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# CHINA DAILY

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## Firm friendship



President Xi Jinping meets with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Thursday at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The Malaysian PM was on a working visit to China from Monday to Thursday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY See more, pages 3, 14

## Xi calls for stable, healthy Sino-US ties

President reiterates mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, win-win cooperation and dialogue

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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As President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to Donald Trump on Thursday on his election as United States president, observers said that Beijing is urging Washington to tackle China-US ties with a cool head and offer the rest of the world a sense of predictability.

In the message, Xi pointed out that history has shown how cooperation between China and the US can bring benefits to both sides, while rivalry can bring harm.

"A China-US relationship with stable, healthy and sustainable development is in line with the common interests of the two countries and the expectations of the international community," Xi said.

It is hoped that the two sides will uphold the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, strengthen dialogue and communication, properly manage differences and expand mutually beneficial cooperation, he said.

Xi added that the two sides should find the right way for China and the US to get along in the new era, for the benefit of both countries as well as the world.

Also on Thursday, Vice-President Han Zheng sent a message to J.D. Vance, congratulating him on his election as US vice-president.

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department for American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, noted that Xi's congratulatory message reflects the importance Beijing attaches to the development of China-US ties.

Through the message, "China once again underscored the significance of keeping China-US ties stable, and it pointed to the fact that the international community is looking forward to seeing the stability of the relationship," she said.

"In the recent past, both sides have demonstrated their readiness to keeping the relationship away from turbulence, and have achieved some results. They should carry on this momentum and move toward the same goal," she added.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of China-US diplomatic relations. And the two nations have conducted fruitful cooperation in areas including people-to-people exchanges, counternarcotics and tackling climate change.

China is now the third-largest export market for American commodities, and the US is China's third-largest trading partner, according to the Chinese embassy in the US.

Observers also raised concerns that some hawkish politicians in the US may press ahead with efforts to seek economic "decoupling" with China and increase their confrontational stance on security-related issues, such as increasing tension in the Taiwan Strait.

At a regular news conference of the Foreign Ministry on Thursday in Beijing, reporters raised questions about topics such as China-US trade tensions, the Taiwan question and the future of China-US ties.

"I would like to reiterate that there will be no winners in a trade war and it is not beneficial to the world," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning.

She noted that the Taiwan question is the "most important and most sensitive" issue in China-US relations.

"It is China's consistent and clear position that it firmly opposes any form of official contacts between the US and Taiwan," she said.

"The US government needs to earnestly abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiques, and prudently handle Taiwan-related issues, so as to avoid severe damage to China-US relations and cross-strait peace and stability," she added.

When asked what would it take to prevent the ties from veering into a disastrous scenario such as a potential hot war, Jeffrey Sachs, a professor of economics and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, pointed to China's core security interests.

"The US has to recognize China's core security interests, including Taiwan as part of China, and the security of China's sea lanes in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean," he said.

"If the US would recognize and respect China's core security interests, relations would improve markedly," he added.

Chen Weihua in Brussels contributed to this story.

## Malaysia looks to engage with China, steer region

Assuming the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2025 gives Malaysia a vital opportunity to steer the region through transformative geopolitical and economic shifts while championing environmental sustainability.

Southeast Asia's growing strategic importance gives Malaysia the chance to enhance ASEAN's global influence. By leveraging its pragmatic diplomacy and Look East policy — emphasizing strategic partnerships with China and other East Asian nations — Malaysia can drive regional integration, foster economic growth and ensure envi-

### WORLD WATCH

By Abdulwahed Jalal Nori

ronmental stewardship. The task is not only to address current challenges but to lay the groundwork for a visionary ASEAN future extending to 2100, characterized by resilience, dynamism and ecological sustainability.

A primary focus area for Malaysia will be advancing economic integration within ASEAN while embedding sustainability into economic policies. Utilizing the

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership as a framework, Malaysia can advocate environmentally friendly trade policies and support green technologies.

In an evolving global economic landscape, the rise of BRICS presents both opportunities and challenges. BRICS countries, with their significant economic clout and growing influence, offer potential avenues for expanding green trade and investment partnerships. Malaysia can leverage these relationships to foster collaboration on sustainable development initiatives and green technologies.

Looking toward 2100, Malaysia

could propose a unified ASEAN green economic zone. This zone would harmonize regulations and policies to promote sustainable trade and investment. Prioritizing innovation in green technologies, renewable energy and circular economy practices will be essential. Establishing long-term economic and environmental goals will help ASEAN maintain its global leadership in sustainable development, while engaging with BRICS can enhance the region's capacity to address global challenges and drive forward the green agenda.

See Growth, page 3

## Foreign trade set for steady growth amid headwinds

By ZHONG NAN  
and OUYANG SHIJIA in Shanghai

China's foreign trade will sustain steady growth for the remainder of 2024 and exporters should prepare for potential challenges, including higher tariffs, by enhancing product competitiveness and expanding sales in emerging markets, government officials and market observers said on Thursday.

These steps will help address possible obstacles posed by anticipated policy shifts in certain countries, such as trade remedy measures and additional countervailing duties, they noted.

China's foreign trade increased 5.2 percent year-on-year to 36.02 trillion yuan (\$5.03 trillion) in the January-October period, while its exports rose 6.7 percent on a yearly basis to 20.8 trillion yuan, statistics released on Thursday by the General Administration of Customs showed.

Lyu Daliang, director of the administration's department of statistics and analysis, said that thanks to practical policies introduced earlier this year, China is on track to achieve its annual goal of steady foreign trade growth in terms of both quality and volume.

Zhao Ping, dean of the Academy

of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade in Beijing, said that changes in global demand have created opportunities for Chinese exporters to remain competitive in the next stage.

Against the backdrop of accelerated low-carbon initiatives globally and heightened geopolitical tensions, many countries face high energy prices, and they have recorded a surge in demand for China's electromechanical products, especially those tech-intensive green offerings, said Zhao. Customs data show that the value of China's electromechanical product exports, including electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and integrated circuits, reached 12.36 trillion yuan in the first 10 months, up 8.5 percent year-on-year. This accounted for 59.4 percent of the nation's total export value.

Hisense Ronshen (Yangzhou) Refrigerator Co, a fridge and freezer manufacturer based in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, saw its export value soar 38.5 percent year-on-year to 2.59 billion yuan in the first three quarters.

"In addition to shipping large-capacity refrigerators and freezers to developed markets, we have also built sales networks in emerging markets, such as Indonesia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan, to mitigate risks from market volatility in certain countries in recent years," said Ma Lili, head of the company's production unit.

"We are now able to develop everything — from energy efficiency and capacity to color and additional functions — to meet the specific needs of local customers," Ma added.

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## YOUNG ARTISANS REVIVE CURATIVE BENEFITS OF CHINESE INCENSE

New generation turns to scents, traditional rituals to relieve pressures of modern life

By CHEN NAN  
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### In-depth

Incense-maker Weng Jianzhi had a fascination with herbs from a young age, sparked by a colorful herb-identification publication he found at a local bookstore. Growing up, he spent hours exploring the hillsides near his home in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province, learning to recognize various plants and herbs, a curiosity that would later shape his life and career.

With his father's quiet workshop, with its lingering scents and dedication to incense-making, was another influence, even if Weng didn't realize it at the time. "It was like a seed planted in my mind," he recalled,

"watching my father making incense for religious rituals."

Today, 32-year-old Weng is working to bring back the ancient craft of *hexiang* — the harmonious blending of different herbal aromas to create scents that have curative qualities.

"My father's incense was simple, mostly for temples. But as I read more, I realized that Chinese incense was once an art and a wellness practice — one based on *hexiang* and rooted in traditional Chinese medicine," he explained.

See Incense, page 2



A New York Stock Exchange trader reacts at the end of a successful day on Wednesday, after Republican candidate Donald Trump claimed victory in the presidential election, defeating his opponent, Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris. ANDREW KELLY / REUTERS

**APEC**

INSIDE  
Empowering informal economy must for future  
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Newsstand prices:  
US \$1 Canada C\$1  
UK 1.5 EU 1.6  
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling  
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120  
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;  
Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee

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# PAGE TWO

From page 1

A growing number of Chinese youth are being drawn to the meditative, spiritual and healing aspects of Chinese incense, which they see as an antidote to the fast pace of modern life.

Incense stick sales on e-commerce platform Tmall have surged 40-fold over the past year, with year-on-year growth exceeding 500 percent in April and May, according to a report released in July by Moojing Market Intelligence.

Yuan Dian, 29, has worked in a high-pressure job as a project manager for an internet company in Beijing for five years. During this year's Spring Festival she returned home to Wuhan, Hubei province, where she had a reunion with her childhood friends.

One of her friends, who has a busy life in Shanghai, advised her to burn Chinese incense with medicinal properties to improve blood circulation, calm the mind, and improve sleep. After trying it a few times, Yuan quickly fell in love with the ritual.

"Watching the thin spirals of smoke rise, and the ash delicately fall around the incense burner, I find a profound beauty," she said, adding that burning Chinese incense gives her a unique sense of tranquility with a "certain healing quality".

### History's ashes

The history of incense in China dates back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), when it was used for ceremonial and religious purposes, according to the website of the China Incense Culture Research Center, an organization under the China Folklore Society.

Incense held a central place in Buddhist and Taoist rituals — often symbolizing purity and reverence — and was burned when prayers were offered. As Buddhism spread in China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), incense became a common aroma in temples and households.

Burning incense extended beyond religion, infiltrating daily life as the practice came to symbolize a connection to the natural and spiritual worlds.

The Song Dynasty (960-1279) saw incense evolve into a refined art form known as *xiangdao*, or "the way of incense", which involved making and enjoying incense in a mindful and contemplative manner.

Scholars and social elites held incense appreciation gatherings, where they would carefully evaluate and compare different scents, discuss poetry, and engage in philosophical debates. The Song Dynasty also marked the peak of incense craftsmanship, with artisans creating elaborate incense burners, aromatic blends, and intricate rituals for enjoying a variety of fragrances.

### Lingering tradition

In the family workshop in Zhoushan, Weng was taught how to make incense by his father, who specialized in producing incense for religious rituals.

Weng graduated from university in 2012 with photography major, but decided to focus on creating incense blends rooted in traditional Chinese medicine, aiming to bring a holistic approach to personal wellness.

Ancient Chinese incense, he discovered, was closely tied to TCM and philosophy. The earliest forms of incense weren't for temples or religious spaces, but for herbal remedies that were heated to release therapeutic scents. In traditional belief, herbs' medicinal properties could be absorbed through inhaling their aromas, improving health and bringing balance to the body.

This approach, called *hexiang*,



Visitors learn to make incense at the Museum of Chinese Gardens and Landscape Architecture in Beijing on March 8. DU JIANPO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Incense: A burning desire for cultural connection



From left: All aromatic ingredients are ground into a fine powder to ensure even burning and a smooth texture. They are then rolled into a dough-like consistency. After drying the uneven ends are trimmed, and the sticks are smoothed. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

emphasizes harmony among different herbs, and balances elements in a way similar to a carefully prepared medicinal formula.

The idea of *hexiang* harmony comes from ancient texts, Weng said, where it's described as blending herbs "as a doctor would prescribe a remedy, letting each ingredient's essence shine without overpowering the others."

Many ingredients, like agarwood, clove, and sandalwood, were selected for their therapeutic effects. Sandalwood, for instance, is believed to warm the body, which can help support kidney health and improve energy flow. Other herbs like mugwort and cinnamon are associated with calming properties or respiratory health.

For Weng, this concept of harmony provided a framework for his work.

"In traditional incense making, just like in Chinese medicine, balance is key," he said. "Some ingredients warm the body, while others cool it. By finding the right ratios, you can create something that promotes well-being while being beautiful to experience."

As he dove deeper, Weng began studying ancient texts on herbs and traditional recipes, combining his father's practical knowledge

with his own research. He learned that incense making requires precise methods and preparations that resemble making traditional Chinese medicines.

For instance, the herb rhubarb, often used for its earthy aroma, needs to be soaked overnight in rice wine to soften its intensity.

Sandalwood has a "dry heat", which can irritate if unprocessed. To temper it, Weng soaks it in honey or green tea before slowly roasting it. This intricate preparation reflects knowledge of how each

herb interacts with both the body and other ingredients.

"Each herb has its own properties, its own way of expressing itself," Weng said. "If you simply mix them, you won't get a harmonious blend. It takes time, patience, and a certain respect for the ingredients to bring out their best."

### Modern twist

The art of *hexiang*, as Weng sees it, lies in making these traditional scents desirable in a modern context while preserving their wellness benefits.

He has created new incense products with his own twist, like blends for sleep, relaxation, or sharper focus, that are designed with the younger generation in mind. "To revive traditional culture, you have to bring it into people's lives in a way that feels relevant and relatable," he said.

This year, Weng has been encouraged by a new wave of young people exploring traditional wellness practices. Many of his customers are drawn to incense as a way to reduce stress and reconnect with their cultural heritage.

"The more I share my knowledge, the more I see people — especially young people — taking an interest," he said.

Zhang Junfeng, 23, is also dedicated to making incense. After graduating from the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts with an art education major, he returned to his home in Yantai, Shandong province, and launched his own incense brand.

Zhang said he sensed the younger generation's rising interest in Chinese incense, especially as more people faced the pressures of urban living, demanding work schedules, and the pervasive digital environment. "As the scent fills the room, it creates a sensory refuge, helping users to center them-

selves and let go of daily tensions," he explained.

Traditional Chinese incense is crafted with care and patience, Zhang said.

The process begins by finely grinding each ingredient into a powder. This powder is then carefully mixed with a natural binder — often honey or water — and shaped into coils, sticks, or cones.

From a young age, Zhang was fascinated by the subtle beauty and fragrance of plants. As he grew older, this passion evolved into an interest in traditional Chinese incense.

"When I was 14, I tried to make a specimen from some mint leaves. As I heated the leaves, I smelt the fragrance, which inspired me to try more plants," he said.

Zhang said his mother loves using incense at home and when he was 20, he made his first osmanthus-scented incense stick for her. "Now, my mother uses incense handmade by me," he said, adding that the incense scents he creates are named after lines from traditional Chinese poems.

His business partner is a computer science major, and the pair have developed and launched an incense fragrance calculator.

Noticing the growing interest among his peers for personalized experiences, Zhang envisioned a tool that would allow young people to craft their own scents.

"Users can select base ingredients, such as sandalwood or lavender, and complementary notes like citrus or spices," he said. "The calculator not only suggests ratios for a balanced fragrance but also educates users on the aromatic properties and the historical significance of each ingredient."

"We want to empower the young generation to engage with the ancient art of incense-making, making it accessible and relevant in a modern context and fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural heritage among young incense enthusiasts," he added.

### Resting calm

Wang Siran, a 32-year-old chemistry teacher who works and lives in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, values incense burning for its aesthetics and sees it as a form of self-expression.

"The delicate, minimalistic incense burners, along with the wafting trails of smoke, make incense a visually pleasing addition to my home, blending in with modern decor while introducing an element of traditional Chinese culture," she said. Some of her colleagues and friends use it to add ambience to their daily activities such as reading, meditation, and tea ceremonies, she added.

Wang learned about the use of Chinese incense from social media platforms, such as Xiaohongshu and Douyin, which have also played a significant role in popularizing incense culture. Influencers and bloggers share images and videos of their incense rituals, detailing the types of incense they use, rituals around burning it, and its benefits for mental well-being.

Wang said Xi'an's ancient attractions draw Sinophiles to the city, with coffee shops, bookstores and restaurants using Chinese incense to attract customers.

"Just like *hanfu* (ancient Chinese clothing), which is popular among young Chinese, the use of incense represents a bridge between the past and present, helping them to slow down, find calm, and reconnect with a piece of their heritage," she said.

Weng, the perfumer, said incense products are examples of items that primarily have emotional value.

"Imagine lighting an incense stick in a dimly lit room on a rainy day, surrounded by a light fragrance while reading or daydreaming — isn't that delightful," he said.



Left: Zhang Junfeng uses a cutting machine to trim the extruded incense to standardized lengths, ensuring neat and even ends. Middle: Weng Jianzhi selects and prepares ingredients for incense at his workshop in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Right: A vendor displays a variety of incense in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in June. WENG XINYANG / XINHUA

## TOP NEWS

## China, Malaysia eye cooperation in new areas

Xi urges nations to better align development strategies when meeting with Anwar Ibrahim

By MO JINGXI  
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President Xi Jinping has called on China and Malaysia to use the 50th anniversary of bilateral ties as an opportunity to promote all-around bilateral cooperation in order to benefit their respective development and make greater contributions to regional prosperity and stability.

Xi made the remarks when meeting with visiting Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday, the last day of the Malaysian leader's four-day working visit to China.

This was Anwar's third visit to China since taking office in 2022. During his first visit to China in March last year, the two sides reached a consensus on building a China-Malaysia community with a shared future, marking a new chapter in bilateral relations.

"The history of friendly exchanges between the peoples of the two countries demonstrates that we are not only good neighbors across the sea, but also like-minded friends and partners committed to joint development," Xi told Anwar on Thursday.

China and Malaysia have seen their bilateral trade volume increase more than a thousandfold to reach nearly \$200 billion in 2023 from less than \$200 million in 1974, when they established diplomatic relations. China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years.

Noting that China and the Southeast Asian country share extensive common interests, Xi said that China

is ready to work with Malaysia to usher in the next glorious 50 years of the bilateral relationship.

Xi urged the two countries to better align their development strategies, explore cooperation in new areas such as the digital economy and new energy, and discuss the establishment of a mechanism for exchanging poverty alleviation experience.

Anwar, who arrived in China on Monday, also attended the opening ceremony of the seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai. Xi said that China welcomes Malaysia to make good use of the CIE as a platform to bring more quality Malaysian products to the Chinese market.

Xi said that China and Malaysia, both of which are developing countries and representatives of emerging economies in Asia, should enhance coordination on global and regional issues, jointly oppose protectionism, and promote trade and investment facilitation for the common interests of developing countries.

He also expressed China's support for Malaysia to take the rotating presidency of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations next year.

Anwar commended the Chinese leader for his dedication to the people, the poor and humanity. "That is why we see you not only as the leader of China, but the new voice for the Global South and internationally," he said.

The Malaysian government is committed to further deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership with China, admires China's achievements in poverty relief and wishes to learn from China's governance experience, Anwar said.

## Growth: Green investment a must for sustainable infra

From page 1

Infrastructure development will be a cornerstone of Malaysia's leadership, particularly within the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Emphasizing the modernization of infrastructure with a focus on sustainability — such as green ports, eco-friendly railways and smart digital networks — will drive regional integration and equitable growth.

For the future, Malaysia can propose an ASEAN-wide green infrastructure master plan for 2100. This plan should include smart cities powered by renewable energy, integrated transportation networks that reduce carbon emissions, and robust digital infrastructure supporting a low-carbon economy. Investing in sustainable infrastructure will be crucial for ASEAN to adapt to global environmental trends and maintain its competitive edge.

Maritime security and environmental preservation will also be critical during Malaysia's chairmanship. Malaysia can lead ASEAN in promoting peaceful dialogue and cooperation among member states, including China, and external partners, with a focus on environmental protection.

