they will engineer a systematic, scientific and replicable routine for the reintroduction of Asian elephants back into the wild, he added.

Xinhua contributed to this story.



Rangers check the status of elephant A'Bao via a drone after sending it back to the wild. HU CHAO / XINHUA

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A visitor takes a photo of a model of commercial residential buildings at a sales office in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, on Sept 23. WEI LIANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Some curbs on buying in top cities to remain

REPORTER'S LOG

By Wang Ying

Although speculation is rife that China's largest cities may further lift restrictions on home purchases, industry experts say certain existing requirements for buying houses in China's top-tier cities may, in fact, be necessary.

A meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, held on Sept 26, noted that housing purchase restrictions should be adjusted to assuage public concerns.

In response, China's biggest cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province's Guangzhou and Shenzhen, unanimously unveiled new policies to further free up the property sector late in September, with Guangzhou scrapping all existing home buying restrictions to become the first first-tier city to lift home purchase requirements.

Though the public expects more first-tier cities to follow suit, industry experts said that although there is large room for adjusting local housing policies, home purchase restrictions in the benchmark cities may not be lifted entirely.

"Mega-cities like Beijing and Shanghai may not fully lift purchase restrictions in their central districts. However, they may do so in suburban areas or specific development zones. Cities like Guangzhou and Shenzhen, on the other hand, are more likely to fully lift purchase restrictions," said Shaun Brodie, head of research content on the China market at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

According to Brodie, the reasons for maintaining purchase restrictions include protecting land resources, controlling real estate market risks and ensuring residents' housing needs.

"Currently, the relaxation of the housing purchase policy in first-tier cities has shown initial results, with the residential market in these cities experiencing a general rebound. Looking forward, the possibility of lifting purchase restrictions in first-tier cities specifically depends on multiple factors such as policy, local market differences, market response, and regulatory effectiveness," Brodie said.

Chen Sheng, president of the China Real Estate Data Academy, said there is a unique phenomenon in the housing market: once super-sized cities totally repeal home purchase restrictions, buyers in neighboring cities will rush to buy homes in the big cities, leaving unsought properties in the surrounding smaller cities.

"To prevent such a scenario, mega cities won't fully remove their home buying restrictions. The easing of existing home purchase policies is closely connected to the recovery of the housing market in surrounding cities," Chen said.

"It is expected that governments at all levels will continue to optimize and adjust their respective policies in a timely manner in accordance with their conditions, but eliminating all existing home purchase restrictions in China's first-tier cities is unlikely in the near future," said Pang Ming, chief economist for JLL China.

"The biggest cities are more likely to relax restrictions on purchases, sales, home mortgages and prices," Pang said.

James Macdonald, head of Savills Research China, has a different opinion.

"Originally, purchase restrictions were implemented to cool overheated markets and prevent speculative investments from inflating prices, ensuring that the local people could access property at reasonable prices. While such policies can distort the market, they should be gradually phased out during periods of market weakness," Macdonald said.

Homebuyer confidence growing

Market sentiment and transactions have jumped after the central and local governments announced a string of supportive measures to stabilize the property market in recent months

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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For Wang Miao and her husband, the National Day holiday last month was spent looking for new apartments in Hangzhou, capital of East China's Zhejiang province, instead of visiting the city's varied scenic attractions.

The couple had worked for two years in Beijing and, unable to afford a home in the capital, decided to relocate to Hangzhou a year ago after getting new job offers.

In fact, they had started to study the local home market even before moving in.

The efforts finally paid off, as they signed a purchase deal for an apartment in the city's downtown area a week after the holiday.

"I feel the home market is more promising in the second half, as housing policies are increasingly favorable to homebuyers. We can pay less down payment, get more loan from the personal housing provident fund, and enjoy a very low mortgage loan rate," the 29-year-old software programmer said.

Market confidence and transactions have been boosted after the central and local governments announced a string of supportive measures to stabilize the property market in recent months. In addition, industry experts suggested more fine-tuning is in the pipeline to promote the stable and healthy development of the nation's real estate market.

In major Chinese cities, some indicators signal a turning point in the home market, such as shrinking residential property inventories, more active land supply and trading, and more visits from potential homebuyers.

Experts believe that China's property market has shown signs of bottoming out after three years of adjustments.

"Since the end of September, we've noticed a significant increase in both visits to new projects and signing of sale contracts, and transactions on pre-owned homes have also gone up," said Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development Ni Hong during a State Council Information Office news conference on October 17.

"Regulated by a series of policies, China's real estate market has started bottoming out after three years of adjustment," Ni added.

James Macdonald, head of Savills Research China, welcomed the latest policies.



A residential project under construction in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on April 16.

LYU MING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



People look at homes for sale at a real estate trading fair in Chongqing on Oct 9. HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

He said they "not only provide broader support for the real estate sector, but also aim to boost the overall economy."

"These policies are crucial for instilling household confidence in job security and encouraging homebuying decisions," Macdonald said.

According to him, over the past two years, various measures have been introduced to support the residential market, mainly at the margins.

Publicly available information shows that since September, the central government, relevant regulators and local governments have introduced a series of measures to

promote the steady and healthy development of the real estate market. These policy adjustments have mainly focused on relaxing home purchase restrictions, lowering down payment ratios, and reducing interest rates.

"These measures aim to ease the qualification requirements and financial burden for homebuyers, thereby stimulating the steady recovery of the residential market," said Shaun Brodie, head of research content on the China market at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

"This will not only help adjust the market's expectations for the future, but also further stimulate

market stability, Pang said.

"Based on their respective conditions, including social development, population, industrial layout and housing supply and demand, cities will be able to make adjustments on demand for home living and reasonable property financing, scientifically arrange land supply, and better allocate financial resources," he said.

"Therefore, it is possible for the property market to meet varied home living requirements and form a benign circle of the real estate industry, which is key to healthy macroeconomic growth and high-quality economic and social development," Pang said.

"Chinese cities' home prices had been stable in September from a month earlier, though home prices had dropped year-on-year. Our survey indicates market confidence is back and market expectations have improved since late September," said Wang Zhonghua, a statistician with the National Bureau of Statistics' urban division.

According to Wang, the monthly survey conducted in late September by the bureau showed that among the nation's 70 major cities, 58.3 percent of the polled respondents expected new home prices to grow or remain stable in the next six months, up 10 percentage points from August, and 45.4 percent of the respondents said they were positive on pre-owned home prices, up 6.5 percentage points month-on-month.

Brodie said the September data indicates the increased confidence and improved expectations about the real estate market.

"In September, among the 70 large- and medium-sized cities, the house prices generally stabilized on a quarter-on-quarter basis. Due to the release of improvement demand, the month-on-month price growth in Shanghai had been the highest in the country for seven consecutive months," he said.

According to him, with the introduction and implementation of a package of new real estate policies at the end of September, the first half of October saw a marked pickup in activity in both new and secondhand housing markets in core cities, as well as stabilization in house prices, and a significant improvement in key real estate indicators. Prices of new and secondhand homes are expected to remain stable or rise in the coming year.

the release of housing demand," Brodie added.

In terms of practical effectiveness, these policies have quickly demonstrated their impact, with both new and secondhand home transactions showing growth. "This phenomenon reflects residents' confidence in purchasing homes is gradually recovering, and it is expected that the positive effects of the new policies will continue to emerge in the near future," he said.

"The unparalleled frequency of supportive policies is in line with the spirit of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee's meeting on Sept 26, which stressed that efforts will be made to stabilize the property market and reverse its downturn," said Xie Chen, head of research with CBRE China, a commercial real estate services and investment firm.

"The meeting has given the direction for ensuing measures, including financing, debt, land and destocking, though it requires further observation concerning the scale of specific measures," Xie said.

Pang Ming, chief economist for JLL China, said forming a new property development pattern is essential to promote the stable and healthy development of the property market.

This can correct all the bottlenecks in real estate market development by ensuring balanced supply and demand, as well as

BUSINESS



Potential buyers visit a model room at a real estate agency's sales office in Shanghai on June 4. YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Shanghai's real estate market showing signs of recovery

Experts expect across-the-board restoration in coming months

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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Backed by combined policy support from central and local levels, Shanghai's real estate market has shown recovery signs, with industry experts expecting an across-the-board restoration in coming months.

"A series of positive changes were observed in the third quarter. In Shanghai's property market, demand for office leasing is driven by cost-effective requirements, recovery of retail leasing is mainly found in categories including affordable dining, sportswear, streetwear brands, local designers' brands and collectible toys stores, and residential properties are supported by stable demand from upgrade needs," said Yao Yao, head of research for JLL China.

Yao attributed the improved market activities to a number of supportive measures announced by the Chinese government benefiting various sectors including finance, consumption, investment, property, capital market, employment and people's livelihoods.

"The supportive measures will work together to greatly boost market confidence," Yao said.

Though most asset classes currently face a challenging short-term outlook, opportunities exist in all real estate segments, depending on entry price, location and market niche, according to James Macdonald, head of Savills Research China.

"The Shanghai residential sales market appears to have the best prospects, supported by substantial household equity, recent policy measures, pent-up demand and its relative security compared to other asset classes and regions," said Macdonald.

"Shopping centers, with their stable rental yields and potential for appreciation, are attracting a large number of investors and becoming the new favorite in the market, presenting opportunities for bargain hunting," said Shaun Brodie, head of research content on the China market at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

Lu Yan, head of research with CBRE Eastern China, said that

leasing demand for office and business parks is projected to see a moderate recovery in the fourth quarter, while outdoor sports and F&B (food and beverage) sectors are driving retail property demand.

"Despite short-term challenges in the office sector, recent government policies are expected to stimulate economic recovery and positively impact the market, but the full effects may take time to manifest, as these measures should support a long-term recovery in office demand, with improved leasing activity anticipated next year," Lu added.

According to Lu, in retail, to stimulate consumer sentiment and enhance consumption structure, Shanghai has intensified its promotional policies, issuing consumption vouchers for the four key sectors of dining, accommodation, film and sports at the end of the season. This policy support is expected to foster robust growth in the consumer market.

As for logistics, the government has introduced various policies to boost consumption, including subsidies for green and smart home appliances at the end of September. Shanghai also allocated 500 million yuan (\$70 million) for the dining, accommodation, film and sports sectors. These measures are expected to enhance consumer market recovery, increase goods circulation and drive greater demand for warehousing space, added Lu.

"The Shanghai municipal government's measures in encouraging consumption will definitely bring positive changes in the retail property and support the sector's further recovery. In the meantime, the new measures introduced in home buying will effectively expand home demand and further boost market confidence," Yao said.

Both local governments and the central government are rolling out measures in line with the spirit of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee meeting on Sept 26, which called to check the fall and stabilize the market.

Brodie believes the latest directive from the highest level regarding the current real estate market will stabilize market expectations.

"It will optimize the supply structure, improve the financing environment and promote a new model for real estate development," Brodie said.

Daxing attracts more high-tech industries

BELJING — In a sleek, automated workshop at the Daxing International Airport Economic Zone in southern Beijing, technicians from dental implant manufacturer CRS are meticulously checking their implants for any defects under microscopes.

CRS, a precision manufacturing company specializing in the research, production and sales of sterile dental implants, began production here in September and aims to produce one million implants annually. Its products are designed to be competitive by minimizing stress on bone and soft tissues, improving structural stability and simplifying clinical procedures.

