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CHINA DAILY

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WORLD WATCH
By Anthony Moretti

New travel advisory positive, but inadequate

It might seem like a small step, but it is an important and positive one: On Wednesday, the United States Department of State updated its travel advisory for US citizens who wish to visit China. The new advisory was posted the same day Washington and Beijing completed a prisoner swap.

The new Level-2 standard reminds US people to "exercise increased caution" should they be in China. The previous Level 3 advisory urged US citizens to "reconsider travel" to the country.

More than 80 countries are listed at Level 2, the most frequently used category by the US State Department. Multiple Asian locations, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, are currently clubbed at that level. So too are many European nations.

The updated guidance is rather simple: US citizens are urged to "exercise increased caution when traveling to (the Chinese mainland) due to arbitrary enforcement of local laws, including in relation to exit bans".

That statement does require further explanation, although it is unlikely any US media outlet will ask for one. Likewise, no US government official is likely to volunteer more information.

Let's not mince words here: with no indication that any US citizen has been prevented from leaving China, it seems illogical to warn US citizens of "arbitrary enforcement of local laws". In fact, the opposite seems quite clear: No US citizen should anticipate any holdup when leaving China.

On the other hand, Chinese citizens are the ones who have felt the sting of "arbitrary" enforcement of US laws in recent years.

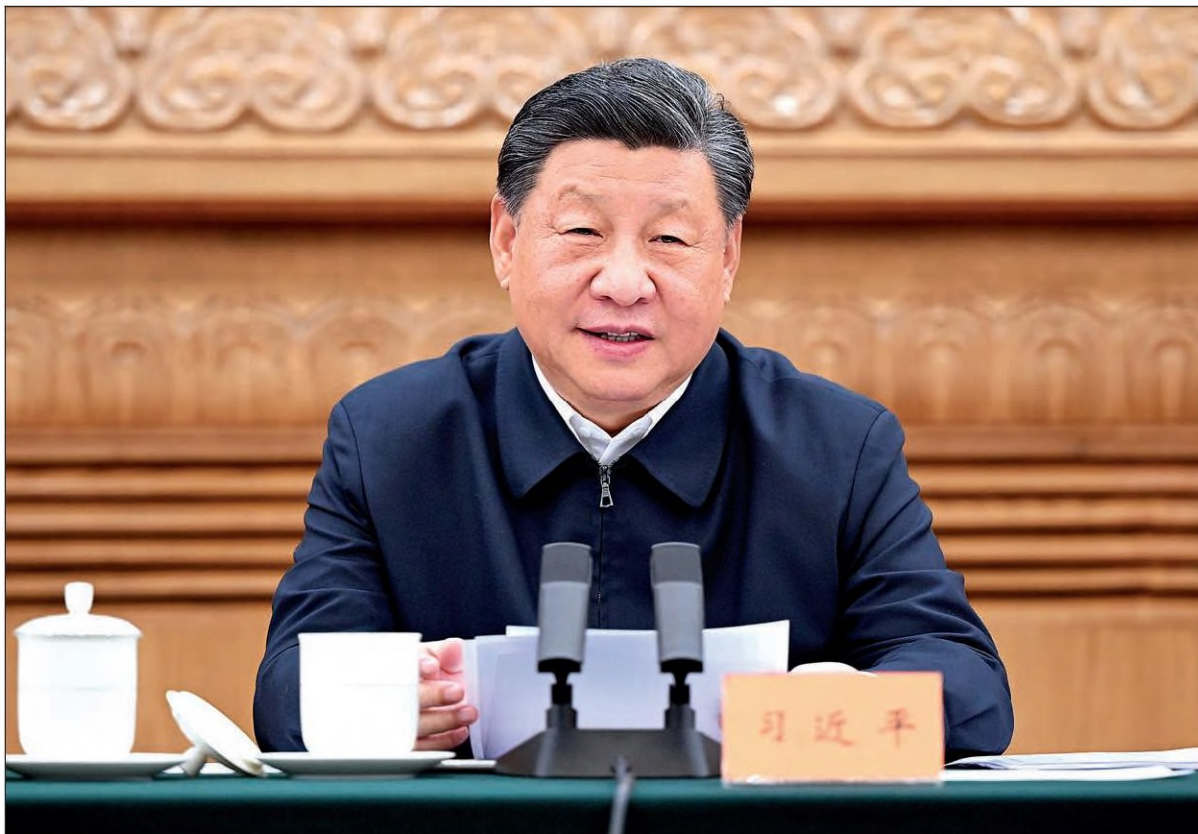
We all know that multiple Chinese scholars and students have been harassed by US law enforcement and other government officials over the past five to six years. All of them deserve an open and complete apology from Washington.

The infamous China Initiative remains a scandalous mark on the US' commitment to freedom. The suggestion that multiple Chinese scholars were engaged in espionage could not be demonstrated, but the scrutiny those men and women endured in many cases permanently damaged their affinity for the US.

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President Xi Jinping addresses a symposium on the development of the Belt and Road Initiative on Monday in Beijing. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

Xi: Advance BRI cooperation

Initiative deepens China's partnership with other countries

By MO JINGXI
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President Xi Jinping emphasized on Monday the importance of properly addressing various risks and challenges and overcoming the impact of geopolitical conflicts, as China advances high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, which has entered its second decade.

Citing the noticeable rise in unilateralism and protectionism and the frequent occurrence of regional conflicts and turbulence in today's world, Xi said it is crucial to remain strategically confident and determined, in order to create a brighter future for jointly building the Belt and Road.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while addressing a symposium in Beijing on BRI development.

It was the fourth time that Xi has attended such a symposium since 2013, when he proposed joining with others to build a Silk Road Economic Belt and a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, known as the BRI.

The previous symposiums, held in 2016, 2018 and 2021, have helped point the way forward for Belt and Road cooperation at critical junctures.



Workers carry out repairs on the No.1 National Highway, a China-aided project, in the Republic of Congo, on Aug 1. WANG GUANSEN / XINHUA

Xi said that since 2013, the joint building of the Belt and Road has been committed to the Silk Road spirit characterized by peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, and mutual learning and mutual benefit, with expanded cooperation in a larger scope of areas.

So far, China has signed more than 200 BRI cooperation agreements with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations across five continents.

In the first 10 months of this year, China's trade with countries participating in the BRI climbed 6.2 percent compared with the same period a year earlier, to 16.94 trillion yuan (\$2.33 trillion), according to the General Administration of Customs.