Looking toward 2100, Malaysia should propose an ASEAN maritime environmental security alliance. This alliance would focus on joint efforts to combat marine pollution, protect marine biodiversity and ensure sustainable maritime practices.

Aligned with its Look East policy, Malaysia can drive ASEAN's green digital transformation by leveraging advancements in Chinese technology. Advocating collaboration in e-commerce, fintech and smart city development with an emphasis on environmental sustainability will be key.

Malaysia can propose a digital ASEAN green community by 2100. This community could integrate digital platforms across member states, enhance cross-border e-commerce and ensure equitable access to green technologies. Establishing a regional digital innovation hub focused on

eco-friendly technology and entrepreneurship will be crucial.

Addressing climate change will be a central issue during Malaysia's chairmanship. Collaborating with China on green technology and renewable energy initiatives will be essential for promoting sustainable development across ASEAN.

Looking to 2100, Malaysia can propose a comprehensive long-term sustainability framework for ASEAN. This framework should include ambitious targets for carbon neutrality, significant investment in renewable energy sources, and strategies for climate adaptation and disaster resilience. Emphasizing sustainable urbanization, conservation of natural resources and ecosystem restoration will help ASEAN meet its environmental goals and position the region as a global leader in sustainability.

Finally, engaging youth and focusing on education will be vital components of Malaysia's agenda. Malaysia can champion initiatives to equip the next generation with skills for a green, digitally connected world.

Envisioning the future, Malaysia can propose a comprehensive ASEAN youth green development program by 2100. The program could focus on education in environmental science, green technology and sustainable entrepreneurship. This will help shape a new generation of leaders and innovators driving ASEAN's sustainable success.

Malaysia's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2025 offers a pivotal opportunity to enhance the group's economic, security and environmental resilience. By deepening ties with China, advancing regional integration, and fostering sustainable and inclusive growth, Malaysia can position ASEAN as a forward-thinking, cohesive and environmentally conscious global player.

The author, a PhD in political science, is with the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Premier Li Qiang (center), poses for a group photo on Thursday with leaders of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, and the president of the Asian Development Bank, before the eighth Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

## Connectivity in focus at GMS summit

By CAO DESHENG  
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Premier Li Qiang called on Thursday for greater unity and coordination among countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion to further promote pragmatic cooperation in

various fields, in order to achieve shared growth and contribute to regional and global peace, development and prosperity.

Li made the remarks when attending the eighth Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in Kunming, Yunnan province, along with the heads of governments of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Masatsugu Asakawa, president of the Asian Development Bank, was also in attendance.

Li emphasized that the GMS mechanism has been a crucial platform for cooperation and development between China and the five Mekong nations for more than 30 years.

Amid global turbulence and transformation, the GMS countries should fully leverage the strength of their economic complementarity to deepen practical cooperation in various fields and join hands on the path toward common development, he said.

The premier underlined the need to uphold open cooperation

to advance higher-level two-way opening-up, improve the open regional economic structure, and create a more efficient and dynamic megamarket.

It is important to promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, carry out the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership effectively, and step up the signing and implementation of the agreement on the Version 3.0 Free Trade Area between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to facilitate trade and investment, he said.

Li called for advancing planning, construction and upgrading of the power grids in the region, deepening partnerships in the new energy

battery, automobile and photovoltaic industries, and expanding cooperation in emerging industries including clean energy, intelligent manufacturing, big data and smart cities, in order to foster new drivers for regional growth.

While strengthening infrastructure connectivity such as roads, railways and ports, which he called "hard connectivity", Li said countries in the region should intensify "soft connectivity" in areas such as policies, laws, regulations, standards and rules, facilitate cross-border payments and local currency settlement, and speed up regional economic integration.

China has decided to issue "Lancang-Mekong visas" to nationals of the five countries, granting eligible business personnel multiple-entry visas valid for five years, he said.

The premier emphasized the importance of upholding true multilateralism, and called for closer cooperation with the United Nations, the ADB, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and other institutions, to effectively implement the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The leaders of the Mekong countries highly praised China's significant role in GMS economic cooperation, and expressed willingness to work together to enhance strategic communication, maintain open cooperation, focus on innovative development, and expand pragmatic cooperation in various fields such as trade, agriculture, connectivity, the digital economy, green development, healthcare, tourism and cultural exchanges.

They underscored their commitments to upholding free trade and promoting regional economic integration.

## Instability can cut short tenures of future Japanese leaders

By CAI HONG  
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As Japan prepares for a special parliamentary session on Monday to elect a new leader, experts have warned of the possibility of a "revolving door" leadership in the country for a period of time with an electoral deadlock leading to political instability and triggering intense maneuvers among different political parties.

Currently, almost all major political parties are engaged in hectic power plays to secure the top job for their leaders. Leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and incumbent Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba is set to meet with the leader of junior coalition partner Komeito on Saturday, the right-leaning Japan Innovation Party head on Sunday, and leaders of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and the Democratic Party for the People on Monday, according to Jiji Press.

Ishiba is actively seeking support from across the political spectrum to retain his position at the helm after the LDP and Komeito lost their majority in the Lower House after 15 years. To reclaim control of the influential chamber, they must now secure the support of a third party, and hence the frantic parleys.

The main opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, made significant gains in the Oct 27 general election, but not enough to form a government. The good showing, however, has meant its leader Yoshihiro Noda has emerged as a strong candidate for the premiership.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party for the People, which increased its seat count in the Lower House fourfold to 28, is emerging as a pivotal "kingmaker" with the potential to tip the scales in Monday's ballot, according to the Japan Times.

DPPF leader Yuichiro Tamaki, being courted by all sides, has dismissed the possibility of his party formally joining the LDP-Komeito coalition.

With the ruling coalition lacking a majority, and opposition parties each likely to vote for their own leaders in the initial round, the prediction is that no candidate will secure a majority in the first round. A runoff — the first since 1994 — most likely between LDP leader Ishiba and CDP leader Noda, would probably decide the winner.

On Tuesday, Tamaki met with Noda, who is trying to unite opposition parties around political reforms, including stricter rules for political donations. The parliamentary affairs chiefs from various opposition parties also put their heads together on Tuesday to work out potential strategies.

The DPPF has signaled its willingness to cooperate with the LDP — Japan's largest political party — on a case-by-case basis. "That makes sense given the unpopularity of the Ishiba administration," the Japan Times said.

Meanwhile, senior officials from the LDP and DPPF met this week to discuss economic measures, further signaling the DPPF's role as a pivotal swing party in shaping future policies.

Ishiba plans to introduce household support measures, including utility cost cuts — a priority shared by the DPPF. With this alignment, Ishiba hopes to secure the DPPF's backing for a supplementary budget proposal for fiscal 2024 in an upcoming extraordinary parliamentary session.

Yuki Tatsumi, director of the Japan Program at Stimson Center, wrote in an article on the think tank's website that it is anyone's guess who will emerge from the second round as Japan's next prime minister.

Tatsumi cautioned that Japan could revert to a "revolving door" era of prime ministers, casting a shadow of uncertainty on the long-term policies established over a decade ago by late former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

Most analysts expect the LDP to aim for a minority government, collaborating with smaller parties on budgets and legislation as needed rather than forming a larger coalition.

With opposition parties now holding a combined 235 seats, the prospect of a government without the LDP cannot be dismissed either.

Wang Xincheng, a professor of history at Peking University, noted that the possibility of Japan's Innovation Party joining the ruling coalition remains open, depending on the course of ongoing negotiations.

A minority government, however, would be in a precarious position in parliament. "Without a majority, it would be extremely difficult for the ruling party to pass

budgets and legislation," Wang explained. "Cooperation with the opposition will be essential."

"This means the ruling coalition and opposition will negotiate over nearly every issue, from bills to policies," he added. "In such a scenario, decision-making will become slower and more complex, and the administration itself will face increased checks."

A fragile foundation in parliament would weaken Ishiba's position. Not only will his administration have to rely on the opposition and independent members for policymaking and legislative support, but fractures within his own party would also be a bother with ambitious senior members ready to challenge him.

Sun Wenzhu, an associate research fellow in the department for Asia-Pacific studies at the China Institute of International Studies, remarked that predicting Japan's next prime minister is a challenging task. Cooperation between the LDP and the Japan Innovation Party or the DPPF is possible if the LDP's proposals align with their interests.

However, the opposition remains divided over both priorities and ideology, making it difficult for the LDP to form a coalition with other opposition parties.

"Japan may enter a phase of political instability, or a 'revolving door' of prime ministers," Sun observed.

If Ishiba manages to navigate these challenges, he might gain additional influence within the LDP, potentially extending his administration until the Upper House election in July 2025, Sun said.

## Trade: Demand for electronics likely to rise

From page 1

Zhou Maohua, a researcher at China Everbright Bank, said the main risks facing Chinese exporters include protectionism, unilateralism and supply chain disruptions.

"While the demand from traditional markets such as Europe and the United States is slowing and protectionist policies have caused some disruptions to China's foreign trade, global demand — driven by many countries' ongoing urbanization, industrialization and consumption upgrade — is still expanding," Zhou said.

Supported by a strong industrial base and continuous optimization in trade structure and quality, as well as policy stimulus, China's for-

ign trade is expected to operate steadily in the coming months, with signs indicating a potential recovery in the global demand for electronic products, he added.

Anticipating the US' trade policies on China in the next phase, the Ministry of Commerce said on Thursday that China is willing to strengthen communication with the US, expand cooperation and resolve differences, all based on the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win outcomes.

Speaking on Wednesday at a sub-forum of the seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai, Tang Wenhong, assistant minister of commerce, said that amid the current headwinds challenging economic globalization and the accelerated restructuring of global industries and supply chains, fostering open cooperation is a common expectation of the international business community.

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## CHINA

# Key aerospace alliance gives Xiong'an a lift

Group will play major role in facilitating satellite internet networks nationwide

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang  
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Xiong'an New Area in Hebei province has witnessed a landmark achievement in enhancing its innovation capabilities as a key nationwide alliance has been established to promote the development of aerospace information and satellite internet, the province's top authority said.

On Wednesday, the China Aerospace Information and Satellite Network Innovation Alliance was officially founded in Xiong'an, marking a new era in aerospace information and satellite network cooperation and development in the country.

"The approval of the alliance will greatly promote the aggregation of innovative elements and resources, helping Xiong'an become an innovation hub and entrepreneurial hot spot in the new era," Ni Yuefeng, secretary of the Hebei Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, said at a ceremony on Wednesday.

Approved by central authorities, the alliance is a social organization involving key players from the telecom and aerospace sectors, and related universities and research institutes. It was jointly initiated by members of major State-owned telecom operators, including China Telecom, China Unicom and China Mobile, as well as key central enterprises such as the China Satellite Network Group.

The satellite group, an enterprise engaged in the design, construction and operation of satellite internet services, started using its new headquarters in the area's internet industrial park last month.

Established in April 2021, the company was the first centrally administered State-owned enterprise to settle down in the area. It will facilitate the gathering of resources in fields such as industry-related companies, technology and talent in Xiong'an and thus promote the development of satellite internet applications and the aerospace information industry.

More than 50 aerospace information companies have since settled

down in the area, according to Wang Lijun, an official with the area's reform and development bureau, as quoted by Xinhua Daily Telegraph.

Efforts to develop the aerospace information industry are in line with the goal of building Xiong'an New Area into a global innovation highland.

Located about 100 kilometers southwest of downtown Beijing, Xiong'an was set up in 2017 as part of a strategy to promote the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

Satellite internet involves deploying a large number of satellites to build a global network. Each satellite serves as a mobile station in the sky, capable of delivering network signals to every corner of the Earth, according to a report by Xinhua Daily Telegraph on Thursday.

"We should expand the application scenarios of aerospace information and establish connection platforms in areas such as smart transportation, emergency rescue, water conservancy and flood control, urban governance, smart cultural tourism and modern logistics, allowing more innovative achievements to converge in Xiong'an and be transformed in Hebei," Ni said.

"Hebei and Xiong'an will fully leverage the decisive role of the market in resource allocation and ensure governments better play their roles, making every effort to use the alliance as a platform to fully promote the development of aerospace information and satellite internet," he added.

Amid the efforts, Hebei will improve the aerospace information infrastructure, targeting 5G applications and 6G development and relying on the province's advantages in computing power and green energy to build supporting data centers to promote the deep integration of communication, navigation, remote sensing, as well as the integration of aerospace, aerial and ground systems, Ni said.

He added that Hebei will also expand the aerospace information industry cluster by persuading related enterprises to settle down in Xiong'an and improving the industrial and supply chains.

## Experts suggest creating digital Chinese textbooks

By CHINA DAILY

There is a huge overseas demand for Chinese textbooks, but challenges remain, experts agreed at a recent symposium hosted by the National Institute for Higher Education Teaching Materials under Higher Education Press.

According to them, teaching and learning materials for Chinese as a foreign language have witnessed a surge in publication and overseas readership in recent years. However, there are many obstacles impeding the distribution and export of Chinese text books to foreign countries, so digital study materials are needed.

With China's rapid development and growing cultural influence, Chinese textbooks are in high demand, and books covering topics ranging from aircraft engineering and traditional Chinese medicine to corporate management and Chinese language learning are being exported.

According to the 2023 International Chinese Language Teaching Resources Development Report, over 21,600 types of Chinese language textbooks have been shipped to more than 180 countries, an increase of 734 compared with the previous year.

Yet obstacles remain, experts said, including limited incentives for publishers to export Chinese text-

books, a lack of digital resources, uneven regional distribution and content that doesn't meet international learners' needs.

Chinese textbooks are reportedly more popular in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, while uptake in Western countries has been slower, hindered by their well-established education and technology systems.

Han Zhen, director of the Academic Committee at Beijing Normal University, attributed the difficulties to cultural differences, which he said have impeded mutual learning in the educational field.

Liang Yu, a professor at Beijing Language and Culture University, pointed out that traditional textbook development can be slow, with fixed content structures that lack interactivity and flexibility, underscoring the need for digital transformation to meet diverse user needs.

Liang called for pooling high-quality textbook resources and integrating print and digital formats to accelerate innovation.

"We should develop AI products for international Chinese language teaching and harness cutting-edge technologies to empower personalized learning, tailored management and intelligent services to promote smart Chinese language education," she said.

Xu Nuo contributed to this story.

## First visit to Macao



An Air China C919 plane arrives at Macau International Airport on Thursday, marking the domestically produced aircraft's first visit to the special administrative region. The plane will be on static display at the airport from Friday to Sunday during the 13th Macau Business Aviation Exhibition. This year celebrates the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to China. TAO RAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Zhuhai arms show to display first declassified missile defense system

By ZHAO LEI  
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China has declassified for the first time one of its dedicated missile defense weapon systems, and it will be displayed at an upcoming arms show.

The HQ-19 surface-to-air missile system has been deployed by the People's Liberation Army Air Force and was highly classified until Tuesday, when the Air Force announced its participation in the 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition scheduled to begin next week in Zhuhai, Guangdong province.

According to the Air Force, the missile system was developed by Chinese aerospace industry researchers on their own. It is tasked with intercepting incoming ballistic missiles, featuring a large defense coverage and the ability to take strong countermeasures against its targets.

The Air Force calls the HQ-19 "a pillar to the country's air-defense and missile interception system", but

has yet to disclose any of its technical specifications such as operational range and hit speed.

Carried by a large, eight-wheel launch vehicle, each HQ-19 unit has six firing tubes that will be erected before launching the missiles.

The missile system uses cold-launch technology, which releases compressed gas to eject the missile before ignition, thus helping protect the launch vehicle from flames and stabilize the firing process.

Zhang Xuefeng, a military hardware observer, said that the HQ-19 is a new flagship ordnance in the Chinese military's air and missile defense arsenal.

"Previous weapons such as the HQ-9 air-defense missile system are mainly used to protect comparatively small zones from hostile aircraft," he said.

"Though they can also defend against ballistic missiles, their hit radius is limited, usually in a matter of tens of kilometers. By comparison, the HQ-19 is a regional missile interception platform and can safeguard a much wider expanse of

areas. For instance, each of the United States' Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system is capable of covering an area that normally needs dozens of Patriot missile units."

According to Zhang, deploying missile defense systems brings a military a great deal of strategic advantages in a war because they can substantially reduce its enemy's air and missile strike capabilities.

"The combination of the HQ-9 series and the HQ-19 will form a powerful, multi-layer network to keep our important assets from threats from the air and exosphere," the observer noted.

Wang Yanan, chief editor of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, said that in addition to conventional ballistic missiles, the HQ-19 is able to defend against hypersonic glide vehicle weapons that are extremely fast and agile. As cutting-edge hardware, the hypersonic glide vehicle weapon poses a significant threat to high-value assets, and it is virtually impossible for other existing air-defense missiles to intercept it.

## Better reading services await elderly

By CHENG SI  
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China will ramp up efforts to enrich reading experiences for seniors by creating accessible reading environments and providing them with scientific guidance and products, with the aim of securing their right to read and attaining spiritual fulfillment in their twilight years.

Fourteen central departments, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Education and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, have recently released a guideline urging local authorities to offer more accessible and higher-quality reading services to the elderly.

The guideline clarifies that it's of great importance to offer seniors more convenient ways to read, which can boost their self-improvement and facilitate better engagement in family and social activities. The nation will integrate its resources to make sure older adults in rural and urban areas can access reading materials.

The guideline states that the nation aims to offer improved reading materials to the elderly by 2027 and produce a large number of talent who can help the elderly read and organize related activities.

It is expected that the number of elderly readers will increase significantly by 2027, and their needs will be better met.

Under the guideline, some State-level reading promotion campaigns targeting seniors will be launched and carried out via smart tools such as digital and information technologies, which will allow them to experience audiovisual reading.

Local authorities are encour-



A senior reader browses books at Shandong Book Mall in Jinan, capital of Shandong province, on Wednesday. HUANG ZHONGMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

aged to organize reading activities, including recitation, book-sharing parties and sitcom performances, to make the experiences more interesting and attractive for the elderly.

Figures from the civil affairs ministry showed that the number of people in China age 60 and above was almost 297 million by the end of last year, accounting for more than 21 percent of the nation's total population.

Among these people, about 37 million have completed senior high school and are literate, but their reading demands are not fully met due to a lack of accessible reading materials and related services.

The guideline encourages publishing houses and printing presses to publish books, magazines or newspapers appealing to seniors and make the copyrighted materials more accessible to them by adding audio services and printing with larger characters.

Also, local public services departments are required to optimize the reading environment for

older adults by installing barrier-free facilities or offering voluntary services such as delivering books to their homes.

Local authorities can use some AI tools to offer scientific, systematic and personalized reading guidance to the elderly based on their ages, education backgrounds and health conditions, and publish regular reports listing their favorite books.

Some provinces and cities have taken steps to better meet the older residents' reading demands. The city-level Wenzhou Library in Zhejiang province offers regular book interpretation services to the elderly, with volunteers speaking in the local dialect to help them better understand some classic Chinese novels.

Jiang Xianjing, who works at the Wenzhou Library, told China Central Television that the library workers will help local residents age 70 and above select the books they want and have them mailed to their homes. All they have to do is call the library.