Su Hanqi, general manager of Beijing CRS Medical Device Co Ltd, recalls that it took just an hour to choose the economic zone for their operations. "The one-stop services offered by the zone significantly reduced our efforts in navigating processes and approvals, while a range of supportive policies have fostered an exceptionally conducive entrepreneurial environment for us," Su said.

To promote the development of the medical and health industry, the economic zone and Daxing district offer policies that include monetary incentives for R&D, innovation application, mass production and space rentals.

Su said that due to the support, overall operating costs are estimated to decrease by 30 percent. "For a manufacturing enterprise like ours, being able to focus on production and R&D is crucial."

The economic zone where Su's firm operates aims to develop a series of industrial clusters in sectors such as life sciences, health, medical devices, logistics and international aviation. This aligns with the city's broader goal of becoming a global hub for scientific and technological innovation.

Data from the Beijing municipal government show that from January to August, investment in high-tech manufacturing and high-tech services grew by 72.7 percent and 19.4 percent year-on-year, respectively, driven by policies aimed at accelerating the development of new quality productive forces. This surge has fostered deeper integra-

tion between technological and industrial innovation, aligning with the national push for new quality productive forces.

According to the resolution adopted at the third plenary of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held in July, the country seeks to establish a mechanism for ensuring funding increases for industries of the future, and improve the policy and governance systems to promote the development of strategic industries such as next-generation information technology, AI, aviation and aerospace, new energy and biomedicine, among others.

A 20-minute drive from Daxing airport is the Daxing International Hydrogen Energy Demonstration Zone, home to Hypower, one of the world's largest hydrogen refueling stations. With a maximum daily capacity of 4.8 metric tons, the station can meet the hydrogen needs of 800 hydrogen-powered fuel cell electric vehicles.

Nearby, a workshop of SinoHytec, a Chinese high-tech company specializing in the R&D and commercialization of hydrogen fuel cells, showcases fuel cells of various capacities to visitors.

According to Bao Jianpeng, deputy director of production operations at SinoHytec, the company's fuel cells have been used in more than 15,000 vehicles.

"All the components of our fuel cell system are home-grown. Another significant breakthrough is that the fuel cells we produce, which previously could only operate above 0 C, can now function at temperatures as low as minus 35 C," he said.

The demonstration zone is focused on creating an industrial ecosystem incorporating hydrogen production, storage, transportation and refueling, fuel cell and components production, as well as testing and certification services for fuel cell vehicles and core components.

The demonstration zone has already attracted over 20 enterprises in the hydrogen industry, including Hypower and SinoHytec, according to the Daxing district government.

XINHUA



A technician operates a device at a workshop of Beijing CRS Medical Device Co Ltd in Beijing on Oct 13. LI XIN / XINHUA

The Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative, reflecting common ideals and the pursuit of fairer, more connected human societies, endeavors to seek new models of international cooperation and inject a new sense of positivity into efforts aimed at promoting world peace and development.



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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Measures needed for expansionary growth

EAGLE EYE

By Liu Shijin

On Sept 26, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held a meeting to analyze and study the current economic situation and make further arrangements for economic work, sending signals of vowing to hit the targets for this year's economic and social development.

According to the meeting, the economy has been generally stable, with progress being made and the overall situation sound. It was pointed out at the meeting that the fundamentals and favorable conditions of China's economy — such as a broad market, strong economic resilience and great potential — remain unchanged.

At the same time, the meeting said there are some new developments and problems in the current economic performance. It is imperative to calmly and objectively look at the current economic situation from an overall perspective, face up to difficulties and have greater confidence. It is also imperative to focus efforts on key areas, take a proactive approach, effectively implement existing policies, intensify the introduction of new policies, and make policy measures even more targeted and effective.

At this stage, the basic situation in China is that there are over 400 million people in the middle-income group. The Gini coefficient has remained above 0.4 for many years, with some research suggesting it is at or above 0.45. The current challenge of insufficient demand is directly related to this demand structure.

To increase effective consumer demand, it is crucial to differentiate between survival-oriented consumption and development-oriented consumption. Survival-oriented consumption, primarily focuses on basic needs such as food and clothing, tends to stabilize, indicating that the basic issue of meeting basic needs has largely been resolved. This type of consumption is mainly individual.

Consumption growth is primarily driven by development-oriented consumption, which includes areas such as education, healthcare, affordable housing, social security, culture, sports, entertainment, financial services, transportation and communication. Development-oriented consumption often occurs through collective consumption or public services that directly relate to the level of equalization in government-provided public services. Expanding development-oriented consumption cannot rely solely on individual efforts, it requires the government to provide a platform, establish systems and invest funds, representing a combination of government consumption expenditure and household consumption expenditure.

The lag in the equalization of basic public services directly hinders the growth of development-oriented consumption. Currently, urban residents frequently express concerns about pressures related to education, healthcare and housing. The issue is even more pronounced for nearly 300 million migrant workers and around 200 million rural workers who have moved to cities and are lacking in basic public services. Therefore, expanding consumption must focus on two critical areas: first, development-oriented consumption that relies on basic public services; second, the middle- and low-income



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

In the short term, this (the plan to advance the economy) will help quickly close the gap in total demand, leading economic growth into an expansionary cycle, while employing a stimulus plus reform approach that will create favorable conditions for high-quality social and economic development over the medium to long term.

groups, particularly migrant workers.

The shortcomings in basic public services are directly related to the level of urbanization. Urban agglomeration effects reduce the cost of providing public services. In tra-

ditional rural areas, costs associated with modern infrastructure and basic public services are prohibitively high and difficult to reach. In comparison to developed economies at similar per capita income levels, China's urbanization rate is relatively low, with the urbanization rate of permanent residents at 66 percent. However, urbanization rates in developed economies typically exceed 70 percent, with some even surpassing 80 percent.

Without a certain density of urbanization, achieving high-level basic public services in education, healthcare, affordable housing, social security, elderly care, and cultural and entertainment sectors becomes difficult.

In light of the current economic situation, it is suggested to launch a plan to advance the economy that combines stimulus and reform measures to guide the economy back onto an expansionary growth path.

This plan aims to implement the reform measures related to integrated urban-rural development mapped out by the resolution adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. It primarily focuses on fiscal policy and works in close cooperation with demand-side management to create a comprehensive effect of expand-

ing consumption, stabilizing growth and preventing risks.

The main source of funding will be through the issuance of ultra-long-term special treasury bonds. Over a period of one to two years, a significant investment scale will be used to address the weak links in basic public services. Previously, the focus was on physical capital investment. Now, the emphasis shifts to human capital investment.

This stimulus plan will primarily drive consumption at the micro level while also boosting investment in real estate, infrastructure and services, to substantially expand domestic demand. Macroscopically, it can elevate the overall demand level, reduce the gap with total supply and drive positive growth in the GDP deflator.

Meanwhile, more efforts are needed to significantly enhance the level of basic public services in affordable housing, education, healthcare, social security and elderly care for new urban residents, particularly migrant workers. In the short term, the government should purchase unsold housing and convert it into affordable housing for new urban residents.

The government also needs to accelerate the development of small and medium-

sized towns within metropolitan areas, driving a second wave of urbanization in China and establishing a high-quality, sustainable modern urban system based on integrated urban-rural development.

International experience shows that core cities within city clusters and metropolitan areas typically account for about 30 percent of urban populations. There remains significant development space for small and medium-sized towns beyond these core cities, which can accommodate over 60 percent of urban populations. This includes both the existing urban population being relocated and an influx from rural areas and other cities, making it suitable for the agglomeration of manufacturing and mid to low-end services. Within this framework, there is still room for development in real estate, infrastructure and other sectors.

It is also necessary to implement the reform measures mapped out by the resolution regarding facilitating greater urban-rural integration in planning, development and governance across the board, promoting equal exchanges and two-way flows of production factors between urban and rural areas, narrowing the disparities between the two and promote their shared prosperity and development.

According to the resolution, China will allow rural households to put houses under their legal ownership to good use by leasing them out, contributing them in the form of shares and engaging in cooperative ventures. It will promote orderly reforms for market-based transfers of rural collective land designated for business construction and improve the mechanisms for distributing returns realized from the appreciation of the land.

The focus should be on promoting a two-way autonomous flow of personnel, land and capital between urban and rural areas, optimizing the allocation and utilization of various resources based on market principles. Farmers should be able to move to cities, while urban residents should have opportunities to go to rural areas, creating greater opportunities for entrepreneurship, employment and housing in both urban and rural contexts. By further liberating thoughts and actively exploring the integration of rural homestead transfer and the improvement of rural social security systems as well as accelerating land system reforms, we can improve land use efficiency, increase property income for farmers, enhance social security capacity, improve housing conditions for urban and rural residents, and stabilize growth and upgrade structures — all yielding multiple benefits.

An important goal is to use the implementation of this plan to advance the economy as an opportunity to strive to double the middle-income population from the current 400 million to between 800 and 900 million within approximately ten years. Proposing and promoting the realization of this goal is fundamentally significant for extending the period of moderate growth and mitigating the adverse impacts of demand constraints on economic growth.

In the short term, this will help quickly close the gap in total demand, leading economic growth into an expansionary cycle, while employing a stimulus plus reform approach that will create favorable conditions for high-quality social and economic development over the medium to long term.

The writer is vice-chairman of the China Development Research Foundation and former deputy director of the Development Research Center of the State Council.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Breakthroughs and prospects of trade-in deals for consumer goods

MAIN STREET

By Shen Jianguang

China has issued 300 billion yuan (\$42 billion) in treasury bonds as a stimulus package to support large-scale equipment upgrades and trade-in deals for consumer goods. It is recommended that the government further strengthen coordination between fiscal subsidies and financial services, and continuously expand the scope of trade-in products.

The country has encouraged trade-in deals for consumer products, including automobiles, household appliances and home furnishings, to boost consumption and thereby economic growth, as per the guideline released by the State Council, the country's Cabinet, in March.

Multiple regions have introduced policies and measures such as auto replacements and home appliance trade-in deals, and positive results have been achieved in improving consumption growth in some areas and product categories.

In the first half, the contribution rate of

final consumption to economic growth reached 60 percent, said the National Bureau of Statistics. Yet, compared to services consumption, the recent downward trend in goods consumption has been more pronounced.

From January to June, the consumption of grains, edible oils, tobacco, alcohol and communication equipment maintained accelerated growth, while spending on home appliances, furniture, building decor and automobiles showed relatively sluggish performance.

The importance of activating consumption of some key categories of products has become increasingly demonstrated. Based on industry statistics, the annual domestic sales scale of home appliances has been around 850 billion yuan in the past decade, showing no significant growth over the period.

It has become increasingly important to drive a comprehensive consumption recovery by activating spending on upgrading consumer products. Currently, the number of household appliances owned by Chinese families has exceeded 3 billion units.

During the period from 2009 to 2012, the government issued subsidies to promote sales of home appliances in the countryside. A decade later, these prod-

ucts have entered a peak period of replacement.

If calculated based on an annual replacement rate of 10 percent, the potential sales of the market sector could exceed 500 billion yuan. In such a context, the importance of fiscal support to encourage consumers to trade in old products for new ones has become more prominent.

First, it is recommended that the government develop standardized plans for the implementation of trade-in policies and clear up uncertainties.

Previously, there were some unclear verification standards for the uploading of data for trade-in deals and for invoice issuances, thus requiring participating companies to pay advance money first. Such a phenomenon has reduced the participatory interest of both businesses and consumers.

Good practices and policy implementation in various regions should be summarized to help formulate guidelines for the implementation of the trade-in policy at the national level.

