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CHINA DAILY

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PBOC to provide more monetary policy support

By ZHOU LANXU
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China's central bank confirmed on Monday the continuation of its supportive monetary policy stance, a move that analysts said has reinforced expectations of another cut in the reserve requirement ratio to accommodate additional government bond issuance.

The ongoing policy dynamics have ushered the country into the first round of significant fiscal and monetary expansion following the pandemic period, signaling a much-anticipated mindset shift toward paying more heed to demand-side management in drafting economic policies that will continue in 2025, they added.

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While delivering a report to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, said the central bank will intensify countercyclical adjustments to shape a favorable condition for stable economic growth and high-quality development.

"We will adhere to a supportive monetary policy stance and increase the intensity of monetary policy adjustments," a statement published on the PBOC's website on Monday quoted Pan as saying, vowing to maintain reasonably sufficient liquidity and lower financing costs for enterprises and households.

Pan added that the central bank will improve policy tools to deal with abnormal fluctuations in the stock market, while optimizing policy mechanisms to make smooth the market-oriented formation and

transmission of interest rates. The remarks followed the approval by Chinese lawmakers on Friday of an increase of 6 trillion yuan (\$833 billion) in the local government special bond ceiling to replace outstanding hidden debt. The new quota will be allocated evenly through 2026, with 2 trillion yuan for this year.

Feng Jianlin, chief economist at Beijing FOST Economic Consulting Co, said the central bank may soon coordinate with the 2 trillion yuan in bond issuance by lowering the RRR, which refers to the proportion of deposits banks must keep as reserves, to achieve the goal of "maintaining reasonably sufficient liquidity". The cut, potentially by 0.5 percentage point, may release approximately 1 trillion yuan in long-term liquidity, Feng said, adding that the central bank may inject another 1 trillion yuan via a new open market operation tool, called outright reverse repo, while withdrawing some short-term liquidity.

Li Yong, a fixed-income analyst at Soochow Securities, said that cutting the RRR has become a necessity both for ensuring the steady issuance of special bonds and for achieving the policy target of promoting a reasonable rise in prices.

China's consumer price index grew 0.3 percent year-on-year in October, a four-month low and down from 0.4 percent in September, official data showed on Saturday. Financial data also pointed to the need for continued policy support as residential lending recovered while corporate financing remained weak in October.

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Aerobatic display



The August 1st Air Demonstration Team makes contrails to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army Air Force during a training session on Monday in Zhuhai, Guangdong province. The 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, also known as the Zhuhai Airshow, starts on Tuesday. ZHOU GUOQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY **Comment**, page 11

Enhancing China-EU dialogue, political mutual trust stressed

Experts: Two sides should embrace broad potential for cooperation in key areas

By ZHOU JIN
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Officials and experts underscored the close interdependence between China and the European Union, calling for maintaining dialogue to address trade frictions and promote mutual trust, as European leaders, including the presidents of Italy and Finland, made a flurry of visits to Beijing.

Feng Zhongping, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of European Studies, said that despite the difficulties in China-EU relations, the visits demonstrate the efforts the two sides are making to promote political mutual trust.

European countries have realized the importance of pragmatic cooperation with China, as they are closely interconnected in terms of the economy, and such cooperation serves the interests of both sides, he said.

Noting that Europe is undergoing reform and transformation, Feng underlined the need for China-EU cooperation to deal with a new era of uncertainty. "As long as China and Europe reject bloc confrontation and say 'no' to decou-

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pling, a new Cold War can be avoided," he added.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of China-EU bilateral relations. However, the ties have been overshadowed by the EU's recent rhetoric and measures focused on "de-risking".

Chen Yang, executive director of the Institute of European Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said the EU lacks a clearly defined concept of "risk", leaving room for subjective judgments and political manipulation, which can easily lead to friction in various areas.

But China believes that the two sides should "reduce risks and resolve problems through cooperation, rather than reducing cooperation as a means of de-risking", Chen said, adding that China and the EU could work toward common ground in this regard to promote mutual understanding.

At the end of October, the EU decided to increase tariffs on Chi-

nese-made electric vehicles to as much as 45.3 percent. Technical teams from China and the EU conducted five rounds of consultations on the matter earlier this month.

Former Austrian chancellor Christian Kern told reporters that such tariffs are detrimental to both sides, and China and the EU need to find a way to carry out more cooperation in key fields.

Maintaining an open border and trade conforms to the interests of Europe, as 45 percent of its GDP relies on foreign trade, Kern said, calling for the two sides to carry out more cooperation rather than engaging in zero-sum games.

Chen Yongfang, an official with the European Department of the Ministry of Commerce, said that despite the EU tariffs, intensive bilateral negotiations are continuing on the basis of mutual benefits.

With an annual bilateral trade volume of nearly \$800 billion, it is impossible to avoid frictions and differences, she said, adding that China has "never been afraid of the problems and has always been committed to solving them through dialogue".

The EU remains China's second-largest trading partner, third-largest source of foreign investment, and fourth-largest investment destination. From January to September, the bilateral trade volume reached \$588.1 billion, Chen said.

Ding Chun, director of Fudan University's Center for European Studies, said that despite the intensified competition in China-Europe economic and trade relations, both sides acknowledge that their closely intertwined industries make "decoupling" impractical.

Meanwhile, there is broad potential for China-EU economic and trade cooperation, particularly in areas such as digitalization, green development and global economic governance.

Chen, from the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that even on the issue of electric vehicles, China and the EU can still seek cooperation.

"Europe has its own established brands, while China has advanced technology — things that complement each other in building a vast market together," Chen added.

Sifting fact from fiction: Nation vital to progress

Anti-China forces have long used words such as "debt", "collapse", "decline" and "threat" to portray China in a negative light in front of the world, to demoralize the Chinese people and to drive a wedge between them and the government.

The rhetoric can be amusing. On the one hand, the opponents want to propagate the idea that China is on the decline, the economy is in a mess, and the people are not satisfied with the government and the Communist Party of China's performance. At the same time, they also want us to believe that China's meteoric rise is threatening the world, especially the West.

This calls for analyzing the facts to find the truth about China.

Let's start with future drivers of growth and development. There is unanimous global acceptance of the



fact that future growth drivers will be shaped by the power of innovation, technology development, and competence in compound computing, space technology and artificial intelligence.

Data show that China is a leading player in all the above areas, and a leader in some of them. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute said that China has become a leader in 37 of 44 critical technologies. The country is moving quickly and acquiring the capability to become the hub and superpower in technology.

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Securing his place



Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba (left) and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi attend a session in the lower house of parliament in Tokyo, Japan, on Monday after Ishiba was reelected as PM after a runoff election. KIM KYUNG-HOON / REUTERS **See story**, page 10

REHAB INDUSTRY SURGES TO OVERCOME GROWING PAINS

More office workers, young people seeking physical therapy for injuries, aches

By ZHAO RUINAN
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Li Xiaoli felt like she had entered a gym or yoga studio when she first walked into the rehabilitation room at Peking Union Medical College Hospital in Beijing.

The large space was filled with therapy beds and various equipment, but unlike a typical gym, the rehabilitation therapists were wearing white coats.



One day in August, after experiencing a dull ache in her lower back and discomfort in her neck from doing crunches at a gym, she decided to follow a friend's advice and visit the hospital's rehabilitation department.

"I was diagnosed with a lumbar muscle strain. It was my first time

trying exercise rehabilitation, and it was quite impressive," she said.

Physical therapy, often referred to as sports rehabilitation, is a combination of exercise and medical treatment.

It consists of various exercises, stretches, and movements designed to enhance strength, flexibility, and mobility, allowing individuals to recover from injuries and move safely.

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Rehab: Fresh paths to physical restoration

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In Li's case, the process involved the therapist assessing her injuries and creating a tailored set of rehabilitation exercises. They included movements such as hip bridges and rowing exercises that focus on strengthening the major muscle groups.

"The therapist also taught me some relaxation exercises for my neck, and the consultation took over an hour. Afterward, I felt physically and mentally refreshed," said the 27-year-old.

Following the therapist's advice, Li committed to performing the exercises every day.

She now believes that the resistance training at the gym that led to her pain, may have been excessive.

"Perhaps the weights and repetitions were inappropriate, as I always felt fatigued and strained after my workouts. The doctors at the rehabilitation department advised me to stop weight training until my symptoms subsided, before resuming," she said. "I never thought that exercise would end in rehabilitation."

Building strength

Nowadays, it's not uncommon for young people like Li to seek sports rehabilitation due to physical injuries.

The National Fitness Plan (2021-25) estimates that by 2025, the proportion of people regularly participating in physical exercise will reach 38.5 percent in total.

Currently, the incidence of sports-related injuries ranges from 10 to 20 percent, with more than 100 million people expected to require rehabilitation treatment for such injuries and illnesses.

Sedentary office workers must also pay attention to their bodies, as chronic neck, shoulder, back, and leg pain, as well as soft tissue discomfort, can result from poor posture and body mechanics.

"Sports-related injuries are the most common type of injury among young people. For example, twisting a knee during a quick stop, spraining an ankle while jumping, or pulling a muscle while running or exercising are all frequent occurrences," said Chen Bowen, a former therapist in the rehabilitation department of a hospital under the General Administration of Sport of China.

In addition, office workers spend hours sitting each day, making them highly susceptible to spinal and soft tissue injuries, which can lead to chronic pain, added Chen, the founder and CEO of Reborn Physiotherapy Center — a clinic specializing in sports rehabilitation.

"These health issues may not necessarily require medication, but rather appropriate and targeted exercise rehabilitation guidance," he said.

According to a 2020 report on pain-control medicine in China, there are over 300 million chronic pain sufferers in the country, and this number is growing at a rate of 10 to 20 million per year.

The incidence of pain has become the third-largest health problem after cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases and tumors, severely affecting people's health and quality of life, according to the report.

Yang Yanyan, deputy chief physician of the rehabilitation department at Peking University Third Hospital, said that managing acute and chronic injuries or pain, typically involves three main steps: "eliminating symptoms, correcting improper posture, and engaging in science-based exercise rehabilitation."

"Humans are naturally active beings. The outdated belief that one should lie still after an injury often fails to resolve the pain-related issues. Restoring muscle strength, joint flexibility, and other factors can more effectively alleviate pain and improve overall physical condition," she said.

Demand for services

In the summer of 2022, Wang Chenfei injured his right knee while playing with a Frisbee.

After undergoing surgery at Beijing Jishuitan Hospital, one of the city's top medical facilities for treating bone fractures and sports injuries, he was dissatisfied with his rehabilitation program.

"The hospital sent a rehabilitation doctor from the rehabilitation department to assist me after my surgery. However, they only taught

A rehabilitation therapist assists a woman in improving her shoulder stability at Reborn Physiotherapy Center in Beijing.

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me some basic movements," said Wang, adding the "generic" guidance seemed inadequate.

"Rehabilitation is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process that requires a tailored approach. Each person's situation is different. The basic guidance on exercise was far from sufficient for someone like me who wanted to recover their physical abilities to resume doing sports," he added.

Wang decided to visit a Reborn clinic twice a week for guidance on rehabilitation and physical improvement.

Chen, from Reborn, recalled his time working as a rehabilitation therapist at a hospital a decade ago. He said he attended to dozens of patients a day, with the average outpatient consultation lasting no more than 10 minutes.

"The hospital's high patient volume created a significant imbalance between supply and demand, which forced the rehabilitation department to follow an assembly-line approach, making effective one-on-one guidance difficult," Chen recalled.

The development of rehabilitation medicine in China began in the 1980s, lagging more than 60 years behind developed countries such as the United States and Canada. It gradually gained public attention following the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

Around 2012, the concept of sports rehabilitation began to gain traction in China, leading to the emergence of the first rehabilitation clinics.

Chen's rehabilitation center was established in 2016, coinciding with the rising public interest in scientific exercise. Now Reborn has seven rehab centers in five cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

Over the past five years, the introduction of two major national strategies — the National Fitness Plan and the Healthy China 2030 Initiative — has shifted sports rehabilitation from a niche market focused on professional athletes to a broader one that serves sports enthusiasts and the general public.

According to statistics from the Sports Rehabilitation Industry Alliance, there were approximately 100 sports rehabilitation facilities nationwide in 2018, which increased to 370 in 2020.

Despite a slowdown in industry growth over the past three years, the number of branches doubled to reach 750 last year.

However, Mi Zhongxiang, deputy director of the China Rehabilitation Research Center (Beijing Boai Hospital), said at an industry symposium last year that compared with the demand for rehabilitation, "our current supply of rehabilitation can be described as a drop in the bucket."

There are 2.2 rehabilitation physicians and 4.3 therapists per 100,000 people in China, official data shows.

In 2021, the National Health Commission released a document to promote the development of rehabilitation medical services, setting a target of eight rehabilitation

Right: Chen Bowen helps a woman in Beijing who suffers from knee discomfort.

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Bottom: A rehabilitation therapist relaxes a runner's muscles at the finish line of the 2024 Beijing Marathon on Nov 3.

FAN DI / FOR CHINA DAILY

“Recently, a popular saying has emerged online: ‘The end of fitness is rehabilitation’. In fact, the fitness journey can also begin with rehabilitation.”

Chen Bowen, former therapist and founder of Reborn Physiotherapy Center



physicians and 12 rehabilitation therapists per 100,000 people by 2025.

Market potential

Even if this level of coverage is achieved, China's rehabilitation industry still has a significant gap to developed countries.

The targets fall below the international standard of having 15 or more physicians and eight to 10 therapists for every 100,000 people.

"In Canada, rehabilitation clinics are almost ubiquitous. You can easily find one every block or two," said sports rehab expert Li Yimeng, highlighting that locals have a strong awareness of rehabilitation and actively seek help from sports rehabilitation clinics after injuries.

Li studied sports rehabilitation during her undergraduate years in Beijing and later pursued a master's degree in physical therapy in Hong Kong and Canada.

She worked at one of the earliest rehabilitation institutions in China until 2019 before transitioning to a

career in sports rehabilitation in Canada in 2022.

She believes that raising public awareness about rehabilitation and having strong support from the healthcare insurance system is crucial for the success of sports rehabilitation in China.

"Even in major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (Guangdong), let alone second- or third-tier cities or even smaller areas, many people still cling to the outdated belief that they should remain immobile after an injury," said the 32-year-old, who is now working as a physiotherapy assistant in Alberta, Canada.

However, with the increase in public awareness about rehabilitation in recent years, Chen is confident about the development of the rehabilitation industry in China.

Market advisory group KPMG forecast the market size of the rehabilitation medicine industry in China would grow at an annual rate of 20.9 percent from 2020 to 2025.

By 2025, the market size is projected to exceed 200 billion yuan, said the company.

In addition to managing his clinic, Chen also shares informative videos on rehabilitation and pain prevention and alleviation, on the Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu.

For instance, he provides tips for office workers on alleviating lower back pain after long hours of sitting. With nearly 200,000 followers, his videos have garnered over 1 million likes.

"Recently, a popular saying has emerged online: 'The end of fitness is rehabilitation'. In fact, the fitness journey can also begin with rehabilitation," said Chen.

"Before starting a regular exercise routine, it's beneficial for everyone to visit the rehabilitation department of a hospital or a qualified rehabilitation clinic for a physical assessment. This can help individuals better understand their physical condition and plan their exercises in a scientific and reasonable way," he said.

Therapist stretches her skills to fitness

By ZHAO RUINAN

After nearly a decade of working as a rehabilitation therapist at a hospital in Beijing, Hao Yue took another step in her career.

"Having my own fitness studio has been a dream of mine since I entered this field. It allows me to maximize my passion for the profession and apply my understanding of rehabilitation," Hao said. "I want every client who walks into my studio to feel satisfied with their physical condition and athletic abilities."

After graduating from university, Hao became a rehabilitation therapist in 2014 and stayed in the occupation until last November. Six months after leaving her steady job, she opened her studio in Beijing's Chaoyang district.

Unlike the overloaded hospital environment, in her studio she enjoys greater freedom, which allows her to pursue personal interests.

"I am a woman in my thirties who loves sports and enjoys participating in and organizing activities like running and tennis groups. I have many friends with similar interests. As a result, helping my clients better understand their bodies and improve their abilities in different sports has become my current goal," she said.

Last month, one of her clients, Yuanzi, injured her right hip while rock climbing.

To ensure Yuanzi could still participate in a hiking trip a week later, Hao adjusted the client's training and included strategies for her to manage injuries while traveling.

"During the National Day holiday, I received photos of Yuanzi walking in a natural environment, and I was thrilled to learn that she completed a 38-kilometer hiking trip," Hao said in a post on the lifestyle-sharing platform Xiaohongshu.

"Every time I receive feedback like this after helping a client return to sports, it feels like a healing moment for me," she added.

Hao closely observes her clients during training, pointing out subtle flaws that may be inappropriate or lead to injury.

There are significant differences between men and women in muscle strength and flexibility.

"For example, take the wrist. Women and individuals with weak or loose ligaments around the wrist need to be cautious participating in sports. During exercise, the wrist should be maintained in a neutral position," she said.

"Slightly spreading the fingers and using opposing forces — where the fingertips point down, and the palm lifts up — can help reduce pressure on the outer side of the wrist and avoid chronic injuries," she said.

In addition to enhancing her clients' physical fitness, Hao loves reading and is a fan of the podcast platform Xiaoyuzhou.

Many of her friends run podcasts on the platform, and she has been interviewed on a popular one called Stochastic Volatility, sharing basic knowledge on sports rehabilitation. Some clients have discovered her through these podcasts.

"In the future, I envision my studio as a relaxed and reassuring training space, as well as a cultural hub for various exchanges and sharing activities."



Hao Yue applies tape to support a client's ankle in July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Envoy calls for joint effort on climate change

Liu Zhenmin says China will work with EU to advance implementation of Paris Agreement

BRUSSELS — Both developed and developing countries must work together to tackle climate change, China's special envoy for climate change Liu Zhenmin has said, noting that China will work with the European Union (EU) and other parties to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Liu made the remarks here in a recent interview with Xinhua before departing for Baku, Azerbaijan, to attend the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29).

Developed countries should take the lead in providing financial support to developing nations in addressing challenges brought about by climate change, Liu said, adding that it is their obligation outlined in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

At the 2009 UN climate conference in Copenhagen, developed countries pledged to provide \$100 billion annually in climate finance to support developing countries in their energy transition; that promise, however, has yet to be fulfilled.

"This funding is modest compared to the vast resources needed for the global energy transition, but it has served as a demonstration of effective global cooperation," Liu said. It also can play an active role in leveraging international market funds and encouraging private investment, he added.

As COP29 will make arrangements for global climate-finance targets beyond 2025, Liu believes that it will not be easy for relevant finance negotiations to move forward smoothly.

In a statement issued in October, the Council of the EU announced that the bloc had reached a consensus on its negotiating position for COP29, supporting a new, collective, quantified goal in global climate finance.

However, the statement did not

specify the EU's own responsibilities. Instead, it more than ever urged all countries, including emerging economies, to shoulder more financial responsibilities.

While the EU has been relatively active in supporting climate finance for developing countries in the past decade, it now faces "some challenges and internal divisions," Liu said, noting that the recent European Parliament elections as well as national elections have revealed that some political parties are less enthusiastic about climate action than before.

"As a significant player in global climate governance, these challenges should not become reasons to shift responsibility," Liu said, urging the EU to continue actively fulfilling its international responsibilities in supporting climate action.

China, as a developing country, has been actively fulfilling its commitment to green transition, Liu said. China is vigorously advancing electrification in the transportation sector, and high-speed railways have become a major mode of transportation for the public, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Electric vehicles also are rapidly gaining popularity, helping to cut emissions and reduce pollution.