## Briefly

### Scholars laud lasting influence of Marxism

Scholars from China and 14 countries gathered at Nanjing University on Sunday for the 4th International Conference on Marxist Literature Collections and Studies. They agreed that the remarkable success of Chinese modernization demonstrates the enduring influence and values of Marxism. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. It also marks the 20th anniversary of the Central Marxist Theory Research and Development Project and the 10th anniversary of the Marxist Literature Collection Project. This year's conference aims to explore the significance and value of the Chinese path to modernization from the perspective of Marxist theoretical innovation.

### Journalism award winners announced

The All China Journalists Association on Thursday announced the winners of the 34th China Journalism Award and the 18th Changjiang Taofen Award, the two most prestigious journalism prizes in China. A total of 373 news entries by media outlets nationwide won this year's China Journalism Award, while 20 people won the Changjiang Taofen Award. The announcement was issued ahead of Journalists' Day in China, which falls on Nov 8 every year.

### Parcel delivery sector sets handling record

China's parcel delivery sector has set a record by handling more than 140 billion parcels as of this week, surpassing the total volume of deliveries for last year, according to the State Post Bureau of China. Chen Kai, deputy head of the bureau, revealed the figures at a conference in Beijing on Wednesday, highlighting the robust growth of the sector. The milestone marks an impressive achievement for an industry that continues to expand rapidly as the country experiences its annual peak delivery season. Last year, the country handled 132.1 billion packages in total.

### China, US crack down on telecom fraud

Law enforcement agencies in China and the United States worked together recently to tackle a transnational telecommunications fraud case, retrieving more than \$1.7 million for a company in Zhejiang province and its US partner. The case was jointly handled by China's Ministry of Public Security and the US Department of Homeland Security, the ministry said in a statement on Thursday. Law enforcement departments in both countries collaborated to investigate the case, the ministry said. Transnational telecommunications are developing rapidly and becoming a common challenge for various countries, it said. Chinese public security authorities consistently crack down harshly on transnational telecommunications fraud according to law, while deepening practical cooperation with law enforcement departments in related countries to curb the crimes, it added.

### Bribery, laundering suspect repatriated

Xu Haipeng, a fugitive suspect in a corruption case, has been repatriated to China, according to central anti-corruption authorities. Born in 1989, Xu was the general manager of the legal compliance department at Jiangxi Province Financing Guarantee Group Co. He is suspected of bribery and money laundering crimes. Xu fled the country in August, prompting the disciplinary and public security authorities in Pingxiang, Jiangxi, to launch investigations. Swift international law enforcement collaboration led to Xu's voluntary surrender abroad. His capture was the result of the Sky Net campaign initiated in 2015 by the Fugitive Repatriation and Asset Recovery Office of the Central Anti-Corruption Coordination Group.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA

## CHINA

## Event hosts talks on shared future

By LIN SHUJUAN in Shanghai  
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The 2024 China Economic and Social Forum took center stage in Shanghai on Thursday, drawing over 130 domestic and international participants. The forum revolved around the theme of fostering a community with a shared future for humanity and collaborating to form a modern world.

Hosted by the China Economic and Social Council and organized by the Shanghai Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the event served as a platform for profound discussions and exchanges on pressing global issues.

In his opening remarks, Wang Dongfeng, chairman of the CESC, underscored the global resonance of China's vision for a shared future, emphasizing its positive reception and significant contributions to a harmonious, prosperous and sustainable world.

"China is ready to work with the international community to build an open world economy, join hands on the road to modernization and jointly promote the development and progress of human civilization," Wang said.

The CESC, a national organization and high-end think tank established in 2001 by the CPPCC National Committee, will continue to strengthen exchanges with friends from all walks of life in other countries, deepen exchanges of State governance experience and promote pragmatic cooperation in various fields to strive for a better future for humanity, Wang added.

Shanghai Mayor Gong Zheng echoed these sentiments in his welcome address, highlighting the city's pivotal role as an international hub driving technological innovation and fostering global cooperation. Positioned as a pioneer of Chinese-style modernization, Shanghai aims to solidify its status as an international economic, financial, trade, shipping and innovation center, showcasing the bright prospects of China's modernization endeavors.

Miao Wei, a member of the CPPCC National Committee, elaborated on the five key features of Chinese modernization, emphasizing the importance of inclusive development, environmental harmony and peaceful progress. He outlined China's commitment to expanding institutional openness, fostering international industrial partnerships and charting new pathways for global modernization, particularly in green technology sectors.

July Moyo, who leads Zimbabwe's Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare, highlighted China's pivotal role in supporting African development through efforts such as infrastructure investment and sustainable initiatives.

"The friendship between Africa and China is the story of people who have come together to build a greater future," Moyo said.

John Jacobs, president of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, shared insights on redefining growth paradigms, emphasizing the significance of shared prosperity over traditional economic metrics. His call for a people-centric approach to measuring progress resonated with attendees, stressing the importance of enhancing societal well-being.

Dimitris Dimitriadis, president of the External Relations Section of the European Economic and Social Committee, concluded his speech with praise for Shanghai's forward-looking ethos, describing his experience as a glimpse into the future.

"I entered the great 22nd century here. I met the future," he said, referring to his visit to Shanghai, which was his first.

## Integrated fishing



Fishermen harvest fish at a pond at a photovoltaic power station in Guanyun county, Jiangsu province, on Thursday. The integrated industrial model combines aquaculture with photovoltaic power generation by installing photovoltaic panels at a specific height above the pond, thereby boosting land utilization efficiency and economic benefits. WU ZHENGXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Institute in Yunnan wants to turn county into base to fight pests

By LI LEI  
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A senior agricultural official has expressed a desire to convert a county on the Chinese border with Laos and Vietnam into a strategic base for fighting significant cross-border crop pests and diseases in Southeast Asia, with a specific focus on combating the fall armyworm.

Dubbed a "global challenge" by plant scientists, the fall armyworm is a highly destructive pest that primarily targets corn. It entered China's Yunnan province from Myanmar toward the end of 2018 and swiftly spread to various provinces, posing a serious threat to agricultural production.

The initiative to establish the base was announced at an event organized by the Institute of Plant Protection of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences in Yunnan's Jiangcheng Hani and Yi autonomous county, which borders both Laos and Vietnam to the south.

Addressing a diverse audience consisting of agricultural scientists, government officials and United Nations representatives, Yang Zhenhai, Party chief of the academy, stressed the critical importance of transforming the county into a strong and resilient bastion to halt the cross-border spread of plant diseases and pests in Southeast Asia, a global food-producing hub.

"Efforts will also be made to promote green technologies and innovative methods of pest control to be used in more member nations of the Belt and Road Initiative," he said.

Jiangcheng was designated as an experimental station for the Beijing-based Institute of Plant Pro-

“Efforts will also be made to promote green technologies and innovative methods of pest control to be used in more member nations of the Belt and Road Initiative.”

Yang Zhenhai, Party chief of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences

tection following the fall armyworm's invasion of China in late 2018.

The county has since played a crucial role in controlling the spread of the pest across borders.

Originating from the Americas, the fall armyworm has rapidly spread across Africa, Asia and the South Pacific islands within just five years since its first reported invasion of Nigeria in 2016, posing a severe threat to global food security.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that plant diseases cost the global economy around \$220 billion each year, with 20 to 40 percent of crop production lost to pests.

Since the fall armyworm's detection in China six years ago, Chinese plant scientists have successfully identified the seasonal migration patterns of the pest in the border regions between China and Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

Leveraging information technology and computer vision technology, scientists at the Institute of Plant Protection have created sys-

tems for automatic identification, dynamic monitoring and precise early detection of these pests.

Through effective management strategies, China has reduced the annual average occurrence area of the pest by about 5.33 million hectares. This has helped avoid an annual loss of 5 to 6 million metric tons of corn, according to an estimate by the institute.

China's success in managing the fall armyworm has been recognized globally.

The Institute of Plant Protection was honored with the FAO Achievement Award during a ceremony in Rome commemorating the 44th World Food Day on Oct 16 for its pioneering efforts in combating the invasive species.

The award is bestowed biennially to acknowledge exceptional technical cooperation or humanitarian work in sustainable agriculture, rural development or food security at the national level.

FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu presented the prestigious award to the institute, emphasizing that its work has made a significant impact in China, Asia and worldwide by advancing crop protection and food security.

China's control of the fall armyworm has not only safeguarded the country's grain output but has also mitigated the risk of the pest spreading to neighboring Southeast Asian countries, experts say.

During a symposium in Beijing in October last year, Wu Kongming, president of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, highlighted the Chinese government's commitment to managing the fall armyworm invasion, which he described as a global challenge.

"Years of State-led control efforts have yielded preliminary success," he said.

## Researchers find quicker way to breed grapes

Artificial intelligence boosts crop innovation, revolutionizes agriculture

By LI LEI in Beijing and  
WANG XU in Shenzhen, Guangdong

Researchers at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences have utilized artificial intelligence to shorten the breeding cycle of grapes, increasing the breeding efficiency of a commercially important crop known for its lengthy growth process.

The findings of this research were published in the journal *Nature Genetics* this week.

The typical germination and fruit-bearing process for a grape seed spans three years, with additional time needed to cultivate superior grape varieties. This prolonged timeline presents challenges in developing new types of quality grapes.

Led by Zhou Yongfeng, researchers from the Agricultural Genomics Institute in Shenzhen, Guangdong province — a subdivision of the academy headquartered in Beijing — have focused on grape variety design and breeding since 2015, analyzing vast amounts of genomic and genetic data. Last year, they unveiled the first complete grape genome map and further constructed the inaugural grape pan-genome, *Grapen v1.0*, which was featured in the *Nature Genetics* publication.

Zhou highlighted the potential of this research to enable precise breeding designs for grapes, hasten grape variety innovation and serve as a blueprint for breeding other perennial crops.

To understand the relationship between grape genes and traits, Zhou and his colleagues examined over 400 samples from a pool of nearly 10,000 grape varieties.

Over two years, they studied 29 agronomic traits such as cluster size, grape berry metabolite content, berry size and fruit skin color to construct genetic and trait maps for grapes.

The team developed a predictive model to expedite the identification of genes that could enhance crop

performance, Zhou noted.

"With this model, breeders can swiftly and accurately assess the genetic potential of numerous breeding materials, facilitating the selection of superior varieties," he said. "This breeding technology allows for the early prediction of grape seedling characteristics, enabling the prompt elimination of unsuitable seedlings and reducing unnecessary labor and costs."

In recent years, AI and other cutting-edge technologies have been adopted by breeders to develop crop varieties with stronger resistance to adverse factors and with higher productivity.

For example, in some areas in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, a major cotton-growing area, AI-powered breeding techniques have been used to develop cotton varieties endowed with traits such as drought tolerance and pest resistance.

The next-generation varieties, coupled with smart farming management that has minimized the use of fertilizers and pesticides, have improved productivity to almost 8 metric tons per hectare at an experimental field in Kashgar.

Sun Qixun, president of China Agricultural University, said in recent years China has emerged as a front-runner in the realm of smart breeding, with postgraduate education in the area rivaling that of many agricultural powers.

Intelligent breeding, which features big data integration and model development, is now a frontier focus for Chinese agricultural researchers, Sun said, adding that he anticipates significant breakthroughs in applying AI to breeding within the next two to three years.

"In the era of intelligent breeding, China's research is in sync with global advancements," he said.

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## Calm down



Workers separate two bulls after a fight at an annual traditional bullfighting event in Baimu township, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday. HU XIAOFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Scientists call for healthy, sustainable region specific dietary plans

By ZHENG CAIXIONG  
and LI WENFANG in Guangzhou

For the first time, Chinese scientists have proposed establishing sustainable, healthy dietary models that are unique to each region in China. The models are expected to play a significant role in improving people's dietary habits and promoting environmental sustainability.

A research group led by Liu Yan and Xia Min from the School of Public Health at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, recently published a research paper in *Nature Food*, a renowned international food journal, titled "Adoption of Region Specific Diets in China Can Help Achieve Gains in Health and Environmental Sustainability."

The study, based on the dietary habits, environmental resource characteristics and economic development levels of China's regions, established a localized sustainable and healthy dietary plan called the Region Specific Reference Diet.

"It guides residents in various

regions to have sustainable diets and provides practical and feasible solutions for achieving the goals of building a 'Healthy China' and sustainable development," Liu, an associate professor at the school, told *China Daily*.

Brent Loken, global food lead scientist for the World Wildlife Fund, highly praised the study and published a special review titled "Healthy and Sustainable Diets Must Be Culturally Acceptable Too" in the same issue of the journal.

Loken believes the study not only provides a practical and feasible way for China to achieve a healthy and sustainable dietary transformation, but also provides an important reference for developing countries, including India and Kenya, that can help them achieve sustainable dietary pattern transformation based on their local dietary cultures, Liu said.

A reasonable diet is a comprehensive concept that ensures nutritional needs and promotes human health, she said. It contributes to the sustainable development of the Earth's resources, meets cultural standards

and is affordable, while an unreasonable diet may not only have a negative impact on health, but may also harm the environment and fail to live up to cultural demands.

Unreasonable diets are one of the main causes of disease worldwide, leading to approximately 11 million premature deaths annually and accounting for nearly one-fifth of all deaths around the world.

Such diets have also caused serious damage to the Earth's resources and the environment. The global annual greenhouse gas emissions related to food has reached 17.3 billion metric tons, accounting for over one-third of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the latest Global Burden of Disease database, more than 3 million people die due to improper diets in China every year, accounting for approximately 20 percent of the nation's deaths annually.

"This data highlights the serious impact of unreasonable diets on public health," Liu said.

In China, the death rate of people

who have cardiovascular diseases caused by unreasonable diets is about 58 percent, while cancer deaths from the same cause are about 15.3 percent. Both rates rank first in the world.

"These statistics not only reflect the severity of dietary problems, but also warn us to take them seriously," Liu added.

Liu urged Cantonese people to reduce their consumption of processed and preserved meats and long-boiled soups with meat.

"Boiling meat soups and consuming cured meat are very popular in Guangdong, but they also pose health risks," she said. "Making soups is an indispensable part of Cantonese cuisine, often using various ingredients to enhance the flavor. But processed meat often contains high levels of salt and additives, and long-term consumption may lead to health problems such as high uric acid and cardiovascular disease."

Liu noted that Guangdong's food culture also includes a rich variety of vegetables and aquatic products

such as fresh fish and tofu.

"These ingredients are not only nutritious and contain a large amount of vitamins and minerals, but are also beneficial for cardiovascular health," she said.

Liu said the Mediterranean diet is widely regarded as a healthy dietary pattern in the West, with a core emphasis on consuming abundant fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish and olive oil.

"This diet not only ensures a balanced nutrition, but also provides a variety of essential nutrients that contribute to overall health," she said, adding it could also help lower cholesterol and protect cardiovascular health.

But Western fast foods, including burgers, french fries and pizza, contain too much sugar, salt and saturated fat, which have serious negative impacts on health and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, she added.

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# WORLDUS

By LIA ZHU in San Jose, California  
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Twenty years after Iris Chang's passing, her determination to seek truth and justice continues to inspire a new generation of young people to explore overlooked chapters of history, particularly the Nanjing Massacre, which she brought to Western attention through her groundbreaking work.

Chang's most influential work, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, published in 1997, chronicled one of human history's darkest chapters.

When Japanese forces captured the Chinese city of Nanjing, formerly known as Nanking, on Dec 13, 1937, they unleashed a six-week campaign of terror, claiming the lives of 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers.

At the Iris Chang Memorial Park in San Jose, California, a group of students gather monthly to maintain the park, but their commitment is more than just community service. For them, the park represents a gateway to understanding a crucial yet often neglected chapter of World War II history.

When Jun Le Lim, 15, first visited the park, he assumed it was "just another park clean-up" for volunteer hours. But what started as routine volunteer work has transformed into a meaningful three-year commitment to preserving an important legacy.

"If it's well-maintained, people will come and learn about who Iris Chang was and what she accomplished," said the student at Irvington High School in Fremont. "It's important to preserve her legacy and help others understand her impact on the world."

The park, inaugurated in 2019 in memory of the Chinese American historian and author, features a monument inscribed with her inspiring quote "Power of One". The quote reflects her belief that a single individual can make an enormous difference in the world.

The message resonates strongly with young volunteers like Lim, who interpret it as a call to action. "It only takes one person to speak up and raise awareness. One voice can make a difference," he said.

Despite its magnitude, the Nanjing atrocity has often been overshadowed by other World War II events in Western historical accounts. Chang's book became a best-seller and introduced many Western readers to the tragic history for the first time.

For siblings Felicia and Joshua Guo, both attending Valley Christian High School, their involvement in park maintenance led them to discover Chang's work and motivated them to delve deeper into history.

Felicia, 16, initially viewed it as a routine volunteer activity but became inspired after learning about Chang's dedication and the challenges she faced.

"School textbooks barely scratch the surface, often dedicating just a paragraph or two to this significant historical event," Felicia said. "I looked online and then researched the history and her books. Iris Chang put everything on the line to tell this story, facing intense criticism and backlash. Her courage in pursuing truth despite opposition is truly inspiring."

The 14-year-old Joshua, introduced to Chang's story by his sister, shared similar sentiments. "Understanding her sacrifices and dedication to spreading knowledge made me want to contribute," he said. "It feels like a responsibility to honor her memory through this work."

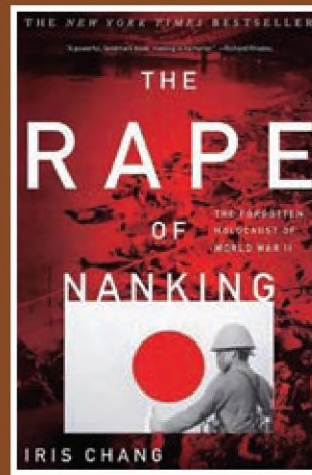
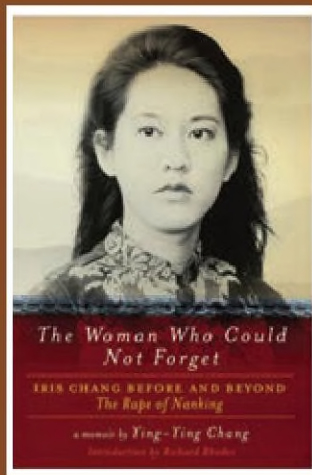
He said that drew him to this history was its neglected nature. "While textbooks acknowledge the event, they rarely delve into the details. There must be a reason why some people try to obscure this history or fear discussing it. Understanding what actually happened becomes even more important because of this," he said.

The park cleanup program, initiated five years ago by the Silicon Valley-based Hanlin Education Foundation, has grown from just



## Iris Chang's legacy an inspiration to youth

Rape of Nanking author's works stir interest in history



Top: Ying-Ying Chang, Iris' mother, looks at stone tablet inscribed with introduction of the late Chinese American historian and author at the Iris Chang Memorial Park, San Jose, California. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY. Above: Iris Chang was featured in *Reader's Digest*, September 1998; A memoir by Iris mother Ying-Ying Chang, and Iris Chang's book *The Rape of Nanjing: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

three participants to a regular group of 15 to 20 students every month.