Possible areas of improvement include clarifying requirements for accounting and invoice issuance practices, unifying standards for government subsidies, and determining the proportion and upper limit of advance payments by enterprises and e-commerce platforms.

This would help ensure the implementation of the policy as a whole, raise consumer interest in participating in trade-in deals, and maximize the overall effect of the policy.

Second, the government may further improve the coordination mechanism between fiscal subsidies and financial services, and expand the effectiveness of the policy.

It is suggested that the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, establish a consumer goods trade-in refinancing program. Or, the PBOC could expand the coverage of technological innovation refinancing programs to support commercial banks to provide loans for the trade-in of smart and green consumer goods.

In addition, it is recommended that the government provide subsidies for financial institutions' loans related to trade-in deals, and thus share the risk pressures of financial institutions.

In addition, platforms and enterprises are encouraged to carry out credit sales based on the consumption scenarios of trade-in deals.

Third, the government should continuously expand the scope of trade-in products and promote effective connections between trade-in deals and the development of new quality productive forces.

Market research shows that consumers are most willing to conduct trade-ins for large-scale household appliances such as air conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines and televisions. The category is followed by electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets and computers.

When replacing old products, green energy-saving products and smart trendy products have proven the most popular.

It is recommended that different regions across the nation gradually expand coverage of products for trade-in deals based on upgrading demands among consumers.

The scope of products could expand from household appliances, home furnishings, automobiles and electric bicycles to high value-added and fast-updating categories such as computers and mobile phones, especially high-end, intelligent and green consumer products.

The trade-in of consumer goods, together with large-scale equipment upgrades, are encouraged to become important levers to develop new-quality productive forces in the country, and thus effectively stabilize supply and demand cycles.

The writer is vice-president and chief economist at Chinese e-commerce firm JD. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WORLD



Kemi Badenoch is congratulated by her husband Hamish (right) after winning the Conservative Party leadership contest on Saturday in London, England. DAN KITWOOD / GETTY IMAGES

UK's Tory Party elects first black leader

LONDON — Kemi Badenoch was elected the new Conservative Party leader of the United Kingdom on Saturday, becoming the first black woman to lead a major political party in the UK.

Badenoch, former secretary of state for business and trade, won 57 percent of the votes, beating Robert Jenrick, former minister of state for immigration, in the final stage of a monthslong contest that saw a field of six whittled down to two.

The new leader's daunting challenges are to restore the party's reputation after years of division, scandal and economic tumult, hammer Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer's policies on key issues, including the economy and immigration, and return the Conservatives to power at the next election, due by 2029.

Badenoch said in her victory speech that the Tories need not only

clear "Conservative pledges that appeal to the British people", but also "a clear plan to change this country by changing the way that government works".

The new Tory leader also asked her party members to "be honest about the fact that we've made mistakes".

"The time has come to tell the truth, to stand up for our principles, to plan for our future, to reset our politics and our thinking, and to give our party and our country the new start that they deserve," she said.

Starmer congratulated Badenoch on her election victory on social media platform X, saying that "the first black leader of a Westminster party is a proud moment for our country".

The Tory leadership race was triggered by former prime minister Rishi Sunak's announcement of his intention to resign on July 5 after the Conservatives lost to the Labour Par-

ty in the country's general election.

A business secretary in Sunak's government, Badenoch was born in London to Nigerian parents and spent much of her childhood in the West African country.

Badenoch herself has publicly said she prefers not to focus on her race.

Asked at the Conservative Party conference earlier this year how it would feel to become the first black woman leader of the party, she said: "I am somebody who wants the color of our skin to be no more significant than the color of our hair or the color of our eyes."

Badenoch is the Tories' fourth female leader, after Margaret Thatcher, Theresa May and Liz Truss, all of whom became prime minister. She's the second Conservative leader of color, after Sunak, and the first with African roots.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Canadian firms eye Chinese consumers

Companies to explore growing interest in health products at Shanghai expo

By YANG GAO in Toronto
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Canadian companies are hoping to appeal to Chinese consumers' growing interest in natural health products at the upcoming China International Import Expo, to be held in Shanghai from Nov 5-10. Nearly 100 Canadian companies will participate in the expo.

Jeannie Cheng, chair of the Canada International Trade Promotion Society, said seven companies from British Columbia will display their products in a Canadian Natural Health Products Pavilion.

"This is the first time we have tried to set up this new form of making a health product pavilion," Cheng said.

Canada's offerings align with China's growing demand for natural, safe and high-quality health products, she said.

China's middle-income group is increasingly concerned about health, she said. "We see this pavilion as a way to meet their needs, showcasing products that have unique Canadian advantages: safety, natural ingredients and environmental sustainability."

In 2016, China implemented the "Healthy China 2030" plan to stem the onset of preventable diseases, which has led to a greater focus on wellness.

China's health and wellness industry is valued at \$683 billion, which makes it the second-largest wellness market in the world, said Zarina Kanji, head of Tmall Global Business Development for health and wellness, and food and bever-

age brands at Alibaba UK and Nordics.

Cheng said this shows there is a strong demand for products that meet daily health needs. "The Chinese are willing to invest in products that improve their quality of life, and our exhibitors are ready."

The CIIIE allows foreign companies to connect directly with Chinese buyers, she added. "Participating in one CIIIE is equivalent to the number of consumers a company will reach in four years."

Cheng believes Canada's commitment to high-quality and natural ingredients gives the country's companies an advantage in meeting Chinese consumers' pursuit of safety and purity.

Innovative thinking

"We are not here just to sell, but to understand Chinese consumers and find ways to better serve them," she said. "To be successful, we need to combine natural advantages with innovative thinking to create products that meet the needs of Chinese consumers."

"This is not just this year's expo," Cheng added. "We see this as the beginning of a lasting relationship with Chinese consumers. China values the values that Canada represents, which are trustworthy, high quality and safe products."

"This partnership has great potential, and we are just getting started."

CAC Naturals, a British Columbia company and the distributor of Webber Naturals in China, is one of the companies in the pavilion in Shanghai.

Wei Xie, CEO of CAC Naturals, said: "This is the seventh time we have participated in the CIIIE. We always believe it is an important opportunity to understand China's rapidly changing consumer needs, connect with local distributors and share Canadian natural health products."

CAC Naturals' display will be centered around its premium fish oil.

"Our fish oil is formulated with pharmaceutical-grade standards, which means everything from purity to absorption rate is strictly controlled," Xie said.

"We are seeing Chinese families moving toward a holistic approach to health," Xie said. "Our goal is to make health management simpler and more effective for Chinese families, which means offering combinations that are both balanced and convenient."

Sonia Parmar, vice-president of regulatory affairs and government relations at the Canadian Health Food Association, said, "Canada's regulatory framework for natural health products is among the most stringent globally."

The government's Health Canada assigns each Canadian product a natural product number, or NPN, an accreditation that denotes adherence to strict safety and quality standards. "The Chinese health product market is becoming more quality-sensitive, and Canadian NHPs answer the rising consumer demand for trustworthy, effective health options," Parmar added.

"By participating in CIIIE, Canadian companies can further strengthen the values of authenticity, safety and trust — the qualities increasingly demanded by Chinese consumers," she said.

Briefly

AUSTRIA
President to have spinal surgery

Austria's President Alexander Van der Bellen, who is overseeing coalition talks following the country's recent election, will undergo spinal surgery, his office said on Saturday. The 80-year-old, who has been the head of state since 2017, has been struggling with intervertebral disc problems since the beginning of the year. "Recently, the situation has deteriorated," his office said. "He will therefore undergo a routine operation on his intervertebral discs in Vienna in the next few days." For the duration of his treatment and recovery he will be represented by Chancellor Karl Nehammer, Van der Bellen's office said.

INDONESIA
Fire in cooking oil factory kills 9

As many as nine people were killed and four others injured following a large fire at a cooking oil factory near Jakarta, Indonesia's largest city, an official said on Saturday. According to Idham Kholid, head of the reconstruction and rehabilitation unit at Bekasi's disaster management and mitigation agency, the fire occurred on Friday at an industrial complex in the town of Bekasi and all flames have now been extinguished. Agung Priambodo, head of the Jakarta Search and Rescue Office, said the injured individuals were receiving treatment.

SUDAN
Medical aid sent to war-torn regions

The Sudanese Ministry of Health announced on Saturday that it has dispatched urgent medical supplies to regions affected by the ongoing armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The 250-ton shipment includes essential medicines, solutions, antibiotics, and emergency medical equipment. The conflict has severely impacted the healthcare system in Sudan, particularly in war-torn areas. The outbreak of diseases like cholera, malaria, measles, and dengue fever has further exacerbated the health crisis.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

China's cleantech surge key to energy transition

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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China's unprecedented deployment of clean energy technologies, surpassing all other nations combined, has become a driving force in accelerating global clean energy adoption, though experts caution that some countries' protectionist measures could hamper the global energy transition efforts.

Recent analyses examining the global clean energy deployment reveal China's unrivaled lead, particularly in battery storage and manufacturing sectors.

Global clean energy investments have seen a surge over the past decade, climbing from \$248 billion in 2014 to \$745 billion in 2023. During this period, China's deployment of clean energy technologies has exceeded that of all other countries combined, according to a recent analysis by Rystad Energy, an energy research company headquartered in Oslo, Norway.

The research indicates that China's rapid scaling of clean technology has not only established its position as a global leader but also sparked a competitive response from other nations, accelerating their own energy transitions.

"Unmatched capacity growth and the resulting price cuts for Chinese equipment have enabled other regions to accelerate their renewable energy investments," said Lars Nitter Havro, head of Energy Macro at Rystad Energy, in the analysis. "The results are clear: As China ramped up its cleantech investments, the rest of the world followed in quick succession."

Yi Cui, professor of energy science and engineering and of photon science at Stanford University, attributed China's cleantech leadership to its robust engineering and manufacturing capabilities.

"China is very strong in manufacturing and engineering, and that's why China's battery industry, energy storage and carbon-capture demonstration is moving ahead really fast," Cui told China Daily.

China's dominance is particularly evident in battery energy

storage and manufacturing, where it accounts for 77 percent of global battery-production capacity and is poised to install more battery storage than the rest of the world combined, according to Rystad Energy.

In the electric truck sector, China's leadership has driven down prices and improved economics, according to a September BloombergNEF report. It showed that China accounts for 82 percent of all fuel-cell and battery electric trucks sold so far this year, contributing significantly to the sector's growth and cost reduction.

Electric trucks play a crucial role in meeting climate goals, as emissions from commercial vehicles are set to become the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The BloombergNEF report suggests that the rapid growth of electric trucks has helped make truck batteries cheaper, therefore improving the economics of heavy-duty electric trucks, which can be as cheap as diesel before 2030.

While the United States and India are aggressively investing in domestic cell manufacturing and module assembly plants, aiming for self-sufficiency by 2026, their production costs remain notably higher than China's, despite substantial subsidies, according to the Rystad Energy analysis.

The Biden administration's decision earlier this year to increase tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles from 25 percent to 100 percent could "impede the global energy transition compared to a scenario where Chinese imports could flow more freely," according to analysts.

"The tariff is slowing down the process of clean energy transition in the US," said Cui, expressing concern as the United States already lags on its climate goals.

The US is set to reduce 22 percent of its emissions by 2030, short of its 50 percent target announced by President Joe Biden in 2021.