Regarding COP29, Liu said China will work with the EU and other parties to constructively engage in all agenda items, striving to achieve significant outcomes and advance the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

China, meanwhile, will continue to support other developing countries through South-South cooperation, providing assistance within its capacity.

"Addressing climate change requires the joint efforts of both developed and developing countries, and China will remain a steadfast promoter of global climate cooperation," Liu said.

XINHUA



A sign in Hebrew reading "400 days disgrace Netanyahu" is displayed on a pavement in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Saturday during a rally demanding the return of Israeli hostages kidnapped on Oct 7 last year by Hamas amid the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict in the Gaza Strip. JACK GUEZ / AFP

Netanyahu admits Israel's role in Lebanon attacks

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has admitted that the September attacks on Hezbollah communication devices in Lebanon were carried out with his consent, marking the first acknowledgment of involvement by Israel in the blasts that killed and injured scores of people.

"Netanyahu confirmed Sunday that he greenlighted the pager operation in Lebanon," the Israeli prime minister's spokesman Omer Dostrri told Agence France-Presse.

On 17 and 18 September, handheld devices used by Hezbollah operatives exploded in supermarkets, on the streets and at funerals, killing 40 people and wounding more than 3,200. The blasts preceded Israel's ongoing military operations in Lebanon.

International law experts said Netanyahu's admission could prove to be strong evidence for the International Criminal Court in investigating Israeli leaders for war crimes.

According to Glenn Wijaya, an associate at the Jakarta-based law

firm Christian Teo & Partners, this admission "could challenge the immunity traditionally granted to top officials, especially if these actions are deemed war crimes. If left unchecked, it could erode the principle of individual criminal responsibility, weaken global norms of accountability, and embolden other leaders to act with impunity."

Wijaya told China Daily that Netanyahu's confirmation that Israel authorized strikes on Lebanese infrastructure, including civilian items like walkie-talkies, raises significant concerns about the legality of these actions under international humanitarian law.

"Targeting dual-use items requires a clear military justification to avoid harm to civilians, and indiscriminate attacks — those that fail to distinguish between combatants and civilians — are strictly prohibited," said Wijaya, who holds a degree in International and European Law from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

He said such an admission could be part of a broader political or legal strategy, whereby Netanyahu justifies the actions as necessary for national security or attempts to

take responsibility in the face of public or legal pressure.

The reported confession comes on the heels of Netanyahu and his defense attorney, Amit Hadad, submitting a request to the court on Sunday to postpone the prime minister's court testimony for his graft trial to March 2025, citing security developments that hindered preparation. The testimony is currently scheduled for Dec 2, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Meanwhile, an Al Jazeera report said Lebanon had filed a complaint with the United Nations' International Labour Organization last week against Israel over the exploding pagers.

Lebanon's Labor Minister Mustafa Bayram filed the formal complaint at the UN headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. He said the attack was an "egregious war against humanity, against technology, against work" and was a "very dangerous precedent" if not condemned.

"We are in a situation where ordinary objects — used in daily life — become dangerous and lethal," he was quoted by Al Jazeera as saying.

Arie Afriansyah, associate professor at the Faculty of Law at Uni-

versitas Indonesia, said Netanyahu's reported admission "should trigger the ICC to proceed with its investigation of war crimes against Israeli leaders."

Karim Khan, the British chief prosecutor of the ICC, had requested arrest warrants in May against Israeli and Hamas leaders for alleged crimes against humanity in Gaza. However, Khan has recently been hit with sexual harassment accusations involving a female colleague, in what is widely believed to be a smear campaign.

Gokhan Batu, an analyst on Israel Studies at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Turkey, said Netanyahu's reported admission of allowing the pager blasts is not only an attack on former defense minister Yoav Gallant's reputation but "also served as a response to the wave of protests that erupted following Gallant's dismissal."

"In this manner, Netanyahu both claimed success for the recent pager and walkie-talkie operations, contributing to the restoration of his political reputation, which had been significantly damaged after Oct 7, while indirectly criticizing Gallant and the military," said Batu.

Lest we forget



World War II veterans shake hands ahead of the Royal British Legion's march past during the National Service of Remembrance Sunday, in London, the United Kingdom. Remembrance Sunday is an annual commemoration held on the closest Sunday to Armistice Day, the anniversary of the end of the World War I, which was on Monday this year. JAIMI JOY / REUTERS

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Growth: Partnerships built for win-win cooperation

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China leads in investments in new energy. For example, in 2023, China was the world's largest investor in clean energy technologies, production and consumption, and was also the biggest supplier of wind turbines and solar panels in the global market.

However, China faces many obstacles in the chip and semiconductor segments. Western countries have gone all out to prevent Chinese companies from building their capacity in these areas. It is good to note that China has put in place numerous instruments to overcome these challenges.

China is aware that the drive for innovation and technology development will not be sustainable without investment in education and the creation of high-quality human capital. Thus, China is investing heavily in these areas. China already has the biggest pool of STEM graduates, and the number could be double that of the United States by 2025.

The country has also invested much in building capacity and resilience to fight against future challenges such as climate change, pandemics and technology-related hurdles. It displayed its resilience and spirit in fighting back the COVID-19 pandemic. It put in place instruments to counter and control the pandemic in no time, and assisted the rest of the world in combating the challenge with medical supplies and special teams.

In promotion of green agricul-

It is certain that China can tackle future challenges in a better way, and offer other countries the opportunity to benefit from its development and prosperity without them compromising on their dignity and sovereignty.

ture and the food industry, China has achieved many milestones. It has significantly reduced usage of nitrogen fertilizers and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. These efforts have contributed to environmental protection, better and healthier food availability, and preservation of soil fertility. China has also launched a plan to develop modern protected agriculture in the 2023-30 period.

It has built the most sophisticated soft and hard infrastructure to address the challenges of new technologies and cyberspace.

China knows that the best way to survive and thrive in a global village is to go for win-win cooperation and build partnerships, and that confrontation, decoupling, undermining others, or winning at the cost of others are not the ways forward. Thus it has built partnerships and forums, such as the Boao Forum for Asia, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the

China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, and the China-ASEAN cooperation mechanism.

Besides, China has launched and steered the Belt and Road Initiative, the biggest economic and connectivity program in human history. The latest statistics show that more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations have signed BRI cooperation agreements with China. The China International Import Expo is helping the country to strengthen its role in the global supply and value chains. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has established itself as a formidable global financial player.

It can be inferred that China has built the capacity and capabilities to enjoy early advantages from future growth and development drivers under the sound leadership of the CPC Central Committee. It has also established itself as a leader in new growth drivers, and the world is looking toward China to benefit from its development.

It is certain that China can tackle future challenges like climate change, technology and pandemics in a better way, and offer other countries the opportunity to benefit from its development and prosperity without them

compromising on their dignity and sovereignty.

Therefore, China is neither on the decline nor a threat to the world but is instead a vital key to human progress. The question is, why do so many media outlets in the West initiate such false claims?

The author is CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development in Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Economy: Scope to raise debt remains

From page 1

Data from the central bank showed on Monday that new renminbi loans came in at 16.52 trillion yuan in the first 10 months of the year, indicating about 500 billion yuan in new renminbi loans in October, down by about 240 billion yuan year-on-year.

Experts close to the central bank said the future monetary policy will "continue to provide sufficient support to the real economy" amid lingering economic headwinds and rising external uncertainties, adding that monetary policy has been prudent in nominal terms but moderately loose in real terms this year.

On the fiscal front, Yang Zhiyong, president of the Chinese Academy of Fiscal Sciences, said there remains scope for China to raise more debt and increase the deficit-to-GDP ratio in 2025. "It is entirely possible to further strengthen fiscal policy adjustments," Yang added.

Ming Ming, chief economist at CITIC Securities, however, said there is limited possibility for further interest rate cuts in the remainder of the year, given that the central bank has acknowledged the constraints from banks' net interest margins and renminbi exchange rates.

CHINA

Law better ensuring children's safety to take effect next year

By ZHAO YIMENG
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China has introduced its first Preschool Education Law, focusing on elevating the quality of preschool educators and protecting children's safety and rights, officials and experts said on Monday. The new law will come into effect on Children's Day next year.

The new law stipulates clear qualification requirements for those working in early childhood education, including teachers, principals, childcare workers and child healthcare personnel, to ensure the safety and well-being of young children, said Zhang Wenbin, head of the Ministry of Education's department of policies and regulations.

"To address staffing needs, the law mandates that kindergartens must ensure an adequate number of qualified teachers and support staff, Zhang said.

It requires schools to file all employment records with local education authorities, conduct background checks and perform health screenings.

"Individuals who pose potential risks to children's safety are prohibited from employment in early childhood education," Zhang said.

The legislation also emphasizes safeguarding educators' welfare, stating that preschools and their operators are responsible for ensuring the provision of fair wages and benefits for their employees.

The salaries of teachers in public kindergartens should be included in the government's fiscal planning, according to the law that will take effect on June 1, which is Children's Day next year.

Wang Jingbo, an official with the China Law Society and president of Heilongjiang University, said the law defines two types of professional bans for individuals in the preschool education sector, including those with criminal records and a history of alcoholism.

It prohibits employment of people with criminal records related to abuse, sexual assault, harassment, trafficking, violent conduct, drug use and gambling, as well as those with a history of alcoholism or severe violations of professional ethics that could endanger children's physical or mental well-being, she said.

Individuals found to meet the

conditions for professional bans will be permanently removed from the teaching profession, ensuring a secure and supportive environment for young children, according to the law.

Furthermore, the law imposes disciplinary measures on kindergarten staff members who engage in corporal punishment, discrimination, humiliation or other harmful treatment of children.

"Schools or relevant departments are required to take appropriate disciplinary action based on the severity of the offense," Wang said.

Kindergartens or educational authorities that detect such misconduct are instructed to respond according to established regulations, she added.

"A key highlight of the new law is its focus on safeguarding preschool children's rights," Wang said, adding that there is a chapter of the law dedicated entirely to preschool children's rights.

Provisions throughout the law, such as requirements for teachers to care for children and guidelines on creating a safe environment, underscore the focus on children's rights.

"For example, Article 50 mandates kindergartens to combine education and care, accommodate individual differences and promote healthy development," she said.

The law also prohibits organizing commercial or competitive activities that hinder early childhood development, Wang said.

Tian Zuyin, head of the ministry's department of basic education, said China will emphasize stringent qualifications for preschool teachers, reinforcing entrance requirements and providing robust professional development.

New regulations demand zero tolerance for unethical behavior, setting high standards for teacher conduct, compensation and career advancement.

"Efforts will focus on improving the quality of preschool teacher training, cultivating a team of dedicated and highly skilled professionals," Tian said.

Meanwhile, preschool establishment criteria will be more stringent, ensuring kindergartens operate with the proper credentials to meet safety and educational standards, he said.

Cheerleader



Runners sprint with a humanoid robot at the finish line during the Beijing E-town Half Marathon in Yizhuang in Beijing on Sunday. The robot, named Tien Kung, cheered on the runners at the starting point and finish line, adding a sense of technology and fun to the event. LI MUYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Draft revision to boost science popularization

It underscores importance of making new tech, knowledge more accessible

By YAN DONGJIE
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China is advancing its commitment to science education with a draft revision of the Law on the Popularization of Science and Technology in order to broaden public engagement with science and technology and adapt to the rapid advancements the country has seen in high-tech fields, experts said.

Wang Ting, director-general of the China Research Institute for Science Popularization, hailed the nation as the only one in the world to enact a law specifically for science popularization.

Underscoring achievements made in fields such as artificial intelligence, quantum physics and biotechnology, Wang said, "We have done extensive research to support the law's revision, proving the need for high-quality science popularization as China leads in several scientific fields."

The new draft, which includes 10 additional chapters compared to the current 2002 law, emphasizes "science popularization activities" and "science popularization personnel," totaling 60 articles in eight chapters.

It highlights the importance of making new technologies and knowledge accessible to various demographics, guiding people to understand and apply scientific achievements. Targeted science education activities in cutting-edge technological fields are also encouraged to promote public understanding and the integration of scientific advancements.

"Building on achievements in education, the new draft further clarifies the mission of science popularization in China's modern era," Wang said.

Historically, science popularization served as a tool to dispel superstitions and promote literacy,

he noted. In the early post-1949 years, efforts focused on basic health messages such as the dangers of drinking untreated water. The role of science education grew gradually after 1949, expanding to agricultural and technological knowledge sharing, especially after China's reform and opening-up period in 1978.

Today, the field has evolved to encompass the latest developments in space exploration, quantum research and satellite technology.

President Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed that scientific popularization should be placed in a position that is equally as important as scientific and technological innovation.

A survey released by the China Association for Science and Technology in April reported that 14.14 percent of Chinese citizens have attained scientific literacy, a notable increase from 1.44 percent in 2001.

"When scientific literacy exceeds 10 percent of the population, it represents a favorable environment for science and technology to thrive," Wang said.

Meanwhile, China's rank in the global innovation index has climbed from 34 in 2012 to 11 this year, making it the only middle-income economy among the top 30, according to the Global Innovation Index 2024, which was published in September by the World Intellectual Property Organization.

The draft encourages popular science initiatives that integrate with sectors such as tourism, agriculture and sports. Research institutions, universities and tech companies are urged to establish science popularization centers. Intellectual property protections are also included to support the development of science education products.

Wang gave a vivid example of

such initiatives when he mentioned the Beijing Yizhuang economic and technological development zone, which is creating a city of science museums.

"Unmanned helicopters, autonomous taxi services, Beidou navigation, commercial rockets, etc. ... these hardcore technologies will showcase their charm in the science museums of many enterprises in Yizhuang," Wang said.

"The first batch of 50 corporate science museums opened to the public in 2021, including the Beijing Benz Museum, the JD Technology Exploration Museum and the Beidou Satellite Navigation Application Museum, demonstrating how companies and other organizations can engage in science popularization," he said, adding that he had visited some of the science museums and was deeply impressed.

The draft also strengthens science education responsibilities for primary and secondary schools and even extends to kindergartens. Wang noted that this would prompt educational reforms, cultivating children's scientific thinking and innovation from an early age to "provide a solid foundation for future science and technology development."

According to the Ministry of Science and Technology, China had nearly 2 million science popularization personnel in 2022, with over 80 percent working part-time. The draft proposes systems for title assessments and performance evaluations to encourage more professionals to participate in science education.

Currently, 18 provinces have initiated professional title evaluations for science popularization, a move expected to increase volunteer involvement and improve quality across science communication efforts. Wang noted that the reforms would promote a more professional, high-quality approach to science education, enhancing public understanding of China's technological strides.

Scientists create novel artificial muscles

The 3D-printing of muscle fibers featured in HBO's sci-fi drama *Westworld* is truly awe-inspiring. Interestingly, a recent breakthrough by Chinese scientists may usher in an era of this futuristic technology sooner than imagined.

Scientists from the Institute of Chemistry under the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Ocean University of China have developed a novel type of artificial muscle that is based on carbon, a fundamental component of all known living organisms on our planet.

The carbon materials, celebrated for their light weight, superior strength, outstanding electrical conductivity and pliability, have shown great potential in the realm of artificial muscles.

While cyborgs demonstrate significant market potential, artificial muscles truly stand out. They're capable of not only emulating natural muscles but also offering unique advantages such as self-repair, exceptional elasticity and swift response times that outperform conventional mechanical "joints."

Amidst an aging population, artificial muscle technology has become increasingly valuable across assistive devices, wearables and diverse medical applications.

The research team was inspired by a butterfly's proboscis — the long, tube-like mouth of the insect. The biomimetic materials they've fabricated employ a cutting-edge, hydrogen-substituted graphdiyne film featuring an asymmetric surface structure.

This muscle possesses reversible, swift and continuously adjustable deformation capabilities, akin to a butterfly's mouth. The motion is triggered by the conversion of carbon bonds, according to the study published recently in the journal *National Science Review*.

The scientists have successfully incorporated the artificial muscle into a robotic arm, granting it the ability to swiftly change its position and lift loads weighing up to 11 times heavier than itself. It retains stability and adaptability even at temperatures as low as -25 C, according to the study.

Additionally, the dimensions of the film are customizable, spanning from about 1 centimeter down to 100 microns. The downsizing of artificial muscles is a significant trend, particularly in the development of micro-medical devices and micro-robots.

The artificial muscle has now been integrated into a real-time tracking system that monitors human finger bending movements. This application has enabled real-time simulation and large-hand-to-small-hand control.

The invention shows considerable potential for enhancing smart robotics and advancing precision medicine, the researchers said.

XINHUA

Ape art



People visit an exhibition of paintings created by gorillas at the Hongshan Forest Zoo in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Sunday. SHAO DAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Commercial space firm launches first satellite for foreign client

By ZHAO LEI in Zhuhai, Guangdong
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CAS Space, a Beijing-based rocket maker owned by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, conducted the fifth flight of its Kinetica 1 rocket model on Monday afternoon, transporting 15 satellites, including one built by China for Oman, into space.

It marked the first time that a Chinese commercial space company has launched any satellite for a foreign client. It is also the first time that an Omani satellite has been successfully put into orbit.

The Kinetica 1-Y5 rocket lifted off at 12:03 pm from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in the Gobi Desert and carried the satellites to

their preset orbit, the company said in a news release.

The "Y5" in the designation code means it is the fifth in the rocket series.

Among the satellites launched by the rocket, the IRSS-1 was designed and built by the China Academy of Space Technology, a subsidiary of the State-owned space conglomerate China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, for the Omani space industry startup Oman Lens.

The contract for the satellite's manufacturing and launch service was jointly signed by the China Great Wall Industry, CASC's international business wing, and the Omani company.

The IRSS-1 is equipped with artificial intelligence-enabled computing apparatus that can process data and images in orbit, according to its designers.

The satellite is tasked with collecting data and images for land mapping, urban construction planning, forestry resources survey and disaster monitoring for the Middle Eastern nation.

The Kinetica 1 series conducted its debut flight at the Jiuquan spaceport in July 2022, making it the country's largest and most powerful solid-propellant rocket at the time.

The rocket has a length of 30 meters and a liftoff weight of 135 metric tons. It is capable of sending satellites with a combined

weight of 1.5 tons to a typical sun-synchronous orbit about 500 kilometers above Earth.

To send the 15 satellites, CAS Space mounted a larger payload fairing, which holds and protects the spacecraft carried by a launch vehicle.

The payload fairings of the four previously launched Kinetica 1 rockets all had the same diameter of 2.65 meters. On the Kinetica 1-Y5, the diameter is 3.35 meters.

As of now, Kinetica 1 rockets have deployed a combined 57 satellites in space, boasting a 100-percent success rate.

CAS Space has begun to develop a new rocket, Kinetica 2, and plans to conduct its maiden flight in September 2025.

The Kinetica 2 will be a medium-lift, liquid-fuel rocket. The 53-meter new model will consist of a multistage core booster, which will have a diameter of 3.35 meters, and two side boosters.

It will have a liftoff weight of 628 tons, a maximum thrust of 766 tons and will be able to transport spacecraft with a combined weight of 7.8 tons to a sun-synchronous orbit or 12 tons to a low-Earth orbit.

After entering service, the Kinetica 2 will be used to transport the Qingzhou-series cargo spacecraft, which is now being developed at the Innovation Academy for Microsatellites of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, to China's Tiangong space station, according to CAS Space.