Song Gao, director of the foundation's youth division, said volunteers help maintain the monument, remove weeds, pick up litter, and address maintenance issues beyond the city's limited resources.

"Many volunteers continue their involvement even after entering college and often bring friends and siblings to join the program," she added. To help the students better understand the history, the foundation hands out flyers and Chang's books.

Chang also authored two other books

documenting Chinese and Chinese American historical experiences before her life tragically ended on Nov 9, 2004. During her research for her fourth book at the age of 36, Chang took her own life after losing a battle with depression.

Her passing left unfinished her mission to raise awareness about Chinese suffering during World War II, particularly among younger generations.

The author's commitment to confronting injustice remained unwavering throughout her life. Though born in the United States, Chang maintained a deep connection to

Chinese history, conducting extensive research in China and interviewing survivors of the massacre. She consistently advocated for Japanese acknowledgment of the atrocities.

The Japanese government has never formally apologized for the atrocities. Japanese nationalist groups also launched a campaign attempting to discredit Chang and her work.

"Iris was not angered. She fought back by writing articles defending her books," Ying-Ying Chang, Iris' mother, recalled.

Chang's work continues to receive support from scholars like Randy Hopkins, a consultant to the history department at Portland

State University. He disclosed "the vilification campaign" directed against Chang and "the resulting distortions of the history" in his 2017 study *Nanjing Echo: Illusion, Subterfuge and Public Relations in the 'Rape of Nanjing' Debate*.

Hopkins' study was translated into Chinese and published last year in the journal of the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders, a museum in Nanjing.



If we don't pursue truth and justice, historical tragedies could repeat themselves. Our goal isn't to promote hatred but to embody her spirit of speaking against injustice for future generations."

Betty Yuan, a friend of Iris Chang and a member of the Silicon Valley-based Alliance for Preserving the Truth of the Sino-Japanese War

Hopkins said he planned to publish the study's Japanese translation so that "a truly international audience" can be exposed to the important information, which will help "restore Chang's book to its true place in history".

Twenty years after her death, Chang's influence continues to resonate.

BC Cook, a director and historian at the US maritime archaeology organization Sealark Exploration, reviewed Chang's *Rape of Nanking* in a recent article and praised how the book "energized the academic world" and sparked "healthy discussion" despite criticism and personal attacks from some Japanese scholars.

Betty Yuan, a friend of Chang's and a member of the Silicon Valley-based Alliance for Preserving the Truth of the Sino-Japanese War, recalled their first meeting at a Nanjing Massacre photo exhibition in late 1994 in Cupertino, California.

"She seemed so young when she told us she wanted to write this book. We wondered if she could accomplish such an ambitious task," Yuan remembered. "Three years later, she had created something truly impactful."

Chang's legacy continues through initiatives like the recent "Iris Chang, I Remember You" art and writing competition organized by the Hanlin Education Foundation, the Alliance for Preserving the Truth of the Sino-Japanese War and a few others. The competition has drawn international participation from the United States, China and Spain, featuring creative works from participants ages 4 to 16.

"The Power of One can profoundly influence a child's development," Yuan said. "Iris once worried about potential anti-Asian hatred. If we don't pursue truth and justice, historical tragedies could repeat themselves. Our goal isn't to promote hatred but to embody her spirit of speaking against injustice for future generations."

Frank Shau, 17, a senior at Independence High School in San Jose, was deeply moved after reading Chang's *Rape of Nanking*. "The personal accounts were devastating to read," he said. "I was shocked that such a significant historical event received so little attention in mainstream media or education."

As he prepares for college applications next year, Shau said he sees lasting value in his volunteer work at the Iris Chang Memorial Park and understanding of this history. "I plan to major in economics and political science. In both areas, you need to understand every part of the world, not just one perspective. Knowledge of Chinese history is crucial for a comprehensive view of world affairs," he said.

## California voters turn away from progressive criminal justice policies

By RENALI in Los Angeles  
renali@chinadailyusa.com

In a rebuke of progressive criminal justice policies, California voters on Tuesday rejected a lenient approach by some elected officials and also approved an anti-crime ballot question.

From Los Angeles to Oakland, election results showed that Californians are prioritizing public safety, in a shift toward more traditional approaches to crime prevention and prosecution.

Yet that shift also has sparked a debate about the future of justice reform in the state, with advocates expressing concern about a potential rollback of "hard-won" reforms.

In Los Angeles County, the nation's most populous county, Nathan Hochman, a former federal prosecutor, defeated George Gascón in the race for county district attorney.

Gascón, known for a reform approach that reduced sentences and focused on alternatives to

incarceration, faced criticism over perceived leniency.

"The voters of Los Angeles County have spoken and have said enough is enough of DA Gascón's pro-criminal extreme policies; they look forward to a safer future," Hochman said in a statement Wednesday.

Statewide, violent crime rose 15 percent from 2020 to 2023, and property crime showed a 5.5 percent increase, according to state Department of Justice data.

In Los Angeles County, the violent crimes and property crimes increased from 2022 to 2023.

Throughout his campaign, Hochman argued that Gascón's policies had compromised public safety, in particular by reducing penalties for juvenile offenders.

Gascón conceded the election but warned of a "rightward shift" not only in Los Angeles but nationwide. "The rightward shift across America last night is heartbreaking," Gascón said in his statement. "Democrats have a long road



California has been a leader in criminal justice reform, but rising crime has brought new pressure to find solutions that also address public safety fears."

Laura Espinosa, political science professor at UC Berkeley

ahead, but the work is more vital than ever."

The rightward shift didn't extend to the presidential election, in which Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris got 57 percent of the vote in California compared with 40 percent for the Republican President-elect Donald Trump.

Voters statewide also passed

Proposition 36, which reintroduced harsher penalties for repeat offenders. Under the measure, certain theft and drug-related crimes, including shoplifting and drug possession, could be classified as felonies for repeat offenders.

As of Thursday evening, 70 percent of the votes counted were in favor of Prop 36, with 54 percent of the vote counted.

At a polling site in Irvine, Orange County on Election Day, a group of Conservative Party supporters expressed concerns about safety and crime.

"We have children, and we work hard here; our choices today will impact the safety of our families. That's what matters most," said Meyaart, who spoke with China Daily after voting.

Another voter, James, a local business owner, said, "I want a safer city with less crime so that businesses like mine can thrive."

Opponents said that Prop 36 could lead to an increase in incarceration rates, potentially

undermining years of reform focused on reducing prison populations and addressing what they argue are inequities in sentencing. Some critics have contended that expanding penalties could disproportionately impact low-income communities and people of color, who historically have had higher rates of incarceration.

In Northern California, preliminary results indicated that both Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao and Alameda County DA Pamela Price were likely to be recalled by substantial margins. Both officials came under fire for policies that critics say failed to adequately address the region's rising crime.

As of Wednesday afternoon, election officials had tallied 233,000 ballots, with about 400,000 to 500,000 more, according to the Times-Herald of Vallejo, California.

In Oakland, Thao had campaigned on addressing the root causes of crime, such as homelessness and economic inequality, but was criticized by residents

frustrated with a rise in property crime and violence.

Supporters of the recall argued that Thao's administration had failed to ensure public safety.

Opponents said that the recall would be an obstacle to addressing the root causes of crime. "I don't have any regrets," Sheng told the media of her policies, at an Election Night gathering.

Price also faced criticism over policies some said were too lenient. Price's approach, which included reduced sentences and alternative sentencing for certain offenders, sparked the recall movement.

"This is a balancing act that voters and leaders must navigate," said Laura Espinosa, a political science professor at UC Berkeley. "California has been a leader in criminal justice reform, but rising crime has brought new pressure to find solutions that also address public safety fears."

Agencies contributed to this story.

# GLOBAL LENS



Family members carry the body of Widman, who drowned four months earlier trying to cross into the US, from the family's home to their church in Yepocapa, Guatemala, on June 19.



Hageo, whose sister Rossanna drowned four months earlier trying to cross into the US, looks behind a photo of his sister hanging in his brother's room in San Juan La Laguna, Guatemala, on June 26.



Rossanna (left), 25, holds onto her dad Alfredo, who grasps hands with Rossanna's fiance Widman as they attempt to cross into Eagle Pass, Texas, US, on Feb 24. PHOTOS BY CHENEY ORR / REUTERS

## DANGER CROSSING

Guatemalan families mourn the migrants who never reached the other side



Missionaries and family members mourn for Widman at a church in Yepocapa, Guatemala, on June 23.



Community members prepare food during the funeral of Widman at their church in Yepocapa on June 19.



Family members ride in a van back to their hometown of Yepocapa after collecting Widman's body on June 19.

The journey of Rossanna and Widman, their full names not given, began in the Guatemalan village of San Juan La Laguna, on the shores of turquoise Lake Atitlan, where they met when he bought the tortillas she was selling for lunch.

It ended in the murky waters of the Rio Grande. The couple drowned as they tried to wade across the notorious part of the river that links Piedras Negras, Mexico, with Eagle Pass, Texas, on Feb 24, just two among the hundreds of people who lose their lives trying to cross into the United States every year.

In June, relatives collected Widman's casket from Guatemala City and carried it back along the winding highland roads to his hometown of Yepocapa in a white van toward his final resting place. Dozens of community members filed through the streets to mourn the popular 26-year-old, often called by his middle name Alex.

Rossanna, his 25-year-old partner, was buried in San Juan La Laguna, near her family.

In the Guatemalan highlands, US election campaigning about immigration and the salvos about who was doing what to secure the border were far away. For the people here, the story is simply that of two of their young who left to earn some money but came back in boxes in the back of a van.

"She wanted to be a chef but we didn't have the money for her to study," said Francisca, Rossanna's mother.

"That's why she wanted to go to the USA. She was going to work in a restaurant. I didn't want her to leave but she insisted that five years would give her and Alex the opportunity to raise money to build their own house and open a restaurant here."

Although the number of people attempting to cross the border but apprehended by US authorities has declined in recent months, increased security on the US-Mexican border in recent years has pushed migrants to take increasingly perilous routes, migration advocates said.

Grupo Beta, which assists migrants on the Mexican side of the border, said it rescued 450

people whose lives were in danger during the first seven months of 2024 and recovered 34 bodies.

### Doomed attempt

Most migrants use "coyotes" — smugglers. Rossanna and Widman traveled with Alfredo, Rossanna's father, who paid coyotes to take them across Mexico.

In the early evening of Feb 24, the three approached the river at Piedras Negras carrying their belongings, accompanied by a coyote and two other migrants.

Rossanna was the last of the group to enter the water. At first she was nervous but excited, and Widman smiled as he encouraged her. It soon became clear the current was strong and the group lost their footing and returned to the Mexican side.

Then they decided to try again. The mood was more somber. A US National Guard officer arrived on the opposite bank and shouted at them in Spanish through a megaphone to return, telling them the river was dangerous.

It was too late. There was no sign of Widman or Rossanna.

Rossanna's body was found the next day on the Mexican side of the river. In a daze, Alfredo identified his daughter and returned to his home in Guatemala. Her body was returned to her family several weeks later. Widman's was found on the US side and returned four months later, after much bureaucratic wrangling.

Now Alfredo — who faces years of debt to work off the cost of the doomed trip to the US — works on a farm in San Juan La Laguna. He has a 5-year-old son, Hageo, who he helps dress in the morning. Hageo will grow up to know his older sister only from her photo — smiling and dressed in colorful local clothing — that hangs in the family home.

In Widman's home, the frame that holds his photo on the mantelpiece is turned backward, a frame around blank cardboard. His mother is not yet able to face it. It brings her too much pain.



Rossanna's father Alfredo helps his son Hageo get dressed before heading to work on June 26.



Marta, Widman's mother, weeps before entering the room holding her son's body in Yepocapa on June 19.



Andres, Rossanna's brother walks towards his sister's grave in San Juan La Laguna, Guatemala, on June 27.

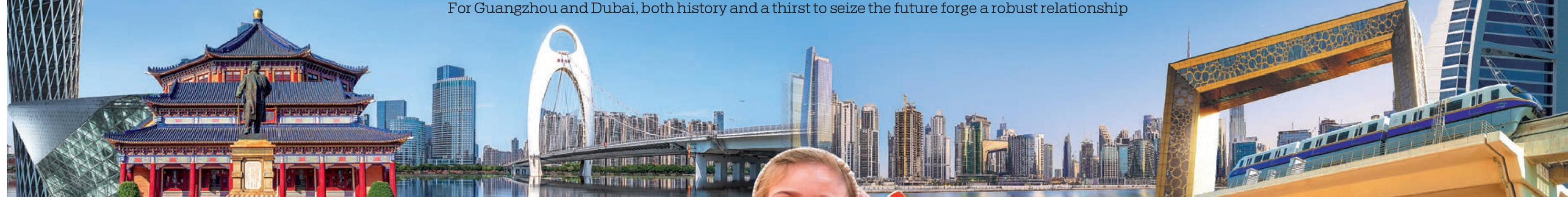
AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



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

# A PARTNERSHIP OF KINDRED SPIRITS

For Guangzhou and Dubai, both history and a thirst to seize the future forge a robust relationship



## Ties that bind: Kung fu, food, language learning

By PAN JIE and LI WENFANG in Guangzhou

As Zubeida Kanare learns Chinese in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, one of her goals is to help Chinese tourists better enjoy their stays in her hometown, Dubai. More than 10,000 kilometers away in Dubai, a group of high school students are also learning Chinese, but for different reasons.

Kanare, who has given herself the Chinese name Beida, used to work as an immigration officer at Dubai airport, and many of those whose passports she stamped were Chinese.

"Many didn't speak English, so there were quite a few communication problems. That's when I decided to learn Chinese."

Kanare has been taking Chinese courses for more than a year and can now speak the language well, and is continuing to study at King Mandarin in Guangzhou.

"Guangzhou is my favorite Chinese city," she says. "The climate is very similar to that of the United Arab Emirates, humid and hot, and it's easy to find Arabic cuisine here."

Like Kanare, Saeed Ali Al Dhaheri, a newcomer to Guangzhou, feels at home in the city because he can find a wide variety of restaurants serving both Chinese and international cuisine, including Arabic cuisine.

Al Dhaheri arrived in Guangzhou in September and is now taking Chinese courses at South China Normal University.

"Guangzhou is a very vibrant city with a lot of cultural diversity, and the locals are very friendly, so I'm comfortable here and feel inspired." Being able to communicate in Chinese is something that will improve his career prospects, he says.

"With China being one of the world's largest producers and exporters, its expertise has opened up huge opportunities for international trade."

Kanare and Al Dhaheri are just two of those students from the United Arab Emirates now studying in Guangzhou.

Their presence "underscores the vibrancy of our educational exchanges at the tertiary level," says Mariam Alshamsi, consul-general of the UAE in Guangzhou.

"They will return home not only with proficiency in Chinese, but also



A student practices writing Chinese characters at Hamdan Bin Rashid Boys School in Dubai.



A student completes Chinese homework at Hamdan Bin Rashid Boys School.



A student practices Chinese calligraphy as part of China's National Day celebrations.

with firsthand experience of life in China, enriching their perspectives and shaping them into true global citizens."

Once Al Dhaheri is competent in Chinese he foresees himself working as an importer and exports coordinator or international sales representative.

Alshamsi says: "I hope that many more will follow in their footsteps because these bright

young minds represent the future."

The enthusiasm for China, its people and its language is also felt at Hamdan Bin Rashid Boys School in Dubai, where more than 300 students in the ninth and 10th grades are studying Mandarin.

Abdulla Mohammad Ali Aldarmaki, a 10th-grade student, says: "I started learning Chinese because I thought it would be a cool skill to have, something not everyone can do. I'm also interested in kung fu, and learning Chinese makes me feel closer to the world of martial arts."

For Sultan Majed, 15, who has not yet traveled to China, a fascination with authentic Chinese food motivates his interest in learning Chinese. "Hotpot is my favorite because it's a social meal that people gather for and enjoy. I'd love to go to Guangzhou and Beijing one day."

Of course, the connections between the countries go far beyond martial arts and food. Majed says that one thing he appreciates is the Chinese cultures value hospitality, family and respect for elders.

"It's amazing how similar we are."

Li Kaixian, a Chinese language teacher at Hamdan Bin Rashid Boys School, fondly recalls his first Spring Festival in Dubai last year. He was deeply moved by the friendliness and enthusiasm as a Chinese dragon flew around Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest structure, in a drone light show, he says.

"And language is the bridge for bringing the two peoples closer."

Li says he was inspired enough to be able to work in Dubai because of the growing demand for Chinese teachers after the UAE launched the Hundred Schools Project.

In 2019, China and the UAE signed an agreement in Beijing to launch the project to expand Chinese language education in the country. The program has expanded to about 170 schools in the UAE, with more than 70,000 elementary and middle school students learning Chinese.

Afaf Aldarwish, principal of the school, says: "Since we introduced Chinese classes at Hamdan Bin Rashid Boys School, the effect on our students and school culture has been remarkable. Students are now more globally minded, curious about China's rich traditions and motivated by the career opportunities this language can offer."

"Beyond language, learning Chinese has provided a fresh cultural perspective, allowing our students to connect more deeply with the world and fostering a unique bond between the UAE and China."

By PAN JIE and QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou, and CUI HAIPei in Dubai, UAE

Mohamed Ali considers himself a fortunate man, having seen a lot of the world. Yet one place pulls particularly hard at his heartstrings: Guangzhou in Guangdong province, with its gleaming skyscrapers, thriving commerce, its huge range of culinary delights and its friendly locals.

Ali, a flight attendant with the airline Emirates who has lived in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, for 12 years, exudes great enthusiasm as he explores Guangzhou, capturing moments in front of a historic white tower, now a popular tourist spot, with his pocket camera.

The tower, standing inside Huaisheng Mosque in Yuexiu District, and also known as the Light Tower, tells of the historical link between the civilizations of China and the Arab world that can be traced back to the ancient maritime Silk Road.

Looking up at the tower, Ali says he can see some Arabic styling in it. "It's amazing, and especially for Arabs, who find it fascinating because of the history it represents."

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), merchants from the Arabian Peninsula crossed the seas and eventually reached Guangzhou. In those days the tower served as a crucial landmark for them and foreign explorers heading to the Chinese city. For the crews of Arab merchant ships, the tower's conspicuous design told them that they had indeed reached Guangzhou.

Twelve years ago, Guangzhou and Dubai, both important trading hubs at the two ends of the Asian continent, established a tie of friendship that essentially formalized a partnership that had thrived for many years before that.

Ali is one of many people who has been struck by the two cities' similarities.

For diplomats who live in Dubai and Guangzhou, pioneering, inclusive, vibrant and innovative are words often used to describe the two.

Mariam Alshamsi, the UAE's consul-general in Guangzhou, just arrived this spring, saying the city has with an "overwhelmingly positive impression."

"I am deeply impressed by the spirit of innovation that permeates Guangzhou, which lives up to its reputation as one of Asia's leading metropolises. The city's dynamic energy reflects that of the UAE, where progress and innovation are integral to our national ethos," Alshamsi says.

"The enduring legacy of the maritime Silk Road does indeed serve as a testament to the historical ties between the Arabian Peninsula and China, particularly Guangzhou. While Guangzhou and the UAE may be geographically distant, their shared attributes underscore the profound connections between us," she says.