"To reach the climate goal, the number one important thing is electricity. The grid needs to be cleaned up. The United States needs to push harder on renewable energy," Cui said.



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COMMENT

Editorial

US ending sponsoring Israel's provocation key to winding down Middle East conflict

Although Washington continues to reiterate its pro-peace stance on the Middle East crisis and claims it will only defend Israel, its latest deployment of military forces clearly demonstrates the Joe Biden administration's de facto unconditional support for the warmongering Benjamin Netanyahu government.

The Pentagon said in a statement on Friday that B-52 bombers, fighter jets, refueling aircraft and US Navy destroyers are being deployed to the Middle East, to cover the aircraft carrier gap that will be created by the withdrawal of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* carrier strike group from the region until another carrier strike group is cycled in.

The deployment of the long-range nuclear-capable B-52 bomber aircraft will bolster the combat strength of the US in the region and is viewed as being a pointed message to Iran.

The US' readjustment of its military assets in the region comes at a critical time as tensions between Israel and Iran continue to escalate.

The Netanyahu government is trying to hype up anticipated retaliation from Iran for Israel's three waves of air strikes on Iranian targets on Oct 26 as an excuse to launch new military actions against the Islamic Republic.

Despite Teheran repeatedly saying it does not want a war with Israel, the Israeli war Cabinet has made it clear that is its goal. Israel hopes to take the opportunity of the US' support to strike against its arch-enemy, and the Biden administration is encouraging it to do so, since it is not Hamas nor Hezbollah, or the Houthis rebel outfit, that is the US' real concern in the region, but Iran.

Israel and the US have calculated the timing of Israel's recent strikes on Iran well, giving full consideration to how long it will take the US side to make the adjustments to its military deployments in the region before the presidential election and passing the ball to Iran's court by presenting it with a window of opportunity to take reprisal actions against Israel just before or even on the day of the US presidential election on Nov 5.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned Israel and the US that Teheran intends to retaliate to Israel's recent strikes on targets in Iran. "The enemies, whether the Zionist regime or the United States of America, will definitely receive a crushing response to what they are doing to Iran and the Iranian nation and to the resistance front," Khamenei said in a video released by Iranian state media recently.

Even if Iran refuses to bite the bait on the hook — and Israel is goading it to do so by further intensifying its assassination campaign against the Hamas and Hezbollah leaderships and brutal attacks on Gaza's refugee camps — Israel has undoubtedly secured more US support for it to step up its actions targeting Iran itself, rather than its regional proxies.

The upcoming US presidential election will prove to be a watershed event for the Middle East crisis. As long as Tel Aviv and Washington continue to scratch each other's back on the issue, peace will not be forthcoming as Israel will take new actions to provoke Iran and its proxies, forcing the situation into an escalating tit-for-tat spiral that can only lead to war.

To prevent this, diplomatic efforts need to be intensified to generate the political will to end all moves that fuel antagonism and ignite conflict. The onus is on the US, as the country with influence, to play its due role to prevent a spillover of the crisis.

China urges the US to put aside its historical differences with Iran and play a constructive role in the region to avoid further turmoil. To this end, Washington should make positive efforts to end the fighting as soon as possible by bringing its influence to bear on Israel in the pursuit of a cease-fire rather than continuing to support its provocation.

No business poking nose in Asia's affairs

The Japan-EU security and defense partnership agreement that Japanese Foreign Minister Iwaya and European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell jointly released on Friday makes it clear that the EU is trying to expand its presence in the Asia-Pacific region, and Japan is doing what it can to play a bigger role in both political and economic spheres in not just Asia but also globally.

Although there is no mention of China in the Japan-EU agreement, both Borrell and Iwaya, during their meeting, reportedly said they were concerned over the situations in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and strongly oppose any attempt to change the status quo in the region by force or coercion, which would further raise tensions undermining regional stability and the rules-based world order. The two also expressed their concerns over the situation in the Taiwan Strait, saying peace and stability across the Strait are of strategic importance for regional and global security.

The first security and defense partnership agreement the EU has signed with a country in the Asia-Pacific region is nothing but a ploy to meddle in the regional affairs and push forward the United States' China-containment strategy.

It is clear that the so-called Japan-EU partnership is closely related to the resolution the European Parliament adopted on the Taiwan island's status two weeks ago, accusing Beijing of deliberately misinterpreting UN Resolution 2758. In reality, the European Parliament's resolution is not only a gross misinterpretation of UN Resolution 2758 but also a blatant interference in China's internal affairs.

Why should Japan and the EU express concern over the situation in the Strait when cross-Strait affairs are China's internal matter. The Taiwan question brooks no interference, not from Japan, not from the EU, not from the US. Beijing has the will and wherewithal to resolve the Taiwan question when it deems fit.

That the People's Republic of China is the only legitimate representative of China, and Taiwan is an integral part of China is recognized by the entire world, including the EU and the US, and therefore it has the right to choose any method it likes to reunite Taiwan with the motherland.

As for the situations in the East China and South China seas, the EU has nothing to do with it, and its involvement will not help settle the maritime disputes between China and some of its neighbors; instead, it will make the situation more complicated.

No country has the right to question China on the Taiwan question — definitely not Japan, which occupied Taiwan for 50 years, and committed untold atrocities on Taiwan residents before and during World War II. Japan's brutal occupation of the island ended only after it surrendered to the Allied forces in 1945.

China has the right to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and no country should expect it to compromise on them when trying to resolve the maritime disputes with its neighbors. But that does not mean China will use force to coerce its neighbors to accept its conditions to settle the disputes.

Beijing has been reiterating that the Chinese mainland will try all means possible to peacefully reunite Taiwan with the motherland, failing which it reserves the right to use force to achieve national reunification.

The fact that the maritime disputes between China and its neighbors have not in the least affected the cooperation in other fields speaks volumes about China's sincerity in improving relations with countries in the region and its efforts in maintaining peace in the region.

EU-Japan security cooperation should not be used as an excuse by Brussels to poke its nose in the affairs of Asia or by Japan to overexert itself on regional affairs.

Beijing will do whatever it can to maintain peace and stability in the region, and prevent non-regional players from meddling in regional affairs, and external forces from interfering in China's internal affairs.

Li Min



Opinion Line

New regulatory measures aim to make capital market open, secure

A document regulating strategic investment by foreign investors in listed companies was revised and issued jointly by relevant central departments on Nov 1.

The regulation was issued in 2005. Since then, foreign investors have made investments in over 600 listed companies in China, and the scale of the securities market has expanded significantly. Moreover, there have been significant adjustments to related regulatory systems, necessitating revisions of the regulatory measures.

The new document allows individual foreign nationals to invest in China; the original version only allowed foreign legal persons or organizations to make investments in the country.

The original regulation required foreign investors to have a total overseas actual assets of at least \$100 million or manage overseas actual assets

totaling no less than \$500 million.

The revised version stipulates that if a foreign investor does not become the controlling shareholder of a listed company after making a strategic investment, the asset requirement is reduced to no less than \$50 million or managed actual assets of no less than \$300 million.

Besides the original methods of targeted additional issuance and agreement transfer, the revision allows foreign investors to implement investments through tender offers. For investments made through targeted issuance or tender offers, it allows the use of shares of unlisted companies abroad as payment consideration.

While the original version stipulated that the shareholding ratio obtained by foreign investors from their initial investment in a listed company should be above 10 percent, and the acquired

shares could not be transferred within three years, the revision eliminates the shareholding ratio requirement for strategic investments made through targeted issuance, and reduces the shareholding ratio requirement for investments made through agreement transfer or tender offer from 10 to 5 percent.

The revision allows investors to make compliance commitments during information disclosure, and connects with the foreign investment security review system and anti-monopoly review rules. It also adds administrative penalty provisions for commercial authorities, which will ensure the domestic capital market becomes more open and also secure.

The revised measures aim to guide more foreign capital toward listed companies.

—ZHANG ZHOXIANG, CHINA DAILY

Platform for merchants to access superlarge market

The seventh China International Import Expo is being held in Shanghai from Tuesday to Friday. According to the Ministry of Commerce, this year's exhibition will attract participants from 152 countries, regions, and international organizations. Among them, corporate houses will have the lion's share, with 3,496 exhibitors from 129 countries and regions participating, surpassing the number of the previous session. Nearly 300 Fortune 500 companies and industry leaders are among the likely participants, marking it a historic high. Among the participants, over 180 companies and institutions will be attending the event for the seventh consecutive time.

As the world's first national-level import expo, the CIIE has expanded its global influence and achieved increasingly impressive results over the past seven years, highlighting China's com-

mitment to further opening-up. The previous expos accumulated intentional transaction volumes exceeding \$420 billion; more than 1,130 foreign-funded enterprises and investment promotion agencies were roped in to help the participants, resulting in many exhibitors opening new stores, factories, and R&D centers in China.

For companies, the CIIE is a convergence point that connects the innovative achievements and concepts of global enterprises.

Through the expo, companies can understand customer and consumer demands more directly and extensively, meet those demands with high-quality products, innovative services, and solutions, and promote the localization of innovation in China to influence industries, thereby collaboratively creating a greener, more efficient, and smarter

industrial ecosystem.

By continuously introducing new technologies, many companies can unleash unlimited potential in China's energy, industrial, environmental protection, and cutting-edge medical fields. Together with their partners, they will build a greener, smarter, and more sustainable future vision for China.

China provides them with a good business environment and is a strategic market for many international companies. Thanks to the vigorous development of the Chinese market, its economic vitality adds momentum to the global economy. As China continues to expand its high-level opening-up, more opportunities for development will be discovered by foreign enterprises in China.

—SHANGHAI SECURITIES NEWS

What They Say

Manufacturing shows signs of rebound

The data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Thursday showed that the Purchasing Managers' Index of the manufacturing sector in October increased to 50.1, up 0.3 points from the previous month. It was also the first time since May this year that the PMI climbed above the 50 contraction-expansion threshold. Coupled with the positive growth in fiscal revenue in September, the increase in the PMI indicates macroeconomic operations are on the rise.

The production index, one of the five indexes that make up the PMI, continued its rebound, increasing by 0.8 points to reach 52 in October, which suggests enterprises are increasing both production and supply.

The new orders index, a component of the PMI which measures overall macroeco-

nomical demand, reached 50 last month, the first time after five consecutive months of sluggishness. This suggests an increase in both production and demand in the coming months.

In addition, the main raw materials purchase price index and the factory sales price index reached 53.4 and 49.9 respectively, up by 8.3 and 5.9 points from the previous month. The increase can be partly attributed to the strong performance of commodity prices under a strong dollar. Enterprises' expectations are continuously rising, with the business activity expectation index reaching 54, up by 2 points from the previous month.

While expectations often have a self-reinforcing characteristic, policies should help further raise expectations.

However, there were signs of a decline in the new export orders index in September and October. In particular, the significant policy uncertainty due to the

US presidential election on Tuesday, and the European Union imposing extra tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles suggest volatility in foreign trade may increase in the future.

Given the combined support of previous adjustments to housing loan interest rates, reduction in the loan prime rates, and easing of restrictions on the purchase of property in multiple cities, sectors such as the real estate are likely to rebound.

In other words, the rebound of the manufacturing PMI suggests production and demand, as well as enterprises' production expectations will improve. Coupled with the turnaround of fiscal revenue from negative to positive in September and the possible continued rise in price indexes, countercyclical regulatory policies are still having a positive effect on economic operations in the fourth quarter.