Through Belt and Road cooperation, some countries have their first expressways or modern railways,

some have developed their own car industries, and some have put an end to long-standing power shortages.

Last month, Chancay Port, a flagship BRI project in Peru, was inaugurated via video link by Xi and Peruvian President Dina Boluarte Zegarra, consolidating Peru's position as a gateway connecting land and sea, Asia and Latin America.

Xi said at the symposium that the initiative has contributed to deepening China's friendship with participating countries and has helped promote these countries' economic and social development.

As Belt and Road cooperation ushers in a new stage of high-quality development, Xi said efforts should be made to ensure that Belt and Road cooperation benefits China while continuing to bring a sense of gain to the countries involved, thus

effectively safeguarding China's overseas interests and security.

Xi said BRI development should be guided by the eight major steps to support high-quality Belt and Road cooperation that he announced last year at the opening ceremony of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

The eight major steps include building a multidimensional Belt and Road connectivity network, advancing scientific and technological innovation, and strengthening institution building for international BRI cooperation.

For more resilient and sustainable BRI development at a higher level, Xi said coordinated efforts are required to deepen connectivity in multiple fields, ranging from infrastructure to people-to-people ties, to push forward signature projects as well as small-scale yet significant projects, and to steadily expand cooperation in emerging sectors.

He also stressed the need to strengthen institution building for high-quality cooperation under the BRI in terms of cooperation planning and management, industrial and supply chain cooperation, and guaranteeing overseas interests, among other things.

Xi reiterated that the high-quality development of Belt and Road cooperation must be brought forward by following the blueprint with steadfast efforts despite risks and challenges, thus making greater contributions to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Policies help bolster sale of homes in major cities

By WANG KEJU
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Amid China's dedicated efforts to fine-tune housing policies, the market for secondhand homes in a number of major cities has seen a notable surge in November, with some recording the highest sales volumes during recent times, suggesting a gradual improvement in the country's property sector, analysts said.

As the effects of optimized housing policies continue to unfold, consumer sentiment and investor confidence will be further bolstered to better underpin the market's overall stabilization and recovery and facilitate the annual growth target of the world's second-largest economy, they added.

Secondhand housing sales in Shenzhen, Guangdong province — China's technology hub — came in at 8,500 units in November, the highest figure in the past 46 months, according to data from the real estate agency Centaline Property.

Shanghai saw its pre-owned housing sales reach 27,050 units in November, marking the highest transaction volume in the past 44 months, according to housing information platform anjuke.com.

Similarly, according to data from the Beijing Municipal Commission of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the city's secondhand housing sales reached 18,763 units in November — the highest level in nearly 20 months.

In addition to secondhand housing sales, the China Real Estate Information Corporation reported that new home sales in 30 key cities monitored last month also reached a new high so far this year, rising 3 percent from the previous month and 20 percent year-on-year.

The policy measures introduced recently to reduce the financial burden on and ease access for homebuyers have been instrumental in the revival of housing transactions and the broader recovery in the property market, said Yan Yuejin, deputy director at E-house China R&D Institute.

In recent weeks, policymakers in various cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen have announced preferential tax policies, with a particular focus on lowering transaction costs for homebuyers.

The new measures came after a raft of policy changes for the property sector at the end of September, including a cut in the minimum down payment ratio to 15 percent for all housing categories and a relaxation in home purchase restrictions.

Chen Wenjing, director of market research at the China Index Academy, noted that down payment requirements and mortgage interest rates have reached their lowest levels on record, while home purchase restrictions in many cities are at their most relaxed stage since being implemented.

The more accommodative policies have clearly anchored consumer sentiment and unlocked substantial pent-up housing demand, Chen said.

Although housing transactions are likely to grow in top-tier cities in the coming months, the picture is more mixed in smaller cities. For the majority of smaller inland cities, real estate activity is still awaiting a boost, according to the report from the China Real Estate Information Corporation.

On the right track



Passengers board a subway train on Sunday at the King Abdullah Financial District station in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Three lines opened to the public as part of a major project intended to help shift the car-centric kingdom to public transportation. The Riyadh Metro is the second subway system in the country. FAYEZ NURELDINE / AFP

BUSY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TURN TO SPORT TO BOOST SOCIAL CIRCLES

From cycling, yoga and pickleball, new connections, friendships are being forged

By YU RAN in Shanghai
For China Daily



Sports socializing is emerging as a popular trend in China, allowing busy professionals to connect on a personal level while embracing a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

Among these sports, cycling is growing as a popular choice.

In August 2022, Zha Xianyao, a real estate professional from Shanghai, founded b15cCLUB as enthusiasm for outdoor activities was rekindled following the pandemic.

Rooted in the motto of "chill, cycling, coffee", the club has rapidly grown into a vibrant community. Zha's passion for cycling started in June 2022 when he purchased his first road bike and took an unforgettable night ride through Shanghai's Lujiazui financial area with another cyclist.

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Inspired by the growing appeal of urban night rides and a sense of belonging to a group, b15cCLUB was born. The club started out with 20 to 30 riders exploring Shanghai's streets.

Since then, it has evolved into a network of over 1,000 members aged 25 to 40 in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Xiamen, Fujian province, and even extending to Sydney, Australia.

Whether it's midweek photo-ride sessions or themed group rides at Halloween and Christmas, the club has created a haven for cyclists to bond over shared experiences.

Wednesday Photo Cycling has become its signature event. Starting at 5:30 am, Zha leads a two-hour cycling session during which participants exercise together, snap scenic photos and forge friendships.

The club activities extend beyond cycling to include collaborative efforts such as designing club jerseys.

"It's this balance of fitness and fun that keeps everyone engaged as we aim to blend fitness with meaningful interactions," Zha said.

According to lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu's 2023 Outdoor Lifestyle Trend Report, cycling-related content saw remarkable growth between January and October 2023. The number of posts about such content increased by nearly 400 percent to exceed 1.8 million during that period. The topic of cycling garnered nearly 1.3 billion views on the platform.

Zha regularly consults with more experienced riders about cycling techniques, such as proper pedaling form and aerodynamic positioning on the bike. Through these discussions, he has developed into an experienced cyclist who now mentors newcomers.

"Cycling has opened up a new social circle for me, introducing people I might never have met otherwise. It isn't just exercise — it's a journey where teamwork and camaraderie make every mile worthwhile," Zha said.