The Kinetica 1-Y5 rocket blasts off on Monday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CHINA

PLA plays major role as global peacekeeper

UN commends China for its humanitarian efforts in areas of need

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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In the same year that China celebrates the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, 700 of its soldiers stationed over 8,000 kilometers away from the motherland in South Sudan have been awarded for their contributions to the cause of world peace.

The soldiers of the 10th Chinese Peacekeeping Infantry Battalion in Juba, South Sudan, were awarded the United Nations Peace Medal of Honour during a ceremony at the Chinese camp of the UN Mission in South Sudan last month.

At the entrance of the camp, two flags are prominently displayed: the red National Flag of China and the blue flag of the UN. An accompanying banner in Chinese reads: "Fulfilling the responsibility of a major power, upholding the mission of peace."

According to China's Ministry of National Defense, since the battalion's deployment last December, it has completed over 150 mandated tasks under the UN mission's command, including security duties, armed patrols and emergency response operations.

It has also actively engaged in humanitarian aid activities such as medical outreach, donating over 10,000 items of humanitarian aid materials locally.

Li Jian, a peacekeeper in the battalion, said that although their mission was coming to an end, the mission of maintaining world peace is ongoing.

"We will remember our original intentions, cherish our honor, and continue to uphold our positions with the highest standards to bring this peacekeeping mission to a successful conclusion, never failing the trust of our country and people," he told China Media Group.

Li is just one of nearly 2,000 Chinese soldiers currently participating in UN peacekeeping missions worldwide.

Zhang Junshe, a former researcher at the People's Liberation Army's Naval Research Academy, said that over the past 30 years, China's involvement in UN peacekeeping operations has demonstrated its commitment as a responsible major power, and its determination and desire to maintain world peace.

International public good

In 1990, China first took part in UN peacekeeping operations by sending five military observers to Egypt and Syria for missions organized by the UN Truce Supervision Organization, which is headquartered in Jerusalem.

Since then, the Chinese military has dispatched over 50,000 personnel to participate in UN peacekeeping operations in more than 20 countries and regions, according to the Defense Ministry.

Currently, China is the second-largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget and the top contributor of peacekeepers among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, with nearly 2,000 Chinese troops serving in six peacekeeping missions.

At the UN peacekeeping summit in 2015, President Xi Jinping announced six measures that China would take to support these operations. All six measures have been fully implemented, including establishing a standby peacekeeping force of 8,000 troops, offering 20 training programs to over 1,500 peacekeepers from more than 60 countries, and sending 25 rotations of engineer and medical units totaling 7,001 troops to missions in Africa and Asia.

Zhao Lei, deputy director of the International Strategy Research Institute at the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, emphasized that peacekeeping is China's contribution to the international public good in the security domain.



75 years on

"Unlike the military forces of the United States, NATO and others, which have indeed caused conflicts and wars in many regions, the PLA soldiers, wearing the UN blue helmets, carry out peacekeeping missions in conflict areas," he said. "We do not start wars. We stop them."

Nicholas Haysom, UN secretary-general's special representative and head of the UN mission in South Sudan, was quoted by China Media Group as saying that in South Sudan, the Chinese peacekeeping battalion has consistently fulfilled its mandate to bring lasting peace to the people of South Sudan, and added that Chinese peacekeepers' contributions have been immeasurable.

Strong will, capabilities

Zhou Bo, a senior fellow at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, said that the UN's primary task is to maintain world peace, and stressed that China has a unique advantage as a participant in the peacekeeping operations.

"(This participation) combines high-quality equipment, disciplined personnel and a strong political will to maintain peace," said Zhou, who is also the former director of the Center for Security Cooperation at the Office for International Military Cooperation of the Central Military Commission. "These three elements only occur together in the Chinese military."

In mid-September, Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun emphasized in his speech at the opening of the 11th Beijing Xiangshan

Forum, that the Chinese military actively fulfills its international responsibilities as a major power's armed forces and is willing to work with militaries from other countries to build peace and share the future.

"China is ready to engage in cooperation on escort missions, counterterrorism and peacekeeping with other nations, providing high-level defense and security cooperation to safeguard high-quality development," he said.

Gilles Carbonnier, vice-president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said that China, as a world-leading power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, is playing an important role in world affairs.

China is an important contributor to peacekeeping, he said, noting that in these domains Red Cross and Chinese officials can develop dialogues.

"We welcome China's engagement in support of humanitarianism and international humanitarian law. It is very important," Carbonnier said.

Zhao Xiaozhuo, a retired PLA senior colonel, noted that China is one of the few countries able to effectively carry out peacekeeping missions, thanks to its strong and comprehensive capabilities.

"Chinese peacekeeping forces undertake a significant amount of front-line work, mainly in security, engineering, transportation and medical units. Therefore, they also contribute to local development by improving infrastructure and medical conditions," said Zhao, who served in the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo from 2001 to 2002.

"Our military has become stronger, and we also hope to do our part to make the world a better place," he said.

Above: Some 700 soldiers from the ninth Chinese Peacekeeping Infantry Battalion in Juba, South Sudan, receive the United Nations Peace Medal of Honour in recognition of their services in the African country in September last year. ZHAO JIANYI / XINHUA

Left: Chinese navy vessels conduct a drill against pirates during their escort mission in the waters near the Gulf of Aden and Somalia in May 2020. JIANG XIA / XINHUA

Naval escort missions

Beyond participating in UN peacekeeping operations, the PLA also contributes to world peace in other ways, including sending its advanced hospital ship *Peace Ark* to provide free medical services to less-developed countries and dispatching naval vessels to escort merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden and through Somali waters.

Since December 2008, when the first Chinese naval escort task force set sail from Sanya, Hainan province, to the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters, China has dispatched 46 escort task forces, involving over 150 ships and more than 35,000 officers and soldiers, according to the Ministry of National Defense.

Chinese escort task forces have safely escorted over 7,200 Chinese and overseas vessels in more than 1,600 passages and rescued nearly 100 ships, with foreign vessels accounting for over 50 percent.

Zhang, the former PLA researcher, pointed out that each Chinese escort task force typically comprises two combat ships and one supply ship, which he said is of a "substantial scale" compared to other nations' escort forces in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters.

Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said at a news conference in December that the 15 years of escort missions in the Gulf of Aden have demonstrated the mission and responsibility of naval officers and soldiers to embrace the world and safeguard peace.

"In missions such as repelling pirates, emergency evacuations and humanitarian aid, the Chinese Navy has embodied the concept of building both human and maritime communities with a shared future, actively contributing to safeguarding national overseas interests and the security of international maritime routes," he said.

Timeline of nation's participation in UN peacekeeping missions

In 1990, the Chinese military dispatches five military observers to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization beginning the country's involvement with UN Peacekeeping Operations.

In 1992, the Chinese military dispatches an engineering unit of 400 troops to the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, the first military unit committed by China to UN peacekeeping.

In 2001, the Ministry of National Defense's Peacekeeping Affairs Office is established, responsible for coordinating and managing the peacekeeping affairs of China's armed forces, and conducting international peacekeeping exchanges. The office was restructured into the Peacekeeping Affairs Center of the MND in 2018.

In 2003, the Chinese military dispatches 218 peacekeepers to the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and 558 troops to the UN Mission in Liberia.

In 2006, the Chinese military dispatches 182 peacekeepers to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and 435 troops to the UN Mission in Sudan.

In 2007, Major General Zhao Jingmin is appointed as Force Commander of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, becoming the first Chinese military officer to assume a senior command position in UN peacekeeping forces.

In 2009, the MND's Peacekeeping Center is established, which takes over the responsibility for peacekeeping training, research and international cooperation for China's armed forces. In 2018, the center was transformed into the Training Base under the newly established Peacekeeping Affairs Center of the MND.

In 2009, the Chinese military holds a joint exercise "Peacekeeping Mission-2009" with its Mongolian counterparts. It is China's first joint peacekeeping exercise with a foreign force.

In 2010, the MND's Peacekeeping Affairs Office and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations co-host the UN Senior Mission Leaders' Course in Beijing — the first senior-level peacekeeping training program held by the Chinese military.

In 2013, the Chinese military dispatches 395 troops to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping addresses the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping at the UN headquarters in New York and puts forth four propositions and six measures that China will take to support and improve the UN peacekeeping.

In 2017, the 8,000-strong Chinese peacekeeping standby force completes its registration in the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System.

Since 1990, the Chinese military has sent more than 50,000 officers and soldiers to participate in UN peacekeeping missions in more than 20 countries and regions.

Currently, China is the second-largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget and the top contributor of peacekeepers among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, with nearly 2,000 Chinese troops serving in six peacekeeping missions.

JIANG CHENGLONG



Online
See more by scanning the code.

Chinese hospital ships cross oceans to provide free healthcare to those in need

I remember an advertising slogan for shampoo from about 20 years ago when I was a child. It said: "Everyone being well is truly being well."

As I grew up, I gradually realized that this is one of the values that Chinese people have adhered to for generations.

The armed forces of this nation, the People's Liberation Army, also practice this value by striving to make the world a better place through various means, as it grows stronger. Those include deploying hospital ships to provide free medical services to people in less-developed countries worldwide.

As a journalist, I have had the privilege of listening to stories of doctors and crew members from *Peace Ark*, a hospital ship of the Chinese Navy.

Deng Qiang, captain of the vessel, told me that when his ship is voyaging across the oceans, it's not showing the muscles of the armed forces and conducting deterrent



Jiang Chenglong
Reporter's log

activities but spreading the military's belief in world peace.

That's what Deng believes is the "innate advantage" of *Peace Ark*, a floating medical facility operated by the PLA Navy.

His words are not empty.

The *Peace Ark* hospital ship is currently on Mission Harmony 2024, visiting 13 countries, including Seychelles, Tanzania, Madagascar, South Africa, Angola, Cameroon, Djibouti and Sri Lanka, to provide medical services.

This is the 10th Mission Harmony for *Peace Ark* since its commissioning in 2008.

According to the Defense Ministry, since 2008, the ship has conducted humanitar-

ian medical missions overseas multiple times, visiting 46 countries and regions and serving over 290,000 people, and has seen more than 1,700 operations carried out on board.

Designed as a well-equipped oceangoing clinic, China's first hospital ship, with a displacement of over 10,000 metric tons, boasts 16 departments, eight operating rooms and more than 300 beds.

"We are the most appropriate way of conveying the peace-loving ideals of China's soldiers, by caring for the lives of people worldwide," the 42-year-old captain said. "We are humanitarians and uphold world peace by healing the sick and helping the dying."

In my view, this is a clear distinction between the Chinese military and others: we do not bring war and conflict, but rather, advanced medical technology and care, enabling people around the world to live healthier lives.

As of this year, apart from the *Peace Ark*, there's another large and domestically designed hospital ship operated by the Chinese Navy — the *Silk Road Ark*.

The *Silk Road Ark*, which is more advanced than the *Peace Ark*, made its public debut in July, conducting medical visits and services on 18 islands and reefs in the South China Sea and along the southern coast of China, providing medical services to over 3,500 people.

Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Wu Qian said in August that in the future, the *Silk Road Ark* will also carry out international humanitarian medical missions and engage in foreign military medical exchanges and cooperation.

He said the Chinese Navy will actively implement the concept of building a maritime community with a shared future, providing more public security goods to the international community.

What is a community with a shared

future? In my opinion, it is that people in every country are able to enjoy a good life, rather than just those in a certain few countries being well.

Last month, the *Peace Ark* hospital ship made its first visit to Cameroon.

During the seven-day visit, Chinese medical personnel provided services to over 6,800 people, conducted nearly 3,000 auxiliary examinations and tests, and performed 126 surgeries, including cataract removal and uterine fibroid extraction, according to the Chinese military.

Additionally, the crew of the *Peace Ark* held a friendly soccer match with Cameroonian military personnel.

I saw their group photos in Captain Deng's WeChat posts. Everyone in the photos was smiling happily.

Seeing their infectious smiles, I better understand why the acronym PLA for the People's Liberation Army also stands for a "peace-loving army."

CHINA

Entrepreneur promotes cross-Strait ties

Project aims to create platform for Taiwan residents living on mainland

By ZHANG YI
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Lin Wun-hau, a young entrepreneur from Taiwan, is working in a town in Xiamen, Fujian province, exploring rural development and envisioning a hub where young professionals can come together, share ideas and work on projects that bridge the gap across the Taiwan Strait.

In Neicuo, a small town in Xiamen, a new project aims to enhance cross-Strait collaboration by integrating Taiwan's community-building practices into local rural development, creating a platform for young Taiwan people to thrive on the mainland.

Lin, 27, hails from Zuoying military dependents' village in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, a home to the families of Kuomintang soldiers and their families who relocated to Taiwan in the 1940s and 1950s, with many veterans coming from various mainland provinces, including Lin's grandfather from Hunan province.

"The soldiers love watching TV programs about the mainland reporting on the people, things and customs of their hometowns," Lin said.

"They experienced the war of resistance against Japan, and the knowledge they shared with me goes beyond what is written in history books."

Growing up in this environment, Lin was immersed in a wealth of stories shared by veterans, which helped shape his broad perspective of the mainland. From a young age, he became deeply interested in the



Above: Lin Wun-hau (middle) talks with architecture experts during an inspection tour to Neicuo town in Xiamen, Fujian province.

Left: Lin introduces his project in Xiamen.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



mainland. His academic background further equipped him with insights into the other side of the Strait.

From 2016 to 2020, while studying at Jinmen University, located on Jinmen Island near the coast of Fujian, he participated in cross-Strait exchanges, and visited cities in Fujian that share close ties with Taiwan.

In 2020, he enrolled in the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies at Chengchi University in Taiwan, focusing on cross-Strait relations,

particularly on how to build a living circle between Jinmen and Xiamen in Fujian. His graduation thesis focused on policies of building a bridge between the two, and sending gas and electricity from Fujian to the island.

Learning that Neicuo provides opportunities for young people from both sides to start up businesses together in rural areas, he became the first Taiwan young person to work in the town and established a cultural tour company in March.

"During the era of cross-Strait

confrontation, this area represented a front line of conflict, but now it serves as a pioneer zone for peaceful exchanges. The close connections in terms of people and logistics have always existed, paving the way for cooperation," he said.

Young teams from both sides of the Strait collaborate to explore and delve into the local folk culture, deriving and developing cultural and creative products.

"We needed a medium to present local characteristics, something tangible that people can connect with," Lin said.

He introduced a young team of craft brewers from Jinmen, renowned for its liquor, to work with local brewers in Xiamen to launch a craft beer brand for the town, creating the first cultural product of its kind in the area.

Lin and his team have also been addressing agricultural challenges in the region. Collaborating with Taiwan agricultural experts, he has initiated efforts to revitalize abandoned farmland through sustainable practices.

Lin has found that cross-Strait exchanges are happening in everyday life. In Xiamen, he often seeks advice from his elders speaking the southern Fujian dialect, which is also spoken in Taiwan, making it the most intimate and natural connection between them.

The recent reopening of travel between Fujian and Jinmen has provided new opportunities for collaboration.

Lin plans to develop repurposed factories into living and working spaces to provide housing and offices for young professionals.

He said he hopes to attract more young people to participate in the community development process, making the community a new home jointly built by people from both sides of the Strait.

Li Ren contributed to this story.

ifaw 国际爱护动物基金会

CWCA

AD

华北豹 North China leopard

Between heaven and earth, together with other sentient beings, I live.

— Zhuangzi, philosopher, late fourth century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一

——《庄子·齐物论》

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SOEs pumping large sums into R&D

Playing key role in developing new quality productive forces, report says

By ZHU WENQIAN
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China's centrally-administered State-owned enterprises have played a leading role in developing new quality productive forces by investing more than 1 trillion yuan (\$139 billion) annually in research and development over the past two years, and major technological achievements have continued to emerge, according to a new report.

Traditional industries have been accelerating their transformation, while strategic emerging industries are flourishing, said the report on high-quality development of State-owned enterprises in 2024, which was released by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council last week.

SOEs need to achieve wide-ranging and deeper integrated development, jointly expand their markets overseas, and actively participate in the building of global value and innovation chains, officials and experts said.

"We will continue to guide and promote SOEs to expand their contacts and integration for scientific and technological innovation. SOEs should closely focus on tackling bottleneck technologies, developing cutting-edge technologies, and striving to master more key technologies," said Tan Zuojun, deputy director of the commission.

Tan added that SOEs should strengthen cooperation in industrial and supply chains, boost efforts to promote the transformation and industrial application of scientific and technological achievements, jointly transform traditional industries and cultivate emerging industries.

Last year, investments by SOEs in strategic emerging industries increased by 32.1 percent year-on-year, and total annual revenues of the industries exceeded 10 trillion yuan, the report said.

In the first nine months of this

year, the value of such investments grew by 17.6 percent year-on-year, and the amount accounted for nearly 40 percent of the total investment by SOEs.

Justin Lin Yifu, dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics at Peking University, said new quality productive forces have been an achievement of the technological revolution. It is led by innovation and is in line with the new development concept, and different regions should develop it based on their local conditions.

He said Chinese enterprises should make good use of their leading industrial advantages, continue to develop new products and technologies, and pay attention to technological and business revolution to prevent being overtaken by others.

In 2023, centrally-administered SOEs achieved total revenue of 39.6 trillion yuan and profits of 2.6 trillion yuan. The total annual investment reached 6.2 trillion yuan, up 6.9 percent year-on-year, according to the report.

SOEs have strengthened collaborative development with private enterprises, directly driving the growth of more than 2 million upstream and downstream enterprises in the supply chain. Of these, 96 percent are private small- and medium-sized enterprises, the report found.

Meanwhile, the technological R&D capabilities of private enterprises have significantly increased, contributing more than 70 percent of the technological innovation achievements to society, according to All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce.

"Private enterprises account for more than 80 percent of national specialized and sophisticated 'little giant' businesses, and over 90 percent of high-tech enterprises, playing an indispensable role in the development of new quality productive forces," said Qiu Xiaoping, deputy chairman of the federation.

Eco-friendly operations



Employees work at PetroChina GWDC's No 2 Drilling Co's construction site in Shuang 229 block of Liaohe Oilfield in Liaoning province. By integrating green development into the whole process of oil and gas exploration, they have drilled 108,049 meters of wells so far this year, with zero pollution to the environment. LIU CHUANBAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Increased cooperation seen key to resolving Sino-EU trade disputes

By CHINA DAILY

China and Europe should enhance cooperation and leverage their comparative advantages and unique strengths in areas such as electric vehicles to develop third-party markets, which could help broaden business opportunities and address the ongoing EV trade disputes between the two sides, experts said.

While much attention has been placed on friction over EVs, closer collaboration, healthier competition and stronger ties could drive progress and produce win-win results, said Sun Yongfu, former head of the department of European affairs at the Ministry of Commerce.

Sun made the comments at the sixth CCG VIP Luncheon, a high-level forum held by the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), a Beijing-based think tank, on Nov 5. During the forum, Chinese and European representatives gathered to discuss green trade collaboration, focusing on China-EU cooperation.

Sun said that currently, too much attention is placed on confrontation, with insufficient emphasis on competition and collaboration. "I am looking forward to seeing this shift, paving the way for a stronger and brighter future for China-EU relations," Sun added.

Pascal Lamy, former director-general of the World Trade Organization, emphasized that the core of the discussion lies in looking to the future and exploring more collaborative approaches.

"The goal is to determine if the European Union and China can achieve a win-win outcome in the electric vehicle sector, rather than a zero-sum scenario," Lamy said.

The comments also came as technical teams from China and the EU have conducted five rounds of consultations regarding the price commitment proposal in the EU's anti-subsidy case on China-made EVs, the Ministry of Commerce said on Friday.