—21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

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COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Opportunities for China's Development

Editor's note: Over the past decades, various sectors in China have undergone thorough transformation, strengthening the country's determination to further deepen reform and widen opening-up to achieve high-quality development and advance Chinese modernization. Three experts share the views on the issue with China Daily.

Wang Yiwei

Chinese modernization a new development path

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China adopted the "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization" on July 18, reiterating China's commitment to peaceful development but also to contributing to build a global community with a shared future based on mutual respect, inclusiveness and stability.

The resolution posits that Chinese modernization is intrinsically peaceful and aimed at building a global community with a shared future. It emphasizes China's shift from being a passive participant to a leader in global governance. China's approach is rooted in the belief that "global economic development is essential for China's development, and vice versa". This principle underscores China's efforts to foster a fairer and more inclusive global governance system — one that benefits not just a few, but all.

After the 2008 global financial meltdown, China emerged as a key driver of global economic growth, while helping maintain global stability. By contributing to nearly one-third of global economic growth, China has been instrumental in lifting itself as well as other countries out of economic stagnation. Forums such as the recently concluded BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, have seen China make new commitments, including making substantial investments in AI, industrial capacity and digital collaboration centers.

China has also pioneered initiatives to eradicate poverty and overcome infrastructure challenges, which include the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund and making efforts to realize the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, China waived interest-free loans for least-developed and landlocked developing countries, demonstrating its commitment to help the developing world meet its development challenges.

Institutionally, China has launched groundbreaking multilateral organizations such as the Asian Infrastruc-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY



The author is a professor of international studies at Renmin University of China, and senior fellow of Tsinghua Institute.

ture Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, addressing global infrastructure needs while promoting economic fairness. The AIIB embodies values of transparency, sustaina-

bility, and green investment, setting an example for future multilateral financial bodies. As for the Belt and Road Initiative, it has redefined global cooperation by advocating for policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, free and fair trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties. By focusing on infrastructure and green development, the Belt and Road Initiative has helped cre-

ate inclusive economic opportunities, opening channels for a resilient, interconnected global economy.

Beyond material and institutional influence, China's foreign policy is shaped by a moral framework steeped in the values of harmony and mutual respect, which contrasts with the Western binary view of democracy versus authoritarianism. Concepts like "innovative, coordinated, green, open, and inclusive" development resonate worldwide, underscoring China's win-win approach to international relations. Initiatives to combat climate change, safeguard cyberspace, protect maritime rights, and improve governance further reflect China's intent to address emerging global challenges.

China's commitment to a peaceful, inclusive world order, exemplified by the Belt and Road spirit of mutual learning and mutual benefit is shaping the values under-

pinning global governance. This ensures that different cultures and values coexist peacefully, and helps shape a new model of cooperation that respects pluralism and rejects hegemony.

With regionalization and protectionism on the rise, China advocates for a new, open and inclusive globalization that resists protectionism. The third plenary session's resolution outlines a vision of high-quality Belt and Road partnerships, emphasizing the importance of multilateral platforms in fields such as green development, AI, and digital economies. Such cooperation frameworks align with the Belt and Road spirit of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.

China's approach to globalization is also reshaping the fundamental structure of capital flow. While the West has focused on "managed globalization" for years, China argues

that fair global competition necessitates good governance and shared rules to avoid the pitfalls of economic polarization. It aims to create a model of "patient capital" focused on sustainable, shared growth rather than short-term gains.

One of China's key goals is to secure the global supply chains. The country has identified strategic fields such as AI, energy and core infrastructure as essential to maintaining secure supply chains. By creating robust and scalable domestic industries, China is not only fortifying its domestic economy but also helping stabilize the global supply chains.

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The resolution also reinforces the necessity of higher-standard open economies, ensuring that foreign and domestic markets are accessible, fair and mutually beneficial to all. China's efforts to help reform the global governance system are manifest in its initiatives to establish institutions such as the Center for International Knowledge on Development, where countries can share their experiences of development.

In the ultimate analysis, China's strategy is encapsulated in its vision of a global community with a shared future. China is now committed to helping improve the existing world order to make it fairer and more representative, and promoting collective development. It champions a globalization that is not dominated by any country and, instead, is based on equitable participation. By fostering a global community rooted in common values, China asserts that mutual development is not only possible but essential to building a peaceful, progressive world.

Globalization should not result in the strong growing stronger, and the weak becoming weaker, nor should it damage the environment or erode traditional cultures. It must not be structured around a singular universal value dictated by one dominant power, with other countries revolving around it. Rather globalization should adopt a multipolar approach, embracing diverse, inclusive values that respect all cultures. This approach aims to establish universal values that benefit all.

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Su Qingyi

China's new opportunities for foreign capital

The idea of "new quality productive forces" stems from the urge to move beyond traditional economic growth paths and pursue high-tech, high-quality development. By using new quality productive forces to upgrade its industries, China is also creating new opportunities for foreign capital to grow. This can be understood through three key dynamics.

First, new quality productive forces create an open economy. China, as a leading example of an open economy, is raising its standards in investment, services and the digital economy by facilitating "institutional openness". This distinct Chinese concept of openness emphasizes adjustments of rules, regulations, management and standards in line with global benchmarks.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China emphasized the importance of deepening reform to attract more foreign investment and ensure foreign enterprises get the same treatment as domestic enterprises in terms of market access, standards and government procurement. This will create a competitive but fair playing field.

Second, new quality productive forces promote innovation and high-end cooperation, shifting foreign investment toward higher value-added fields, with China's expanding institutional openness helping improve the quality of foreign investment. No wonder last year saw the setting up of 53,766 new foreign-invested enterprises, up 39.7 percent year-on-year, with actual foreign investment in high-tech manufacturing increasing by 6.5 percent, according to Ministry of Commerce data.

This shift has made multinational enterprises' executives visiting China more interested in the country. While Apple has announced it will set up new R&D centers in Shenzhen and Shanghai, AstraZeneca said it will establish an advanced drug manufacturing unit, and some major global automakers stated they have plans to set up R&D hubs in China. This is good news before foreign capital brings with it advanced technologies that, working in synergy with Chinese companies, can boost efficiency, reduce costs, and increase the potential of new patents and tech transfer.

The synergy between China's economic transformation and the sustained growth of high-level foreign investment shows how the Chinese and global economies can achieve efficient integration.

Third, new quality productive forces have huge potential to contribute to the development of industry chains. The third plenary session said foreign enterprises ought to be encouraged to engage in upstream and downstream collaboration within China's industry chain. This should allay fears that China's push for self-sufficiency in certain fields would exclude foreign companies, and reaffirm that they remain essential partners in China's pursuit of higher-quality development.

In September, China introduced a new "negative list", removing all restrictions on foreign companies' entry into the manufacturing sector. In the auto industry, 2020 saw the removal of equity caps on foreign commercial vehicle manufacturers, and 2022 witnessed the removal of similar restrictions on passenger vehicle makers. Also, foreign enterprises can now establish more than two joint ventures in China. These moves show China remains committed to open collaboration, which, given its vast market and comprehensive industry chain, will draw high-level foreign partners across the value chain, fostering global resource integration.

Foreign investors stand to benefit in multiple industries. Traditional industries, especially the labor-intensive sectors, have significant potential for upgrading and transformation. New quality productive forces rely on a complex system of labor, capital and production processes, where skill levels, technological know-how and social integration shape productivity and its trajectory. With China moving away from the "market for technology" model, the labor-intensive sectors can overcome the problem of rising labor costs by using advanced, adaptable technologies. And with policy support, the market potential of these sectors can be unleashed, attracting more foreign investment.

Emerging and future industries, too, require foreign participation. Developing new quality productive forces means prioritizing innovation and industrial upgrading, and creating new growth avenues in green energy, smart manufacturing and the digital economy.

Due to the lengthy investment cycle and uncertainties involved in commercializing future technologies, venture funds will play a key role in the economy, with foreign capital being critical for boosting productivity.

Moreover, the growing role of services as a key productivity component reflects the deepening social division of labor, with new productivity driving demand for high-quality production-related services. China's expanded and high-quality opening up in the service sector will create a huge market and development opportunities for global service trade enterprises. The high potential of the services sector can be gauged from the fact that in the first eight months of the year, China's foreign trade in services reached 4.89 trillion yuan (\$686.44 billion), up 14.3 percent year-on-year.

In other words, the development of new quality productive forces will attract more foreign investment and draw global players to be part of China's industrial transformation.

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

Christine Bierre

Sci-tech a field of competition and cooperation

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held in Beijing in July, set some extraordinary economic targets, daunting for many countries.

Despite all the short-term economic difficulties and geopolitical tensions, the third plenary session reaffirmed the country's determination to advance Chinese modernization on the way to realizing its second centennial goal of building China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful by the middle of this century, the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. It also added to the agenda a whole set of goals to be realized by 2029, the 80th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

At a time when most of its competitors are having difficulty in even electing the right person to the country's highest office and getting disgruntled



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voters to vote for them, the development goals set by China reflect the strength of the country.

While the drums of trade wars were being beaten by some Western powers and conflicts in Eurasia and the Middle East were intensifying, China, at the third plenary session, was reaffirming its commitment to deepen reform and widen opening-up.

The resolution of the third plenum reaffirmed China's status as a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics, while the communiqué asserted that the CPC will extend, in a measured way, the country's opening-up on matters of regulation, and reform in depth its foreign trade system as well as the

management of foreign investments in China, and China's investments abroad.

The most significant aspect of the third plenum, however, was its assertion that the country remains committed to promoting higher-quality development, a broad term which means China will improve the market environment and solve the economic problems obstructing smooth growth while raising the living standards of the people.

To achieve higher-quality development, China will use new quality productive forces. Although China has made great strides in many fields, including infrastructure, green energy, green products, space science and technology, the Chinese leadership has said the country's innovation capacity falls short of expectations, and the industrial sector, while large in size and extensive in scope, is not yet strong or adequately advanced, and the over-reliance on key and core technologies controlled by others has not been fundamentally changed. This means

China is yet to become self-reliant in advanced technologies.

The Chinese leadership has emphasized that the world is witnessing a new cycle of scientific and technological innovation and industrial change centered on advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum technology and bio-technology. Advanced technologies have become the main battleground of international competition and certain technologies remain under the control of rich countries. Therefore, China needs to boost its innovation capacity to make significant breakthroughs in advanced research to become self-reliant in advanced technologies.

The third plenum's communiqué also calls for deepening comprehensive reform in education, science and technology, as well as talent development, so as to boost the overall performance of China's innovation-oriented enterprises. In this regard, the government will encourage students to choose disciplines and majors

(especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics) that are in high demand, so they can build a strong base for China to become self-reliant in advanced technologies.

The government will also take measures to promote research, especially advanced-level research, in universities, institutions and leading high-tech enterprises. It is to be hoped that better management of the science and technology sector will ensure advanced research works in those areas are forward-looking and help boost basic research.

Humans' ability to make new discoveries and use them to develop new technologies knows no bounds, while scientific breakthroughs and innovations create the conditions for humans to produce more using less raw materials and at lower costs. And China is determined to excel on all these fronts.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

JORGE HEINE

A potent platform for the Global South

For the overwhelming majority of the developing world the current international system has failed and needs a major overhaul, one for which BRICS can be instrumental

The 16th Summit of the BRICS, held in Kazan, Russia, from Oct 22 to 24, was the first after the group's expansion in 2023. It brought together representatives from 36 countries, 22 of them heads of state or government, as well as United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, making it the biggest diplomatic summit held in Russia in a long time, perhaps ever.