The club's activities also include night rides to the airport and exploring distant trails.

"We're not focused on competition or profit. It's about creating a space where people can connect, whether through cycling or other sports. The club is a free platform where everyone can find their own rhythm," said Zha.

United in yoga

This emphasis on community building through sports resonates across different fitness activities throughout China.

In Tianjin, Ding Dong, a 40-year-old finance professional, has discovered that yoga can be as much about social connections as it is about exercise.

For years, Ding had done her yoga exercises at home while juggling work commitments and parenting responsibilities. But in late 2020, she found herself drawn to power yoga, a new concept that promised to challenge her preconceptions about the practice.

Modern yoga studios in Tianjin, taking their cues from pioneering ones in Beijing, transformed from simple workout spaces into sophisticated social hubs.

These venues create multiple spaces for interaction, from public lounge areas to specialized online chat groups for different yoga styles and instructor-led communities.

For busy professionals like Ding, who maintains a rigorous schedule of seven weekly workouts along with two to three social sessions, this approach offers a practical solution.

"The social dynamics in these spaces are fundamentally different from traditional gatherings. You might chat for just five or 10 minutes before or after class, discussing daily life or shared interests," she said.

"It's brief but meaningful, and there's no pressure to maintain a conversation. If you run out of things to say, you can transition to your workout or get a drink of water."

Ding said making it through a tough workout session gives her yoga group a strong sense of unity.

"When you struggle through a challenging class together, you develop a unique bond — a camaraderie born from shared experience as we're all in it together, being pushed to our limits by the instructor. This creates a kind of warrior-like companionship," she said.

Lifelong partnership

The meaningful links made through sports can lead to lifelong partnerships. A CrossFit gym in Tianjin recently celebrated the marriage of two members who met while training.

"They were both introverted individuals who might never have connected in a traditional social setting. But the supportive atmosphere of the gym, where members often share breakfast after morning workouts, helped act as a catalyst for their relationship," Ding said.

She believes regular attendance and deeper engagement in the yoga community are prerequisites for meaningful relationships to develop. "It's through special events, like outdoor activities or themed gatherings, that deeper bonds form," said Ding.

These organized activities, whether at scenic locations or themed venues, provide opportunities for carpooling, sharing meals, and deeper interactions that build lasting bonds.

"Sports-social activities represent a new way of connecting for busy urban profes-



Fitness enthusiasts attend a Body Combat group exercise class at Locker Space gym in Beijing late last month. DU LIANYI / CHINA DAILY

Sport: Embracing new way of socializing



Left: Zha Xianyao, founder of b15cCLUB, rests on his road bike. Middle: Ding Dong, a finance professional, participates in a yoga group. Right: Qin Yun, co-founder of Banks Tennis, relaxes on a net post. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

sionals, while they can't replace traditional friendships, they offer a practical solution for modern lives," Ding said.

As this trend continues to grow, particularly among younger people seeking alternatives to traditional social gatherings, some participants are reassessing their priorities. After four years, Ding now focuses more on the physical benefits of her yoga classes

"We're not focused on competition or profit. It's about creating a space where people can connect, whether through cycling or other sports. The club is a free platform where everyone can find their own rhythm."

Zha Xianyao, founder of b15cCLUB in Shanghai



Left: A contestant competes at a frisbee event in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in August.

Right: Zhang Xiangxiang, owner of Ou Pickleball Club in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, plays pickleball.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

while remaining open to social connections that develop naturally.

"At my age, I find myself less drawn to the superficiality of belonging to a group and more interested in cultivating deeper, more refined emotional connections. However, such friendships are rare, and while I enjoy the potential for connection through sports, I prefer to focus on the



sport itself until the right opportunity arises," she said.

Who's for pickleball?

A study of engagement in urban sports jointly released by sportswear brand Skechers, newspaper Southern Weekly, and a research center under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in August, showed the expanding diversity of fitness activities in China.

Urban residents now participate in 3.4 different sports on average, dedicating approximately 50 minutes to each session.

The sports range from traditional ones like soccer and basketball to emerging sports such as pickleball and ultimate frisbee. Light activities including hiking and camping are also gaining in popularity among city dwellers, the report said.

More than 70 percent of urban residents participate in three or more sports regularly, with millennials and Generation Z leading the trend, it said.

As new recreational sports emerge, few are taken up globally. Pickleball, however, is an exception mainly due to the ease of social connections formed between players.

"The success of pickleball in China stems from its unique position in the sports landscape," said Zhang Xiangxiang, owner of Ou Pickleball Club in Wenzhou, Zhejiang.

"Unlike traditional racket sports, pickleball encourages social interaction, particularly through doubles play."

The sport bridges the age gap, he said, and his club regularly has players aged 8 to 65 sharing the same court.

Since opening in June, Zhang has seen pickleball attracting sporting novices. Many young professionals who have never been involved in athletic pursuits before have discovered a passion for pickleball, he said.

The social aspects of the sport stand out. Zhang said the club hosts monthly members' tournaments, professional player visits, and themed events such as Halloween nights.

"In Wenzhou, a second-tier city with strong consumer spending power, we've successfully replicated and even enhanced the premium experience of first-tier city clubs," he said.

Eyes on the ball

Nearly three-quarters of people aged under 35 are open to making friends through sports activities, according to a report on sports socializing consumption released by JD's Consumption and Industry Development Research Institute in March.

The study found that 73.7 percent of young respondents welcomed sports as a social avenue, with this figure jumping to 86.2 percent among extroverted personalities. Notably, even 60.8 percent of self-described introverts expressed interest in sports-based socializing.

Beyond social connections, the report found that participants value sports for multiple benefits. A total of 83.4 percent cited improved physical health, while 72.4 percent appreciated the opportunity to expand their social circle. In addition, 70.4 percent said that sports activities helped them develop a more positive and proactive outlook on life.

While socializing through sports has become a powerful way to bring people together, not all clubs find this focus sustainable. Banks Tennis in Shanghai believes that genuine passion for the game is what draws people in and keeps them coming back.

In the bustling heart of Shanghai's Lujiazui area, the outdoor tennis hub — co-founded by 31-year-old coach Qin Yun in March — prioritizes expert professional coaching and members' privacy demands.

Banks Tennis started out by hosting lively social events, from brand partnerships with tennis-themed activities to festive holiday tournaments. These gatherings drew a wide range of participants and created a party atmosphere.