Ou Boqian, China's consul-general in Dubai, says: "Historically, Guangzhou and Dubai are important hubs along the ancient maritime Silk Road. Today, both are dedicated to advancing smart cities and fostering high technology."

Both cities exude resilience, openness and inclusiveness, and

regard themselves very much as pacesetters, she says. Indeed, in recent years both cities have stepped up their efforts to adopt new technology, such as electric vehicles and driverless cars, and to develop the use of low-altitude flying vehicles.

In the first nine months of this year, 193,000 vehicles were exported from Nansha Automobile Port in Guangzhou, nearly 40 percent more than in the corresponding period last year. Of these, 32,700 were new energy vehicles, and by the end of the year, 240,000 such vehicles are forecast to have been exported.

Among those loaded from Guangzhou ports are cars made by GAC Group.

"As GAC International's overseas operations expand, the Middle East is our most important sector," says Wayne Wei, president of GAC International.

"Over the past few years, our business has spread to nine countries in the Middle East, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait."

"Both have leveraged their special status as historical trade hubs to explore new areas and achieve remarkable success. Most importantly, both have chosen a development path that suits us well."

Ou Boqian, China's consul-general in Dubai

While ground-based vehicles are the focal point of most discussions, entrepreneurs in Guangzhou have their sights set on the skies and are working to turn fairy-tale magic carpets into reality.

On April 7, China's Civil Aviation Administration issued the first production certification for a pilotless passenger-carrying aircraft in Guangzhou, which is also the first such license in the global industry of electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft.

The model for which a certification was granted is the EH216-S of the company Ehang in Guangzhou. It made its maiden flight in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi in May.

Dubai has unveiled plans to introduce flying taxis, with full operations set to begin in 2026, setting the stage for a new era of urban mobility.

"We attended this year's Gitex in Dubai and the booth was a star attraction," said Jack Dong, senior manager of public relations at Ehang. Gitex is said to be the biggest technology show in the world, and this year's edition in Dubai ran over five days from Oct 14.

Flying taxis represent the future, Dong said. "This is the dream. ... People in Guangzhou and Dubai are similar in how they embrace new technologies and innovations."

Another Guangzhou company, Xpeng Aeroht, also had its futuristic concept cars, which are still in the development phase, on display at Gitex.

"This model is to demonstrate how we transition from the driving mode to the flying mode," said Fanny Tong, senior manager for international communications at Xpeng Aeroht.

By 2029, the air taxi market is projected to be worth \$80.3 billion, compared with \$4.9 billion last year, according to Indian market research firm Spherical Insights.



Above: An Xpeng Aeroht eVTOL Flying Car is on display at the Gitex Dubai on Oct 14. WALEED ZEN VIA GETTY IMAGES. Below: A light show decorates the China Pavilion at Expo 2020 in Dubai on Nov 12, 2021. GUSPEPE CACACE / AFP

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For all the flight attendant, riding on a flying taxi between skyscrapers is an exciting prospect. "It will help with the traffic because you'll skip congestion. Then you can see many places in a shorter time. So for tourists coming to Dubai who don't have a lot of time, it will make exploring the city much easier."

The warm ties between the two cities epitomize the robust relationship that China and the UAE enjoy, the fruit of an agreement made on Nov. 1984, when they established diplomatic ties.

"Over the past 40 years, the relationship has been highly fruitful," says Ou, the consul-general in Dubai.

"Both have leveraged their special status as historical trade hubs to explore new areas and achieve remarkable success. Most importantly, both have chosen a development path that suits us well," she says.

"The good internal and external environment ensures our long-term development. We both have visionaries and efficient, pragmatic governments. This is among the most important factors in ensuring the long-term economic development of our two countries."

For Alshamsi, the consul-general in Guangzhou, the UAE and China have indeed enjoyed robust bilateral economic ties over the years.

"To further strengthen these ties, she thinks there are several key areas such as new energy, financial services and tourism industry, where both nations can deepen existing partnerships.

She believes there is immense potential for collaboration across these various fields, which will "transcend barriers and bring us together for the common good."

Contact the writers at panjie@chinadaily.com.cn



## SWEET SCENT BRINGS TWO VIBRANT CITIES TO MIND

A refreshing early autumn breeze sweeps across Guangta Road in the Yuexiu District of Guangzhou, I walk through a long passage to the yard of Huaisheng Mosque.

As I walk, that breeze brings in a fragrance that mingles lemon, jasmine and honey, refreshing this early-riser's mind.

Looking toward the ground, it becomes apparent that the fragrance emanates from frangipani petals shed from a lofty tree and now scattered across the slabstone.

It all takes me back several years, to when I first visited Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, when that fragrance last delighted my senses.

Sweet smells and urban greening may not immediately suggest similarities between Guangzhou and Dubai, but they do have a lot in common. The two cities are located at similar latitudes and are both coastal metropolises, and they are both cultural melting pots.

Perhaps it is no surprise then that 12 years ago they decided to form a partnership under the moniker sister cities.

As a commercial hub for thousands of years and an important international exchange city in China, Guangzhou has attracted many foreigners to study, work and live there.

In the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the Guangta Road, where the mosque is located, and its environs served as a community for foreign merchants, mainly Arabs and Persians. This area, known as Ranfang, was a residential unit designated by the gov-

ernment for the foreign residents. Now the area still plays host to effervescent cultural exchanges, and in April, more than 30,000 foreigners were living in Guangzhou.

Not far from Guangta Road I walked into an Arab cuisine restaurant called Saba and ordered a cup of milk tea. The man who served me was a Yemeni, Ali Ismail Mahyiddin, who said he had lived in Guangzhou for 24 years with his family, and who now considers the city as his first home, his fluent Chinese underlining that.

It was trade and the famed Canton Fair that first drew him to Guangzhou, he said, and the city's openness, cosmopolitan nature and respect for foreigners made him stay.

Two of the restaurant's diners were Omani businessmen who said they had just arrived in the city for the Canton Fair.

Guangzhou had obviously made a great impression on at least one of them, Mohamed R. Sabar, general manager of a medical supplies company, who said: "Guangzhou is a nice city and a flower city. Coming in, all the way from the airport, there were flowers."

For me, the diversity and multiculturalism of the city are evident everywhere, including in its cultural vitality, architecture and culinary offerings, mirroring the cosmopolitan UAE, where



Pan Jie Reporter's log

more than 200 nationalities live side by side.

The UAE's diverse economy provides ample opportunities in many sectors such as technology, finance, real estate, healthcare and new energy. The UAE government promotes policies that make doing business easy, encouraging businesses and investors to establish their ventures there.

Notable legislative changes include removing local sponsorship requirements for onshore companies, expanding the Golden Visa program, and introducing various long-term residency visas. The visa programs are a culmination of the UAE's efforts to attract and retain global talent and investment.

The UAE's population is 12.5 million, with 88.5 percent of those who live in the country being foreign nationals, according to a report by the Arab consultant GMI Research.

Two of my graduate school pals once told me they had decided to work in Dubai, and I had long wondered why they would want to work there when they could find a good job in China.

One of them, Zhang Wenjia, told me recently: "The UAE is incredibly vibrant, and in Dubai, you rub shoulders with people from all corners of the globe who not only respect one another but also chase unique opportunities here. The city pulsates with energy."

In fact, Zhang said, she is now the marketing director of a solar power company. Why my two friends opted to work in the city is no longer a mystery to me.



Students taking Chinese classes at Hamdan Bin Rashid Boys School in Dubai celebrate China's National Day in October. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE

# Exhibition zooms in on cultural heritage

Film and photography highlight handicrafts, performing arts and ritual celebrations, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Scenes of stone-paved alleys lined with ancient-looking houses and lush forest with waterfalls have a way of drawing the audience in to the arcadian landscape of Jiangjin district in Southwest China's Chongqing.

They are shown at the beginning of a 4-minute film highlighting a local distinctive dragon dance and set the stage for the subsequent emergence of dancing performers dressed in bright red costumes.

They move in harmony with the beat of drums and gongs, and the painted bamboo-made dragons they carry nimbly slither and coil, gliding through the air, as if having a life of their own.

The film recently stood out for vividly capturing the dance as a distinctive cultural heritage. It was among 500 selected pieces at the 2024 intangible cultural heritage film and photo exhibition that was hosted in Kaihua county, Quzhou city, Zhejiang province, from Oct 23 to 25.

The exhibition was hosted by the Center for Ethnic and Folk Literature and Art Development under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Zhejiang provincial department of culture, radio, film and television, and tourism, and the Quzhou government. It showcased a range of ICH domains, including traditional handicrafts, performing arts and ritual celebrations from 22 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, including the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Zhejiang, Shanxi, Henan, Guangdong and Gansu provinces.

"I am a representative inheritor of the small dragon dance, and I deeply feel the responsibility to preserve this precious cultural heritage through recorded images, contributing my part to cultural transmission," says Zhong Jie, a crew member of the film production team.

Named a municipal-level intangible cultural heritage in Chongqing in 2011, the dragon dance acquired its distinctive characteristics out of interactions among dragon dance artists. It took shape in the 1940s, with a dragon normally six meters long and 25 centimeters wide.

"It is characterized by four key features," Zhong says.

Compared with its counterparts across the country, the Jiangjin dance applies relatively small and intricately crafted props and requires only a few dancers.

"Usually three people can deliver a show, or in some cases, two or even a single dancer can pull it off," Zhong explains.

However, it entails a variety of movements and requires advanced skills.

A set of movements vary based on the number of performers, ranging from jumping and diving to interlocking hands, dangling upside down, and head-tail catch.

"Each movement requires strength, agility, and flexibility, making it a challenging and skillful dance for the performers," Zhong says.



Producers of 10 short films on intangible cultural heritage are specially commended during an exhibition in Kaihua county in Quzhou city, Zhejiang province, in October.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A photo capturing traditional wooden house construction in rural areas of Guangxi (left) and a short film on dragon dance from Chongqing (right) stand out among 500 displays at the exhibition.



The art form has been popular in local communities for being highly adaptable to different occasions and seasons.

"It is suitable for both solo and collaborative performances with larger dragon dances," Zhong says.

His team made sure all the highlights of the dance were captured in the short film, as well as the close connection of the art with local life.

"We also tried to tap into the cultural connotations of the small colorful dragon dance as a folk cultural heritage typical of western Chongqing, and show them to the audience in a vivid way," Zhong says.

Every cultural heritage item, he adds, carries the historical memory, values, and lifestyle of a specific region or ethnic group and is closely linked to local customs and ways of life, thus reflecting people's understanding and perception of nature and life.

The short film also makes a point of presenting the creation of props.

It shows that only "female" bamboo that has grown for more than three years is selected. The outer layer is scraped off before the bamboo is sliced into strips with a knife. These strips are then soaked in hot water for two to three days to enhance their flexibility. Once the frame is assembled, it is painted and decorated with colorful fabric to complete the dragon's appearance.

"Each step, from the rigorous selection of materials to the precise craftsmanship, demonstrates the inheritors' exceptional skills and unwavering commitment to quality. This craftsmanship is not only the core value of intangible cultural heritage but also a key reason it has been preserved over time," Zhong says.

Like Zhong, Liang Hongwei from southern Guangxi Zhuang auto-

nous region stood out for her series of photography works zooming in on traditional wooden house construction in rural areas of Tianlin county, Baise city of the region.

"The people there have lived in wooden houses for generations, but due to the high costs of materials, the complexity of the construction process, and the need for skilled craftsmen, very few villagers have built wooden houses in the past decade," Liang says.

"When I learned that a family was planning to construct a traditional wooden house, I felt compelled to document the process out of a desire to protect and pass on traditional culture," she adds.

Over the course of more than six months of construction, Liang visited and took photos three times, witnessing how this traditional wooden house was built without a single nail,

relying solely on the efforts of over 200 relatives and neighbors who carried materials and pulled ropes.

"I was deeply moved by the wisdom of these hardworking people," she says, adding that her work being shortlisted for recommendation is not only a recognition of her efforts but also a motivation for her to continue using the power of photography to promote the transmission and development of local intangible cultural heritage.

Zhong's film and Liang's photos were among 10 long films, 10 short films and 10 photography works themed on intangible cultural heritage that were specially commended during the exhibition in Zhejiang.

The event aimed to showcase the achievements in intangible cultural heritage preservation in China since the country joined the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 20 years ago.

It also aimed to promote and exhibit the recent outstanding intangible cultural heritage imagery works from across the country, summarize the related experiences and disseminate the correct concepts of intangible cultural heritage preservation, according to the organizers.

The three-day event drew in more than 330,000 visits online.

Lan Jing, director of the Center for Ethnic and Folk Literature and Art Development, says intangible cultural heritage films and photos play a vital role in recording and disseminating ICH. On one hand, they reflect the personal journeys of the practitioners involved in ICH, and on the other, they objectively present the preservation and development of ICH projects.

The works can transcend the limits of time and space for the public to

understand the lineage of these heritage projects, appreciate their spiritual values, and discover their rich meanings and unique charm, Lan says.

Lan also calls on ICH photographers and filmmakers to immerse themselves in the communities where ICH projects are located, paying close attention to the preservation of heritage items, the stories of their bearers and communities, and the natural and cultural environments that sustain these projects.

This approach will foster the creation of more high-quality ICH photos and films that can meet the growing spiritual and cultural needs of the people, Lan adds.

Speaking from his own experience, Zhong points out that it's important to fully understand the history, cultural significance, and value of the intangible cultural heritage project before filming.

"We have to approach these traditional cultural assets with respect, avoiding inappropriate depictions or misinterpretations of the heritage project," he says.

Efforts should also be made to truthfully represent the authentic scenes and craftsmanship of ICH projects, avoiding excessive embellishment or exaggeration, he notes.

"Let the audience see the project in its true form, allowing its unique charm to shine through," Zhong says. Additionally, focus should be given to details, as the allure of ICH often resides in subtle intricacies.

"Capture these often overlooked details, using close-up shots to highlight delicate techniques, so that viewers can clearly appreciate the craftsman's finesse," he says.

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# Lineup at Golden Rooster Awards gives the jury plenty to crow about

By XU FAN  
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The 37th China Film Golden Rooster Awards, one of the country's most prestigious industry honors, will be announced in mid-November in Xiamen, Fujian province, organizers announced during a Beijing briefing on Oct 27.

In all, 20 awards will be given to winners from among the 251 submissions — Chinese films that were screened between July 1 of last year and June 30, and foreign movies screened during the same period that have debuted globally within two years.

Six features received nominations for the Best Picture Award — one of the biggest trophies — namely crime drama *Endless Journey*, comedy *Johnny Keep Walking!*, war epic *The Volunteers: To the War*, romance *Viva La Vida*, street dancing-themed comedy *One and Only*, and director Zhang Yimou's *Article 20*.

Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi blockbuster *Dune: Part Two* will vie for the Best Foreign Language Film,

competing against four other rivals — Christopher Nolan's biographical film *Oppenheimer*, the American psychological thriller *Mother's Instinct*, Russian movie *The Challenge*, which is the first film shot in space, and the documentary *Kim's Video*.

Pop idol Wang Yibo, who plays a young dancer pursuing his dream in *One and Only*, will contend for Best Actor, facing off against capable contenders such as Shen Teng, who is known for his vivid interpretation of an underdog racer in *Pegasus 2*, and Lei Jiayin, who portrays a procurator struggling with a midlife crisis while continuing to seek justice in *Article 20*.

*Article 20* has also earned Ma Li, who plays Lei's wife, a nomination for Best Actress, with the other shortlisted actresses including Li Gengxi, for her touching portrayal of a 25-year-old patient fighting severe uremia in *Viva La Vida*, and Zhang Zifeng, for playing a dumpling cook in a factory canteen in *I Love You, to the Moon, and Back*.



Left: The primary poster for the 37th China Film Golden Rooster Awards. Right: The secondary poster for the event.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



As one of the most prestigious awards, Best Director will be contested by five nominees, from

veteran director Chen Kaige for *The Volunteers: To the War* to emerging talent Shen Ao for his

film, *No More Bets*.

Award winners will be announced during the 2024 China Golden Rooster and Hundred Flowers Film Festival, which will be held between Wednesday and Nov 16.

The biggest events include the opening and award ceremonies, which seek to demonstrate Chinese cinema's achievements over the past year, according to Deng Guanghui, vice-chairman of the China Film Association, one of the organizers of the festival and the awards.

Launched in 1992 and consecutively held in Xiamen for five years, the festival is scheduled to screen 75 movies. The lineup comprises 10 new Chinese mainland titles, 25 features from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, as well as 40 foreign films from over 30 countries.

Due to its increasing popularity, the festival is expected to draw more foreign attendees than in previous years. Volunteers who are able to speak a number of different languages are being recruited, with plans to bring

onboard over 600, according to Wu Zidong, director of Xiamen's publicity department.

Two posters were unveiled during the news event: The primary poster features a rooster about to crow, and the secondary poster is an artistic representation of the number "37", symbolizing this year's 37th edition.

Lu Bu, the designer of the primary poster, explains that the rooster's comb and feathers are colored in an orange-red shade that resembles the color of peacock flowers, an icon of Xiamen.

He adds that the technique used to depict the rooster was inspired by paper marbling, a traditional pattern design dating back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

Zhu Xiaohai, the designer of the secondary poster, explains that the image incorporates inspiration drawn from the interplay of light and shadow cast by movie projectors, explaining that the design symbolizes the vitality of the art of film.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## China open to enhancing Sino-US relations based on 'three principles'

Donald Trump's pledge during his campaign to end the Middle East and Ukraine crises in a short time became the focus of media reports and commentaries soon after he won the presidential election on Tuesday. But how Sino-US relations will develop during his second term as US president has been the common focus of a broader group of people, because it concerns the common interests of countries around the world.

Despite its claim to stabilize Sino-US relations, the Joe Biden administration has built or tried to build "small yards and high fences" in the fields of trade and technology in an attempt to "decouple" the US and Chinese economies, urge its allies and partners to take provocative actions against Beijing in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, and form a united front with "like-minded" allies to isolate China from the rest of the world.

Since the new Trump administration will assume office only after he is sworn in as president on Jan 20, if all goes well, the intervening period provides the president-elect with precious time to explore ways to not only address domestic issues but also steer Sino-US relations in a direction that better serves the interests of the two countries.

An objective evaluation of the Biden administration's policy legacy of "competition, cooperation and confrontation" indicates the either win-win or lose-lose nature of Sino-US relations. The development of Sino-US ties since 2017 when Trump began his first term as president should serve to drive home the core message that China and the US gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation.

That's also the core message President Xi Jinping sent Trump on Thursday, congratulating him on his election victory and highlighting the fact that a stable, sound and sustainable Sino-US relationship serves the two countries' shared interests and meets the need of the international community.

It is hoped that the US will uphold the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation to intensify dialogue and communication with China, properly manage differences and expand mutually beneficial cooperation, as Xi stressed in the congratulatory message.

The three principles Xi has put forward for the healthy development of Sino-US ties are down-to-earth guidelines for steering the bilateral relationship toward win-win partnership.

These principles demand that both sides form a correct strategic perception of each other; properly handle pressing issues such as those in the South China Sea and Taiwan; and cooperate to unleash their growth potential for economic development.