At the last summit held in Johannesburg, 23 countries applied to join, and six (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) were invited to do so. This time, in Kazan, 34 countries applied to join, and 13 (Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam) were invited to do so as "partners". This is a new category that will precede full membership in the group.

In Kazan, President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held their first formal meeting in five years, agreeing on common protocols about military patrols along their border. This signaled a breakthrough in Sino-Indian relations, one that potentially holds the seeds for a fresh start in relations between the two Asian giants, the two most populated countries on the planet, and the ones to which the saying "there are only two BRICS in the wall" once applied.

Turkiye's bid to join the group and the presence in Kazan of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

also marked a key turning point in East-West and North-South relations. For the first time a NATO member and EU member candidate has asked to join BRICS, setting a significant precedent and raising eyebrows in foreign ministries around the world.

However, the 16th BRICS Summit also showed something else: the steady rise of the Global South as a force to reckon with in world affairs. There is a reason why not too long ago one influential journal asked: "Was 2023 the year of the Global South?"

In fact, one could well argue that the most significant geopolitical shift that has taken place in 2022-24 has been the emergence of what was once known as the Third World, that is, the developing nations, now labeled as the Global South, to the forefront of international politics. As the world moves from the unipolar moment of unbridled US hegemony in the post-Cold War period, to one in which power is more evenly distributed, many countries — especially those in Africa, Asia and Latin America — are expressing their discontent with the current world order.

Amazingly, just around the time when these countries are raising their voice on this matter, there are those in capitals such as London and Washington that argue that there is no such thing as the Global South. In their view, the very use of the term is a mistake, and it should be retired, because it is "divisive". A favorite argument of these deniers is that countries such as China and India, as well as those of Central Asia, and a number of nations in the Middle East, are in fact in the

Northern Hemisphere, making the notion of the Global South a misnomer.

This, of course, assumes that the notion is a strictly geographic one. It never was. It is a geopolitical and geohistorical concept. It was first used by Carl Oglesby in an article published in the magazine *Commonweal* in 1969. Referring to the Vietnam War raging at the time, Oglesby argued that the war was the result of "northern domination over the Global South".

In contrast to countries in the developed Global North (i.e., those in the North Atlantic, plus Japan and those in Australasia), countries in the Global South tend to be poorer, to have a colonial past and be often economically dependent on developed nations. Once under the shackles of empire, they are keen to loosen those ties and strike out on their own. This does not mean that several of them have not done quite well. In fact, a key feature of the new century has been the "Wealth Shift" from the North Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific, although that has not yet reflected itself in the power structure of global governance mechanisms like the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions.

And while this discontent with extant arrangements has been simmering for quite some time, it has surfaced with a special brio in 2022-24. It first came to the fore with the crisis in Ukraine, when some of the leading countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America did not partake of the Western stance on the war. And although many of them condemned Russia, most of them did not support the unilateral Western sanctions on Russia. They consid-

ered the sanctions to be highly arbitrary, a radical weaponization of what might be considered the "utilities" of the international economic system, such as the US dollar, the international banking system, and even the internet, simply to further the interests of Western powers.

And the Global South's frustration with the West, and with the incapacity of current mechanisms to deal with international crises, spiked with the war in Gaza, triggered by Hamas's attack on Israel on Oct 7, 2023. A year later, with 41,000 fatal victims in Gaza (16,000 of them children) and the West's unlimited support to Israel, and steady supply of bombs and weapons to "inflict horrors on thousands of children" as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has called it, any claim that the West stands for the universal defense of human rights has been shown to be mere empty talk.

Beyond these wars, however, there is a generalized discontent across the developing world, a sense that the current international system, whose foundations were laid as far back as 1945 by the victors of World War II, has ceased to function, and that it needs a major



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

overhaul. To further that goal, the BRICS group is seen by many in the Global South as a potent platform.

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powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

DARYL GUPPY

Swift results for BRICS

The Kazan Declaration addresses many challenges, including how to counter the weaponization of dollar-based global trade settlement, which trips global prosperity

The 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, is the most significant in recent times because it turns BRICS

into a more important player in an increasingly unstable world, which is facing tremors from hegemonic sclerosis. At the summit, China advanced solutions to the central issues surrounding cross-border trade settlement.



BRICS member countries are home to 45 percent of the global population, and account for more than one-third of the global economy. The GDP of the expanded BRICS is larger than G7 economies combined.

The Kazan Declaration makes it clear that BRICS is about adhering to the United Nations Charter and removing barriers to global impoverishment, particularly in the Global South. This is consistent with China's Global Development Initiative operating under the umbrella of UN principles. The summit focused on expanding the group's influence in geopolitics, reshaping global trade and finance to reduce transaction risks, and addressing some of the key issues concerning its members and the broader developing world.

Central to any advance in all of these areas is the question of currency convertibility and its role in stabilizing trade relationships. Western media were quick to label this as de-dollarization but this misrepresents the situation.

The US dollar enjoys the exorbitant privilege of being the major reserve currency but that privilege has been widely abused in recent years. There has always been a flavor of arrogance attached to the role of the dollar. "The dollar is our currency, but it's your problem."

John Connally, former US treasury secretary, noted when speaking at a 1971 European finance conference.

That attitude has hardened and resulted in the weaponization of the US dollar by using sanctions and manipulation of the exchange mechanisms. These changes undermine the global trade environment. The BRICS summit responded to three risks.

The first risk is the weaponizing of the SWIFT settlement system. Many believe this is possibly the biggest foreign policy mistake the US has ever made because it restricts countries' choices and forces countries to explore alternative means of trade settlement.

Over 120 countries count China as their major trading partner. The "BRICS Pay" proposal will help facilitate trade between China and these countries, allowing them to use alternative currencies for trade settlement outside of the SWIFT system. This will increase reliability and reduce geopolitical risks in global trade.

The decision not to renew the petrodollar arrangement where oil was traded only in US dollars, reflects this growing unease with the dollar's weaponization. The BRICS grain exchange will expand to include other commodities, enabling trade in national currencies. BRICS nations are massive commodities producers so, as with the demise of the petrodollar, this has a significant impact in terms of the dollar's stranglehold on global



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commodities trading.

The weaponization of the SWIFT system comes when the US revokes a bank's license or puts it under sanctions to prevent it acting as a co-responder bank and stopping access to US dollars. Trade settlement is stymied for political reasons.

The BRICS meeting provides alternatives to countries that are biased by the existing global trade

settlement system. In late October, China hosted the SWIFT International Banker's Operation Seminar, bringing together leaders from finance, technology and policy. The meeting demonstrated China's commitment to further integrate itself into the global financial system. The BRICS proposals capture a desire to further de-risk trade settlement by providing alternative mechanisms.

The second, but unspoken, risk addressed by BRICS comes from US actions to freeze, confiscate, or steal sovereign assets. This growing risk underpins some of the most important outcomes in the Kazan Declaration supporting an independent mechanism for cross-border trade settlement.

Concerns about this risk were confirmed when the EU decided to use seized Russian assets to fund Ukrainian reconstruction. This action followed the earlier freezing of Venezuela's reserves in the United States and the United Kingdom. Both actions are examples of sovereign-initiated theft by institutions previously considered to be immune from political interference. This accelerated the move toward de-dollarization of the global economy.

As the second-largest foreign holder of US debt, China has steadily reduced its US Treasury holdings over the past 11 years, from a peak of about \$1.32 trillion in November 2013 to approximately \$768 billion in May 2024. This gradual reduction reflects a strategic shift in China's economic and geopolitical risk management rather than a push for de-dollarization.

As a leader in digital innovation, China is well positioned to provide an alternative trade settlement framework built on advanced blockchain capabilities. China is at the forefront of fintech development, with companies like Ant Group and Tencent revolutionizing digital payments.

China has pioneered the development of central bank digital currencies. These will reshape global payments by reducing transaction costs, and providing an alternative to the dominance of the US dollar in international trade settlement.

The third risk addressed in the Kazan Declaration reflects concerns with the way the US is unilaterally imposing sanctions all over the world. Neither of the US presidential candidates gives any indication of stepping back from the use of unilateral sanctions which are designed to hinder the global trade settlement system and achieve domestic US policy objectives. This is an abuse of the exorbitant privilege afforded to the dollar as a reserve currency.

The Kazan Declaration addressed many other issues but the commitment to the "BRICS Pay" concept is the most significant because it opens the gate to a fairer and non-exploitative cross-border trade settlement mechanism. These solutions are required to counter the weaponization of dollar-based global trade settlement based on the inherent belief that what is good for America is good for the world. This attitude has hampered progress toward global prosperity by entrenching disadvantages in trade settlement in the Global South. The "BRICS Pay" proposal, combined with China's advanced digital solutions, holds the promise of a genuine swift and fairer trade settlement system.

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LIFE

Watery Wuzhen puts on a wave of shows

Annual theater festival turns ancient town into giant stage, with performances around every corner, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

The Wuzhen Theatre Festival, which takes place each year in the ancient water town of Wuzhen in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, boasts that — to borrow a phrase from Shakespeare — “all Wuzhen is a stage”.

A long, narrow alleyway, an ancient dock, and a pole boat ... performances can happen anywhere in the town. It's a place where the boundary between theater and the surroundings dissolve.

Even the moon can play a part. In the play, *Run Away to the Moon*, which was staged this year in the town's open-air Sun Moon Plaza, the moon merged with the performance at its zenith above the plaza, becoming the most sublime overhead prop.

In Chinese mythology, Chang'e is said to run away by flying to the moon, after she drinks an elixir of immortality, and turns into a goddess. In some versions, Chang'e steals the elixir from her husband Hou Yi, a legendary archer, while in others, she drinks it to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands.

The play, an adaptation of Lu Min's 2017 novel, reimagines the tale of escape in a contemporary setting. In the story, the protagonist Xiaoliu survives a bus accident and decides to disappear from her previous life. She assumes a borrowed identity and lives in the strange town of Wuque. As her husband searches for her, he discovers unknown sides of his wife.

“I've read many contemporary novels over the past two years. I first came across Lu Min's *Run Away to the Moon* earlier this year, and it particularly resonated with me,” says Xiao Jing, the play's director and playwright.

“The story of Chang'e isn't entirely new to us, but Lu has given it a fresh, contemporary interpretation, writing a story that reflects the predicaments of modern life. I knew I wanted to adapt the novel for the stage even while I was reading it.”

One aspect of the novel that struck a chord with Xiao was its depiction of the yearning to escape from one's social identity. Bound by constraints, many people seek escape, some choosing temporary retreat, while others move from big cities to smaller ones.

She is also interested in the feminist perspective of the story. While the theme of women leaving home has been explored in classics, such as Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Xiao points out that these works often end at the moment of departure.

“I think Lu opens up a new perspective. The protagonist arrives at her ‘utopia,’ and then discovers that it is no different from other places. She wants to go back to her previous life, but there's no place for her anymore. So what should she do? The novel has an open ending. Personally, this question has no answer. It's for all of us to think about,” she says.

For many people, the annual festival is itself an escape from the mundane, everyday routine to a town with theater happening in every nook and cranny.

Walking from the entrance of the Xizha scenic area to the town's center, visitors will pass the Wuzhen Grand Theatre, where the festival's opening and closing ceremonies are held, enter the ancient town with its interwoven alleys and waterways, and pass historical squares and docks, which serve as antique backdrops for open-air vignettes.