"It was thrilling to see so many new faces and feel the energy of people connecting through tennis. Many of these guests later became loyal students," Qin said.

However, the hosting of social sports events meant it was harder for the club to maintain its commitment to professional tennis training.

"The events were a success in many ways, but as we expanded, we noticed that prioritizing socializing wasn't aligning with our core mission. Our most loyal members are those who value privacy and a focus on skills development," Qin said.

Now, Banks Tennis tries to balance social aspects of the sport with providing quality training and events. From specialized training workshops to discreet members-only gatherings, the club offers opportunities for players to network and bond — but always with an emphasis on the sport.

"We've learned that sports socializing doesn't have to mean losing sight of expertise as it's about creating meaningful interactions while staying true to what makes us unique," Qin said.

Lyu Jidong, professor of the Physical Education Department at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, said sports activities have always played a key role in bringing people closer together and lifting their spirits, especially in today's fast-paced world where individuals are seeking new ways to connect socially.

"Under the banner of sports, we are adding more layers to social interaction and bringing more joy to people's lives. I believe this will become a more prominent part of everyday life in the future," Lyu said.

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TOP NEWS

Tense situation



Cars line up near a checkpoint controlled by anti-government forces on the road leading to the town of Saraqib in Idlib province of Syria on Sunday. Reports said the government had lost control over nearby Aleppo, which is one of Syria's largest cities. AAREF WATAD / AFP

Beijing, Berlin
vow to bolster
cooperation

Constructive relation, open dialogue and fair competition emphasized by Chinese FM

By CAO DESHENG
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Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Monday urged Germany to view its relations with China with a correct strategic perception, saying that the differences between the two countries should not become an obstacle to their cooperation, while the disagreements should not serve as reasons for confrontation.

Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, spoke to German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock

during the seventh round of the China-Germany Strategic Dialogue on Diplomacy and Security in Beijing. Baerbock began a two-day visit to China on Monday.

Wang emphasized that the European Union's imposition of high anti-subsidy duties on Chinese-made electric vehicles violates the principles of fair competition and free trade, becoming a prominent issue in current China-EU relations.

He said that competition should be fair, rather than a zero-sum game.

Wang expressed the hope that Germany and the EU would view China's development in an objective and rational manner, adopt a proactive and pragmatic policy toward China, and resolve trade disputes through dialogue and consultation.

On bilateral ties, Wang pointed out that China's policy toward Germany remains stable and consistent, and China has considered Germany an important cooperative partner throughout the 52 years since they established diplomatic relations.

China-Germany relations have generally maintained a positive momentum, bringing significant benefits to both peoples and serving as a stabilizer in China-EU relations and the international landscape at large, he added.

Wang highlighted China's new policies and measures in reform and opening-up, which, he said, have been well received and welcomed by the international com-

munity, including the business community in Germany, paving the way for even broader prospects for pragmatic cooperation between the two countries.

As the world's second- and third-largest economies, China and Germany should overcome disturbances and eliminate obstacles, always adhere to dialogue and cooperation, reject the outdated Cold War mentality, jointly address external risks and address global challenges, Wang said.

Both countries should strive to be promoters of pragmatic cooperation, advocates of open development, and exemplars of multilateralism, showcasing the responsibilities of major countries in the complex international landscape, he added.

Wang called on both countries to uphold mutual respect and understanding to develop mutually beneficial cooperation.

Sino-German relations are not directed against any third party and should not be influenced by a third party, he noted.

Highlighting the vast scope of cooperation between the two countries, Baerbock said that Germany attaches great importance to its relations with China, and it firmly adheres to the one-China policy.

She noted that maintaining candid dialogue and enhancing strategic communication with China are of great significance in a turbulent world and conducive to steering bilateral relations in the right direction, and contribute to global peace and stability.

Germany appreciates China's proactive role in responding to climate change, she said.

Baerbock said that Germany supports the EU and China in continuing negotiations on the anti-subsidy issue of Chinese-made electric vehicles in order to find a solution acceptable to both sides.

The two foreign ministers also exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis.

Baerbock expressed the hope that China, as a cooperative partner of Europe, would play an active role in resolving the crisis. Wang elaborated on China's commitment to promoting peace talks.

Nation's green drive on display at COP16

By YAN DONGJIE
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China will share with the world its experience in sand control over the past 50 years during the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which opened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Monday.

Guan Zhi'ou, head of the Chinese delegation to COP16 and director of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, said that China's remarkable achievements in controlling desertification have garnered global attention.

"China has achieved a 'double reduction' in desertification and sandy land, becoming the first country in the world to achieve the goal of zero net growth in land degradation," he said.

An exhibition showcasing the history and achievements of the Three-North Shelterbelt Program — one of the most important projects in China's sand control history — opened on Monday at the China Pavilion at the COP16 venue.

The pavilion, covering 608 square meters, will host a series of activities until Dec 13, the last day of the conference.

China joined the UN convention on desertification in 1994 as one of its first signatories. Sixteen years before that, it launched the Three-North program, which has built a "green Great Wall" in 13 provincial-level regions, spanning 4 million square kilometers in northern China.

Over the past 46 years, the forest coverage rate in the project area has increased from just over 5 percent to nearly 14 percent, Guan said, noting that China now has the largest area of planted forests in the world and is the largest contributor to global greening.

Andrea Meza Murillo, deputy executive secretary of the UNCCD, said, "I was really moved when I saw the images of different generations of Chinese people fighting the desertification."

Good leadership, good policies, the engagement of society and governments, traditional knowledge, and technology and innovation are among things the world can learn from China's experience, she said.

"China's process is really a good

step to demonstrate that we can have development with sustainability. This green development is possible," she added.

According to Guan, one of the secrets behind China's sand control success is the country's adherence to the philosophy that "mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands and deserts form a community of life", which was proposed by President Xi Jinping.

"The Chinese government attaches great importance to the construction of ecological civilization, integrating it into the overall layout of the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics, alongside economic, political, cultural and social development. Xi's thought on ecological civilization has become the fundamental guiding principle for the comprehensive control of desertification in China," Guan said.

Established in 1994, the UNCCD is one of the three major UN treaties — alongside the two on climate change and biodiversity — that are collectively known as the Rio Conventions.

According to national reports presented to the UNCCD last year, at least 1.2 billion people and an

area of 1.5 billion hectares are affected by land degradation, with an estimated annual increase of 100 million hectares.