China and the US have broad common interests in not only combating climate change but also promoting trade, developing technology and safeguarding peace and stability. So, instead of starting from the position of strength, the US should approach bilateral relations keeping in mind common interests and mutual benefit.

Intensified dialogue and communication will help the two sides to realize that their common interests far outweigh their differences, and that the common interests can be expanded and differences narrowed down through talks.

China and the US, which are partners not rivals, should become a source of peace and stability, and a driver of development for the world. China's US policy has been consistent. While the two countries, as well as Sino-US relations, have undergone great changes over the past years, China remains committed to developing healthy and sustainable relations with the US based on the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation. It also remains committed to firmly safeguarding the country's sovereignty, security and development.

It's time the US realized that China's development is beneficial for the American economy and people, and vice versa, started seeing each other's development as an opportunity rather than a challenge, and explored together with China the ways to achieve common development.

## Manila naive to demand damages

It is ludicrous of the Philippine military chief to repeatedly demand that China pay damages for and return the rifles seized during a confrontation between Chinese and Philippine personnel in the South China Sea in June.

Manila's intention behind such a demand is to give the world the impression that China is bullying the Philippines. But the fact is that the Philippine Navy has taken repeated provocative actions in the South China Sea, leading to clashes.

The China Coast Guard has been warning Philippine vessels not to make provocative moves or venture into the waters around China's islands every time the Philippines sends its vessels to the disputed waters. Beijing has reiterated time again that maritime disputes in the South China Sea be resolved through talks, but its calls have fallen on Manila's deaf ears.

It is the Philippines that has been trying to provoke China in order to trigger clashes in the South China Sea, and thus give the United States an excuse to intervene in the disputes on its behalf and form an anti-China front.

The Philippines has become especially aggressive in the South China Sea since 2023, when it allowed the US military to set up four new bases on its territory. Since the Philippines is willing to act as a pawn to take forward the US' geopolitical strategy to contain China, it has been making even more aggressive moves to provoke China in the South China Sea.

But the Philippines has underestimated China's resolve to safeguard its maritime territories. Under no circumstances will China give in to external threats and compromise on safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

China has no intention of bullying any country despite it being the world's second-largest economy, and it has never run roughshod over any country. Instead, it seeks to establish good neighborly relations with its neighboring countries.

The Belt and Road Initiative, which has benefited many countries in terms of infrastructure development and trade, speaks volumes about how China has been trying to promote common development. And the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership that China has signed with the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand projects China's vision of building an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future.

As far as relations between China and the Philippines are concerned, the ball is in the Philippines' court. It could have maintained good relations with China, as the two countries did enjoy a good relationship before Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr assumed office in 2022.

If, like his predecessor, Marcos, too, had tried to settle the maritime disputes through talks, and consulted China on what the two sides should do to take the relationship forward, there wouldn't be any tensions in the South China Sea.

Instead, Marcos sided with the US, which has been trying to contain China in order to maintain its global hegemony and further consolidate its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Philippine president believes he can challenge China with the support of the US. But he is being naive to think so. China will never compromise on its sovereignty and territorial integrity. So he should stop fantasizing that Washington will engage in a conflict with Beijing in order to defend Manila's interests. The US is just using the Southeast Asian country as a pawn in its geopolitical game to contain the rise of China.

China will continue to defend its maritime rights and take appropriate action against the Philippines' provocative moves. And no, Beijing will not pay any damages to Manila.

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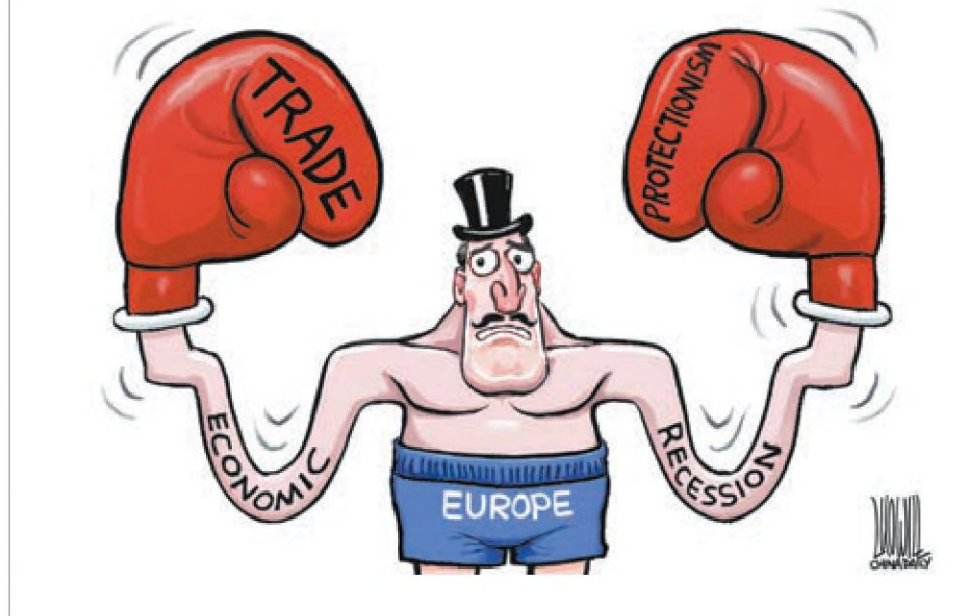
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Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Mekong region countries should steer clear of external divisive forces

Premier Li Qiang met with the leaders of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam on Thursday during the eighth Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in Kunming, Yunnan province.

The meeting, held on Wednesday and Thursday, is expected to consolidate consensus on the basis of the previous agreements reached between China and Mekong countries and negotiate measures to promote coordinated socioeconomic development and regional integration. China hopes that in-depth exchanges can help promote cooperation in key areas such as regional connectivity, trade and investment, agriculture and poverty reduction.

In August, China put forward a four-point proposal for regional cooperation in the next stage, from upholding genuine multilateralism and open regionalism, and resisting zero-sum games and "decoupling" and "supply-chain-break-

ing", to stepping up joint efforts to combat transnational crimes and safeguard regional stability, and improving science, technology and innovation cooperation mechanisms, and strengthening artificial intelligence capacity building to better serve regional countries. It also includes accelerating the building of connectivity networks, maintaining unimpeded production and supply chains, strengthening cooperation on climate change and disaster prevention and reduction, and facilitating personnel exchanges.

All these proposals, aimed at promoting greater regional economic and social development in the Greater Mekong Subregion, are achievable and had good reason to be further confirmed at this meeting in Kunming.

In the first half of this year, the total trade volume between China and Mekong countries exceeded \$200 billion,

an increase of 12 percent year-on-year, and China has been their leading trading partner for years. The remarkable achievements made by the six countries over the past years, such as in boosting regional inter-connectivity and building economic corridors, prove that closer cooperation is necessary.

Against the backdrop of sluggish global recovery and geopolitical tensions, the need for these countries to strengthen solidarity and cooperation has become more important.

However, not all countries want to see smooth cooperation between China and other countries, and are attempting to drive wedges between them. All countries in the region should be alert to such malicious campaigns and stay committed to their original goal to pursue greater cooperation for regional common development.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

## Enhance facilities to popularize ice and snow sports

The General Office of the State Council issued guidelines on Oct 31 for high-quality development of ice and snow sport facilities. It proposed that by 2027, the facilities for ice and snow sports will be more complete, ice and snow sports more widely practiced across the country, and the total scale of the national ice and snow economy will reach 1.2 trillion yuan (\$167.25 billion).

Ice and snow sports are becoming popular in the country after the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. The ice and snow sports and related industries are becoming emerging growth drivers.

During a routine policy briefing of the State Council, it was stated that in the post-Winter Olympics era, the General Administration of Sport of China

will increase the supply of ice and snow sports products and services, promote ice and snow sports, and continuously encourage 300 million people to enjoy the sports. The key lies in encouraging youth participation. But the lack of relevant infrastructure is a problem in some places.

The document explicitly proposes strengthening the construction of ice and snow sports facilities. It encourages localities to adapt measures and make use of parks, trails, urban squares, and other public lands to build ice and snow sport facilities for the public. It also says that supporting qualified primary and secondary schools to incorporate ice and snow sports into their physical education and health curriculum as special sports projects, establishing a compre-

hensive youth competition system for ice and snow events, and encouraging general higher education institutions to promote ice and snow sports can stimulate youth participation.

Many regions are now investing heavily in ice and snow sport facilities. Various such facilities are coming up in southern regions such as Guangdong, Fujian and Sichuan provinces and Chongqing municipality.

According to the guidelines, by 2030, a number of high-quality destinations for ice and snow sports and tourism will be established and the total scale of the ice and snow economy will reach 1.5 trillion yuan. The future of the ice and snow economy undoubtedly holds great promise.

— THEPAPER.CN

## What They Say

## Meddling joint statement has crossed redline

Beijing has reasons to feel offended by a joint statement issued by Ottawa and Seoul recently.

The joint statement the two countries released at the end of the Canada-Republic of Korea Foreign and Defense (2+2) Ministerial Meeting on Friday last week has gone far beyond the scope of bilateral ties.

Borrowing the "Indo-Pacific" concept, a veneer the United States uses to cover its China-containment strategy, the document hypes up the "threat" the two countries face in the region,

expressing their concern about the South China Sea issue, to which both are external parties.

Although the two countries emphasized the importance of maintaining peace, security, stability and freedom of navigation and overflight in and above the South China Sea, they should be well aware that this is all rhetoric that the US and its allies use to provoke China, by taking advantage of their mari-

time disputes to support the Philippines to do Washington's bidding.

The South China Sea is one of the safest and freest maritime routes in the world, and there has never been any problem with the freedom of navigation and overflight in the waters.

Although they know that the US' implementation of a China-containment strategy, citing "China threat", is the root cause of rising uncertainties and risks in the Asia-Pacific, they still try to call black white by hinting that it is China that is making "unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the Indo-Pacific".

Both Canada and the ROK are major trading partners with China and benefit tremendously from the healthy development of Sino-Canadian and Sino-ROK ties. While most US allies were adopting a wait-and-see attitude before the US presidential election on Tuesday — Japan, and the ROK, have actually tried to repair and stabilize ties with China — it is not clear why, on this occasion, Canada and the ROK want to irk

China with such a meddling statement.

The most outrageous thing regarding the document is that they feel no qualms about openly interfering in China's internal affairs, the Taiwan question. Both countries uphold the one-China principle, and if they really think peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is "indispensable to international security and prosperity", they should stop poking their nose on the Taiwan question, which is not their business at all.

The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and core interests, and brooks no interference from any external party.

As the spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Canada said, the greatest threat to cross-strait peace is the "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and foreign interference. Canada and the ROK should earnestly abide by the one-China principle and unequivocally oppose the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

Zhao Zhongxiu

## Sound trade policy a boon for US

Former US president Donald Trump has won the presidential election and will be sworn in as the 47th US president on Jan 20. President Xi Jinping on Thursday extended congratulations to Donald Trump on his election as president of the United States.

Xi urged the two countries to find the right way to get along in the new era, so as to benefit both countries and the wider world. The statements made by the Chinese leader indicate the correct path that the world's two largest economies should follow. Hopefully, both the current US president and the president-elect will take heed of such suggestions.

In particular, the US has imposed tariffs on more than \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods since 2018. It's a big concern that during the election campaign, Trump threatened to impose 60 percent tariffs on imports from China (worth about \$427 billion in 2023) and 10 percent tariffs on all imports (worth more than \$3 trillion).

However, it should be noted that many US presidents have prioritized practical measures over impractical election pledges after being sworn in.

Tariffs are never a "panacea" for all the economic and social ills of the US. Can tariffs help boost domestic manufacturing, increase national wealth, compensate for the loss of government revenue due to tax cuts, pay for childcare, and even combat inflation? Can tariffs on Chinese products have helped bring manufacturing and employment back to the US?

Even US economists have dismissed such claims as being exaggerated, unsubstantiated and logically fallible. In fact the tariffs failed to boost US manufacturing and, instead, cost more jobs than they created. Among the studies are those by the Tax Foundation and US-China Business Council, as well as some other prominent economists including David Autor at the economics department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The study by Autor and others — basically, the same team that conducted a study on the "China shock" — is particularly interesting, as it found that the tariffs failed to achieve their goal of bringing jobs back to the US. Due to other countries' retaliation, the cumulative effect of Trump's tariffs — that is, the effect of the original tariffs, retaliatory tariffs and subsidies granted to farmers — was slightly negative for US jobs.

Also, some economists agree that the proposed broad-based tariffs may increase the cost of entry for overseas competitors and thus reduce imports, encouraging some US enterprises to increase their production. But studies



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

show the tariffs would raise the costs for US manufacturers and businesses that depend on foreign inputs.

Contrary to the claim that China will pay the cost of those tariffs, not US consumers, numerous studies have shown that the costs of tariffs were, in reality, borne by Americans as a whole, if not only consumers. According to a 2018 study led by Mary Amiti of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the extra tariffs "had little to no

impact on the prices received by foreign exporters." Importers, too, had to pay part of the cost of the tariffs, as their profit margins shrunk.

There's no doubt any new tariffs would increase the costs for consumers. Kimberly Clausing and Mary Lovely of the Peterson Institute estimate the annual cost for a typical US household to be about \$2,600, while Budget Lab at Yale puts the extra cost at \$1,900 to \$7,600 per household.

In a country whose supply chains are spread across the world and where labor costs are rising, extra tariffs on imports alone cannot bring manufacturing back or solve the problems facing US manufacturing.

Therefore as to the claim that "smart tariffs will not create inflation", and would even "combat inflation", economists say it is completely untenable. Autor at the MIT said the proposal to impose tariffs will have "a very large effect on prices almost immediately", which, in turn, could trigger a recession. Besides, according to a study by the Peterson Institute, the proposed policy combination — import tariffs, deportation of illegal immigrants and efforts to erode the US Federal Reserve's independence — will drive up consumer prices. To be precise, the inflation rate, which otherwise would have been 1.9 percent in 2026, is projected to reach between 6 percent and 9.3 percent if tariff threat is realized.

Many Americans see tariffs as a remedy for the country's economic ills, because the US' manufacturing sector has been hollowed out, and inflation remains a big concern. But economists have been warning that extra tariffs increase commodity costs and raise inflation, hurting ordinary people. In a country whose supply chains are spread across the world and where labor costs are rising, extra tariffs on imports alone cannot bring manufacturing back or solve the problems facing US manufacturing. As a matter of fact, protectionist tariff policies will, more likely than not, exacerbate economic instability and increase economic costs.

Also, over-reliance on tariffs could result in higher living costs and increase the inflationary pressure on the people, ultimately undermining the health of the US economy. So policymakers should adopt a more rational approach to evaluating the long-term impacts of tariffs, temper protectionist impulses and strike a balance between increasing employment and maintaining the stability of the global supply chains, so as to ensure sustainable development.

The author is president of the University of International Business and Economics, Beijing. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



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## Let's hope new US president ends conflicts as promised

Donald Trump's election victory on Wednesday has raised concerns. During the election campaign he proposed to an extra 10 percent tariffs on all US imports and a 60 percent tariffs on Chinese goods.

Given the highly interconnected global supply chains, a tariff war against one economy today means a tariff war against many countries, not to mention that a tariff or trade war launched by the US ends up harming the US economy and consumers. Studies show that tariff wars have been and will continue to be disastrous for US workers, consumers and businesses.

Win-win cooperation, especially between the world's two largest economies, has always benefited not just the people of the two countries but also the world as a whole.

It has also prolonged the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, by adding fuel to the fire to fulfill its own narrow geopolitical goals.

One major concern is what kind of people the president-elect will choose for his new cabinet. On Tuesday, Ron Paul, a former Republican congressman from Texas, warned of the danger of "neocrons yet again infesting" the new US administration — people like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo. His message on X was applauded by Tesla and SpaceX founder Elon Musk, who responded by saying "I agree that we should not empower neocron warmongers".

The world has become a more dangerous place today because of the Biden administration's obsession with playing zero-sum games, especially in its dealings with China, and focusing its energy on measures to contain China and divide the world into confrontational political blocs.

The US' sordid role in the Asia-Pacific includes stoking tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. It has also prolonged the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, by adding fuel to the fire to fulfill its own narrow geopolitical goals.

Many experts, including Columbia University professor Jeffrey Sachs, have warned that the existing US foreign policy is pushing the world toward a new Cold War, a potential third world war, and even a nuclear war that could annihilate the entire human race.

While many people are skeptical about the promises the US president-elect made during his presidential campaign as well as on Wednesday, particularly his pledge to "stop wars", such promises are needed more than many other things in today's world.

Despite being politically incorrect in Washington, Trump has repeatedly said that it is a great thing to get along with China, Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

As a journalist who covered the first summit between Trump and DPRK leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore in 2018, I was impressed by his efforts to make a rapprochement with the DPRK, because that's another important thing the world needs today.

It's way too early to tell what Trump administration 2.0 will look like. But I hope he makes good on his promise to end the conflicts in Eurasia and the Middle East, restore lasting peace in the Middle East, and improve relations with China, Russia and the DPRK, thus stopping the downward spiral toward a new Cold War, even third world war.

The world should never see a new Cold War, let alone another world war.

Maya Majueran

## Ancient civilizations can seek modernization together

Recently China and India have reached resolutions on issues concerning the border areas through diplomatic and military channels, which is a good sign for both nations and the region.

Historically, China and India shared peaceful relations for thousands of years. As the world's second- and fifth-largest economies, the two countries manage their differences with a strategic mindset, emphasizing the importance of open communication. Their commitment to fostering a healthy and stable relationship is essential for building a multipolar world, as sought by the Global South.

India and China, as ancient civilizations, had much in common as Buddhism played a significant role in shaping both societies. The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1950, with India being the first non-socialist country to establish diplomatic ties with China, a move that was globally significant.

In 1954, China and India jointly proposed the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, laying the foundation for their future relations. The Global South views these principles as crucial for contemporary international relations and for giving a collective call for improving global governance.

Also, the two countries are expected to emerge as two of the most powerful global players. Together, they account for one-



The improvement in China-India relations is a win-win for not only those two nations but also the expanded BRICS members and the Global South as a whole.

third of the world's population and contribute to almost half of global economic growth. And their emergence is one of the most significant developments in the 21st century.

China and India recognize the complexities of today's geopolitical landscape and the common challenges they, and the other developing nations, face. They share broad interests and understand that good bilateral relations are beneficial to them as well as for the rest of the world.

However, Western powers have been try-

ing to exploit the differences between India and China, portraying them as rivals for the leadership of the Global South. This narrative has been perpetuated through systematic campaigns, and by fuelling the belief that China is India's enemy, so India should strengthen ties with the US to counter the "Chinese threat".

China and India agreed to organize meetings between their foreign ministers and other officials to restore healthy and stable bilateral relations, and pledged to strengthen communication and cooperation in multilateral forums to safeguard the common interests of the developing world.

As key members of BRICS and the Global South, their cooperation represents a win-win for all developing countries. Positive relations between India and China are particularly significant for the Global South, as the countries play pivotal roles in shaping the future global order.

The growing cooperation between these two largest developing countries, along with their involvement in organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, will help widen the influence of the Global South, as well as promote a truly multipolar world, one that is not dominated by the US and other Western powers.