The old buildings with their white walls and gray, upturned eaves conceal within them theater venues of different sizes and functions, among



The Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, offers outdoor celebrations (top and middle left) for residents and visitors, and stage plays, such as *River/Cloud* (top right), *The Revised Future* (middle right) and *Run Away to the Moon* (above).
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

them the West Warehouse Theatre, where young practitioners bring their shows to compete every year.

On the water town's outskirts lies the Wuzhen International Internet Exhibition and Convention Center, which has three theater venues that

can accommodate both international forums and large-scale theater productions.

Held between Oct 17 and 27, this year's Wuzhen Theatre Festival was its 11th edition, and was organized around the theme of “solidity”,

because according to the festival committee, the pursuit of ambition amid uncertain external factors requires having “a spirit like a torch, faith like a great rock”.

“What's changed about the festival is that it keeps growing, and

what hasn't changed is our goal,” says the festival's co-founder and director, Stan Lai. “We're not aiming for a large-scale event with countless productions. We only hope to hold a well-executed festival, where people can come for 11 days to enjoy

shows, talk about them, and simply have a great time.”

Reflecting on the past decade, Lai says that Wuzhen and theater seem a natural fit. Compared to other major theater festivals around the world, the Wuzhen festival stands out for being a compact, cozy hub of theatrical art and other activities.

“If you're fortunate enough to spend 11 days in Wuzhen, you can immerse yourself in the atmosphere,” Lai adds. “Enjoy a meal and chat with your friends, and when the time draws near, stroll to the theater and watch a play, then unwind in a teahouse afterward. It's a wonderful lifestyle here in Wuzhen, free of stress, whether you are a theater enthusiast or not.”

Each year, he stages a show of his own. This year, he's putting on his 40th production, *River/Cloud*, a spinoff of his classic play, *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*. The classic play is a tragicomedy. It involves a poignant love story of Yun Zhifan and Jiang Binliu, who are separated and lose contact during the War of Liberation (1946-49). Then unbeknownst to each other, both move from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan.

“There's so little background information about them, so I wanted to explore these characters I created. It's a fascinating exercise for a writer to dissect their characters and write their life stories,” Lai says. “It becomes a journey of self-discovery. These themes of missed connections, chance encounters, life, and love have been swirling around my mind. I felt it was the perfect time to write a piece that weaves all these elements together.”

This year, the festival also shed light on inclusive art, with a “Nothing Is Impossible” section dedicated to *The Revised Future*, a play written and performed by actors with diverse abilities from The Pleasure Troupe, an original theater brand founded by a group of enthusiasts.

The production addresses social issues in a sci-fi setting. In a distant future under alien attack, people with disabilities are able to receive body modifications and are treated as superior to those without disabilities. The protagonist, a boy without disabilities, is accused of patricide, and as the trial progresses, the group's struggles come to light.

“My parents taught me to dedicate 10 percent of my free time to public welfare,” says Ma Yan, the play's director. “I first worked with people with disabilities in 2008, when I volunteered at the Summer Paralympics and received training on how to offer accessible services.”

The reason why some people overlook social resources for people with disabilities is because they fail to consider that they might find themselves in a similar situation at some point in their lives, Ma adds. By reversing the social dynamics between those with and without disabilities, the production allows the audience to see things from the perspectives of others.

The Revised Future won best play award at this year's Nanjing Festival of New Theatre, where Lai was chairman of the committee. In the hopes that more people would be able to see the play, he invited the troupe to perform in Wuzhen. “It is featured in the festival because it's a high-quality production, free from external biases. The Wuzhen festival is fundamentally inclusive and diverse. We would like to promote all types of theater productions here,” Lai says.

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Tatar singer Saida Mukhametzyanova from Kazan, the capital of Russia's Tatarstan Republic, sings *Jasmine Flower*, a Chinese folk song, in a studio in Kazan. LIU KAI / XINHUA

Kazan singer hits right notes with Chinese folk song

KAZAN, Russia — In a small studio in Kazan, the capital of Russia's Tatarstan Republic, the air was filled with the melodious strains of the famous Chinese folk song *Jasmine Flower* (Moli Hua in Chinese).

This impressive rendition of the iconic Chinese song came from an unexpected source: Saida Mukhametzyanova, a 23-year-old Tatar singer who has developed a special affinity for Chinese music.

Her endeavor at Chinese folk music began over a year ago, driven by her curiosity and love for exploring music from different cultures.

On hearing *Jasmine Flower* for the first time, she perceived its striking similarities to the Tatar folk

song, *Galiyabanu*, and was captivated by its beauty. Both songs feature a pentatonic scale and share flowing melodies and themes about the pursuit of love.

“That's why I had the idea of blending these two beautiful folk songs,” she says.

Later, she discovered a seamless and natural way to blend the two songs, alternating between Chinese and Tatar lyrics while combining their melodies.

To perfect her performance of the Chinese portion, she dedicated herself to learning the language, focusing on every detail of the tone and pronunciation.

When she released this cultural

mashup online, it garnered significant attention, with listeners praising the fresh take on both traditions.

This experience with Chinese folk songs has opened up more opportunities for her to perform at various China-Russia cultural exchange events, including one during the Games of the Future, a national event held in Kazan earlier this year.

Her keen apprehension about Chinese music has profoundly influenced her artistic vision. “Chinese culture often draws parallels between people and nature, which captivates me because it brings us closer to nature,” she says.

“The melody is beautiful, everything in it is harmonious, and it

touches the soul. I told my parents that I need to focus my creativity and resources on China and Asia,” she adds.

She has embarked on a project to create an album featuring both Chinese and Tatar folk songs, which she hopes will serve as a musical bridge between the two cultures.

She also dreams of visiting China, a country which she has yet to gain firsthand experience of. “I've sung Chinese songs, but I've never been to China,” she says. “It has such a rich culture that has preserved its uniqueness for thousands of years. I want to see it with my own eyes.”

XINHUA

LIFE



Leung Man-tao (left), chief consultant of Imaginist, interacts with the five finalists of the 2024 Blancpain-Imaginist Literary Prize. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wei Sixiao has won the 2024 Blancpain-Imaginist Literary Prize for his novel *Tu Guang Cun Mu* (Vast land, Small Tree), beating other four shortlisted writers.

Cofounded in 2018 by Swiss luxury watch brand Blancpain and Chinese publisher Imaginist, the annual prize was established to shed light on Chinese writers under 45. The winner receives a cash prize of 300,000 yuan (\$42,022), and a Blancpain watch.

The theme of this year's award was "Where is the originality in literature?" According to Leung Man-tao, chief consultant of Imaginist, with the theme, the award chose to inspire people to explore the experiences and creativity that define us as individuals, especially in the context of being surrounded by the cocoon of information, big data, and artificial intelligence.

The evaluation committee, which is composed each year of different writers, literary critics, and a celebrity reader from another field, consisted of poet and literary critic Zhang Dinghao, actor-director Joan Chen, writer Shuang Xuetao, who won the award in 2020, Xu Zidong, former director of Department of Chinese at Lingnan University, and writer Luo Yijun.

Representing the jury, Xu delivered the award speech for the 38-year-old's winning entry: "Focusing on a village, rather than a single character or event, the book makes use of meticulous realism to carry on the tradition of *Sheng Si Chang* (The Field of Life and Death, by Xiao Hong).

"It deepens and develops the mainstream of Chinese rural literature in terms of space. In terms of time, it not only narrates the lives of farmers over the past few decades, as seen in *Huo Zhe* (To Live, by Yu Hua) and *Pingfan De Shijie* (Ordinary World, by Lu Yao), but also keeps pace with the times by depicting new rural scenes: tractors harvesting corn, farmers using social media, township elections and nursing homes.

"Amid the changes to the countryside, it reflects on unchanging aspects, namely the network of interpersonal relationships based on kinship and family ties as described in Fei Xiaotong's *Xiangtu Zhongguo* (From the Soil: The Foundations of

Writing the village as universe

Previously shortlisted in 2022, winning novelist's experiment with style finally clinches him the coveted prize, **Yang Yang** reports.



Left: Liao Xinjia (second left), vice-president of Blancpain China, and Liu Ruilin (right), founder of Imaginist, present awards to the five finalists. Right: Wei Sixiao, 38, speaks after winning first prize in the Blancpain-Imaginist Literary Prize.

Chinese Society)."

However, at the prize-giving event on Oct 22 in Beijing, Zhang Dinghao raised the issue of whether Wei's work was "repetitive", suggesting that the structural innovation of the novel was designed to mask the repetition of content. He also raised the question of whether the writer was stuck in a habitual style, saying this was "a matter that Wei might need to reflect on".

In response, Wei acknowledged that his limitation was the tendency to repeat themes. "Some characters may recur, but it's inevitable. After living in the countryside for over 30 years, I've witnessed the gradual development of many characters each year. So, I want to write coherently," he says, adding that he tries to present fresh and overlooked elements with each new novel he writes.

Born in a village in Zibo, Shandong province in 1986, Wei focuses on the village as his subject. His recent titles include *The Rural Trilogy - Yu Shi Wu Qu* (which roughly translates as "don't do other things than suggested by traditional Chinese almanacs"), *Doushi Renmin Quanzhong* (The Masses), and *Wang Nenghao* (the name of the principal character), which was shortlisted for the 2022 Blancpain-Imaginist Literary Prize.

After *Wang Nenghao*, Wei was searching for a new way to write another novel about the village. He says that after the trilogy, there were still a great many things in Xinliu village that he had not written about previously. "Even if it's a small village with only a few hundred households, it's a very complex little universe, which motivates me to continue writing

about it," he says. In the end, he found the answer, to "dissect" the little-known village from different perspectives, as the title of his book indicates.

"The idea (for the title) is actually quite simple: to deconstruct the two Chinese characters for 'village' into four parts, and see how they could be rearranged to sound smoother. I chose this title as the novel seeks to describe different aspects of a village," Wei says.

Wanting to break free from the constraints of the traditional novel, Wei made bold structural changes in his latest work.

The novel is divided into two parts. The first part, *Aspects*, places specific focus on some of the people, things and places in the village, revealing both the genealogies of characters in Xinliu, and the vicissitudes of life.

The second part, *A Year*, takes a nonfictional approach to documenting the events, large and small, such as agricultural work, weddings and funerals, providing a panoramic depiction of the authentic rural landscape of the present.

In the second part, Wei introduces his own perspective, leading readers through significant events in rural life. "It was a bit like making a documentary," he says.

Inspired by the writing style of German-English novelist, essayist, poet and scholar W.G. Sebald, which combines elements of memoir, fiction, history and biography, in *Tu Guang Cun Mu*, Wei explores a style that blurs the boundary between fiction and nonfiction.

Like scenes from a documentary, the multitude of living beings and everyday life in Xinliu village unfold

gradually in the 400-page novel. Over 100 characters, through different festivals and seasons, experience birth, aging, sickness, and death, joy and sorrow, separations and reunions — behind each face is an endless story.

"Villages may seem similar to one another, and you don't know how the villagers survive and live. Perhaps after reading my novel, readers may understand how they live and die, which might have been my original intention in writing," Wei says.

"The work is vivid and powerful. Wei Sixiao possesses a deep understanding and affection for the land, yet he avoids sentimentality, using the most simple, compassionate and humorous tone to accurately depict the lives of the villagers," says Joan Chen, commenting on the book.