These consultations were held in Beijing from Nov 2 to 7 and some progress was achieved. Both sides agreed to continue consultations via video or other means, said a ministry spokesperson in an online statement.

The EU announced last month the imposition of additional tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on Chinese-made battery EVs, with the tariffs to remain in place for the next five years.

Tu Xinquan, professor and dean of the China Institute for WTO studies at the University of International Business and Economics and a CCG nonresident senior fellow, said collaboration between China and the EU for sustainable

development is a global imperative.

"The EU and China have complementary strengths in developing and expanding third-party markets. By jointly exploring broader markets, they can alleviate some of the pressure from direct competition," Tu said.

Tu added that the EU has longstanding ties in regions such as Africa, Latin America and Central Asia, while China holds unique advantages in resources and cooperation.

"Together, they are well-positioned to make strides in these emerging markets."

China and EU cooperation can also help advance carbon reduction goals and strengthen China-EU relations for sustainable development amid pressing environmental challenges, experts said.

"The green transition is a global issue, impacting China and all other nations. It requires the collective effort of WTO members. In my view, the green transition should be a 'race to the top' rather than a 'race to the bottom.' Therefore, China-Europe cooperation is essential," said Zhou Yunlei, an official of the department of WTO affairs at the Ministry of Commerce.

Yin Mingyue contributed to this story.

Deeper ties urged to boost green technology

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Despite geopolitical uncertainties and setbacks to free trade, China and Finland can further strengthen their cooperation in developing green technologies, which is conducive to sustainable growth globally, said government officials and senior executives of Chinese and Finnish companies.

They made the remarks during the 2024 Finland-China Business Summit held in Shanghai late last month where Finnish President Alexander Stubb was present as part of his four-day state visit to China from Oct 28.

According to Stubb, executives from 25 Finnish companies accompanied him during the latest visit. They signed 10 memorandums of understanding with governments and around 20 business agreements.

About 250 Finnish companies have set up operations in China, of which 130 are based in Shanghai. Finland is a trustworthy trade partner, as Finnish companies are straightforward, law-abiding and have much interest in expanding their businesses, said Stubb.

Expressing concern over protectionism, Stubb said that such language is being heard in a lot of countries and that there has been increasing talk of tariffs, impediments to trade or bringing value chains home.

However, Stubb stressed that "economic growth does not happen only inside borders."

"Without free trade, we will not have growth. And without growth, we will not have welfare." In the spirit of free trade, trust and cooperation, it is very important that Finnish and Chinese companies keep the channels open, he said.

While climate change has become one of the pressing tasks that the world has to address now, China and Finland can strengthen their cooperation to come up with more innovative solutions, he added.

Patrick Zhong, founding managing partner of Chinese private equity firm M31 Capital, one of the organizers of the summit, said Finnish companies have long valued sustainability and a clean environment. They have a deep understanding of the world, including economic cycles, markets, innovation and geopolitics.

On the other hand, Chinese companies are making due progress in sustainable development. Industry leaders in new energy, electric vehicles, energy storage and smart logistics have been actively advancing green transition within their industries, he said.

Zhong further said that sustainability is not only about the environment but also building sustainable business partnerships.

Kari Hietanen, executive vice-president of Finnish marine and energy solutions provider Wartsila, said that Chinese and Finnish companies can step up their cooperation in developing green technologies for the maritime industry.

In April, Wartsila said it will supply the methanol-fueled auxiliary engines for five new container vessels for COSCO Shipping Lines Co Ltd and seven new container vessels for Orient Overseas Container Line. This is the Chinese maritime sector's largest order to date for methanol-fueled vessels.

Meanwhile, Chinese companies have been making investments in solar energy technologies. Cooperation between the Chinese and Finnish counterparts will help to promote the world's green transition, said Hietanen.

Wang Haijun, chairman of Tsingshan Industry, said the company will look for cooperation opportunities in the new battery project of Finnish Minerals Group.

Zhang Chuanwei, chairman of Mingyang Smart Energy Group, lauded the innovation capabilities of Finnish companies. Chinese companies have formed long-term cooperative partnerships with Finnish companies in computer numerical control equipment.

Working on new HSR



A drone image shows the construction site of the Wuhan-Yichang section of the Shanghai-Chongqing-Chengdu high-speed railway in Hubei province. The 313-kilometer section, which is being built by the 24th bureau of State-owned infrastructure builder China Railway Construction Corp as a critical part of the national major horizontal rail network, has had its ballastless track completed — another major milestone ahead of its expected operation next year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Auto sales in China up 7% in October

China's auto sales rose 7 percent year-on-year to 3.05 million units in October, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers on Monday. In the first 10 months, auto sales exceeded 24.6 million units, up 2.7 percent year-on-year.

SMEs show overall improvement

China's small and medium-sized enterprises reported better business performance in October,

with an industry index measuring their activity posting its largest increase of the year, said the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises. The SME Development Index, based on a survey of 3,000 SMEs across eight major industries, reached 89 last month, 0.3 point higher than in September. This growth rate marked the largest increase this year and the highest since March 2023.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Firms plan digital transformation initiatives to boost growth, services

By FAN FEIFEI
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More Chinese enterprises are willing to invest in transformation projects, but lack confidence in their capabilities of managing changes, with only a relatively small proportion of companies having mastered the ability to achieve significant value from change initiatives, according to a new report released by global consultancy Accenture.

The report said that all of the surveyed Chinese companies are planning to invest more than 5 percent of their total revenues in change initiatives over the next three years, while only 20 percent of the interviewed executives have confidence in their change capabilities.

It noted that 68 percent of polled Chinese firms have undergone two or more transformations in the past three years. About 40 percent of surveyed Chinese executives cited high financial costs as a common obstacle in their transformation journey.

As business leaders are increasingly committed to driving reinvention across the enterprise, Accenture's latest report underscores the value of building continuous change capabilities for achieving a more predictable and positive impact across the business.

Chinese companies hold a very positive attitude toward change, but have some concerns and are facing

mounting challenges from transformation, said Robert Hah, president of strategy and consulting at Accenture Greater China, adding that they should push ahead with change initiatives with a particular focus on strategy, research and development innovation, operations and information technology over the next three years.

The report also found that 26 percent of surveyed Chinese companies have the awareness of embracing AI, and 32 percent of them have begun to redesign job roles to better adopt the technology. However, the figure is still below the global average level.

In the past four years, technology has become the most prominent factor affecting changes in the business environment, Hah said, adding that the adoption of generative artificial intelligence technology is a key factor driving change and called for efforts to ensure the responsible use of AI and safeguard data security.

According to the report, the key to navigating change successfully lies in embracing six capabilities of continuous change. These capabilities include "foundations", or proven practices known to drive success, as well as "innovations", which refer to areas of new thinking and practice enabled by technology, data and AI that are focused on turning insights into action.

Only 16 percent of the 1,000 organizations surveyed worldwide are implementing all six capabilities

of change at scale, suggesting there's more work to be done.

"Companies that embrace reinvention as a strategy, where they drive a step change in performance through the power of technology, data and AI and new ways of working, are outperforming the competition. These organizations have also made change management a core competency," said Jack Azagury, group chief executive of consulting at Accenture. "Change must be built as a capability to continuously reinvent and should be part of the organizational DNA."

Amid radical shifts in ways of working, changes in technology including generative AI and the constant potential for unforeseeable disruption, the ability to effectively navigate and measure change has become a critical competency for business leaders, the report said.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association, underscored the significance of developing digital technologies represented by AI, which will inject fresh impetus into the intelligent transformation and upgrading of enterprises.

He said Chinese enterprises have sped up their transformation in their globalization process, with the application of generative AI technology in these enterprises' efforts to expand their footprint in overseas markets becoming increasingly obvious.

BUSINESS

Miniso unveils major global expansion plans

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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Chinese retail lifestyle brand Miniso plans to extensively expand its global network by opening 900 to 1,100 stores per year in the coming five years as part of an ambitious brand development strategy, according to its top executive.

"Between 550 and 650 of the newly opened stores will be located overseas," said Ye Guofu, founder and CEO of Miniso, during an interview with China Daily in Shanghai recently.

According to Ye, the company has charted key targets in the five years between 2024 and 2028, including adding between 900 and 1,100 new stores across the world, reaching a compound annual growth rate of at least 20 percent in revenue, as well as having more than half of its annual GMV (gross merchandise value) by IP products.

Since its establishment in 2013, the Guangzhou-based company has opened 7,000 stores globally as of the end of June, including 2,753 stores overseas.

"Our global development was rapid in the first half, as 455 new stores were opened globally, with 266 of them beyond China," said Liu Xiaobin, vice-president and chief marketing officer of Miniso.

According to Liu, opening chain stores in iconic landmarks such as Times Square in New York, Oxford Street in London, and the Champs-Élysées in Paris has greatly enhanced the company's awareness among global consumers.

"Based on our analysis and estimation on markets in Europe, Asia, North America, Latin America and Oceania, there is spacious expansion room for opening thousands of stores in the future," said Kou Weixuan, vice-president and chief



People visit Miniso Land on Shanghai's Nanjing Road on Oct 22. WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

growth officer of Miniso.

The projection is based on key elements of macro data, commercial space and multi-dimensional brands among others, Kou said.

Going global has shifted from being an option to a must for Chinese enterprises, and a rising number of Chinese brands are favored by overseas consumers, reported local news portal ThePaper.cn citing a report on China's top 50 global brands jointly conducted by Kantar and Google.

Despite a global economic slowdown, the top 50 Chinese brands saw their overall brand power grow 17 percent year-on-year, demonstrating strong vitality and competitiveness in the global market, said the

report, which is in its eighth edition.

Ye said Miniso takes a differentiated strategy in exploring overseas markets compared to what they did in domestic development.

"As long as we can ensure the localization of talent, products and marketing, our business performance will win local consumers," Ye said. "Attending to the preferences of specific markets, we have launched differentiated products accordingly. In North America for example, a large proportion of our products have adapted to US tastes and developed jointly with local suppliers."

While achieving quality development in its global expansion, Miniso is expecting to embed Chinese inno-

vation into IP development, according to Ye.

"We strive to become a top IP design retail group, and we are going to introduce 100 Chinese IPs to the world in the coming decade," Ye said.

Since the company launched an IP strategy in 2016, Miniso has reached collaboration with 150 IPs with global reputation to date, and the company's IP products sales (in terms of gross merchandise value) surpass 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) per year, said Dou Na, executive vice-president and chief merchandising officer of Miniso.

"We launch more than 10,000 IP products on an annual basis, and more than 800 million IP products have been sold worldwide to date," Dou said.

'Big three' oil giants rely on CIIE deals

Recently concluded import expo saw energy behemoths sign major deals

By ZHENG XIN
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China's three State-owned oil giants are ramping up efforts to strengthen international collaboration in oil and gas development, with an increasing focus on transitioning to green energy, said industry experts and company executives.

The companies, collectively known as the "big three", signed contracts worth a total of \$488.3 billion during the China International Import Expo (CIIIE) held over the past seven years, forging partnerships that not only strengthen international collaboration in oil and gas resource development, but have also provided strong support for China's transition to greener energy in the oil and gas sector, they said.

While China Petrochemical Corp (Sinopec) has signed contracts totaling more than \$285 billion over the past seven years, China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) has secured procurement contracts worth over \$127.3 billion with 190 international suppliers, underscoring their commitment to deepening open cooperation.

China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC) saw its cumulative contract value over the past seven years surpass \$76 billion, with signed contracts covering a wide range of sectors across the oil and gas industry, including crude oil, natural gas, deepwater oil and gas equipment, and advanced technical services, reflecting a continuous optimization of the procurement structure, it said.

Dai Houliang, chairman of CNPC, said as the energy industry is accelerating its shift toward cleaner, low-carbon, efficient and diversified solutions, the sector should expand oil and gas cooperation to jointly secure global energy supplies while emphasizing the importance of increasing openness and collaboration to accelerate transformation and upgrade efforts.

Foreign oil and gas companies also expressed their willingness to collaborate with the Chinese government, industry partners and local communities to support a low-carbon future in China.

"Throughout Chevron's history in China, partnership is core to everything we do," said Xiong Shu,

president of Chevron China.

Chevron has built a solid presence in China over the past decades and it remains committed to working closely across the energy value chain and developing innovative solutions together with its partners here in China, said Xiong.

"Working with our local partners including CNPC, we have been collaborating to produce and supply energy from both onshore and offshore China, participating in a wide range of activities across the entire energy value chain," she said.

An analyst said the ever-growing cumulative contract volume by the "big three" Chinese oil companies at the CIIIE underscores China's growing commitment to global energy cooperation.

"As the global energy landscape undergoes profound transformation, with a shift toward cleaner, low-carbon, more efficient and diversified energy sources, the emphasis on expanding oil and gas cooperation remains critical," said Wang Lining, director of the oil market department under the economics and technology research institute of CNPC.

"In this context, the 'big three' are not only focusing on securing oil and gas supplies, but also play a pivotal role in ensuring global energy security amid growing demand and geopolitical uncertainty," Wang said.

"Their increased efforts in liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports, in particular, highlight their strategic push to diversify energy resources and meet the dual goals of energy security and sustainability. This aligns with China's broader energy strategy, which increasingly incorporates clean and efficient solutions alongside traditional fossil fuel investments."

During the recently concluded CIIIE this year, Sinopec signed a 15-year deal with TotalEnergies for 2 million metric tons of LNG annually for 15 years from 2028, which is expected to further advance the country's clean energy goals.

In China, natural gas is a key component of green energy transition as it mitigates the intermittency of rapidly growing renewable energies and helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions when it replaces coal in electricity production.

Low-altitude flights help to beat traffic woes

By ZHENG CAIXIONG
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A helicopter that took off from a downtown area in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, at about 12:10 pm on Oct 31 landed successfully at a helipad in Guangzhou's Haixinsha Park after about 30 minutes of flying.

The helicopter subsequently took off from Haixinsha at 4:35 pm and landed at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport after another 18 minutes.

The successful maiden flight marks the opening of the first low-altitude flight route from Baiyun Airport to Haixinsha Park in Guangdong's provincial capital and Shenzhen, a statement released by the Guangdong Airport Authority said recently.

The low-altitude route is jointly operated by Yitong Business Aviation Management Co Ltd and

Shenzhen-based Heli-Eastern, a low-altitude reform pilot unit recognized by the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the Shenzhen municipal government.

Cai Wuqun, an executive with the Strategic Development Department of Heli-Eastern, said low-altitude traffic mainly solves the problem of traffic congestion between cities and within the urban areas of a city.

"It takes only 18 minutes from Baiyun International Airport to Guangzhou's Zhujiang New Town, a central business district in the southern metropolis, which can meet the high efficiency travel demand of business representatives," said Cai.

As two core cities within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Guangzhou and Shenzhen not only have large economic volumes and strong industrial foundations, but also numerous private enterprises.



A helicopter flies along the recently launched low altitude flight route linking Shenzhen's downtown area and Guangzhou Haixinsha Park to Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, at the end of October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The two cities also share economic development links, strong demand for passenger and freight transportation, and frequent and close business exchanges, he said.

Currently, ground transportation from Shenzhen to Guangzhou Haixinsha takes more than 120 minutes, and from Haixinsha to Baiyun Airport, it is

more than 50 minutes.

With the newly launched helicopter service, it only takes 30 minutes by air to fly from Shenzhen to Haixinsha, and another two minutes for security checks.

And it takes only 18 minutes by air to fly from Haixinsha to Baiyun Airport, plus two minutes for a security check.

Holding Up Half the Sky

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BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

List of 'global' Chinese brands ever growing

Miniso founder:
'Without courage,
there's no success'

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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Chinese enterprises are transitioning from simple product exports to a broader model that includes supply chains, branding and cultural influence, according to enterprises and experts.

At the recent 2024 China Enterprise High Quality Overseas Forum in Beijing, experts and industry leaders shared insights into how Chinese companies can strategically expand globally, embracing high-quality development in increasingly complex overseas markets.

Long Yongtu, China's former chief negotiator for its entry into the World Trade Organization, highlighted the necessity of global expansion as part of China's economic evolution.

"When a country's economy reaches a certain level, and its enterprises mature, going global is a historical inevitability and a result of long-term and consistent reform and opening-up policies. For Chinese manufacturing, overseas expansion is not just an opportunity, but a vital stage in its growth," Long said.

Long said that forming strong local partnerships to reach mutual benefits and win-win scenarios is key to achieving stability.

He cited the example of the completion of the China-Laos Railway having helped make Laos a major exporter of durian.

"Now more than 95 percent of its durian sales are in China. Many investors invest in durian plantations in Laos to stimulate local economic development," said Long.

Bai Chong'en, dean of Tsinghua University's School of Economics and Management, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, spoke on the importance of considering the perspectives of host countries.

"When companies go global, they should not only think from their own perspective, but also from others' perspective. This inclusiveness can enhance long-term capabilities, as companies gain new markets, talents, and partners," Bai said.

Bai also called for a dual focus on learning and contributing. "As a multinational corporation, it's essential to learn from others, continuously enhance abilities and think about what Chinese enterprises can contribute globally. This exchange is mutually beneficial," he added.

As one of China's global pioneers, Lenovo's journey has become a model for other companies. Lenovo Group's Chairman and CEO Yang Yuanqing reflected on the company's 20-year global expansion, which began with its acquisition of IBM's PC business in 2004.

"This acquisition remains a significant milestone," he said.



Visitors check out the booth of Zhejiang Geely Holding Group at an auto expo in Frankfurt, Germany, in September. ZHANG FAN / XINHUA

Yang outlined Lenovo's "three pillars" for successful globalization — a robust supply chain, a global R&D system and a worldwide marketing network.

"These are essential capabilities that every Chinese company going global should develop," he said, adding that digital transformation and adherence to environmental, social and governance standards underpin these efforts.

Rooted in China, Lenovo's strategy has focused on expanding internationally while empowering operations domestically.

"Lenovo's production, research and development, and workforce remain largely in China. Through overseas market engagement, we can contribute vitality to China's economic growth," Yang said.

For companies aiming to succeed internationally, Yang offered three suggestions — focus on building globally recognized brands through localized product innovation, establish resilient supply chains close to target markets, and foster a positive corporate image through community collaboration.

"Going global is more than just expanding abroad. It's about becoming a respected part of local markets," he said.

Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, China's largest private carmaker, has demonstrated steady growth in overseas markets, achieving 40 percent in terms of the number of cars sold and more than 50 percent of



A crane loads cargo onto an express train in Zhengzhou, Henan province, in April. WU GANG / XINHUA

sales revenue recorded abroad last year.

Geely CEO Li Donghui cited the company's emphasis on innovation as a driver of global competitiveness. The company has set up 10 research centers globally.

"Technological innovation is core to going global," Li said, noting the importance of balancing global reach with localized approaches.

Geely focuses on regional coordination, ensuring that globalization and localization complement each other, contributing to local industry development.

"For sustainable development, companies must possess strong gov-

ernment intellectual properties worldwide.

"We collaborate with over 150 well-known IPs to design unique products," he added. "Our vision is to become the world's leading IP design retail group."

Miniso's success in Indonesia, where the company opened a 3,000-square-meter store in Jakarta, reflects the power of its model in young, vibrant markets, he said.

"Indonesia has a youthful population, and Miniso's growth there is strong," Ye said. "Young consumers want fun, engaging shopping experiences, which is exactly what we provide."

As Chinese companies expand their global footprint, they continue to face both opportunities and challenges. With robust strategies focused on technology, inclusiveness and community partnerships, these enterprises aim to establish themselves not just as global players, but as local contributors in every market they enter, he said.