To reduce the dominance of the US and its Western allies in reforming the existing world order that primarily serves the West's

interests, BRICS member states and the Global South are advocating for improving the world order that benefits all countries and fosters a community with a shared future for humanity.

The improvement in China-India relations is a win-win for not only those two nations but also the expanded BRICS members and the Global South as a whole. With the two countries playing key roles, the Global South can establish a new, balanced, open and inclusive multilateral cooperation mechanism, capable of addressing global challenges.

As for the Global South, China and India could join forces to oppose unilateralism, resist bloc confrontations, safeguard the interests of developing countries, and contribute to regional and global peace, stability and development.

Strong Sino-Indian ties have the potential to promote regional and global peace and prosperity. By standing together for more fairness and justice, they can help create a multipolar world that opposes supremacism and fosters a fairer and more equitable world order.

The author is director of BRISL, an independent and pioneering Sri Lanka-based organization that specializes in the Belt and Road Initiative. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## GLOBAL VIEWS



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

ONG TEE KEAT

## Managing success for new challenges ahead

The upgrade of the ASEAN-China FTA will bring enduring peace and shared prosperity to the region

As the Belt and Road Initiative enters the second decade of implementation, its sphere of global outreach has been growing with gusto. Over 150 countries across the world have endorsed the mammoth endeavor of economic



integration by participating in the China-led multilateral cooperation. "High quality" is now a new benchmark set for the mega deal. New drivers for economic growth and areas for collaboration have, by and large, been earmarked at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation last year. Nonetheless, this is still very much dictated by the changing dynamics of the respective regions.

The substantial conclusion of the upgrade negotiations on the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0, announced at the 27th China-ASEAN Summit last month, came as a timely triumph for economic integration and multilateral cooperation at a time when external powers are indulging in incessant wedge-driving and sowing of discord in the Asia-Pacific region.

The ASEAN-China FTA has been the institutional cornerstone of economic and trade relations between China and the 10-member bloc. The conclusion of the latest upgrade with the inclusion of consumer protection and competition provisions signifies a landmark breakthrough beyond traditional cooperation, underscoring the increasing significance of the consumer protection regime, alongside transparency in competition since the previous upgrade.

Through this agreement, cooperation and coordination in consumer protection and competition, particularly in digital transaction, is all set to be enhanced.

While certain quarters among retailers in Southeast Asia echo the West-instigated calls for imposing anti-dumping tariffs against the influx of Chinese inexpensive goods, the new provisions on consumer protection and competition perhaps can provide a timely solution to address the latent woes. Undeniably, some micro, small and medium-sized homegrown enterprises might have their survival threatened. But to label normal trade transactions as "overcapacity-induced

dumping" is certainly too far-fetched to accommodate. The discerning negotiators from both China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are astute enough to not be baited by such assertion driven by geopolitical dynamics.

Meanwhile, the new upgrade witnessed a significant positive shift in the integration of standards and regulations that paves way for mutual recognition of conformity assessment results, notably in sectors such as new-energy vehicles and electronics. This inclusive move will help establish an institutional framework for aligning standards between both sides.

All in all, the updated version focuses on digital trade and sustainable development aside from providing ongoing support to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, alongside building a more resilient supply chain to keep trade and investment markets open for long-term growth. This, in itself, is a strong booster to the globalized free trade amid escalating protectionism and fragmentation.

All the positivity seems to bode well for the continuous bolstering of ASEAN-China economic cooperation, upon which underpinned the new phase of BRI implementation. In this context, geopolitical disruption, notably the recent maritime confrontation brought up by the Philippines against China over the territorial waters dispute, will continue to put the cooperation to test.

Backed by the United States and its allies outside the region, Manila is becoming increasingly vocal and defiant by prioritizing its dispute with Beijing at the expense of common good to be reaped from the enduring ASEAN-China economic cooperation.

While we are ushering in a new phase of high-quality BRI cooperation primarily characterized by digital economy and green economy, the quest for homegrown innovation among the ASEAN member states through technology cooperation with China stays real and relevant.

By the same token, the Chinese technology entrepreneurs should also look beyond mere market penetration for their products. Their mature experience and expertise in new turfs such as digital economy and green energy transition will help boost the homegrown innovation in Southeast Asia, which is still very much strait-jacketed by deficiencies in

capital and technology know-how.

This is reminiscent of the dire need to narrow the infrastructure and finance gap in ASEAN before the BRI was rolled out. In this context, the focus on developing the digital and green economies is no longer synonymous with mere trade in goods and services, but also encompasses capacity building through technology cooperation. The new twin pillars of economic development earmarked for ASEAN-China cooperation are well poised to shape the sustainability of ASEAN in the years to come, consistent with the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

In this regard, the China-initiated Global Development Initiative is a perfect vehicle to foster ASEAN-China sustainable economic cooperation. This goes far beyond mere trade as is intended in the free trade agreement.

While the wide encompassing BRI serves as a broad framework for fostering multi-lateral and multi-dimensional connectivity that is driven by the ideal of building a global community with a shared future, the three global initiatives rolled out by China are more dedicated to addressing specific collective needs and global challenges. The raft of initiatives was offered as China's solution in response to the arising exigencies. It is a groundbreaking move to reset the ailing world order.

ASEAN may endeavor to embark on a sustainable economic development path alongside China via the Global Development Initiative with the facilitation of the ASEAN-China FTA 3.0. But it doesn't mean to negate the possibility of fostering a parallel ASEAN-China collaborative mechanism through the Global Security Initiative or Global Civilization Initiative to address common exigencies or promote civilizational engagement.

The successful conclusion of the upgrade negotiations on the FTA is merely a positive step facilitating the ASEAN-China cooperation, marking a landmark move to bring enduring peace and shared prosperity to the vast region of over 2 billion people.

The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific (BRICAP). The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LU GUOXUE

## Empowering the informal economy

China's experience in enhancing the quality of jobs and stabilizing socioeconomic growth using the digital economy will be useful at the APEC summit in Peru

The Asia-Pacific region boasts fairly robust economic growth, with analysis suggesting that the GDP of the APEC region will grow by 3.5 percent in 2024, the same as last year and higher than the global growth rate of 3.2 percent. At the same time, government spending, tourism and the service industry have seen a strong recovery. The inflation rate across APEC

economies averaged lower at 3.9 percent in 2023 from 5.9 percent in 2022, and is forecast to drop further to 2.9 percent this year. Concurrently, consumption within the region has shown a positive trend. In addition, the Purchasing Managers' Index in the manufacturing sector of APEC economies has remained stable.

However, geopolitical uncertainties within the region, the rise of trade protectionism, anti-dumping measures, tariffs, and other restrictive and unpredictable trade policies continue to impact trade activities negatively. The disruption of global supply chains due to the Russia-Ukraine crisis, as well as the long-term drought in the Panama Canal caused by climate change in recent years, and the security impact of the Middle East situation on shipping along the Suez Canal has led to significant fluctuations in commodity prices and exchange rates. Several international institutions have predicted that growth rate in the region will slow down to 3.1 percent in 2025-26.

In this backdrop, it is crucial for APEC to promote structural reforms, foster the healthy development of global trade, and make progress toward sustainable and inclusive growth.

APEC has been advocating cooperative concepts such as "inclusion" and "growth" in recent years. However, unlike the previous advocacy for economic growth primarily through the "new technological revolution" and "industrial upgrading", this year's APEC summit to be held in Lima, capital of Peru, from Nov 9 to 16, proposes transitioning to a formal economy through innovation and digitization — by "empowering informal economic entities", adding new connotations to APEC's inclusion and growth.

Since the scopes defined by various countries and their attitudes toward the informal economy vary, the economy has different names in different nations, being called shadow economy, or parallel economy.

The International Labor Organization defines it as economic activities that are not included, or not sufficiently included, in formal arrangements in law or practice. Integrating the explanations, the informal economy advocated by APEC for "empowerment" should consist of legal economic activities (including tax, labor insurance, financial supervision, etc) that are not controlled or managed by the state. Its partial or whole output or services are not counted in the GDP. It definitely does not include illegal operations such as smuggling, drug trafficking, gambling and other "underground economy" and "gray economy".

According to the ILO, the informal economy accounts for 65 percent of non-agricultural employment in Asia, 48 percent in North Africa, 51 percent in Latin America, and 78 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. Data published by the APEC Policy Support Unit show that the output of the informal economy among APEC economies ranges from 8.2 percent of the United States' GDP to 56.6 percent of Peru's GDP. Overall, the informal economy, acting as a "reservoir" for employment, is characterized by low wages, insufficient protection of workers' rights, long working hours, high labor intensity, and poor working conditions. How to transition the informal economy to a formal one and achieve high-quality employment has become a big concern for governments and the international community in the digital economy era.

The upcoming APEC leaders' Summit in Peru has taken the "empowerment" of the informal economy as an initiative to promote more balanced, sustainable, and inclusive growth in the Asia-Pacific economy. This is an objective and rational response to the economic development of most developing economies in the region in this era. There is a reasonable prospect that the informal economy will embrace new development opportunities among the economies of the Asia-Pacific region.

Peru, as an APEC economy, will be hosting the leaders' summit for a third time after 2008 and 2016. The summit, with the theme of "Empowerment, Inclusion, Growth," not only reflects the voices of informal economy workers within the developing APEC economies but also points out the common socioeconomic issues present in the Global South economies. As a fellow member of the developing world and the APEC, China has gained valuable experience and achieved tangible results

in recent years by exploring the impact of the digital economy on informal employment and how to enhance the quality of workers' employment, improve workers' welfare, and ensure healthy and stable socioeconomic growth.

According to the Research Report on the Development of China's Digital Economy (2023), the overall size of China's digital economy has surged from 27.2 trillion yuan (\$3.83 trillion) in 2017 to 50.2 trillion yuan in 2022, and its share of GDP has expanded from 32.9 percent in 2017 to 41.5 percent in 2022. China has vigorously developed the digital economy, actively promoted the digitalization of industries and the industrialization of digital technologies, as well as fostered the deep integration of digital technology with the real economy.

Both China and Peru are ancient civilizations, important emerging market countries around the Pacific, and key members of the Global South. They have a long-standing friendship. Peru was the first Latin American country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, and was also the first Latin American country to launch a comprehensive strategic partnership and to sign a comprehensive free trade agreement with China. The Chinese side highly values China-Peru ties and is willing to deepen practical cooperation, promote mutual learning between civilizations, strengthen multilateral collaboration, and elevate the partnership to new heights.

Therefore, China actively supports the initiatives issued by the informal APEC leaders' meeting in Peru, advancing Asia-Pacific economic cooperation amid challenges and uncertainties. China is also pleased to carry out broader cooperation with Latin American and Caribbean countries in economic and trade collaboration, infrastructure and digital economy construction, scientific and technological innovation, and cultural and academic exchanges. It also hopes to keep the correct direction of cooperation, strives to build an open economy, and inject more stability and growth into the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

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# BUSINESS

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## Shanghai highlights investment potential

City showcases its open policies and development opportunities

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai  
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As the 7th China International Import Expo caught the spotlight in Shanghai, the city hosted the Shanghai City Investment Promotion Conference on Wednesday, showcasing its open policies and development opportunities to attract more businesses and talent.

"The 7th CIIE has made a call for upholding an open consensus and expressed firm confidence in promoting high-quality economic development in China," said Chen Jining, Party secretary of Shanghai. "Shanghai will intensify efforts to deepen reform and opening-up to unleash new vitality for high-quality growth."

Shanghai's economy has maintained strong resilience and vitality, holding significance for long-term strategic investments by, and the development of, multinational companies, Chen said.

He highlighted China's long-term growth advantages, robust industrial and supply chains, cost-

effective innovation capabilities and policy stability — coupled with Shanghai's deepening economic transformation.

Shanghai Mayor Gong Zheng described the city as an innovative, open and aspiring metropolis ideal for global investment, innovation and entrepreneurship, thanks to its location advantages, industrial mix, resources, government services and ecological environment.

Through further market opening and competitive policies focused on key areas and projects, Shanghai aims to facilitate investment, he added.

At the event, Shanghai signed 23 foreign investment projects spanning biomedicine, high-end equipment, advanced materials, fashion and green low-carbon development.

Executives from multinational companies participating in the event praised Shanghai's business environment and the value of CIIE as a platform.

Deng Jian, vice-president of commercial operations at medical devices giant Medtronic, said Shanghai is crucial for the company, as its

headquarters here has been driving development across the country since it entered China 35 years ago.

Medtronic remains upbeat about the Chinese healthcare market and innovation sources, and has increased investments, including in a new cardiovascular devices production line in the Lin-gang special area in Pudong.

Guan Huili, president of Cargill China, said the agriculture and food giant has, by participating in the CIIE for seven straight years, helped build local ties and insights to tailor more products for China.

From just over 10 products initially to over 120 innovations this year, including global premieres, the company has localized some CIIE launches, meeting demand for quality, health and sustainability.

With the firm's China headquarters in Shanghai, Guan said the city's open, inclusive and innovative identity aligns with Cargill's philosophy, representing an important market and platform for better customer service and more innovation.

The 2024 Shanghai City Investment Promotion Conference was held jointly by the Ministry of Commerce and Shanghai Municipal People's Government.



Malaysia's booth attracts visitors during the 7th CIIE in Shanghai. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## Malaysia to deepen biz ties with China

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai

As this year's guest of honor country at the 7th China International Import Expo, Malaysia is making the most of the spotlight to showcase its export offerings and develop stronger economic cooperation with China, said Tengku Zafrul Aziz, Malaysia's minister of investment, trade and industry.

Zafrul expressed optimism that the long-standing Malaysia-China partnership will scale new heights at CIIE and beyond, in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"We have always been a strong supporter of the CIIE and are grateful to be the guest of honor country this year," Zafrul said. "Our Prime Minister delivered the opening address for the CIIE and over 60 Malaysian companies are involved showcasing products ranging from food and beverages to high-tech solutions like aerospace."

For Malaysia, CIIE represents a pivotal platform to spotlight its export potential and appetite for deeper investment ties with China, its largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, according to the minister.

The diverse Malaysian contingent, ranging from petrochemicals, food, technology firms and more, underscores the nation's economic dynamism and commitment to maximizing access to Chinese consumers and businesses, he said.

CIIE also enables Malaysian firms to "understand the market by meeting players from other countries," Zafrul explained, lauding it for "giving a platform for many countries and their companies to be more involved in the market and having access to China."

Highlighting Malaysia's participation for the 7th consecutive year, the minister stressed that marketing and trading "cannot be just one-off. It's important to be consistent."

Among the Malaysian exhibitors are firms maintaining a decades-long presence in China alongside newcomers eager to gain a foothold. "Some Malaysian companies have been in China for the last 20 years, while some are new," Zafrul noted. "It's good to have that mixture of new and old companies."

"The past 50 years have consistently shown stronger and stronger collaboration between the two

countries," Zafrul stated. "China has been one of our largest investors, especially in the last 10 to 15 years. We have many Chinese companies who are investing in renewable energy, electric vehicles, data centers and the digital economy in Malaysia."

As a flagship Malaysian project under the Belt and Road Initiative, the East Coast Rail Link connecting the east and west coasts of Peninsular Malaysia is blazing ahead to provide vital rail connectivity. "It's progressing ahead of schedule and will deliver very positive economic spillovers once completed," the minister said.

Looking ahead, as Malaysia assumes the annually rotating ASEAN chair in 2025, its economic aims include finalizing an upgraded ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement to "further deepen trade collaboration" between ASEAN and China.

Beyond economic components, people-to-people bonds are flourishing amid Malaysia's 50th anniversary celebrations of diplomatic ties with China. Tourism arrivals from China to Malaysia skyrocketed 160 percent year-on-year in the first nine months of this year, according to the minister.

### Briefly

#### China cuts gasoline, diesel retail prices

China cut retail prices of gasoline and diesel on Thursday based on recent changes in international oil prices. Gasoline prices were reduced by 145 yuan (\$20.42) per metric ton

and diesel prices by 140 yuan per ton, the National Development and Reform Commission said.

#### Freight train route to Central Asia launched

A train carrying 45 containers of

automobile parts on Wednesday departed from Wusu in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, marking the launch of an international freight train route linking Xinjiang with Almaty, Kazakhstan.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

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# BUSINESS

## Import expo key platform for Inditex to engage with partners, consumers

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Fashion group Inditex, parent company of Zara, has said it remains steadfast in its commitment to sustainability, digital transformation and tailored consumer experiences in China.

Eugenio Bregolat Lukashov, president of Inditex Greater China, said the company is optimistic about its prospects in China as a strategic market.

The company will continue to invest in store refurbishments, customer service and employee training, said Lukashov.

"With China as a core part of its strategy, Inditex is well positioned to navigate the demands of the Chinese market, drawing on its pillars of sustainability, digital integration and customer-centric innovation," he said.

It is the fifth time that Inditex has taken part in the China International Import Expo. Lukashov said the event is significant as a platform to engage with partners and consumers.

Each year, the event allows Inditex to showcase innovations and connect with Chinese customers in a dynamic market, he added.

"To meet the demand from Chinese consumers, we have provided quality fashion options through introducing pop-up stores, premiering global collaborations and local team-ups," he said.

Inditex's physical stores in China are evolving beyond traditional retail spaces to become destinations for immersive, artistic and omnibrand experiences, said Lukashov.

A new flagship store will open in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, designed with local tastes in mind and featuring an in-store coffee shop.

By enhancing stores with modern designs and interactive elements, Inditex is redefining the purpose of brick-and-mortar retail in the digital age. "Stores today are less transactional and more experiential," Lukashov said.

Inditex's approach prioritizes quality over quantity in its physical presence, focusing on personalized store designs that reflect each market's unique consumer demands.

Recent examples include the opening of a smaller, temporary store on Shanghai's Anfu Road, a popular shopping destination, which would not be a place they would open a big store. "Consumers are changing the way they shop and how they spend their free time, so we need to adapt to these changes in their lifestyles as well," he said.

To better connect with Chinese consumers, Inditex has collaborated with Chinese designers. The latest collaboration with AO YES will launch in January for the Chinese Lunar New Year. Building on past partnerships with designers like Susan Fang and Calvin Luo, the company plans to increase the number of collaborations with Chinese designers next year.

The company has expanded its presence across local digital platforms. The company entered new e-commerce channels, including Douyin last year and JD this year, adapting to diversification of shopping habits.

Inditex has also invested heavily in livestreaming, which was piloted in China and has gained traction worldwide. Inditex's livestream sessions often attract over a million viewers, allowing it to directly connect with a new generation of customers.

The executive said they have exported the way of livestreaming in China to their markets globally.

"China is not only a retail hub, but also a market where we can learn and export these trends globally," he noted.

Inditex has implemented standards across its supply chain to ensure environmentally friendly practices, including the recent elimination of plastic bags and the integration of energy-saving sensors in stores.

"Sustainability is not a department; it's a way of thinking and is applied to everything we do," he said.