"This allows us to feel intense, indescribable emotion and sentiment, reflecting the era and society through a tapestry of lives. I particularly enjoy the dialogues between the first-person narrator 'I' and the mother in the book, where they exchange all sorts of gossip about the city, the village, relatives and acquaintances, that bring a smile to the reader's face."

Death is one of the topics Wei often covers in his work, especially rural funerals, which he says are like a festival gathering, attended by a lot of relatives and friends.

"When faced with death, people often experience poetic moments. My view of funerals has changed over the years. I used to dislike insincerity of the wailing, but now I see it can comfort the deceased person's close family, even if the tears aren't real."

Opened for entries on April 15, the 2024 Blancpain-Imaginist Literary Prize received 115 works of fiction, a record number of submissions, says Liu Ruilin, founder of Imaginist. Five, including Tong Mo's novel *Dadi Zhongxin De Ren* (People at the Center of the Earth), short story collection *Guowang De Youxi* (The King's Game) by Datouma, and *Lao-shi Haoren* (Honest, Good People) by Gu Xiang were shortlisted, with the five judges commenting that they "demonstrate the young writers' keen insight into reality and an impressively expansive view".

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Silk Road bonds explored at Teheran exhibition

TEHERAN — The memory and inspiration of the Silk Road, a series of ancient trade routes stretching from China to Europe, provide an attractive platform for cultural exchange between countries once connected by them.

In one of the halls at the Malek National Library and Museum in the Iranian capital Teheran, vivid paintings were among a series of works of art that caught the attention of visitors, both Chinese and Iranian.

Open to the public since Oct 12 and running until Nov 10, and taking the Silk Road as its theme, the exhibition, *Endless Clouds of Silk Road*, features a selection of Chinese art, manuscripts by renowned Chinese authors, and ancient coins used to trade along the routes, and cele-

brates the cultural exchange between China and Iran.

"The exhibition is very interesting as it features the fusion of Chinese and Iranian cultures and their impact on each other," says one visitor, Shaqayeq Evaz-Zadeh.

"The Iranian and Chinese people have had very good relations for a very long time, and share many cultural similarities," continues Evaz-Zadeh, who is a film and theater director.

She mentions that there are many commonalities between Iranian and Chinese poetry and traditions, indicating time-honored, people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

The works on display demonstrate the trade relations between the two countries along the Silk

Road, which helped bring both peoples closer, she adds. "Visiting the exhibition gave me a very good feeling, as I was able to see the closeness between the two cultures again."

Evaz-Zadeh also says she felt the amicable atmosphere at the exhibition, and saw Iranian and Chinese visitors chatting happily with one another.

"Throughout history, Iran and China and their people have always had transactions, interactions and relations with each other," says Masoud Nikqalb, another visitor, adding that the work on display makes a feature of traditional styles and simplicity. "This is very interesting and makes them more tangible to visitors."

Nikqalb, a cinema and theater

actor, says people from both countries share cultural commonalities, particularly valuing the family and respecting the elderly. "The art displayed at this exhibition gave me a sense of cultural proximity, as they conveyed concepts shared between the two peoples."

Jebrael Nokandeh, director of Iran's National Library and Museum, says the exhibition shows great potential for cooperation between the two countries' museums, voicing confidence that the event would help increase mutual understanding.

He speaks highly of Chinese museums for their "very high" standards and "cooperation with counterparts across the world", including the National Museum of Iran.

Nokandeh says that Iran orga-



A visitor takes a photo of an item at the exhibition, *Endless Clouds of Silk Road*, at the Malek National Library and Museum in Teheran, Iran, on Oct 12. XINHUA

nized an exhibition, *The Glory of the Ancient Persia*, at Beijing's Palace Museum in January, and also at the Shanghai Museum in June. He called for expanding the "very

good" cultural cooperation between Iran and China to further strengthen the bond between their peoples.

XINHUA

CULTURE

In the fall of 2012, Satoshi Nishida, a Japanese exchange student from Kyoto, was captivated by a double act comedy show at Beijing Language and Culture University.

Nishida found the performance electrifying yet familiar, reminiscent of *manzai*, a comedic style from Japan's Kansai region.

It set him on a journey to learn more about the Chinese-style cross-talk, or *xiangsheng*, one of the most popular forms of comedy in China.

"If I can use Mandarin to provoke laughter from local people, that would be an extraordinary achievement," Nishida said.

For Yegor Shyshov from Ukraine, a similar revelation occurred at a Mandarin speaking competition in 2010. He marveled at a group of foreigners who spoke Mandarin fluently and made the audience laugh heartily.

"I couldn't grasp half of their jokes at the time," he said, "but I was astonished that foreigners could deliver such emotionally compelling Chinese."

Driven by their shared ambition to learn the Chinese language through humor, the two foreigners from across the world embarked on a similar path, training with renowned *xiangsheng* artist Ding Guangquan, who began accepting foreign apprentices in 1989. Ding passed away in 2018.

For comedian Tina Huang, who is of Chinese and Russian descent, Chinese cross-talk helped put her in the limelight. Together with Chinese *xiangsheng* artist Yan Jiabao, Huang gained recognition at a 2016 show at the Beijing Radio & Television Station with their performance, *Love, To Be In or To Be Out*.

Huang's authentic Beijing accent and engaging stage presence made a lasting impression, marking her first few steps onto the *xiangsheng* scene.

Through *xiangsheng* lovers Nishida, Shyshov, Huang and many others, the groundbreaking show *Xiangsheng Encounters Foreigners* emerged. The program debuted in 2019 in Beijing's vibrant 798 Art District, a hub for contemporary art. It offered a platform for Chinese *xiangsheng* actors to work with foreign comedians passionate about Chinese culture.

The unique mix showcased a novel cultural dimension of the traditional art form, combining *xiangsheng* with various international influences and languages.

Yan, who founded the program's team, said its early days were modest, consisting of just seven or eight members.

"At times, we had to invite *xiangsheng* performers from outside our group to complete a show," he said.

Over the years, the troupe has expanded significantly. It now counts nearly 50 members, covering Asia, Europe, Africa, North America and Oceania. They currently perform at the GG2077 Space Station Theater in Beijing's China World Mall.

Breaking barriers

Despite its rich history, *xiangsheng* faces challenges such as a creative slump, shortage of talented performers and dwindling artistic standards, and revitalizing the art form requires a collective effort and willingness to adapt, Yan said.

"For cross-talk to win the affection of audiences, it needs to keep up with the times in both content and format," he said.

Many fans say the *Xiangsheng Encounters Foreigners* show pioneers a new format that transcends the traditional art form, presenting a comedy variety show that blends stand-up, sketch comedy and original cross-talk.

But the path to the creative break-



Foreign and Chinese performers present *Xiangsheng Encounters Foreigners* cross-cultural crosstalk show at the GG2077 Space Station Theater in Beijing's China World Mall in June 2023. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Just for laughs

Fresh platform for Chinese cross-talk tradition *xiangsheng* connects global cultures while preserving heritage, **Hou Chenchen** reports.



Satoshi Nishida

Tina Huang

Yegor Shyshov

All our performances are built on cultural differences and there wouldn't be any creative friction without them. It's this friction that fuels our inspiration."

Tina Huang, member of the *Xiangsheng Encounters Foreigners* group

through was not always smooth — Yan recalled early performances at the 798 Art District, where the performers struggled to draw audiences.

"Sometimes only a few people would buy tickets and, with our friends included, there were barely a dozen people in the audience," he said.

Still, those trying times fueled the comedians' determination. "Accepting something new always takes time," Yan said.

Adaptability is essential in the field,

especially given the team's diverse cultural backgrounds, and unlike traditional *xiangsheng* in which the partners of a performance are fixed, their team constantly reconfigured their lineup, requiring members to adjust and collaborate effectively, he said.

Huang also emphasized the importance of "cultural conflict" in their work. "All our performances are built on cultural differences and there wouldn't be any creative friction without them," she said. "It's this friction that fuels our inspiration."

Striking chords

In July 2023, the team hosted a performance featuring renowned *xiangsheng* artist Jiang Kun, who was deeply impressed by the onstage collaboration.

"I had never seen anything like it before," Jiang said. "So many foreigners engaging in light-hearted banter while showcasing genuine cross-talk."

This performance attracted the largest and most diverse audience yet, with attendees from Russia, Ukraine, Japan, and the United

States. For Yan, it highlighted how laughter can transcend differences and unite people in joy.

The cultural blending enriches the comedy scene, as elements from different backgrounds come together on stage, and Yan said that they have recently incorporated other cultural themes into their cross-talk performances, such as Japanese *manzai* and Russian poet Pushkin's lines.

"Some foreign friends come to watch our shows and we include interactive segments to make them feel at home," Yan said.

"They see familiar faces from their own countries, creating an atmosphere that feels like a party. This offers a unique perspective for foreigners studying or working in China, showing them that there's joy to be found here."

As a traditional Chinese performance art, *xiangsheng* can also weave cultural nuances that deepen foreign performers' understanding of Chinese society.

"My master always tells us that performing cross-talk involves more than just memorizing lines; it requires experiencing the culture firsthand," Nishida said.

He recalled visiting a *Tong Ren Tang* medicinal store to grasp the essence of traditional Chinese medicine and better understand the terms related to the herbs for cross-talk.

Shyshov recounted a touching moment after a cross-talk competition, when an older member of the audience praised their work.

"The audience told us that what we did was cross-talk in its truest form," Shyshov said.

Looking ahead

The value of live performances has never been clearer in an age dominated by digital screens, Yan said.

"By attending shows in person, audiences support the art form in its most authentic and rewarding way," he said.

At the performance venue, comedy lovers gather like family, sharing joy and laughter. Over time, *xiangsheng* has woven itself into the lives of its performers, providing emotional fulfillment that transcends financial gain, he said.

Yan also acknowledged the need for financial stability to nurture their creative efforts in a competitive landscape.

"A steady stream of ticket buyers is essential for retaining talent and fostering innovation," he said.

Nishida said he is confident of the unifying power of comedy.

"I understand how challenging it is for a Japanese person to learn cross-talk in China, but my master, Ding Guangquan, always emphasized that art knows no boundaries," he said.

"*Xiangsheng* gives me the chance to meet young Chinese performers and friends from around the world. Before coming to China, I never imagined I would stand on stage and make a Chinese audience laugh. Being Japanese or Chinese doesn't matter. We must first understand each other. To me, this is a truly magical connection," Nishida said.

Shyshov looked to the future of *xiangsheng* with hope. "I hope that years from now, when we can no longer perform, our students will become the teachers. This art form must be passed down through generations," he said.

Huang echoed the sentiment and wished for the continued growth of their collaborative efforts.

"We hope what we've created together, like a cherished work or even a child, can flourish," she said.

Yan expressed a simple yet profound goal: "I want to accompany these foreign friends who love Chinese comedy, attract more foreigners to China and inspire even more people abroad to appreciate our culture. If *Xiangsheng Encounters Foreigners* achieves this, then we've succeeded."

He pointed to a world where shared futures and connections are vital.

"What does it mean to have a community with a shared future? It's about everyone sitting together, joking and laughing, regardless of nationality or ethnicity," Yan said.

Lu Huimin and Xu Yuxin contributed to this story.



From left: Members of the *Xiangsheng Encounters Foreigners* cross-cultural crosstalk show perform at the GG2077 Space Station Theater in Beijing's China World Mall in June 2023; Chinese *xiangsheng* artist Jiang Kun (sixth from right) poses with performers of *Xiangsheng Encounters Foreigners* show at the GG2077 Space Station Theater in Beijing.