During COP16, which is themed "Our Land, Our Future", the main decision-making body of the UNCCD's 197 parties — 196 countries and the European Union — will undertake a midterm evaluation of its 2018-30 strategic framework.

"China will further share technologies, exchange experiences and contribute wisdom and strength to achieve the global goal of zero growth in land degradation by 2030 and the long-term objectives of the G20 Land Initiative, in order to curb land desertification and build a beautiful and habitable global home," Guan said.

China's process is really a good step to demonstrate that we can have development with sustainability."

Andrea Meza Murillo, deputy executive secretary of the UNCCD

Advisory: US travelers face no exit or entry barriers

From page 1

Those scholars who chose to return home cannot be blamed for taking that action: The security and safety they felt in the US were lost. What a terrible way for the US to treat these honest men and women.

More recently, the unnecessary detainment earlier this year of Chinese students who were flying into the US drew a strong rebuke from China. Multiple reports indicated

the students were often asked about any connections they might have to the Chinese government, a remarkably insensitive question to ask. Sadly, some of the students were denied entry into the US and told to board another flight back to China, a callous decision that damaged their educational opportunities. To repeat the words mentioned above, what a terrible way for the US to treat these honest men and women.

US citizens should remember that China has not retaliated by scrutinizing them in or while attempting to enter the country. In fact, China, and especially President Xi Jinping, has made clear that US citizens are encouraged to visit, study and live in China. Late last year, during his trip to the US for the annual APEC conference, President Xi announced that China wants to welcome 50,000 US students over the next five years.

Granted, more than 270,000 Chinese students currently are studying in the US, yet US President Joe Biden missed a tremendous opportunity at that time by opting not to do something that would have thrown open US' doors even wider to all Chinese citizens.

Returning to the State Department advisories, US citizens are told that they should "exercise normal precautions" whenever visiting a nation listed at Level 1. Should

China be at Level 1? The few items mentioned above simplify the complexity associated with traveling to any country, but the evidence suggests US citizens should feel no worries about entering or leaving China. Modern conveniences are everywhere, and the country is not facing internal strife.

People-to-people exchanges, whether happening through education, culture, sports or some other avenues, form the foundation for a community with a shared future for mankind, a vision mentioned often by President Xi. Yes, by shifting China to a Level 2 advisory, the US

State Department has provided increased assurance to US citizens seeking to visit China. One can hope that the raw political climate created by Washington — think small yards and high fences — is not preventing the potential for China to be at Level 1.

The author is department head and an associate professor in the Department of Communication and Organizational Leadership at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Railway project brings sound development to Laos

By LI YINGQING in Kunming
and PENG CHAO

The China-Laos Railway has facilitated over 346,000 cross-border passenger trips and handled roughly 11 million metric tons of cross-border goods over the past three years, boosting socioeconomic development along the route in both countries.

The 1,035-kilometer railway, which began operations on Dec 3, 2021, is a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative. It connects Kunming, the capital of China's Yunnan province, with the Laotian capital of Vientiane.

In three years, the railway has turned Laos, a land-locked country, into a land-linked hub, helping the country effectively overcome its development barriers and improving the livelihood of the Laotian people.

Statistics from Kunming Customs showed that till the end of November, 10.6 million tons of goods had been handled via the railway, with the total value exceeding 44 billion yuan (\$6.05 billion).

Through the cross-border cargo transportation service, over 2,900 types of goods including electronics, photovoltaics, telecommunication equipment and automobiles are transported between China and 12 BRI countries, including Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, said officials at the Mohan checkpoint on the Chinese side of the border with Laos.

Zhang Xuxu, general manager of Yunnan-based Tonghai Wanhe Import and Export, who has been engaged in exporting and importing vegetables for 10 years, said his company's foreign trade covers over 20 types of vegetables, and trade is mainly with Thailand and Malaysia.

"Cold chain transport via the China-Laos Railway to Thailand saves one day compared with road transport and reduces costs by 10 percent," Zhang said, adding that he has noticed an increase in the number of people involved in the vegetable import and export business since the railway began operations.

Hu Shengli, safety technology director of Laos Tongda International Logistics, said the railway has not only enhanced transport convenience, but has also spurred economic development and job opportunities in Laos, significantly improving the lives of the Laotian people.

"Thanks to the China-Laos Railway, the export prices of Laotian agricultural products such as cassava, rice and corn have surged in recent years due to growing demand, which has boosted the local people's incomes," he said.

The average price of durian has dropped 20 to 50 percent, since the railway has cut the transportation time and cost from Thailand, the largest exporter of fresh durian in the world, to China, its biggest market.

"Thailand and the China-Laos railways have enabled the direct transfer of full-container loads, opening up a new channel for Thai durian exports. Previously, it took seven days by sea and five days by road from Thailand to Kunming. Now, using the railway, it only takes two days," said Pan Jiaoling, operations director of Thailand Shibida International Logistics.

Moreover, the railway's cross-border passenger service, which started on April 13 last year, has sparked a tourism boom as it connects destinations such as Kunming and Xishuangbanna in Yunnan with Luang Prabang and Vientiane in Laos.



Performers dressed in traditional ethnic attire welcome passengers on Sunday at Pu'er station in Pu'er, Yunnan province, to celebrate the third anniversary of the China-Laos Railway. CHEN XINBO / XINHUA

As of Monday, passengers from 108 countries and regions had used the service, according to data from the Mohan checkpoint.

Japanese tourist Tanaka Kaiya entered China via the cross-border passenger service on Sunday. He was also the first international tourist to enter China through the China-Laos Railway after China

expanded its 144-hour visa-free transit policy to nine more countries, including Japan, on Saturday. "This policy is fantastic. It has made my travel much more convenient and will definitely attract more people to China," he said.

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CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT

Editor's Note: The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.

Disinformation on Resolution 2758 rebutted

Distortion of UN document by West, DPP aims to split Taiwan from China

By ZHANG YI
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The recent attempts by some Western governments and the Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan to deliberately misinterpret United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 have been criticized and dismissed by experts and officials.

Explaining why Taiwan is part of China from a factual historical perspective, supported by the vast majority of the international community, they said the one-China principle leaves no room for misinterpretation and there are no "gray areas" in Resolution 2758.

In 1949, the People's Central Government of the People's Republic of China was founded, replacing the government of the Republic of China and becoming the only legitimate government of the whole of China. The Chiang Kai-shek regime retreated to Taiwan after its defeat in the civil war and confronted the central government under the name of the so-called Republic of China, and the two sides of the Taiwan Strait fell into a state of protracted political confrontation.