"Without courage, there's no success," said Ye, and urged Chinese entrepreneurs to boldly step into international markets. "Chinese enterprises should confidently move forward and embrace the world, starting with Southeast Asia."

Wu Dan, CEO of Hero Games and the first investor and co-producer of China's first AAA game, *Black Myth: Wukong*, has seen the game become

a global sensation since its release in August. Inspired by the classic novel *Journey to the West*, it has captivated players worldwide with its rich storytelling and high-quality production.

Wu echoed Ye's sentiment that "going overseas requires courage," particularly in the gaming industry's R&D efforts on a global scale.

"Many people don't fully understand China's current standing in the gaming world," he noted. "For example, nearly 50 percent of our users are already international, with around 15 million players outside the Chinese market."

The company has successfully entered markets in Southeast Asia and South America, but Wu acknowledged that their operations in North America have been challenging.

"Our games haven't fully matched local tastes, and strong localization is essential to succeed in any market," he explained. "That's something we're still working to improve."

Wu pointed to the importance of localization in promoting *Black Myth: Wukong* globally.

"When we started marketing in the United States, we discovered that US players were searching for 'Sun Wukong' in *pinyin*, drawn by his heroic qualities," he said. "In Europe and Thailand, audiences are more interested in the historical aspect, while in Japan, players often search for 'Black Myth'."

Pop Mart aims for big revenue jump this year

By WANG ZHUOQIONG

Pop Mart, a trailblazer in the collectible toys industry, has announced a year-on-year revenue increase of 120-125 percent for the third quarter of 2024, with a surge of 55-60 percent from the Chinese mainland and a 440-445 percent growth in overseas markets.

Wang Ning, chairman and CEO of Pop Mart, has set ambitious targets for the company, aiming for a full-year revenue of 10 billion yuan (\$1.39 billion), with an expected annual growth rate of no less than 60 percent and growth abroad of no less than 200 percent.

This high-growth trajectory is evident in the company's 2023 revenue of 6.35 billion yuan and its 2024 first-half revenue of 4.56 billion yuan, a 62 percent increase from the previous year.

Its net profit, too, has seen a 90 percent year-on-year increase to 1.02 billion yuan.

The company's fast growth is in line with the country's emerging

trend in the toy market.

According to the Report on the Development of China's Trend Toy and Animation Industry (2024), released by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the China Animation Society, China's trend toys industry has seen a compound annual growth rate of 33 percent in recent years.

It is estimated that the market size of China's trend toy industry, or art toys, will continue to expand rapidly, with an annual growth rate of more than 20 percent, and reach 110.1 billion yuan in 2026.

The market value of China's trend toy industry in 2023 was about 60 billion yuan, accounting for about 20 percent of the global trend toy market.

As of June, the number of TopToy stores had reached 195, an increase of nearly 100 compared to two years ago. In terms of revenue, TopToy achieved about 429 million yuan in revenue in the first half, a year-on-year increase of 37.9 percent.

Pop Mart's global expansion, initi-

ated in 2018, has been instrumental in driving this growth.

South Korean Justin Moon, vice-president of Pop Mart, leads its overseas division. The company opened its first store in Seoul in 2020.

The company's overseas revenue exceeded 1 billion yuan for the first time in 2023 and soared to 1.35 billion yuan in the first half, a 260 percent increase year-on-year.

With a near-to-far strategy, Pop Mart has successfully entered markets with narrow cultural differences, such as Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia, before expanding to Europe and North America.

Southeast Asia has now become Pop Mart's largest overseas market, accounting for over 40 percent of its international business.

Wang's vision for Pop Mart's global presence is to "create another Pop Mart" overseas, with overseas business accounting for over 45 percent of the company's revenue in September.

This ambition is supported by plans to add 30 to 40 new stores in

the second half, particularly in high-growth potential markets like North America and Southeast Asia.

On the supply chain front, Pop Mart plans to increase the production and supply proportion of Vietnam's cooperative factories to nearly 10 percent and is thinking of opening warehouses in North America to support its business development.

Wang has openly expressed her ambition for Pop Mart to compete with Disney, a company known for its storytelling and IP network.

While Pop Mart's IPs may lack the rich backstories of Disney's characters, the company has found success in IP incubation and operation.

This new trend is evidenced by the popularity of Disney's Linabell character, which has been achieved through unique marketing strategies and fan engagement in the mobile internet era.

Pop Mart has diversified its IP portfolio, with seven IPs — including Molly, Skullpanda, The Mon-



Consumers browse a Pop Mart store in Bangkok, Thailand, in July. SUN WEITONG / XINHUA

sters, Hirono Ono, and Zsiga — each generating over 100 million yuan in revenue in the first half, breaking free from dependence on a single IP.

Despite its success, Pop Mart faces challenges, including the rapid aging of core IPs and the slow pace of new IP updates.

The company's reliance on third-

party manufacturers also poses a risk to product quality and supply chain stability.

To maintain its leading edge, Pop Mart will need to enhance its artist discovery and IP creation capabilities, increase its store count in tier-one and tier-two cities, and expand its overseas markets to reach more consumers.

WORLD

Europe races to prepare for Trump's comeback

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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The European Union is struggling to prepare for shock waves after Donald Trump won the United States presidential election on Tuesday in a historic comeback.

European leaders gathering in Budapest for the European Political Community meeting on Thursday and an informal EU summit on Friday spent much time discussing possible strategies to deal with the second Trump administration.

French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday that Trump was elected by US voters to defend their interests.

"The question we, as Europeans, must ask ourselves is, are we ready to defend the interests of Europeans?"

Many Europeans are disappointed by Trump's victory. An Infratest dimap poll for German public broadcaster ARD before the election showed that 74 percent of Germans supported Democratic candidate Kamala Harris whereas only 11 percent supported Trump.

Carl Bildt, co-chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations, described the mood in the EU as "gloom and despair" after Trump's win.

For European leaders, many of whom have dealt with Trump during his first term, a major concern is Trump's campaign promise to impose across-the-board tariffs on goods going into the US.

Significant concern

The Federation of German Industries said in a statement on Thursday that Trump's tariff threat is "a significant concern for German industry".

Trump pulled out of the landmark Paris Agreement during his first term and many EU leaders worry that Trump, who promoted domestic fossil fuels during his campaign, might do it again to deal another blow to the global climate fight.

The biggest concern for many EU leaders is Trump's threat to cut US financial aid and military assistance to Ukraine and not defend NATO members who fail to meet spending targets.

Compared to Trump's first term, the EU has become more vulnerable as indicated in a recent EU competitiveness report by former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi. In the two largest EU economies, Macron was weakened at home after his party suffered a loss in elections while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition collapsed.

Many believe Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni could play the role of EU interlocutors with Trump given their close relations.

Nicolai von Ondarza, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, said Europe has been preparing for the Trump II scenario in the past year.

"The problem is that they couldn't find convincing answers, so great is the dependency on the US," he wrote on X.

Some much-needed cheer



Students practice cheering for their senior schoolmates at Joongdong High School in Seoul, South Korea, on Monday, three days before the state-administered College Scholastic Ability Test. As part of the country's tradition, high schools hold ceremonies to cheer on students taking the exam. YONHAP

Japan's parliament reelects Ishiba as PM

Govt to face challenges in the absence of majority in lower house, experts say

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
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Shigeru Ishiba was reelected as Japan's 103rd prime minister on Monday in a House of Representatives runoff election, securing 221 votes. Experts said his administration will likely face increased challenges in passing its preferred bills, as this will require behind-the-scenes negotiations with the opposition.

Yoshihiko Noda, leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, or CDP, came in second with 160 votes. In the first round, Ishiba and Noda received 221 and 151 votes, respectively, with other candidates trailing behind. Since no candidate passed the majority threshold of 233 votes, the election advanced to a runoff.

The second Ishiba Cabinet was inaugurated on Monday evening. Ishiba replaced the minister of justice and the minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, both of whom lost their seats in the House of Representatives election. He also appointed Hiromasa Nakano, a member of the junior ruling coalition partner Komeito, as transport minister, to replace Tetsuo Saito, who vacated the Cabinet post to become the leader of the Komeito.

Ishiba's reelection as prime minister was largely because the opposition parties failed to unite behind Noda, said Kazuyuki Hamada, an international political economy scholar and Japan's former parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs.

Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, lost a considerable num-

ber of seats in the recent House of Representatives election, and even in the coalition with Komeito, it could not secure a majority.

If the opposition had united behind Noda of the CDP, he would likely have become prime minister, Hamada said.

The LDP remains Japan's largest party, maintaining a dominant coalition with Komeito. However, the opposition is divided: the CDP is positioned to the left of the LDP, while the Japan Innovation Party leans to the right, making cooperation between them unlikely, experts said.

"Given the numbers alone, Ishiba's selection was the natural outcome," said Ukeru Magosaki, director of the East Asian Community Institute.

"The LDP once held an outright majority, enabling it to pass almost any bill, but it no longer holds such power alongside Komeito. This change requires the LDP to negotiate each bill with the opposition, meaning they must incorporate some opposition demands, which makes it harder to pass their preferred legislation," Magosaki said.

Seeking cooperation

Ishiba held successive meetings on Monday with Noda and Yuichiro Tamaki, leader of the Democratic Party for the People, or DPP, seeking their cooperation in managing the Diet, Japan's national legislature. Noda called for revising the Political Funds Control Act, in line with the CDP's stance, while Tamaki advocated for economic policies aimed at increasing income.

However, a recent scandal could

complicate the LDP-Komeito coalition's discussions with the DPP.

DPP leader Tamaki admitted on Monday to an extramarital affair with a tourism ambassador of Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture. Following a tabloid magazine report, Tamaki apologized at a news conference, acknowledging the story's accuracy while also expressing his intention to continue as party leader to pursue his policy goals.

"Ishiba's administration will face increasingly challenging management going forward. ... Although there are discussions about possible collaboration with the DPP on a policy-by-policy basis, Tamaki's recent scandal may leave the party without stable leadership," said Hamada.

Additionally, on the issue of political funding, criticism is emerging from opposition parties and Komeito. Unless the flow of political funds is clarified and suspicions about "secret funds" are addressed, Ishiba's administration could face a crisis. Failure to address these issues could prompt a change in prime minister before the House of Councillors election next year, Hamada warned.

He further noted that the House of Councillors election is expected to bring even stronger challenges for the LDP and Komeito than the recent House of Representatives election. Voters are focused on inflation measures, job stability, and tax reforms to boost take-home pay. If these issues remain unaddressed, both the Ishiba administration and the LDP risk losing their relevance with voters.

"For Ishiba to survive politically, he has no choice but to address public concerns head-on and present concrete economic policies," Hamada said.

TIES THAT BIND

New Gwadar airport a symbol of friendship

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
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Pakistan's New Gwadar International Airport, a flagship venture under the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, or CPEC, will transform connectivity and open a new chapter of development for the South Asian nation, observers said.

A symbol of solid friendship between China and Pakistan and their commitment to building a better future together, the newly built airport, located in the port city of Gwadar in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, has recently been handed over to Pakistani authorities to commence operations, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The China-aided airport was inaugurated virtually by Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Oct 14, during Li's trip to Pakistan.

It has been welcomed by experts and people from all walks of life in Pakistan.

"The airport is more than just a project, it is a gift from China to Pakistan, reflecting the deep bond between the two countries," said Moiz Farooq, the executive editor of Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group.

"It is a cornerstone of the CPEC, a flagship initiative that exemplifies the strategic partnership between Beijing and Islamabad. This substantial investment is a clear indicator of China's commitment to enhancing Pakistan's infrastructure, ultimately fostering economic growth and stability," he said.

As the airport prepares to open its doors, it promises to transform Gwadar into a major hub of

regional connectivity and economic growth, unlocking new opportunities for development.

Khalid Taimur Akram, executive director of Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future, in Islamabad, noted that China's investments in projects such as the New Gwadar International Airport, are mutually beneficial for Pakistan and China, contributing significantly to Pakistan's infrastructure, energy and overall economic growth.

"As CPEC projects continue to flourish, they create jobs, stimulate local businesses, and pave the way for technological and industrial collaboration between Pakistani and Chinese firms," Akram said.

The construction of the airport, starting in October 2019, was one of the flagship projects of the CPEC. Upon completion, it has become a modern landmark in Gwadar, which will lay a better foundation for the future development of the port city.

According to China Railway Beijing Engineering Bureau, which was involved in the project, the airport can accommodate the largest civilian aircraft, including the Boeing 747-8. The runway spans 3,658 meters in length and 45 meters in width, making it one of the few 4F-grade airports in Pakistan equipped to handle the largest jets.

"This is a huge airport in Pakistan, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and an architectural marvel," Airport Manager Khalid Kakar, a native of Quetta, told Xinhua.

Citing the limited operational capacity of the old airport, the manager said this newly constructed one will encourage airlines with modern fleets to begin services to and from Gwadar.



Airport Manager Khalid Kakar (right) talks with Ding Kan, head of the project management team, at the New Gwadar International Airport in Gwadar, Pakistan, on Sept 13. AHMAD KAMAL VIA XINHUA

ASEAN fears tariff hike in wake of US election

By PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong
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The election of Donald Trump as the 47th US president has raised concerns in export-oriented Southeast Asia, given the regional economies must contend with Trump's campaign promise to raise tariffs on imported goods, analysts said.

But analysts are hoping Trump will use his second tenure as president to engage more with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. There are also expectations that ASEAN will continue to use diplomatic hedging as it navigates new geopolitical challenges arising from Trump's return to the White House.

Oh Ei Sun, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, said the planned tariff hike is "undoubtedly bad news" as ASEAN's exports to the US "will encounter strong headwinds".

"Larger manufacturers in these countries would probably have to contemplate setting up factories in the US to satisfy Trump's demand to 'make America great again,'" Oh said, referencing Trump's slogan.

Maybank said in a research note that more protectionist US policies could dampen ASEAN exports, reduce investment inflows to the region, and produce a "major deflationary shock".

The Kuala Lumpur-based lender said the blanket tariffs will increase the incentive for US companies to "onshore" their manu-

facturing and could therefore dampen foreign direct investment to ASEAN.

Abdul Majid Ahmad Khan, president of the Malaysia-China Friendship Association and former Malaysian ambassador to China, said most ASEAN countries are "highly exposed" to international trade. As such, Trump's proposal for tariffs of 10 percent on all imports "could impact (ASEAN's) economic growth" and affect currency valuations in the region, he said.

Muhammad Habib Abiyon Dzakwan, a researcher at the Department of International Relations at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia, is concerned that Trump skipped the annual ASEAN Summit where leaders discuss critical global issues.

"We need the United States' participation in these dialogues," Muhammad Habib said.

Lucio Blanco Pitlo III, a research fellow at the Manila-based Asia-Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation, sees a "possible volatility" in US foreign relations under a second Trump administration. He said such concerns might push ASEAN countries "to do more hedging" and keep their options open as much as possible.

Pitlo said any move that will promote decoupling "will disrupt supply chains and affect ambitions of regional countries to upgrade their industries".

Leonardus Jegho in Jakarta contributed to this story.

Railway milestone reached in Sino-Algerian project

By LUO WANGSHU
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A new railway sleeper plant built by China Railway Construction Corporation, or CRCC, began operations in the Tindouf Province of western Algeria on Sunday, marking a significant milestone in the launch of a major railway infrastructure project.

It also represents the first time that Chinese-designed railway sleeper solutions have been used in a local heavy-duty railway project.

Mustapha Dahou, governor of Tindouf Province expressed his gratitude for the joint efforts of CRCC and local partners, noting the substantial resources invested and the satisfying progress achieved on the project.

Xu Huaxiang, general manager for CRCC International Group, emphasized the significance of CRCC's involvement in the construction of

the Western Algeria Mining Line, highlighting its role in contributing to the region's economic and social development. He pledged to ensure the project's timely and high-quality completion, aiming to make it a model of mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Algeria.

The Western Algeria Mining Line is a key project under the Belt and Road Initiative, and it represents the largest project undertaken by Chinese companies in Algeria in recent years. The 575-kilometer railway, which links the Bechar and Tindouf provinces and serves the Gara Djebilet iron ore mine, is being jointly developed by CRCC and COSIDER TP, a local Algerian state-owned enterprise. Once completed, the railway will significantly enhance Algeria's national rail network, improving connectivity between mining areas, industrial zones and ports, as well as supporting the economic develop-



A ceremony marking the launch of the new railway sleeper plant built by China Railway Construction Corporation in the Tindouf Province, Algeria, is held on Sunday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ment of southwestern Algeria.

According to Dong Lin, general manager of CRCC's North Africa regional office, the new sleeper plant is the first standardized concrete railway sleeper factory in the Sahara Desert region. Covering an area of 91,000 square meters, the plant is tasked with producing 1.2 million railway sleepers for the project.

Local employees are also benefiting from the project.

"In less than two months, under the careful guidance of Chinese engineers, I've gone from being a newcomer to a skilled worker capable of answering various technical questions raised by the project supervisors," said Boudierl Nouridine, an Algerian test engineer at the plant.

Currently, the plant employs 152 local workers, and regular training is provided on skills, safety and technical knowledge.

COMMENT

Editorials

APEC leaders should join hands to ensure another 'golden 30 years' for the region

The 31st APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting to be held in Lima on Saturday is undoubtedly the most important event of the ongoing APEC Economic Leaders' Week, which is being held in the Peruvian capital this week under the theme of "Empower, Include, Grow".

The meeting sets the stage for bilateral and multilateral discussions among the participating leaders to further liberalize trade among the regional economies. Such face-to-face meetings between major leaders can effectively help deepen mutual understanding, prompt consensus and manage differences.

So the expectations are high that such meetings will also feature at Saturday's gathering in Lima to help build consensus on the implementation of relevant pro-trade documents and newly adopted trade initiatives, among other things.

In the face of the world's largest economy's politicization of economic issues and attempts to restructure the global industry and supply chains to its liking, it remains a question whether the APEC mechanism can usher in another "golden 30 years" for the region.

Nonetheless, Saturday's meeting, which is intended to help "create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration", offers an opportunity for the participating leaders to try and temporarily put aside any differences they may have and focus on the economic and trade issues of common concern from the regional rather than a national perspective.

Thirty years ago, after the end of the Cold War, leaders in the Asia-Pacific region unanimously agreed to transcend the old thinking of group confrontation and to work together to deepen regional economic cooperation and integration, and commit to building a dynamic, harmonious and prosperous Asia-Pacific family.

That propelled the development of the Asia-Pacific and put economic globalization onto the fast track, helping the region become the world's economic growth center, the anchor for global stability, and the highland of cooperation. The Asia-Pacific now accounts for one-third of the world's population, more than 60 percent of the world's economy, and nearly half of the total global trade.

Whether or not the Asia-Pacific can enjoy another "golden 30 years" depends on whether the APEC members uphold the original aspirations of the mechanism, and push for a new start in Asia-Pacific cooperation. Those participating in Saturday's meeting should bear in mind that openness and inclusiveness should be the main principles underlying regional cooperation, and promoting common development should be the overall goal.

They should thus seek to advance the process for the establishment of an Asia-Pacific free trade area, promote economic linkages and integration among the regional economies without any exclusion, and strengthen the connection between relevant regional economic and trade agreements and development strategies.

In particular, with a new technological revolution taking place, they should work together to improve global science and technology governance, strengthen support for technological innovation to promote the green transformation and sustainable development, and create an open, fair, just and nondiscriminatory environment for the development of science and technology.