Pedestrians walk past a Zara store in Shanghai in June.  
QIU DAOEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Leading innovation in cardiopulmonary care with state-of-the-art technologies

By MA LINMIAO in Shanghai  
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With a focus on innovation, patient-centered care, and collaboration, Pulnovo Medical, a rising star in the realm of innovative medical technology, is making waves in the healthcare industry with its cutting-edge solutions aimed at revolutionizing patient treatment globally.

This year is a milestone for the company as it presents its work with an independent booth at the ongoing seventh China International Import Expo.

Known as the world's first national-level import-themed expo, the CIIIE provides Pulnovo Medical a prime platform to showcase its innovative technologies to a global audience.

Interactive demonstrations at the booth highlight the advancements and clinical outcomes of Pulnovo's cutting-edge medical technologies, Pulmonary Artery Denervation, or PADN, which draws attention to the company's commitment to transformative healthcare solutions.

"By connecting with potential partners, medical institutions and industry leaders at this influential event, Pulnovo Medical aims to solidify its position as a pioneer in innovative medical solutions..."



By connecting with potential partners, medical institutions and industry leaders at this influential event, Pulnovo Medical aims to solidify its position as a pioneer in innovative medical solutions..."

Cynthia Chen, global business president of Pulnovo Medical

and Malaysia. This demonstrates its commitment to expanding its reach and gathering crucial data to support market penetration. This milestone reflects Pulnovo Medical's dedication to delivering advanced solutions to patients worldwide, particularly those dealing with diseases where traditional therapies offer limited relief.

Pulnovo's efforts in clinical research, especially with its innovative PADN technology, have set it apart as a leader in addressing complex cardiopulmonary conditions.

PADN technology has shown promise in managing pulmonary hypertension, a challenging condi-

tion that affects millions globally. This groundbreaking technology was approved as a US Food and Drug Administration Breakthrough Designation Device, as well as receiving both FDA Humanitarian Use Device certification and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services coding approval, aiding patient access and solidifying Pulnovo's reputation in the global medical field.

"Recognizing the limitations of current therapies, we are driven by the desire to provide innovative treatment solutions to a broader patient population," Chen said.

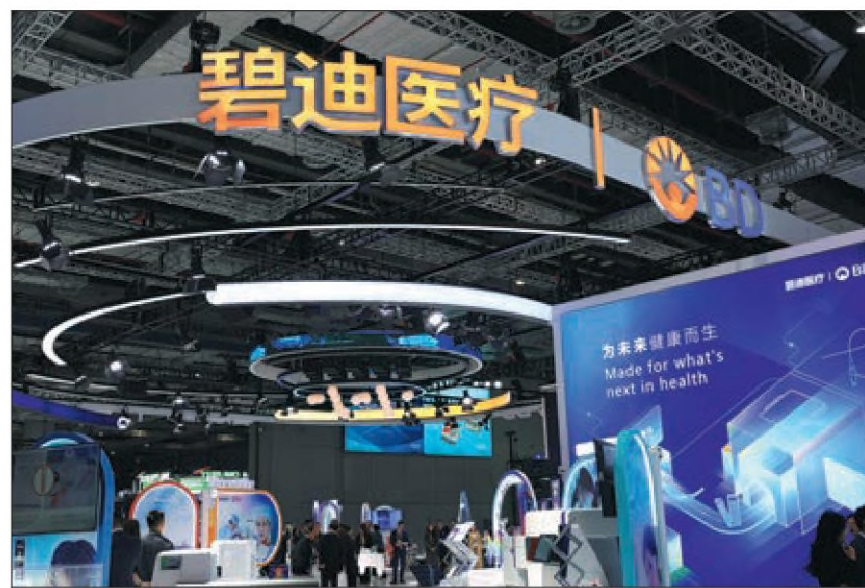
Pulnovo Medical's expansion efforts reflect a commitment to making its technologies widely available, especially in key markets across Europe, North America, and Asia. The company has also pursued partnerships with healthcare providers to foster education and awareness around pulmonary hypertension and heart failure, increasing understanding of these serious conditions and the potential effects of PADN technology.

Looking ahead, Pulnovo Medical is setting ambitious goals. "In the next three to five years, Pulnovo Medical aims to further expand its global presence and advance PADN technology through ongoing clinical research to support more pulmonary hypertension patients," Chen explained.

As part of its global expansion strategy, Pulnovo is keen to foster collaborations with international healthcare institutions and participate in major industry events, such as the CIIIE, to build a network that supports its mission.

Through its advancements in technology, strategic global partnerships, and commitment to improving patient outcomes, Pulnovo Medical is emerging as a leader that could reshape the future of healthcare in cardiopulmonary care.

"We plan to strengthen our partnerships with healthcare providers and institutions globally to promote education and awareness of pulmonary hypertension and heart failure, along with the benefits of our solutions," added Chen.



Visitors check out medical products at Becton, Dickinson & Co's booth during the seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## CIIIE offering better market opportunities

### Corporate service entity Swiss Centers applauds expo's role in bilateral ties

By HAN JINGYAN  
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China remains an attractive market despite global economic uncertainties, a top executive participating in the ongoing seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai said.

The expo, which began Tuesday, will conclude on Sunday.

Xiao Zhen, CEO of Swiss Centers, a nonprofit Sino-Swiss corporate services provider, said that the CIIIE offers Swiss companies a valuable opportunity to engage with local governments, professionals and industry leaders.

Xiao also said that he is optimistic about the future of business cooperation between China and Europe.

He said Swiss Centers, which has been serving Swiss companies in Shanghai for 24 years, has brought 14 innovative companies in the medical devices sector — each holding a leading position in their respective fields — to the CIIIE this year.

Despite global economic headwinds, Xiao said China remains an attractive market, especially in the healthcare sector, where demand in the country aligns well with the innovative capabilities of Swiss companies.

The Shanghai expo is once again showcasing one of its highlights — the Medical Innovation Incubation Zone — to bring together innovative forces to promote global cooperation.

The zone, with its unique attributes, has been a feature of the CIIIE for four consecutive years, and is becoming a critical platform for international procurement, investment promotion, cultural exchange and open cooperation, said James Deng, senior vice-president of Becton, Dickinson & Co and general manager of BD China.

Covering a wide range of products, from dental care to diabetes self-management tools and quantum-assisted therapeutic devices — all of which reflect the innovation prowess of Swiss and European companies — the zone intends to let visitors leverage resources from various sources, Deng said.

He noted that beyond the exhibits, the zone has extended its reach through two seminars, held in cooperation with the Henan provincial and Tianjin governments. These aim to help companies better understand the Chinese market and policy environment to foster financing and collaboration.

Deng also said he hopes small and medium-sized enterprises

can seize more opportunities for innovative development through participation in the annual expo.

As a leading company in the medical devices industry, the United States-based BD plays a significant role in global medical innovation, Deng said.

Over the past four years, he said BD has visited some of the world's top technology parks to refine an incubation model that aims to create a high-quality platform for companies to enter the Chinese market and develop sustainably.

Deng said BD plans to help Chinese companies invest abroad, creating a dual-circulation model of "bringing in and going out" that will foster innovation in China and present a new phase of the country's reform and opening-up to the outside world.

In the incubation zone, there has been close collaboration between Chinese and European companies, a convergence of innovative technologies and market needs, as well as policies and corporate growth.

These factors can help drive innovation in the healthcare industry and contribute Chinese wisdom and solutions to global health initiatives, Deng said.

The incubation zone, he added, has once again demonstrated its crucial role in promoting international cooperation and advancing medical innovation.

## IAT, Yazaki set up JV to tap NEVs

By DU JUAN  
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Beijing's economic and technological development area welcomed another joint venture focused on new energy vehicles this week.

Beijing IAT Yazaki New Energy Technology Co Ltd, a joint venture between IAT Automobile Technology Co Ltd and Yazaki (China) Investment Corp, was officially established on Monday in Beijing E-Town — an economic and technological development area in the southeast of the capital.

The two companies will collaborate in depth on high-voltage systems, which will consolidate E-Town's foundation of the NEV industry and enhance the resilience of its industrial chain.

With the establishment of the new JV, E-Town has attracted investment on 160 projects from 105 Fortune Global 500 companies.

"We are optimistic about the development prospects of the NEV sector," said Xuan Qiwei, president of IAT. "We will make use of the advantages of both companies in technological research and development, production and manufacturing to jointly overcome core technical difficulties and promote the market application and popularization of related products."

Xuan said that as the first

The main layout products in the early stage will be high-voltage charging, power distribution and power supply systems."

Yao Lin, vice-general manager of Beijing IAT Yazaki New Energy Technology

independent automobile design company listed on China's A-share market, IAT has strong capabilities in designing and developing NEVs, as well as system solutions.

"Yazaki, on the other hand, is a world-leading auto parts manufacturer and has been listed on the Fortune Global 500 list for several years. The cooperation will be beneficial for both sides and raise the competitiveness of the regional industry."

According to Yazaki, the company's wiring harness products have a 30 percent global market share. It possesses design and development technologies for automobile wiring harnesses, high-voltage connectors, manufacturing capabilities and an international sales network.

According to the agreement, the JV's product R&D over the next two years will cover charging and power batteries as well as drive and distribution systems. It is expected to complete core technology breakthroughs, develop serialization product prototypes, and eventually achieve mass production under joint efforts.

"In the future, we will keep up with market trends, explore the core technologies of high-voltage systems and develop products with advantages such as intelligence, integration and lightweight characteristics," said Yao Lin, vice-general manager of the JV.

"The main layout products in the early stage will be high-voltage charging, power distribution and power supply systems."

The high-end and new energy automobile industry is one of the four leading industries in E-Town, also called the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area.

The output value of the auto sector in the area exceeded 200 billion yuan (\$28 billion) in the first three quarters, and it is expected to set a new record for the whole year, according to government data.

To support the development of the auto sector, E-Town plans an industrial space of 2.7 million square meters to better meet the development needs of enterprises of different types and stages in the area.

## SPORTS

## MOTOR SPORTS

## Zhou chases new F1 challenge

By SUN XIAOCHEN

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Zhou Guanyu, China's first Formula One driver, released a statement on his personal social media account on Wednesday officially announcing his impending departure from Sauber at the end of the 2024 season.

In the statement, Zhou emphasized his unwavering focus and desire to continue driving in Formula One.

"This has been a difficult season, but I am still putting all my effort into the remaining races. I care about my future and want to stay here as long as possible, so I am fighting for it. The opportunity is still there," the 25-year-old wrote.

"I am delighted with the achievements I have made amid the fierce competition of F1, including scoring points on my debut, setting the fastest lap in treacherous conditions at the Suzuka Circuit and executing some exciting offensive and defensive maneuvers on the track.

"I am full of confidence in the future, and focused on truly showcasing my abilities."

Looking back at Zhou's highlights in F1, he made his debut in Bahrain in 2022 as a rookie driver for Alfa Romeo, finishing 10th and becoming the 66th driver in the history of F1 to score points on his debut.

Zhou has since brought a legion of new fans to Formula 1 — and, together with Valtteri Bottas, played a key role in Sauber-run Alfa Romeo securing a top six finish in the constructors' championship in 2022.

The last two seasons, however, have been difficult, and he's struggled to consistently match his teammate — though it should be noted mechanical issues on his side of the garage have hampered his progress.

Sauber also confirmed the departures of Bottas and Zhou on Wednesday, at the same time announcing next season's arrival of Brazilian rookie Gabriel Bortoleto to the team.

Twenty-year-old Bortoleto will team up with the more experienced 37-year-old Nico Hulkenberg in 2025.

The McLaren junior Bortoleto currently tops the F2 standings.

"This is one of the exciting projects in motor sport, if not in all sports," Sauber, which will become the Audi entry in 2026, quoted him as saying.

"Joining a team that combines the rich motor sport history of Sauber and Audi is a true honor."

Bottas and Zhou are set to depart at the end of the season after both failing to register a point in this season's driver's championship so far.

"After open and constructive discussions with Valtteri Bottas and Zhou Guanyu, we mutually concluded that conditions to continue together could not be met, so we agreed that it is time to part ways," Sauber said.

"We would like to thank both for the contribution they have made to the team in the last three years.

"They have been the embodiment of professionalism, using their experience and enthusiasm to support our growth."

Last month, Bottas said he would consider returning to Mercedes next year as a reserve driver if he was not retained by Sauber.

Zhou will be leaving the team that made him China's first F1 driver, but remains positive that his journey at the top of the sport will continue.

"Sadly, the last two seasons have been challenging for all, but I want to look forward," Zhou said in his statement, adding: "I am now discussing a number of options to stay in the Formula One paddock."

Ge Xuan contributed to this story

## TENNIS

## Serving up a 'perfect' performance

Power-hitting Chinese ace Zheng Qinwen blasts her way into Riyadh semifinals

By SUN XIAOCHEN

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Not after making her first major final, not after winning the coveted Olympic gold, not until this week in Riyadh had Zheng Qinwen ever described a match she played as "flawless".

She did so on Wednesday, giving herself a perfect 10 for the first time in public, as far as anyone could tell, and she was not exaggerating.

By smashing 12 aces, converting five breaks and hitting 24 winners to go with only 14 unforced errors, the reigning Olympic champion was firing on all cylinders as she delivered a ruthless demolition of Italy's Jasmine Paolini.

She dominated the world No 4 in straight sets in her last round-robin match to secure a career first semifinal berth at the year-end WTA Finals in Saudi Arabia.

The score was 6-1, 6-1, and it took Zheng just 67 minutes to clinch her fourth straight victory over Paolini, one of this year's most consistent competitors, having reached back-to-back Grand Slam finals at Roland Garros and Wimbledon.

"I feel like my performance today was simply perfect. I don't have much to say," a confident Zheng said during her post-match TV interview at the King Saud University Indoor Arena.

"My serve was powerful, my groundstroke on the baseline had a good rhythm and I controlled the pace well throughout the match, knowing when to attack and when to defend. I also played a few nice volleys."

The all-around total domination has served up a glimpse of how intimidating "Queen Wen" — as Zheng is known by her legion of fans



China's Zheng Qinwen celebrates winning her group-stage match against Italy's Jasmine Paolini at the WTA Finals at the King Saud University Indoor Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Wednesday. REUTERS

— can be, as the 22-year-old continues perfecting her craft and mental toughness, following an almost invincible second half of 2024.

Since the end of Wimbledon in July, as of Wednesday, Zheng has racked up 30 wins — four more than the next-closest player Aryna Sabalenka — out of 35 matches she's played.

This surging momentum has seen her win Asia's first singles Olympic gold medal in Paris, defend her WTA250 title in Palermo, Italy, before bagging her fourth WTA title in Tokyo last month. Zheng has also reached the quarterfinals at the US

Open for a second time, a semifinal at the top-flight WTA1000 China Open in Beijing and the final at the same level in Wuhan, capital of her home province Hubei, last month.

With a potential semifinal clash against world No 3 Coco Gauff of the United States on Friday, Zheng could become only the second player to win the Olympics and reach the WTA Finals championship match in the same season since tennis returned to the Games in 1988, following in the footsteps of Serena Williams in 2012.

After her first full season on the pro circuit, Zheng was named WTA's

"Newcomer of the Year" in 2022, had her meteoric rise recognized as the "Most Improved Player of the Year" in 2023 and now, it seems, only the sky is the limit in her exciting future.

She's not so surprised at her sharp ascent.

"Finally, I showed some tennis I really wanted to play, and I'm really happy to be in the semifinal in Riyadh for the first time," said Zheng, who has enjoyed an almost "home court" support thanks to a vocal group of Chinese fans rooting for her in the Saudi capital.

Since making her WTA debut,

she's always been confident in her game, but Zheng had struggled to live up to expectations, particularly her own, with nerves and her emotions getting the better of her in key moments. It has resulted in some unexpected early exits at major tournaments and inconsistency in her form.

The Olympic success proved a game-changer for the ambitious power hitter, with her resilience now honed to become a bigger weapon than her kick-serve and forehand hammer.

With an Olympic gold medal around her neck, Zheng has confessed multiple times that she's now able to approach big matches with new levels of composure and focus.

"When you enter the match, you are nervous, but at the same time, you feel confident, because you know your level," Zheng said of her mindset facing Paolini in the high-stakes encounter.

"I know how capable I am. Honestly, I don't think it is a match that my life depends on. I just treated it like any other match."

Another noticeable improvement of Zheng's game this season has been her serve. She now leads the WTA Tour with total 432 aces for the year so far, with Kazakhstan's 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina, who lost to Zheng on Monday, trailing her in second place with 352.

"I finally feel that my serve has a bit more consistency. Over the years, my serve performance was good, but then I would struggle," she said. "I know, when the serve was there, I could be really strong, really aggressive in the game."

"In this tournament, and the rest of the second half of this year, I've felt like, 'wow! My serve is back!'"

## SOCCER

## Barca puts on a scoring master class in Belgrade

BARCELONA — Barcelona showed its attacking prowess yet again in another big Champions League win.

The Catalan club routed Red Star Belgrade 5-2 Wednesday, marking the seventh straight match in all competitions that it has scored at least three goals. Hansi Flick's team has averaged four goals per match in that run of victories.

Robert Lewandowski netted twice to extend his scoring streak to 15 goals in his last 10 matches with the Catalan club, while an in-form Raphinha also scored for Barcelona, taking his recent Champions League tally to eight goals in his last six appearances.

"We played very well again today," said Lewandowski, who took his total tally in the competition to 99 goals. "We had the match under control and got the three points."

Barcelona leads the Champions League in goals scored with 15 in four matches.

"We knew that Barcelona were in good form before the match, winning the 'Clasico' and scoring a lot of goals," Red Star midfielder Timi Elsnik said. "It was quite a challenge, but we put in a good showing, especially in the first half."

Flick said he was pleased with his players' focus and determination to earn a commanding win.

"The most important thing is the three points. It's not easy to win away from home in this competition, the Champions League is complicated," Flick, who led Bayern Munich to the 2020 Champions League title, told Movistar Plus.

"I'm very happy, I really value what we're doing. We've been very good on the ball and we've applied a lot of pressure."

"Red Star played very well, they knew how to play with the ball and it was difficult to defend against them. I really appreciate my players being focused for 90 minutes, because it's not easy."

After scoring his 19th goal in 16 games across all competitions with Barca this season, the 36-year-old Lewandowski said he was delight-



Raphinha celebrates with Jules Kounde after scoring Barcelona's fourth goal. REUTERS

ed with Flick's aggressive approach.

"Since the beginning of the season we have had a goal: we have to play very attacking football, but without losing sight of how well our defensive line has been playing," Lewandowski said.

"Everything that has worked so far is almost perfect. We have to look at what we can do better, sure, but I feel very good, the team is very happy."

"I think, in this new Champions League format, winning away games is very important."

"In the first half we played a bit slow, but in the second half we had a lot of chances."

"Sometimes when a team plays very defensively, like Red Star today, we need a bit of patience. I'm always looking for a free space to be able to touch the ball and score."

"That's why I'm very happy. As a team we played very well."

Barcelona was coming off a 3-1 Spanish league win against Espanyol in the city derby last weekend, and, before that, it had routed rival Real Madrid 4-0 in the Spanish league "Clasico" and beaten Bayern Munich 4-1 in the Champions League.

Its previous victories included a 5-1 win against Sevilla, a 3-0 victory at Alaves and a five-goal Champions League demolition of Young Boys.

AGENCIES