"The Taiwan question is one that is left over by the Chinese civil war, and China's sovereignty over Taiwan has never changed," said Chen Binhua, spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council.

However, after the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the United States and some Western countries persistently maintained a hostile stance toward the New China. They continued to uphold so-called diplomatic relations with the Chiang Kai-shek regime that had fled to Taiwan and supported its representation of China internationally. This erroneous practice was corrected in 1971.

On Oct 25, 1971, the 26th session of the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758 with an overwhelming majority. The document states in black and white that the General Assembly "decides to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations, and to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it". Nevertheless, the DPP authorities in Taiwan and some Western countries have maliciously distorted Resolution 2758 and falsely claimed that "the resolution is unrelated to Taiwan" and have exploited the phrase "representation of China at the UN" to create their own spurious narrative.

Representatives of the US have even gone to the extent of saying



Facts on the Taiwan question

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council explain basic facts about Taiwan.

Q: Why is Taiwan part of China?

A: Taiwan has been part of China since ancient times. The 1943 Cairo Declaration and the 1945 Potsdam Proclamation clearly stipulated that Taiwan, a Chinese territory stolen by Japan, shall be restored to China. These documents with international legal effect formed an integral part of the post-WWII international order and also established the legal foundation of Taiwan's status as China's inalienable territory.

In 1949, the government of the People's Republic of China was established, replacing the government of the Republic of China as the sole legal government representing the whole of China. It was a change of government without changing China as a subject of international law. China's sovereignty and inherent territorial boundaries did not change.

Rightfully, the government of the PRC fully enjoys and exercises China's sovereignty, including that over Taiwan.

Q: Why does UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 fully reflect the one-China principle?

A: The resolution resolved once and for all the question of the representation of the whole of China, including Taiwan, in the United Nations as a political, legal and procedural issue. It made clear that there is only one China in the world and that Taiwan is a part of China, not a country. It also made clear that there is only one seat for China in the UN, and the government of the PRC is the sole legal representative, precluding "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan".

Q: How is Resolution 2758 reflected in practice?

A: The UN Office of Legal Affairs has issued legal opinions stating very clearly that "the United Nations considers

'Taiwan' as a province of China with no separate status", "authorities" in 'Taipei' are not considered to ... enjoy any form of governmental status", "use the term 'Taiwan, Province of China' when a reference to 'Taiwan' is required in United Nations Secretariat documents".

The one-China principle is also the fundamental prerequisite and political foundation for China to establish and develop relations with all other countries. From the very first country that established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China to the 183rd country, Nauru, they have all made political commitment to adhering to the one-China principle, and included this commitment in political documents. And they have all severed so-called diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

Q: Can Taiwan participate in international organizations?

A: As part of China's territory, Taiwan has no basis, reason or right to partici-

pate in the UN or any other international organizations where membership is exclusive to sovereign countries. Any issue concerning the Taiwan region's participation in the activities of international organizations must be handled on the basis of the one-China principle, as reaffirmed by Resolution 2758.

The principle was again confirmed in May 1972 by Resolution 251 of the 25th World Health Assembly, which was adopted in accordance with Resolution 2758. Hence, whether and how Taiwan participates in the WHA can only be decided by the central government of China.

The Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan refuse to accept the 1992 Consensus that reflects the one-China principle, and are hellbent on the separatist stance of "Taiwan independence". As a result, the political foundation for Taiwan to participate in the WHA no longer exists.

ZHANG YI

However, many countries stepped forward, voicing clear opposition and stressing that the proposal was "illegal and inconsistent with reality, justice and the principles of the UN Charter". In the end, the proposal failed to be put to a vote and was discarded.

Yang said that the US is once again acting against the trend of history and trying to overturn the consensus of the international community. It must see that what it failed to accomplish more than 50 years ago will have even less chance to succeed today.

Fei Shengchao, ambassador of China to Belgium, said in an article published in October, that the false narrative that aims at denying the one-China principle not only challenges China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also challenges the post-War international order and threatens the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific and the wider world.

Shao Yuqun, a senior researcher at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, said that Western politicians distorting Resolution 2758 are doing so to serve their overall strategy of containing China's development.

"This exposes concerns within US political circles regarding China's international influence against the backdrop of the one-China principle becoming a universal consensus in the international community," Shao said, adding that it underscores the growing capabilities of the Chinese mainland in resolving the Taiwan question.

Wang Yinglin, a professor of Taiwan studies at Renmin University of China, said that prior to Resolution 2758, the fact that Taiwan was a part of China had already been recognized by the mainstream international community.

"Therefore, there was no need to specifically mention Taiwan in Resolution 2758, just as how it did not mention other Chinese provinces like Guangdong or Fujian," he said.

Experts condemned Taiwan's leader Lai Ching-te for following Western politicians and hyping up in a speech in October that the People's Republic of China had no right to represent Taiwan, and urged for Taiwan to be able to participate in international affairs.

Li Zhenguang, a professor of Taiwan studies at Beijing Union University, said challenging the authority of Resolution 2758 is essentially challenging the long-standing international consensus that the PRC represents the entirety of China, including Taiwan.

Peng Weixue, a researcher of Taiwan Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said by distorting Resolution 2758, Lai is trying to persuade the international community that the Taiwan question is not China's internal affair, but a common challenge to the world.

"He is seeking 'legitimate' external reasons to internationalize the Taiwan question," he said, adding that Lai's purpose was to construct a new "Taiwan independence" system and attempt to split Taiwan from China.

that Taiwan's status is undetermined, and have advocated support for Taiwan's participation in UN conferences and activities. US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State at the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Mark Baxter Lambert said in April that the Resolution "did not endorse, is not equivalent to and does not reflect a consensus for China's 'one-China principle'".

In October, a motion was introduced into the European Parliament

by members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, an anti-Chinese group partly funded by the US government. The motion was aimed at denouncing China's use of Resolution 2758 to exclude Taiwan from international organizations.

During a briefing in May to elaborate on China's position on Resolution 2758, Yang Tao, the then director-general of the Department of North American and Oceanian Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, said, "If Taiwan's status is undetermined, and if China's representation does not include Taiwan, then why were the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek expelled?"

For more than 50 years, Taiwan's economic output has been counted as part of China's GDP when calculating China's scale of assessment at the UN and many other international organizations, he said. "Why does the US turn a blind eye to such clear facts and simple logic?"