China remains a staunch advocate and practitioner of Asia-Pacific cooperation. It hopes the regional economies will demonstrate the wisdom to maintain free and open trade and investment, and support and strengthen the inclusive regional trading system, rather than denying the achievements of the past 30 years by adopting a beggar-thy-neighbor approach to economic and development issues.

China is willing to work with all parties to comprehensively implement the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 and push for positive outcomes from this meeting, which it hopes will inject new impetus into regional economic integration and promote shared, balanced and sustainable growth. Beijing calls for parties in the Asia-Pacific to join hands and work together to build an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future.

TSMC a tool in tech crackdown on China

The United States has been ramping up its economic bullying targeting the Chinese mainland. Its latest move is to demand Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company halt shipments of advanced chips to customers on the mainland starting on Monday.

The US Department of Commerce reportedly sent a letter to TSMC imposing export restrictions on certain sophisticated chips, of 7-nanometer or more advanced designs, that power artificial intelligence accelerator and graphics processing units. As a result, TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, said it will stop sending the products to the mainland and it will review orders from customers there to make sure they comply with US restrictions.

Washington has tried for years to keep advanced chips from mainland companies on the false grounds that they could pose threats to US national security. It has previously prohibited US companies such as Nvidia from selling advanced AI chips to the mainland, and asked Japanese and Dutch companies to stop selling to the mainland the specialized machines used to manufacture the chips.

That TSMC has this time responded to the US' sales ban request in the shortest time possible reflects how desperately the company seeks to prove to Washington that it is a reliable and cooperative partner of the US at a time when Donald Trump is preparing to enter office as the US president for the second time. Trump a few months ago accused Taiwan of "stealing" the US' chip industry, and said that upon his return to office he would impose tariffs on Taiwan chips. A person close to TSMC said its latest move was "definitely designed to underscore that we are the good guys and not acting against US interests".

TSMC has in fact always been ready to do Washington's bidding, even at the expense of its own interest. The company's revenue from mainland companies has been nearly cut in half since the US started to crack down on chip exports to the mainland. In 2019, 20 percent of TSMC's revenue came from the mainland. Last year, it was down to 12 percent.

Yet despite the company's pledge of allegiance, the US regards TSMC as a dispensable tool in its geopolitical game against Beijing, one that can be sacrificed at any moment to serve the US' own interest. A 2021 paper published in The US Army War College Quarterly suggested adopting "a targeted scorched-earth strategy" as the best way to deter the Chinese mainland's reunification effort, by "threatening to destroy facilities belonging to the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company". Former US national security advisor Robert O'Brien also advocated for destroying TSMC's fabrication facilities in any future war across the Taiwan Strait. All this should make the producer of most of the world's cutting-edge computer chips realize that even if it toes the US line, it is expendable if Washington deems it necessary to realize its objective of putting the brake on the mainland's development.

The tightened US technology restrictions targeting the Chinese mainland come as the Joe Biden administration is reportedly drafting new rules on foreign exports of chipmaking equipment and planning to add about 120 Chinese companies to the Commerce Department's restricted entity list. Such moves will not only cause further disruptions to the global semiconductor industry and supply chains, but also risk derailing the efforts the two sides have been making to promote and strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the AI sector, as agreed to by the two countries' top leadership.

That telecommunications giant Huawei has basically survived repeated US crackdowns with the development of replacements for Western technology serves to highlight the futility of the US moves. The stepped-up US restrictions on advanced chips will not cripple China's progress in AI technology, but rather they will only serve as an impetus for the country to double down on its self-reliance drive for science and technology.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Charm of superlarge market continues to enthuse partners

The seventh China International Import Expo, which concluded on Sunday and raked in an intended transaction value exceeding \$80 billion on a one-year basis, up 2 percent over that of the previous expo, has demonstrated not only foreign businesses' confidence in the Chinese economy but also the country's resolve to advance its opening-up.

The expo brought in 3,496 enterprises from 129 countries and regions, including 297 of the world's top 500 companies or industry leaders. At the expo, China provided more than 120 free booths for enterprises from 37 least-developed countries. As a result, it was not only the first time that Benin, Madagascar and other African countries participated in the expo, but also the first time Tanzanian honey and other African products made a debut.

Multinational companies brought with them 450 new products, new technologies and new services, demonstrat-

ing that the CIIE continues to bring innovation and new productive forces. At this year's expo, US companies continued to rank first in terms of exhibition area. Following the first delegation it sent to participate in last year's expo, the US Department of Agriculture brought more US companies this year, reflecting that despite the attempts of some to decouple the US economy from that of China, the China-bashing politicians in the United States cannot prevent US companies from coming to China.

Behind this year's CIIE are China's long-term efforts to promote high-standard opening-up that show not only its openness and inclusiveness, but also its commitment to sharing opportunities with the world. Beijing's reiteration that it will further open up the country's superlarge market, including implementing unilateral opening-up measures and granting 100 percent zero tariffs to the least-developed coun-

tries, means China matches its words with deeds.

China's determination to adhere to high-level opening-up has never changed, as evidenced by the ever-expanding visa-free policy to the implementation of the negative list for foreign investment access, from revising and promulgating measures for the management of strategic investment by foreign investors in listed companies to establishing a negative list management model for the cross-border trade in services.

China has continuously launched positive measures to boost consumer confidence and unleash the potential of domestic demand, which will boost the domestic economy and offer greater opportunities for other countries. The charm of the Chinese market displayed through CIIE has made its opening-up actions and determination recognized by the world.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

PLA Air Force loyal protector of peace and security

Monday marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army Air Force.

Over the past 75 years, the PLA Air Force has grown to become an important force protecting the country's security. Apart from that, during the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, 15 paratroopers jumped from an altitude of 4,999 meters without guidance, markers, or weather data, landing directly at the center of the earthquake zone, paving the way for rescue efforts.

In 2011, the PLA Air Force dispatched transport aircraft for the first time overseas to evacuate Chinese nationals from Libya. In 2015, the PLA Air Force conducted its first flight over the Miyako Strait to carry out long-range training in the Western Pacific. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the

Y-20, China's first heavy military transport aircraft, performed its first major transport mission, promptly delivering medical personnel and supplies to where they were most needed.

According to a spokesperson for the PLA Air Force, at the ongoing 15th Airshow China in Zhuhai, South China's Guangdong province, a medium stealth multi-role fighter J-35A is scheduled to be on display for the first time, making China one of the few countries that are capable of independently developing and equipping two or more types of stealth fighters.

In future operations, both the J-20 and J-35A will combine their capabilities for multi-role combat, indicating an increasing number and wider deployment of stealth aircraft as major equipment of the PLA Air Force.

Additionally, the nighttime large-scale parachute drops by the Y-20 demonstrate that air mobility forces can effectively support the campaign-scale airborne operations of Chinese paratroopers, while the YJ-21 ballistic missile signifies that the PLA Air Force possesses advanced strike capabilities with long range, high-speed, precision and strong penetration.

A country's air force is a mobile fortress defending its territory. In times of peace, it plays a crucial role in both safeguarding the nation and addressing emergencies.

Currently, with the international situation still unstable and regional conflicts occurring from time to time, the PLA Air Force will defend every inch of the motherland's airspace.

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

Dynamic measure to address local debt risks

Chinese lawmakers have approved a State Council bill on raising the ceiling on local government debt by 6 trillion yuan (\$840 billion) to be used to replace existing hidden debts. Under the new arrangement, the debt ceiling for special local government debt will be increased to 35.52 trillion yuan from 29.52 trillion yuan by the end of 2024.

Also starting from 2024, China will set aside 800 billion yuan from each year's newly issued local government special-purpose bonds for five consecutive years, thereby providing debt relief to replace 4 trillion yuan of hidden debts, according to the Ministry of Finance.

The new measures will add a combined 10 trillion yuan to China's debt relief resources. Meanwhile, the 2 trillion yuan of

hidden debts resulting from housing improvement projects in run-down areas due by 2029 and beyond will be paid in accordance with the original contracts. As a result, the amount of hidden debts that China's local governments need to deal with by 2028 is expected to drop from 14.3 trillion yuan to 2.3 trillion yuan.

This move can help effectively manage the risks arising from local government debt. Raising the ceiling of local government debt can help them shift from emergency risk disposal to active risk resolution, and from the "dual track" management of hidden debts and statutory debts to standardized and transparent management of all debts.

Through debt replacement, since the statutory debt interest rate is much lower than the implicit debt interest rate, the local governments can save

about 600 billion yuan in interest expenses in the five years after the replacement. This will help free up policy space to support investment and consumption.

The central government still has a large space for debt and deficit increase. For instance, the central government can also further increase the deficit space, issue more ultra-long-term special treasury bonds, increase the scale of transfer payments, and strengthen investment guarantees in key areas.

The policymakers will need to take into account many international and domestic factors. The country's incremental policy should therefore be regarded as a dynamic adjustment process to provide powerful policy support to help the nation achieve relevant economic development goals.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

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COMMENT

Wu Fulin

China Eximbank backs BRI cooperation

Belt and Road cooperation has progressed from "sketching the outline" to "filling in the details", delivering tangible and fruitful outcomes in the 11 years since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative.

To promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, the Export-Import Bank of China, as a financial institution dedicated to supporting China's foreign trade and investment, and international economic cooperation, has taken all necessary measures.

The bank has financed more than 4,000 kilometers of railways, 23,000 km of roads, 40 airports, and 30 ports in Belt and Road partner countries.

The China Eximbank has synergized with development plans of Belt and Road partner countries, so as to provide them with financial support according to their actual needs and resource endowments. It has rolled out reasonable financing plans to cater to both long-term interests and short-term benefits of the host countries. In this way, the bank has provided essential development funding, while avoiding increasing the debt burden of recipient countries, to facilitate sustainable growth.

The bank ensures that its funds are used where they are needed most. Backed by country-specific plans, it has supported key areas related to national development and people's livelihoods, and managed to channel more financing toward sectors of productivity, including transportation, electricity and manufacturing, so as to help partner countries clear the development bottlenecks and build up growth momentum.

The China-Laos Railway, funded by China Eximbank, has helped Laos to open up to the outside world. With the bank's support, Laos' dream of becoming a land-linked country has

In so doing, we will provide a platform for in-depth exchanges on regional cooperation and global economic integration with the aim of forging consensus, and sharing opportunities.

come true. More than 40 million passenger trips have been made in the railway since operations started in December 2021. The railway has also facilitated import and export of more than 10 million tons of goods. In 2023, the trade volume between China and Laos reached \$7.1 billion, up by more than 60 percent from 2021, showing the huge transportation potential unleashed by the railway.

We (at China Eximbank) remain committed to the principle of planning together, building together and benefiting together, and have deepened exchanges with financial peers at home and abroad. While looking up to advanced international standards and being drawn to useful experiences, we have forged synergy with Belt and Road partner countries in terms of concepts, policies, rules and standards. In particular, in our pursuit of green and sustainable growth, we have strictly followed green credit standards and helped enterprises develop, build and operate projects in line with international ecological and environmental protection principles and the regulations of host countries.

For instance, to reduce the environmental impact of the China Eximbank-supported Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, we worked

closely with the contractor and environmental experts to come up with a series of targeted measures. After research on the habitats and migration paths of wild animals, a total of 14 large wildlife crossings or corridors and 79 bridges were built, including corridors as high as 6.5 meters below the tracks for large animals such as elephants and giraffes.

According to a United Nations report, the global development funding gap is now estimated to be \$4.2 trillion a year, and only a massive increase in financing will make it possible for developing countries to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. Scaling up financing requires cooperation among all parties. Hence, developed countries should honor their commitment of allocating 0.7 percent of their gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance, with international organizations, development-oriented and policy-backed financial institutions playing a leading and exemplary role. And more commercial funds and social capital should be mobilized to bridge the financing gap.

Over the years, China Eximbank has channeled more inclusive and accessible funds to promote Belt and Road cooperation through various means including syndication, on-lending, a combination of equity investment and loans, and third-party market cooperation. Take the large-scale FLNG (floating liquefied natural gas) project in Mozambique as an example. While the project has been jointly developed and operated by enterprises from China, Italy, the United States and Mozambique, China Eximbank and financial institutions from the Republic of Korea, Italy, France and other countries formed a syndicate to finance it. With such support, Mozambique has suc-

cessfully transformed itself into an LNG exporter, with additional annual fiscal revenue estimated to be more than \$400 million.

China Eximbank will host the 29th Asian Exim Banks Forum annual meeting in Shanghai from Tuesday to Thursday which will be attended by export credit agencies from Japan, the ROK, Thailand, Indonesia and other countries, as well as multilateral financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank. In so doing, we will provide a platform for in-depth exchanges on regional cooperation and global economic integration with the aim of forging consensus, and sharing opportunities.

Other than being funding sources, financial institutions can also act as intermediaries to share knowledge. In implementing projects, we should provide more knowledge support, apart from financial support, for host countries. By transferring advanced technologies and sharing know-how, we can help developing countries strengthen their production capacity and strengthen themselves from within.

In recent years, China Eximbank has held five senior executive training programs for its major partners apart from organizing other thematic training programs. In this way, we are sharing with our partners development concepts and experiences, allowing them to not only get the whole picture of China's reform and opening-up, but also provide them with useful references to explore their own mode of development.

The author is chairman of the Export-Import Bank of China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Song Qingrun

Asia-Pacific needs free trade and multilateralism

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and its member economies have long championed an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future. Accordingly, the ongoing APEC Leaders Meeting, themed "Empower, Include, Grow", in Lima, Peru, is expected to emphasize the importance of economic growth and social development for empowering disadvantaged groups and enabling people to seize the opportunities created by the digital technologies.

Given the participation of many world leaders, CEOs from global companies and international media representatives, the high-stakes meeting in Lima underscores the global importance of APEC's mission and the Asia-Pacific region's role in shaping a cooperative, integrated future.

The Asia-Pacific accounts for more than 60 percent of global GDP and nearly half of global trade, making it a dynamic economic powerhouse — often seen as the "engine" driving global growth. The region is also home to a wealth of regional cooperation organizations, fostering robust collaboration. The thriving network of cooperation and partnerships in the region has not only helped sustain the region's economic vitality but also created what many view as the "Asia-Pacific growth miracle".

APEC is the region's most influential and comprehensive economic cooperation mechanism, championing transparency and fairness in global trade, removing the barriers to regional trade and investment and expediting the economic integration of the region over the past more than 30 years. By facilitating economic and technological cooperation, APEC has fostered a sustainable business environment, promoted economic growth and built a vibrant, cohesive Asia-Pacific community, thereby improving the well-being of millions of people.

China's application to join the CPTPP and its efforts to push for the FTAAP demonstrate its commitment to advancing economic unity in the region.

Since the first informal APEC leaders' meeting in 1993, average tariffs in the region have declined from 17 percent to 5 percent, per capita income has more than quadrupled and 1 billion people have emerged out of poverty. These are significant contributions to global sustainable development.

APEC has now embarked on a new journey toward creating an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040. In this regard, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement is a milestone. Signed by 15 countries — the 10 ASEAN member states plus China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand — the RCEP took effect on Jan 1, 2022, and is aimed at expediting the Asia-Pacific's economic integration.

Accounting for nearly 30 percent of global GDP, goods trade and population, the RCEP's goal is to create a more unified market, boosting the region's GDP by an estimated \$10.9 trillion from 2023 to 2029, about 1.4 and 2.6 times the growth rates of the United States and the European Union, according to the International Monetary Fund.

On the other hand, the Asian Development Bank estimates that, if fully implemented by 2030, the RCEP will generate \$245 billion in income and create 2.8 million jobs for people in the member states. Such has been the impact of the open and inclusive policies of the RCEP that countries like Chile and Bangladesh have sought to join it.

Moreover, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, established in 2010, has strengthened relations between China and the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Thanks to the free trade area, China has remained ASEAN's top trading partner for 15 consecutive years, while ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner for four years. In 2022 and 2023, their trade volume neared \$1 trillion a year, consolidating their positions as each other's largest trade partners.

In October, China and ASEAN announced the completion of negotiations on CAFTA 3.0, an upgraded framework covering digital and green economies, supply chain connectivity, customs procedures, trade facilitation, and technological cooperation, saying the two sides had agreed to sign the agreement by 2025. The upgrading of CAFTA into an up-to-date, inclusive and comprehensive framework that will foster deeper regional integration and boost growth across the market of more than 2 billion people is set to create substantial economies of scale and spillover effects, further facilitating the Asia-Pacific's economic integration.

Apart from APEC and CAFTA, a variety of other cooperation mechanisms are driving economic development in the Asia-Pacific. They include ASEAN+3, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement. A comprehensive Asia-Pacific free trade area could unify these diverse mechanisms, helping develop a shared vision for an open, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific by 2040. But to make this vision a reality, countries in the region have to repair economic and political fragmentation, remove trade barriers and streamline cooperation.

To build a "Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific" and develop the region into an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful community by 2040, all countries and regional organizations must reach a consensus on collaboration. This means advancing open and inclusive economic cooperation, refraining from politicizing regional trade, and overcoming the "spaghetti bowl effect" of overlapping agreements, and strengthening and integrating various cooperation frameworks to pave the way for deeper economic integration across the Asia-Pacific.

China has been an active player in Asia-Pacific cooperation, working closely with Northeast Asian, ASEAN, Pacific island countries, and other APEC economies to build mutual trust and deepen collaboration. China's application to join the CPTPP and its efforts to push for the FTAAP demonstrate its commitment to advancing economic unity in the region.

Given that growing geopolitical tensions and rising anti-globalization sentiments are threatening cooperation, countries in the Asia-Pacific should boost their economies so the region continues to drive global growth. By accelerating economic integration, APEC and regional agreements such as the RCEP and CAFTA can provide the stability and cooperation needed to overcome global uncertainties, contributing to a more prosperous and sustainable future.

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Sun Yanhong

Mattarella visit to boost Beijing-Rome ties

Italian President Sergio Mattarella's state visit to China less than four months after Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni visited the country underscores the importance both countries attach to bilateral relations.

While during Meloni's visit, the two countries signed a 2024-27 action plan for strengthening their comprehensive strategic partnership and fostering pragmatic cooperation across various fields, Mattarella's six-day visit, which concludes on Tuesday, focused on reinforcing the traditional friendship and political trust between the two countries, apart from expanding cultural exchanges.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Italy, as well as the 700th anniversary of the death of Marco Polo, a pioneer of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Despite the massive geographical distance between them, China and Italy share a long history of friendly exchanges, with Marco Polo's visit to China fueling the West's interest in China and prompting a wave of Western missionaries to travel to the country. Among those missionaries was 16th-century Italian missionary Matteo Ricci, who introduced Western learning to China. The interactions between Chinese and European scholars and statesmen since then have fostered mutual respect, mutual trust and mutual understanding between China and European countries.

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1970, China and Italy have been promoting cooperation, and maintaining a stable relationship based on mutual respect and equality. The smooth development of bilateral relations prompted the two sides to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2004.

That China and Italy respect each

other's core interests and major concerns is evidenced in their deepening political trust, efficient economic cooperation and vibrant cultural exchanges. In fact, Sino-Italian relations have become a model of comprehensive cooperation between countries that have different social systems and cultures, and are at different stages of development.

China and Italy have supported each other in times of difficulty. In the 1980s, Italy was one of the European countries that provided the most development aid to China. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the two countries exchanged messages, with the governments and peoples of the two countries providing substantial support for each other.

At their meeting on Friday, President Xi Jinping said Mattarella is a good friend of the Chinese people, and such meetings and interactions deepen the two countries' friendship and mutual trust.

During his six-day visit, Mattarella attended numerous cultural exchange programs. This included visiting the Summer Palace, visiting an exhibition related to Marco Polo, and attending a concert featuring Chinese and Italian artists performing the works of the Italian composer Puccini.