Yang said the attempts made by the US aim to mislead international public opinion with malicious distortions, and seek to force this wrongful stance upon the international community.

During the discussions that led to Resolution 2758, the US had teamed up with a few countries to try to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan", and to push through a "dual representation" proposal against overwhelming opposition.

Taiwan-born kendo instructor grows cross-Strait ties

By LI PEIXUAN
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In July, Su Yu-cheng became the first Taiwan-born athlete to represent China at the World Kendo Championships, which this year took place in Milan, Italy. The significance of Su's participation, and him serving as Team China's flag bearer at the opening ceremony, was not lost on many observers.

During his rounds, Su competed valiantly for his country, donning the black kendo armor and wielding his bamboo sword in the traditional Japanese fencing contest. His efforts helped Team China to a meritable Top 16 finish.

Post-competition, the 34-year-old from Taipei was proud of his efforts.

"I have been practicing Kendo for 20 years. After coming to the mainland and after 9 years of intermittent selection, I finally repre-

sented China at the World Championships. I felt extremely excited, happy and proud," Su said.

"When holding the flag up high during the opening ceremony, I was quite nervous since it was such a big moment. However, my anxiety dissipated as I made my way into the arena and beheld the cheers and encouragement from the Chinese spectators below. My happiness grew steadily, and I was deeply moved as I clutched the flag at that moment."

Su first visited the mainland in 2007 while taking part in an invitational kendo tournament held by Renmin University of China in Beijing.

In 2015, he moved to the mainland full time, setting up his own kendo dojo in Xiamen, Fujian province.

Nine years on, Su has taught many students, forming a strong bond with them as both a mentor and friend.

Su is even working with partners and the Xiamen government to make a success of setting up a sports complex made up of Taiwan sports companies to attract interested parties from across the Taiwan Strait to showcase their unique talents and foster greater exchanges.

The integrated sports and cultural entrepreneurship employment base for Taiwan youth was established in June this year.

Regarding the operation of the base, Su admitted that there remained challenges in attracting investment and property management.

"Nonetheless, we are confident that these tasks can be managed as our primary focus is simple, which is purely on assisting Taiwan individuals in starting businesses, settling here and providing them with the necessary support."

At present, the base accommodates 28 Taiwan companies span-

ning a diverse range of sectors. In addition to kendo, the base has expanded its offerings to include basketball, swimming, tennis, archery, ice hockey, curling, short-track speed skating, fencing, surfing and skateboarding. It also offers services such as sports rehabilitation, physical training, etiquette coaching and modeling training. These businesses have been integrated with e-commerce ventures to facilitate the promotion and online sale of courses and sports equipment within the sports industry.

"We are doing our best to meet various needs and provide all the assistance possible to help our business owners succeed. For example, there are individuals who may be unfamiliar with selling coaching courses or sports equipment in this region due to varying sales practices between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. In this case, I share my knowledge personally and provide guidance on effectively



Su Yu-cheng (right) shares his experience of being the flag bearer of the Chinese delegation at the 19th World Kendo Championships during a cross-Strait youth exchange event in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in August. LYU MING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

marketing and selling these products," Su said.

His plan for the future is to enable a greater number of young people from Taiwan to visit the Chinese mainland, broaden their horizons

and get access to increased opportunities.

"Sporting interactions can help to diminish misconceptions and foster closer ties between people from both sides," Su said.

CHINA

Farming expert grows knowledge in Africa

By ZHOU LIHUA
and LIU KUN in Wuhan

Bringing along 75 kilograms of citrus branches, local tea and grafting materials, Liang Suiquan recently arrived in Malawi for his third agricultural aid mission to Africa.

Liang will serve as an expert in fruit trees, focusing on mangoes, apples and citrus fruits over the next two years as part of a project between China and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

The project aims to foster the sharing of agricultural knowledge and strengthen ties between developing countries.

The 55-year-old, a recognized agricultural expert from Yichang, Hubei province, has devoted his career to agricultural extension services since he was 18.

In 2014, Liang embarked on his first overseas mission to Chad, where he provided technical aid on conventional and hybrid rice. In 2019, he continued his work in Guinea-Bissau, supporting sweet potato and rice cultivation.

"My wish is simple: to make rice more fragrant and fruit sweeter, bringing quality produce to everyone," he said, explaining his motivation to return to Africa.

Liang's hometown is known for its citrus, so it is the fruit he knows best. He selected a few local citrus branches to bring to Malawi for grafting, testing their adaptability to the African climate.

"To start work quickly, I brought three large suitcases, totaling 75 kg of supplies," he said.

He began working immediately upon arrival in Malawi.

His techniques for mangoes and citrus proved popular among farmers in Guinea-Bissau, as locals are unfamiliar with these methods.



Above: Liang Suiquan monitors the growth of rice at a demonstration plot in Guinea-Bissau, with three local farmers. Below: Liang checks the health of a mango tree in Guinea-Bissau. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Liang is a tireless Chinese farmer. Beyond offering guidance on rice, he experiments with grafting mangoes, citrus and other fruit trees.

"I noticed local technicians grafting one branch per tree, which was inefficient. So, I divided the mango tree into upper, middle and lower sections for grafting — a method I call the 'three-step grafting technique,'" he said.

Liang's new method helps plants recover faster, sparking interest among local farmers. He teaches grafting hands on, mento-



ring African trainees like local worker Papa, creating sample trees that will support later large-scale practices.

Liang sees China's African support as more than just financial aid and material assistance — it involves imparting essential technical knowledge for sustainable development.

"Just as the old Chinese proverb: Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime," he said. In Guinea-Bissau, Liang and his

team worked for programs from rice training to crop variety breeding, with their Sabe-12 rice variety becoming a local favorite.

By 2020, their guidance on mechanized, high-yield cultivation boosted yields to 5 to 8 metric tons per hectare, three to four times the local average, significantly increasing rice production and reducing dependency on the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

This success has directly boosted local rice production, with more farmers now involved.

Each season, Liang's team provides 15 tons of rice seeds to local farmers for free and gives multimedia guides on topics such as planting techniques and tractor maintenance.

"This reduced the country's reliance on FAO-provided seeds, easing food shortages and reducing hunger in rural areas," Liang said.

The success of Sabe-12 was praised by Guinea-Bissau's O Democrata journal as a "symbol of friendship" with China.