These are important because cultural and people-to-people exchanges not only deepen the traditional friendship between countries and their peoples but also lay a solid

foundation for deepening cooperation.

When meeting with representatives of the China-Italy cultural cooperation organization and attending the discussions of university presidents, Mattarella said the story of Marco Polo's stay in China and his exchanges with Emperor Kublai Khan and Chinese scholars laid the foundation of mutual learning between Eastern and Western civilizations. Hence, China and Italy should carry forward their traditional friendship, and build more bridges for people-to-people exchanges so as to support the development of a comprehensive strategic partnership between Italy and China.

Mattarella's visit to China sends a positive message to Europe, in fact, the West as a whole, about Italy's commitment to strengthening dialogue and fostering stable, friendly relations with China. In his talks with President Xi, Mattarella emphasized that Italy sees eye to eye with China on major global issues, is opposed to protectionism and advocates for open and constructive communication to deal with common challenges.

As major representatives of Eastern and Western civilizations, China and Italy bear the responsibility to promote mutual understanding and mutual learning between civilizations, maintaining global peace and stability, and using strategic foresight to address global challenges including climate change.

It is to be hoped that Mattarella's visit will open a new chapter in China-Italy cooperation and set a positive example for China-Europe relations.

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL VIEWS

PANG XIAO AND ZHANG HUIYONG

Urgency to think beyond 1.5 C

Climate overshoot is a challenging problem, but China, with its unique strengths, has the potential to play a leading role in shaping a sustainable future for all

On the eve of the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), the world is focusing on the next steps for addressing climate change.

While the debate is getting more intense, there seems to be unanimity on just one emerging issue — the global community must think about climate overshoot beyond 1.5 C with greater urgency.



Pang Xiao



Zhang Huiyong

Last year was the hottest year in the 174-year observational record according to the World Meteorological Organization, and the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 C seems increasingly elusive. Many climate experts and even politicians have urged to pay more attention to climate overshoot — a scenario in which temperatures exceed the threshold of 1.5 C but eventually return below this level.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that climate overshoot could have irreversible consequences for humanity and ecosystems. The temporary spike in temperatures could lead to more frequent extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity and disruptions to food and water security. However, the potential for temperatures to eventually fall back to safer levels offers a glimmer of hope. The ques-

tion is — how soon can we achieve it?

After the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development conducted a series of discussions on the issue this year, one key take-away is that more studies are urgently needed for understanding the impact of climate overshoot under different scenarios, so that we can be better prepared for all possibilities. Addressing climate overshoot requires a systematic and comprehensive approach, with at least four areas to be highlighted.

The first is stepping up emissions reductions. This remains the cornerstone of climate actions. We must accelerate the transition to renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, and phase out fossil fuels. Focusing on methane reduction is also very crucial, as it is a potent greenhouse gas with a significant warming impact. The pace and scale of these actions cannot be emphasized more.

Second, enhancing climate adaptation. We need to build resilience to the impacts of climate change, particularly in vulnerable regions and sectors. This involves investing in infrastructure, developing adaptive agricultural practices, and strengthening disaster preparedness. More importantly, developing countries and less-developed regions are vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and urgent actions on adaptation are key to their fundamental survival, and to achieve a just transition.

Third, exploring carbon removal technologies such as afforestation, direct air carbon capture and storage, ocean alkalization, etc. These technologies can play a key role in

offsetting emissions, especially for those hard-to-abate sectors such as heavy industry and aviation, and helping bring down temperatures. However, many of the technologies are either still in the early stages of development or yet to be invented, and require further research and investment. It is also worth mentioning that concerns have been raised that focusing too much on carbon removal may distract the resources from carbon emissions, sending a wrong signal to the fossil fuel industry, and slow down the emissions reduction efforts.

The last key area is innovative measures. For example, solar radiation management is a popular topic. It involves artificially manipulating the Earth's climate system to reflect sunlight back into space, potentially cooling the planet. While it holds promise, solar radiation management also raises ethical and governance concerns. For example, one measure is to inject chemicals into the atmosphere to add solar reflection, but this might have impacts on the planet's ecosystems — and the exact outcome remains unknown. International cooperation and careful consideration are essential to ensure its responsible and equitable use.

Now the question is: How can we address it?

China, as a major player in global climate governance, has a crucial role to play in addressing climate overshoot. China can leverage its strengths in technology and manufacturing to develop and deploy climate solutions. This includes investing in carbon removal technologies, while consistently advanc-



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

ing renewable energy and promoting energy efficiency.

Fostering international collaboration is also something China can actively push forward. As a leader in global climate actions, China has already provided support to other developing countries in their climate efforts through South-South cooperation. In the future, China can expand its contribution to the development of global governance frameworks for emerging technolo-

gies such as solar radiation management, ensuring its transparency and accountability, and advocating for developing countries' interests.

Overall, climate overshoot is a challenging but manageable problem. By taking a proactive and collaborative approach, we can mitigate the risks and seize the opportunities it presents. China, with its unique strengths and global influence, has the potential to play a leading role in shaping a sus-

tainable future for all.

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YU HONGYUAN AND ZHANG YASEN

Reshaping the energy security governance system

Following the crisis in Ukraine, there is not only a 'supply chain iron curtain' against Russia, but also demand for energy autonomy in the West

Modern life is based on oil, and global energy security is crucial for economic growth as well as people's livelihood in all countries. As climate change intensifies and geopolitical considerations assume greater importance, there is a marked trend toward the



Yu Hongyuan



Zhang Yasen

re-geopoliticization of energy security. Major powers and resource-producing nations are leveraging these shifts in geopolitics and energy transitions to secure advantageous positions and assert their interests within the global energy security framework. Currently, the international energy security governance system exhibits significant imbalances. The traditional focus of geopolitics has been on the physical spaces occupied by fossil energy sources such as coal, oil and natural gas, typically characterized by political contests between resource-rich producing nations and energy importing countries. This reflects the political dynamics of energy security. With industrial upgrades and the diversification of governance demands, elements such as sustainability are increasingly becoming an integral part of the concept of energy security.

From the new energy geopolitical perspective, competition in the development of new physical spaces is emerging. Advances in technology have enabled the exploration and exploitation of regions that previously lacked the conditions or economic capability for such activities, including polar regions, Africa and Central Asia. For instance, the polar regions are rich in untapped energy resources, but their vast expanse, the presence of numerous neighboring coastal states, and the difficulty in clearly



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

delineating sovereign interests complicate geopolitical relations, particularly in the face of interventions by resource-scarce countries, which can lead to geopolitical tensions. Additionally, Latin America also emerges as a potential area for energy production growth.

From the perspective of energy pricing mechanisms, political factors are exerting a growing influence on the stability of energy markets, resulting in unconventional price fluctuations. In terms of energy supply chain security imbalances, there is a clear trend toward the "weaponization" of traditional energy sectors, which has led to increased energy import costs and heightened supply-side risks. The current energy security governance mechanism is simulta-

neously influenced by the Ukraine crisis and the European Union's efforts to disengage from traditional energy systems. Moreover, the development of quasi-military alliances is likely to steer energy security governance toward confrontation. The restructuring of global supply chains toward shorter, localized systems, alongside the polarization and fragmentation of global economic governance, poses heightened challenges for technological collaboration in the energy sector. The development of renewable energy is shifting the paradigm of energy dependency.

Enhancing energy security through renewable energy deployment may alter the dynamics between energy-exporting and importing countries, potentially

diminishing the roles of oil and gas in international politics. Consequently, ensuring energy supply security is increasingly becoming a matter of domestic governance rather than an international security priority. Those countries that achieve energy independence will also find themselves less reliant on their suppliers, thereby allowing for a more independent pursuit of their strategic and diplomatic objectives.

Energy is, after all, a fundamental driving force of growth and development around the world, and the use of energy has been steadily expanding along with the world's political and economic development. The openness of the existing international energy system has its roots in the interdependence among producer

countries, consumer countries, and transit countries. From a geopolitical perspective, the strategic layout of hegemonic powers, resource nationalism among regional powers and the geopolitical risks associated with resource corridors all added to the uncertainty of global energy security. The changes in global geopolitics and value chains affect the balance of the global energy system. The rising levels of energy consumption and dependence are among the salient features of China's industrialization and modernization process. According to the concept of the "energy trilemma", China's energy transition must seek a balance among economic viability, security and sustainability.

First, China needs to enhance its energy security resilience by balancing the impacts of climate change, energy transition and geopolitical competition, thus improving its energy security governance capacity. Second, China should consistently provide public goods to promote the de-politicization of the global energy security governance system. Unlike the United States' emphasis on competitive gains and relative advantages against China, China's multilateral energy security cooperation seeks to align domestic demand with external public goods collaboration, thereby fostering complementarity and geopolitical compatibility with resource-producing countries. China can collaborate with resource-rich countries and regions, including Russia, Central Asia and the Middle East to establish a new multi-dimensional framework for energy security cooperation, and can also work with developed countries to address international market fluctuations and the energy transition uncertainties.

Given China's comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership with Russia in the new era and its

high degree of integration with supply chains in Europe and the US, it can play an essential intermediary role in maintaining the integrity of the global energy system. This, in turn, offers China an opportunity to implement its dual-circulation strategy and assume a leadership position in globalization.

Furthermore, China can emphasize how global energy security hinges on multilateral and regional platforms, contributing knowledge and promoting reform of the global energy governance system. China should build upon initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative to promote capacity building in developing countries and reshape the global energy security governance system.

Last, China should leverage its role as a major power to facilitate communication and coordination on energy policies among various countries, thereby preventing the fragmentation of the global governance mechanisms. The Ukraine crisis and climate change have not only advanced the formation of a "supply chain iron curtain" against Russia by the West but also heightened the demand for energy autonomy and the "de-Russification" of energy security in the West. In this context, it is essential to prevent Russia from being isolated from the globalized system. Furthermore, it is crucial to deepen the construction of the comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership between China and Russia in the new era and to promote collaborative governance of energy issues on a global scale.

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LIFE

Du Chunxiao couldn't take her eyes off the stamps on display at the Philatelic Liechtenstein booth during a recent visit to an exhibition in Beijing.

Produced by the official postal authority of the Principality of Liechtenstein, the stamps celebrate the culture, history, nature, as well as significant events of the country tucked between Switzerland and Austria. They were on display during the Beijing International Cultural and Tourism Consumption Expo at the Beijing Exhibition Center between Nov 1 and 3.

The visitor from Shunyi district says she was immediately drawn to the stamps for their depictions of murals, oil paintings and court culture.

"I've never collected stamps before, but they are exotic, and are carriers of art and culture," says Du, in her 40s.

She bought a set of stamps for 180 yuan (\$25.3) for her nephew, who has just started primary school.

"I think it will make a nice present and a good early introduction to exploring and understanding the cultures of different countries," she says.

Du was among more than 20,000 visitors to the expo on the opening day.

The three-day event was hosted by the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism and attracted around 300 exhibitors from China and abroad.

According to the organizers of the event, the aim is to aggregate resources, introduce the latest developments in the cultural and tourism market, and offer an international platform for the exhibition and trading of cultural and tourism products.

In addition to exhibitors from across the country, cultural and tourism institutes from 16 foreign countries took part, including from Algeria, Canada, South Africa, Thailand and Russia, all hoping to win a bigger share of the Chinese market.

"In addition to those carrying elements of the national paintings of the royal family, we are displaying stamps featuring laser-dot and woodblock printing technology, and paper-cut patterns," says Shi Chunhong, who works with the Philatelic Liechtenstein in China.

The booth had a magnifying glass that enabled visitors to see details like the eyelashes on the figures on the stamps.

Shi's team also came up with decorative items highlighting the stamps, such as paintings and porcelain, to appeal to visitors to the expo.

"The Chinese market shows relatively stronger demand, since it has a larger number of stamp collectors," Shi says, adding that an increasing number of non-philatelists are also showing interest in the stamps.

Next to the Liechtenstein booth, a booth was selling toys from Peru made of alpaca wool, which is known for its softness, warmth and vibrant dyes.

"The wool is incredibly fine and luxurious, and the toys are not only cuddly but also durable," says Wang Yuxi, a manager with Nuna Alpaca, a trade company working with the commercial office of the Peruvian embassy in China. "All the stuffed animals and dolls were handmade by artisans, and incorporate designs and patterns that reflect Peruvian culture."

Her company has been promoting the wool products for four years in China, including on occasions such as the China International Fair for Trade in Services.

"Our stand is a hot spot at the services trade fair, and an increasing number of Chinese customers have followed our products over the years, especially women and children," she adds.



A visitor dressed in traditional Chinese costume at the Beijing International Cultural and Tourism Consumption Expo that was held at the Beijing Exhibition Center from Nov 1 to 3.

Expo provides an international insight

From stamps and toys to ceramics, 16 countries plus China put their culture on display at Beijing expo, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



Clockwise from top left: The expo is a popular attraction. A visitor checks stamps from the postal authority of the Principality of Liechtenstein at the expo. The Algerian booth is a top draw. Cultural, creative items, featuring the Temple of Heaven, a landmark in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY AND BY YANG FEIYUE / CHINA DAILY

The toy-making process involves dyeing the wool using natural pigments, then felting or knitting it into different shapes. "Each toy is one of its kind, a demonstration of the artisans' skills and creativity, and they are lightweight, and hypoallergenic," Wang says.

The toys use wool shed from 3-month-old alpacas. "The shedding is good for future wool growth, so our business is also built on a sustainable link in the local industrial chain," she explains.

Wang says that she introduced the toys to China not only to improve sales, which would help support makers in Peru, but also to help Chinese visitors better understand Peru's culture, and motivate them to visit the country.

"We also brought in instruments like panpipes, which are popular in rituals in a number of South American countries," she adds.

Cheng Hao, a commercial representative for the Sri Lankan embassy in China, took part in the Beijing expo to boost the numbers of Chinese travelers to the country.

"We displayed Sri Lankan black tea and cultural and creative products related to distinctive elements of Sri Lanka, such as refrigerator magnets and postcards of landscapes and tourist attractions," Cheng says.

"The sites on those items are all worth visiting, and prove popular with Chinese travelers to Sri Lanka," he says.

Several travel agencies have shown interest in working with Cheng to develop customized tours for the Chinese market.

Sri Lanka received more than 68,000 visits from Chinese travelers last year, making the country its fifth-biggest source of inbound tourists, according to Sri Lankan authorities. In the first quarter of this year, that figure topped 39,000, about seven times that of the same period last year.

Sri Lanka plans to step up efforts to promote what it has to offer and give Chinese visitors greater access to its tea, gems and handicrafts by working with Chinese business players, according to Cheng.

Like Sri Lanka, Algeria is also aiming for a bigger slice of the Chinese outbound tourism market.

Hani Djaballah, a 42-year-old ceramicist and painter, displayed his work at the expo, drawing many curious Chinese visitors. Djaballah was invited by the Algerian authority to give Chinese travelers a taste of what the northern African country has to offer.

"I painted my country's signature flowers and plants on a variety of porcelain items that I fired myself," Djaballah says. "You can also find some typical Algerian decorative items."

This was his first visit to China, and Djaballah was excited that so many Chinese showed interest in his work, some buying items from the booth.

Having studied traditional Algerian arts with his grandfather and father since he was a teenager, Djaballah says that he also wanted to interact with Chinese artists during his stay.

Tahar Arezki, president of the Algerian National Office of Tourism, says the Chinese market potential is huge, especially since there have been few Chinese travelers to the country.

Yi Jiao, an officer with the organizers of the expo, says that more cultural and tourism authorities were present this year, compared to the first session last year.

"There's a significant improvement in the quality and variety of what they displayed at the expo," Yi says.

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Focus on human interest, experts advise new-age documentary filmmakers

By CHENG YUEZHU
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Experts at the Third Chinese Documentary Film Festival emphasized that documentary filmmakers should present authentic and deeply human reflections in order to connect with today's audiences.

The festival, held in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, from Oct 24 to 26, was co-hosted by China Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio (Group), the China Film Association and Zhuhai's publicity department. It featured events including opening and closing ceremonies, keynote forums, film screenings, new film releases and an awards ceremony.

As a part of the festival, a keynote forum on Oct 24 gathered experts and scholars to discuss ways to promote production of high-quality documentary films, from content and technology to market and screening.

In his speech, He Suli, director of the China Documentary Research Center at the Communication Uni-

versity of China, provided a review of Chinese documentary's market performance and content supply.

In a review of the box-office performance until Oct 21, he noted that 27 documentary films were released in national cinemas this year. Despite modest box-office collections, many were low-budget films that portrayed ordinary people with warmth and emotional resonance.

"These 27 films cover a wide range of observations and reflections of various genres and fields. Some filmmakers focus on personal stories, like motherhood or small local communities. There are also those that take on grand historical themes," He says.

"We must not overlook the works about ordinary people with humble stories. The warmth and emotional impact they bring to society can be truly powerful."

The China Documentary Research Center launched a screening project in September, with 26 screenings in six Beijing cinemas. The sessions were enriched by

director Q&As or expert discussions.

While some of the documentaries only garnered a box office of several million yuan, He says that the screenings produced gratifying results. "Cinemas like Capital Cinema reported occupancy rates of 70 to 80 percent, surpassing those of regular films. We discovered that in any region, age or social group, there are always documentary film lovers," he says.

According to He, to pave new paths for high-quality documentary production, filmmakers should highlight topics that resonate with audiences, connect historical themes with contemporary concerns, enhance market awareness and respond to public feedback, develop a distinct Chinese artistic style, and always stay true to authenticity.

Huang Qunfei, deputy general manager of Huaxia Film Distribution, says that in the new era, documentary films should continue to uphold authenticity, deal with current social issues and present content with profound social significance. "Documentaries should capture

the endeavors of those who contribute to China's development. These topics can evoke emotional resonance among audiences, so that more works with contemporary significance can be produced," Huang says.

In another forum centered on producing documentaries that connect with audiences, Yang Chenghu, vice-dean of School of Arts and Communication at Beijing Normal University, says that through his research on video-streaming platforms, he has observed a growing enthusiasm for documentaries among young people.

"Young people from different majors and fields, especially university students, have shown acceptance for documentaries on diverse subjects, such as cuisine, history, science and technology," Yang says.

"We've noticed that young people today are using documentaries as a way to understand life and observe the world. Unlike feature films, which pull the viewers into fictional narratives, documentaries allow them to experience real-life stories and the world without



The Third Chinese Documentary Film Festival opened in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, on Oct 24. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

stepping out of their homes."

While many documentaries highlight historical figures and events, Yang says that connecting with the audience requires engaging with the present, by telling contemporary stories and reflecting universal concerns, especially those of today's young people.

Through the medium of Chinese-language documentaries, this year's festival aimed to inspire innovative

and high-quality filmmaking, enhance their reach and impact, and contribute to the prosperity of documentary cinema.

The festival received 46 documentary film submissions, including science educational films and theater production recordings. At the awards ceremony on Oct 26, *The Great Journey* and *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru* received the special recommendation awards.

LIFE



Left: Dutch-German professor Ole Bouman reaches Buzludzha Monument in the central Balkan Mountains, Bulgaria, as shown by his bicycle, on which he rides from Amsterdam to Shanghai. **Middle:** Bouman (center) at the Huaihe River near Huainan, Anhui province. **Right:** Leaving Europe from Istanbul, he makes his way to Asia across the Bosphorus. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

While it normally takes over 10 hours to fly from Amsterdam to Shanghai, if you've ever wondered how long the trip would take by bicycle, Ole Bouman has the answer — 156 days.

Born in 1960 in Amersfoort, Netherlands, Bouman is a Dutch-German historian, writer, publisher, photographer, curator, lecturer and practitioner of design and architecture, and now a professor at the College of Architecture and Urban Planning at Tongji University in Shanghai.

Departing from Amsterdam in early February, Bouman cycled 10,756 kilometers through 18 countries and regions, as well as more than 500 historical sites, mapping an adventure filled with discoveries about people, cultures, stories, understanding and connection.

"From Amsterdam to Shanghai, the journey was never just about the distance. My bicycle became more than just a way to get from point A to point B; it was a companion, a tool, a way to dig into the world up close," writes Bouman in his blog, making a joke that he was just "commuting from home to work".

Motivated by curiosity

Bouman did not embark on this journey on a whim. It was a long-lingering idea that became clear and increasingly concrete over the last two years as he started making mental, physical, legal and financial preparations.

In addition to taking long daily walks and two-hour cycling trips to maintain his physical condition, Bouman points out that the most important preparation was to think of a "narrative" or "story" that would continuously motivate him to the finish line.

"I had the intellectual curiosity to learn more about the East since the 1990s. As a cultural historian, I would like to know more about the relationship and interconnection between the East and the West, so curiosity is my motivation," says Bouman.

Bouman has lived in China for around 10 years since he served as the creative director of the Urban-

Architect's cycling journey spins his intellectual wheel

After preparing for two years, traveler covers nearly 11,000 km in 156 days, discovering a deeper understanding of connection, **Wang Xin** reports.

ism and Architecture Bi-City Biennale of Shenzhen and Hong Kong in 2013. Before his teaching role at Tongji University, Bouman was the founding director of the Design Society, an initiative of China Merchants Group and the Victoria and Albert Museum, which opened in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in December 2017.

"I think many people go from one world to another because of opportunity. The Design Society as a cultural platform was an unbelievable, high-speed project for me and one of my most exciting chapters. I caught this chance and felt so fascinated by the reason and the whole history behind it," says Bouman.

He further explains that he has always been interested in the background and context of things, which makes him want to better understand the deeper drive of his choice to live here. "It does not just mean to be dropped in the middle of Shenzhen or Shanghai but to experience what it takes to go step by step toward the East, to be slowly embraced by the East and to see how the journey would change my mindset. That was an important personal motivation."

On the road

A 45-kilogram bag and an 18-kg bicycle are all that carried Bouman on the long journey that crossed about 300 rivers, climbed over 100 mountains and traveled through three deserts and regions with 16 different languages.

Dedicating much of his professional life to architecture, Bouman has a broad definition of it, which makes him see the journey as a



Ole Bouman with his bicycle at the Bund in Shanghai, 7 kilometers before arrival at his final destination.

kind of design project. Normally, he would cycle 120 to 130 km in roughly seven hours per day.

"For many people, architecture is about designing a beautiful building or just making a building. But I think architecture is

about the careful organization of space or spatial arrangement. Once you are very strong in spatial organization, you can apply it to a building but also to other things, including cultures, history, engineering, stories and values — even

a long journey. I think an architect should learn about all these things," says Bouman.

During the journey, Bouman continued teaching online once a week from one location, where he shared his observations along the road and discussed with students what he would see and experience the next week. Together, with his students, Bouman has designed an inspiring "architectural journey".

Every day, Bouman rode toward new horizons and different destinations. He tried to find a road that was smooth enough to make some progress, but not so smooth to gain new experiences. Such a journey has brought him many unexpected challenges and deeper thinking.

Among the many difficulties that he faced were heat, cold, headwinds, distance, mountains, floods, bad roads, nails and rocks on the pavement, wild animals, aggressive guards, and sometimes the necessary distrust to get out of a situation quickly, according to his blog.

A big challenge came in May when he ran into the extreme heat at the Flaming Mountains and the drought of the Gobi and Taklimakan deserts in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

These unexpected encounters inspired Bouman to further explore a core argument during the journey, which he summarizes as "the clash between West and East, as well as the clash between modernity and nature, and how to overcome them".

Cycling from the West and capturing thousands of memorable moments, Bouman says he

became more convinced that his journey was also about peace.

Designing a legacy

"From the West to the East, there are big changes in culture, landscape, literature, politics and so on. But while pursuing changes and interacting with ordinary people, I increasingly became aware of the common ground we share," says Bouman. "People are pursuing a similar kind of normal life and personal happiness. This common ground is the fabric of peace and is much more important than the differences. Going through the Christian world, the Muslim world, the Buddhist world and the Taoist world along the journey, I found different ways to pursue peace that are, in principle, similar."

"There is a symbiosis between architecture and peace. Architecture can be a strong torchbearer of peace, as its passing on to the next generation can only happen in peaceful situations. Otherwise, it might be destroyed," he adds.

Although Bouman's journey to the East has come to the finish line, the thinking, conversations and connections it sparked are just beginning. While continuing to share his thoughts and experiences with his students, Bouman would also like to advise those who followed his journey.

He encourages people searching for cycling experiences to go on a long tour, as it can bring them closer to truth and reality. For travelers, he advises them to pay respect to local customs and manners and to listen and observe more. For architects, his advice is to learn from the past, as the power of architecture is a sign of cultural heritage. For young people, he emphasizes the significance of seeing things by making physical efforts and cultivating their memories rather than absorbing ideas on computers.

For himself, Bouman aims to write a book about his journey, adding with a laugh that he hopes to complete a full circle of the "Journey to the West" one day.

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Jazz hits high notes in symphony collaboration

By ZHANG KUN AND WANG XIN

Led by legendary jazz trumpet player and composer Wynton Marsalis of the United States, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra collaborated with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra to present Marsalis' fourth jazz symphony *The Jungle* in Shanghai on Oct 26.

Under the baton of Yu Long, artistic director of the Shanghai orchestra, the two orchestras "presented the humanistic, historical and artistic perspectives of this brilliant masterpiece with excellent control", according to music critic Hu Jiaowei.

The Jungle is the fourth jazz symphony composed by Marsalis, an internationally acclaimed musician, composer, bandleader and educator as well as the managing and artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, a nonprofit arts organization that presents and preserves jazz music through live performances, education and recordings.

"The interweaving of composition and improvisation, the blending of genres and elements, the overlapping of harmony and color, the connection of compound rhythms and beats, the overwhelming onomatopoeia, impressionistic processing and transitions. ... All of this makes *The Jungle* undoubtedly



Led by American jazz legend Wynton Marsalis, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra collaborates with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra to present the symphony he composed *The Jungle*, which was conducted by Yu Long in Shanghai on Oct 26. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

a masterpiece of large-scale contemporary symphony," Shanghai-based Hu wrote after the concert.

The Jungle was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and premiered in 2016. In 2017 the New York Philharmonic premiered the piece in Shanghai at the Music in the Summer Air Festival.

For SSO and Yu, playing *The Jungle* with Marsalis and JLCO was like "stepping into a brand-new world of jazz". During rehearsal, Yu found himself uncontrollably tearful when Marsalis played his improvised

trumpet solo near the end of the piece. "I simply couldn't help my tears ... completely different from my usual ways. Such is the power of his music. It's beyond words," Yu says.

The concert was one of 57 theater productions in the ongoing China Shanghai International Arts Festival. Marsalis and the JLCO presented another concert at the Shanghai Symphony Hall on Oct 24, playing selected pieces from his nine-movement composition *The Shanghai Suite*. The piece was composed for the opening of the Jazz at Lincoln

Center's club in Shanghai. Its album was released on Oct 25.

From *Swinging on the Bund* to *The Monkey King's March*, *White Yulan — First Flower of Spring* and *Shanghai Skyline*, these movements interpret the rich heritage and ideas of Chinese culture, combining traditional Chinese pentatonic scales with the rhythm and beats of swing and blues.

Blues music and Chinese culture have many things in common, Marsalis says in Shanghai.

Jazz is about achieving balance

for two opposites, like the Chinese philosophical idea of yin and yang. "Chinese culture is as old as several thousand years. Classical music is about 600 years and jazz is maybe 100 years old," Marsalis says.

By making music that crosses the boundaries of culture and genre, he says, "we bring cultures together from their roots".

During his stay in Shanghai, Marsalis oversaw the contract renewal for the Jazz at Lincoln Center Shanghai. "Shanghai has a tradition with jazz music. It is touching to see fan-

tastic musicians play here; and the young people become educated and embraced in the community," Marsalis says at the center on Oct 27.

Co-founded by the Jazz at Lincoln Center New York and the Shanghai Bund Investment Development (Group) Co Ltd in 2017, Jazz at Lincoln Center Shanghai has staged over 2,000 shows in the past seven years, playing a prominent role in promoting Sino-US cultural exchanges and popularizing jazz culture to Chinese and global audiences.

"Music is a universal language. Jazz, born in New Orleans, Louisiana in America, has become a global genre. Especially, at this time in history, the opportunity to communicate through music — this ancient common tradition that we all share is very important," says Greg Scholl, executive director of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Before coming to Shanghai, Marsalis and the JLCO participated in the 27th Beijing International Music Festival and played two concerts at the National Centre for the Performing Arts on Oct 9 and 10. The Jazz master then celebrated his 63rd birthday onstage while performing in Hong Kong on Oct 18.

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LIFE

Piano fans will probably be no stranger to the name of Maksim Mrvica, who is also known as just Maksim, a renowned Croatian pianist celebrated for his classical crossover mastery, technical virtuosity and charisma onstage.

Born in 1975 in Sibenik, Croatia, Maksim is one of the best-selling crossover pianists in the world. His albums have sold millions of copies in more than 50 countries and regions across the globe, reaching gold and platinum sales.

Often labeled as the pianist incredibly able to hit 16 notes per second, his masterpieces such as *Croatian Rhapsody*, *Exodus*, *The Flight of the Bumblebee* are among the best known worldwide.

Adorned with tattoos, chic hairstyles and dressed in a casual outfit with personalized decorations onstage, Maksim looks unlike a classical musician.

"I enjoy what I do. I love my job, traveling, interacting and meeting so many people around the world. I love being onstage and performing and I feel comfortable there since I was a child. If someone has an office in the building, my office is the stage all around the world," says the musician after the *Segmenti* world tour premiered in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Oct 2.

Starting to play the piano at 9 and performing his first concert as a soloist at 11, Maksim actually had a solid education and proven achievements as a classical musician. He won his first major piano competition in Zagreb, capital of Croatia, in 1993. Later, Maksim studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Hungary. He moved to Paris in 2000 to study with Igor Lazko at the Russian Conservatory Alexander Scriabin. During his time as a student, he won first prize in a number of major piano competitions in Europe.

While trained as a classical pianist, Maksim is more renowned and internationally acclaimed for his crossover music that continuously explores the fusion of classical music and modern styles transcending boundaries.

"I have always wanted to experiment with the presentation of classical music, so I used lighting shows and lasers at the venue where I played the piano concerto with the orchestra. I have always had such new ideas of different presentation. Then I met my manager Mel Bush, who was back then a pioneer of crossover music and was looking for the pianist for a long time," he recalls.

That was the start of Maksim's crossover music and it has proved to be a big success. With a career catalog spanning 13 albums since 2003, Maksim has grown into one of the top-selling crossover pianists in the world.

More than five years since the last album, Maksim released his 14th album *Segmenti* at the end of September, announcing the start of a new classical crossover concert world tour of the same name from China a few days later.

The new album consists of eight tracks, including two covers, three originals and three classics, which showcase as always a refreshing blend of different musical segments, genres and styles, explains the artist.

Among the eight tracks is *The Show Must Go On*, a notable rock hit from the legendary band Queen.

"This is one of the songs which



Maksim Mrvica performs with his band during the *Segmenti* classical crossover concert tour on Oct 4 in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Pianist keys in to rhapsody and innovation

Crossover musician gives new energy to traditional instrument as he launches world tour, **Wang Xin** reports in Shanghai.



Left: Maksim plays with his band during the Hangzhou leg of the *Segmenti* classical crossover concert tour on Oct 2. Right: Maksim collaborates with Chinese Yueju Opera actress Chen Lijun to present *Glorietta* during the tour in Hangzhou on Oct 2.



I always wanted to do. I like Queen and I did *Bohemian Rhapsody* before. The songs from Queen are so powerful. It was around the time of the pandemic and the end of it (when making this song), a period when the world stopped for two years. And I thought it's a perfect song to do as we need to continue with our lives," says Maksim.

Although different from the original version, Maksim's covers are never about making them easier to play. In addition to the piano as the main instrument, he usually infuses the songs with rich symphonic sounds from the orchestra, as well as difficult and complex arrangement and techniques to

interpret the themes with no less power.

Maksim is crossing his own boundaries too, with the challenging classical piece *Prokofiev Fantasy* presented on the album.

"It is one of the most technically complex and difficult pieces I ever had to record for my crossover albums. It comes in three parts, including the famous *Romeo and Juliet Ballet* and the coda from the Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No 3*. This concerto is one of my favorites since I was a child. I've heard it a million times, and I want to keep the coda as it is, without changing any note. It's so difficult and complex, literally, to play 20 pages in one minute. I

was laughing to myself when learning it, but it was so much joy and fun in the end," he says, laughing.

The original track *Glorietta* on the album, written by Croatian composer Tonci Huljic, is highlighted for its traditional Asian instruments and Oriental melodies, such as the *pipa* (a four-stringed Chinese lute) and Chinese bamboo flute.

This is not the first time that Maksim and Huljic absorbed Chinese and oriental elements into their creation. In his last album released in 2018, they made a majestic piece named *New Silk Road*, which integrated musical elements from China, Russia, India and Central Europe, and is well-

received by Asian audiences.

Jake Zeng, a trade manager in Hangzhou, spoke highly of such elements.

"My favorite piece used to be the *Croatian Rhapsody*, but later, I like *New Silk Road* more. In his previous albums, he made the arrangements more on Western classical pieces. So the Chinese elements in *New Silk Road* are refreshing, and we as Chinese people are more connected and excited about such arrangements," says Zeng after the *Segmenti* world tour premiere in the city.

This world tour premiered in Hangzhou only a few months after the end of his two-year *The Collection* world tour, during which he present-



A photo of Maksim in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, for the promotion of his world tour.

ed more than 100 shows in 22 countries and regions on four continents. Basically, he has been crossing geographic boundaries as well.

Asked about how to keep in good condition for an energetic and passionate two-hour concert each time in tight schedules, he says it is all about "love" and the audiences' appreciation always fuels him up.

"For me, it's always interesting to come to the country where I've never been, and to introduce myself to the audiences for the first time. It is so rewarding for me as an artist to see the audiences' reaction, enthusiasm and excitement when they listen to my music," he says with a smile.

Maksim first came to China 21 years ago, winning an MTV music award in the country, which kicked off his journey here. Since then, he has visited China with extensive concerts and shows across the nation, nurturing a large crowd of fans at all ages.

Maksim says he was always impressed by Chinese culture and the Chinese audiences for their enthusiasm.

"As soon as I come onstage at the beginning of the show, I have huge ovations (from Chinese audiences). This is something that exists only when they really know you, and are happy to be here. For me, to begin the concert like that is amazing. It's like a huge push for the general energy of the concert," he says.

As a professional pianist for about four decades, Maksim is still actively open for explorations and challenges in music. Over the past two decades, he has been on many shows and collaborated with quite a few Chinese musicians, including Chinese cellist Ouyang Nana, *guzheng* (Chinese zither) player Zhao Jianan and *erhu* (a two-stringed Chinese fiddle) player Chen Yimiao.

"I always consider myself lucky because I was born with this talent and the love for the instrument and classical music. I can't physically be without the piano for a long time. It is part of my life and part of who I am. Music can be very powerful in terms of touching your life and moments. Many people might underestimate the power of music, but it is a very powerful element in life," says Maksim.

The *Segmenti* classical crossover world tour is continuing to hit several cities across China within this year, including Fuzhou, Shenzhen, Guangdong, Kunming, Chengdu, Nanjing, Qingdao, Changchun and Shanghai.

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A tale of tea and the intimacy of strangers amid the fostering of kindness

Xuezhuang and Olivia were sharing a pot of lemon tea on the balcony of a bar not far from the Lama Temple. I was sitting right next to them, but hadn't noticed because my head was buried in a page of words that were annoying the life out of me.

It was a Sunday and I'd taken the subway to the temple from Panjiayuan after spending hours wandering among the stalls at the antique market looking for a present. I was really just glorying in the late October sun, and trying to pick up words I could recognize in the conversations going on around the piles of serpentine jade rock and Zhou Enlai portraits.

Sundays in Beijing are something special. At Panjiayuan or in

the Yongheng Hutong or around Yuyuantan Lake, you can watch couples, friends and families without number, reveling in each other's company. A lot of the time, the shops that surround them act like stage props. Some people get their photos taken by a window display, others point out an animal in a window, but not much seems to get bought. Consumption is not the point of these Sunday gatherings that linger into the dark.

Last Sunday at Panjiayuan, for example, I stood watching an auctioneer laud one painting after another, giving his pitch to rows of pensioners sitting around him on fold-up chairs. No one in the audience was scrolling on their phone, they kept their eyes fixed on the paintings and their champion, but they held running conversations in one another's ears all the while — nodding,

frowning, chuckling. They were never on the point of bidding for anything, they were content just to while away their day there in good company, with a history of art as the background sound. And despite the lack of business, the auctioneer seemed content to be there too, calling for another painting to be unrolled by his assistant when he'd exhausted one more chapter in his matinee performance.

I'd too quickly forgotten about all this as I sat staring at words from home on the balcony of that bar by the Lama Temple, until Olivia got my attention.

"Are you unhappy?" she asked without introduction, minus polite preliminaries, no messing around. "We noticed how your face looked and we thought you might not be happy."

I laughed and then realized I hadn't been scratching my head

over a conundrum but had been trying to pull my hair out as I slumped over the page. Maybe she was being polite, maybe she was using "unhappy" in place of "unwell."

I don't remember a stranger ever asking me this question before. People we know intimately, for all our lives even, rarely ask us a question like this.

She'd forced me to think. I was drinking a beer as dusk fell, and I'd eventually found a present for my friend at the market, and I was able to haggle over the price with fragments of Chinese.

"I'm alright," I answered, putting the lid on my pen. Then, we introduced ourselves and we talked about accents and their home places and mine, and the Milky Way, and work.

Olivia is from Qinhuangdao in Hebei province and works in online retail, selling the packag-

ing that sweets are wrapped in. One day, she wants to set up her own shop.

"Where are you going to open it?" I asked. "I'll call in and buy something."

"It's still on its way here from Mars," she laughed.

Xuezhuang is originally from Huludao in Liaoning and moved to Beijing to work in software testing. She puts her command of English to good use making sure programs from abroad will run without a glitch when they are released in China.

As she poured more tea, Xuezhuang told me the original story behind the recently released movie, *Fall Into the Mortal World*; of the forbidden love between Zhinyu, one of the seven daughters of the Queen of Heaven, and Niulang, a cow herder. We talked about the similarities between Chinese and Greek mythology,

and the universal jealousy of the gods.

Olivia was quiet for a while, staring at the rooftops beyond, then singing a song quietly to herself, and then without warning asked me, "Are people kind where you come from?"

There was both playfulness and concern in her sporadic line of questioning, but also a ruthlessness that almost took my breath away. "Cut the crap," she was saying. "How are you with the world, and what about your people?"

Before I answered, I looked back down at the page I had been working on and the words, "we must foster a ferocious kindness in one another", that were written across the top of it.

"Kindest in the world," I told her, "but I would say that."

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