"Helping one another is at the heart of China-Africa exchanges," he said.

Liang plans to select and cultivate fruit tree varieties suited to Malawi, establishing model orchards and training local farmers. He aims to introduce China's agricultural supply chain model to Malawi, laying a foundation for future agricultural trade between the two countries.

He said he has learned skills he couldn't acquire at home, but believes this is just the beginning.

"I not only want to share my expertise in citrus and mango cultivation but also to study in unfamiliar areas during my time in Africa," Liang added. "We should always keep learning."

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.

Bilingual livestream draws viewers for harvest season in Shenyang

By ZHOU HUIYING in Harbin
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Peng Bo has become much busier interacting with netizens since her video promoting local rice was published last month.

In the video, Peng, deputy director of the cultural and tourism bureau of Yuhong district in Shenyang, Liaoning province, garnered a lot of attention and likes as she seamlessly switched between her fluent English and northeastern dialect while livestreaming in a rice field.

"The video is one of the four main promotional videos for Yuhong," said Peng. "As it happened to be the harvest season for rice, we decided to shoot in the rice field."

Within just two days of its release, the video had accumulated tens of millions of views on various online platforms.

Born in 1983, Peng graduated from Shenyang Normal University

with a major in English, and became a civil servant in Yuhong, mainly responsible for translation and interpretation.

In June, Peng became deputy director of the district's cultural and tourism bureau.

"After I took the position in the bureau, I collected historical information about the district to find the stories of Yuhong," she said. "I found Yuhong was the first place that started planting rice in Shenyang."

To create a contrast, she decided to promote rice in English and the northeastern dialect. She had previously tried Mandarin with the northeastern dialect, but the contrast "wasn't strong enough, so we finally chose English." "Also I am the English promotion officer of Yuhong," she said.

She and her colleagues contacted the district's agricultural and rural affairs bureau and asked them to help recommend several high-quality grain growers, she

said. "We captured videos when they were busy harvesting rice and invited a villager to introduce his rice," she said. "Then we had lunch together with them in the field, presenting our love for the land and rice."

The creative team consisted only of her and another employee from the district government, she said, adding that the video's popularity was somewhat accidental.

However, she found communicating with netizens very enjoyable.

"In two days after the video went published, I replied to over 3,000 comments," she said.

"I found that they were quite curious about Northeast China, and I have added a few friends from the comments section on WeChat."

After the video went viral, the villager featured in the video, Zhao Heping from Wanjin village, and the other four farmers who left contact information at the end of

the video have become increasingly busy.

Farmers in the village sold over 100 metric tons of rice within a few days after the video was posted.

In recent years, tourism bureau officials from all over the country have showcased their talents and gained internet fame through popular short videos.

In 2021, Liu Hong, director of the tourism bureau of Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, received widespread acclaim for a video where he dressed up as a character from the well-received martial arts TV series *Xiao Ao Jiang Hu*, aka *Smiling Proud Wanderer*.

In 2022, Xie Wei, director of the tourism bureau of Suizhou city, Hubei province, appeared in ancient costume to promote the local thousand-year-old ginkgo tree, unexpectedly gaining internet fame with a humorous twist.

Last year Du Bo, director of the tourism bureau of Tahe county, Heilongjiang province, wore traditional attire of the Ewenki ethnic group and endorsed the beautiful local scenery amid the snowy forest, introducing countless netizens to Tahe, a relatively unknown small county.

Breakthrough improves harvesting of maize

By YAN DONGJIE in Beijing
and LIU KUN in Wuhan

A recent research breakthrough by Chinese scientists allows for a reduction of around 7 percent in the moisture content of maize kernels at maturity, facilitating mechanical harvesting and threshing.

Last month, the journal *Cell* published a research paper online titled "A Zea genus-specific micro-peptide controls kernel dehydration in maize" by a team led by Yan Jianbing, a professor at Huazhong Agricultural University.

The dehydration rate of maize kernels can impact the efficiency of mechanical harvesting. Maize kernels suitable for mechanized harvesting require a moisture content less than 25 percent, but most maize varieties in China typically have a moisture content at harvest between 30 and 40 percent, according to the research team.

The team studied the gene responsible for controlling the dehy-

dration rate of maize kernels, pinpointing a specific DNA sequence and further uncovering the mechanism through which it operates.

This discovery enables rapid dehydration of kernels before maturity without affecting yield.

"After adjustment, the moisture content at the time of maize harvesting can be reduced to approximately 23 percent. On average, the moisture content can be reduced by around 7 percent compared to ordinary maize, apart from being influenced by different climates and varieties," he said.

He mentioned that once this technology is implemented, direct threshing can be achieved during harvesting, reducing breakage and loss during harvesting.

"This essentially saves costs in maize production and increases additional income, benefiting the common people," Yan added.

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Emergency response system eases fears of elderly in Shanghai

A 24-hour emergency response system has allowed 91-year-old Chen to feel safe anytime of the day despite living alone in Shanghai.

The new system provides Chen, who chose to be referred to by surname, with around-the-clock care and peace of mind, as she knows that help is just a phone call away.

"It's such a relief," her son said. There were 297 million people aged 60 or above in China at the end of last year, accounting for 21 percent of the country's population. More than 90 percent of the elderly population prefer to grow old at home, a poll has shown.

Integrated in-home and community care is likely to be the dominant model elderly people in China will choose for their golden years over the next one to two decades, said Lei Xiaoyan, a professor of economics at Peking University's National School of Development, citing both demand and financial realities.

In response to this trend, Wujiqiao, where Chen lives, has established a 24-hour emergency

response center as well as a quick response point in each of the three city blocks of the subdistrict, which is an administrative unit equivalent to a township.

In addition to managing emergencies such as injuries, falls and burns, the system also provides daily living assistance, including personal care after incontinence, and people to accompany seniors to medical appointments when needed. Including Chen, 176 residents have signed up for the service.

In Panjin, a city in Liaoning province, Li Qinghe's home now features accessibility rails, an adjustable backrest support and a wooden chair designed for seniors. Across town, 86-year-old Wu Huanlai has received a wheelchair, a four-legged cane and a shoe bench.

Both are beneficiaries of minimum subsistence allowances. The Chinese government is working to support its most vulnerable citizens, experts say.

Authorities in Liaoning, for example, allocated 30 million yuan (\$4.22



A worker serves a senior customer at a community canteen in Gongzhuling city, Jilin province, on Nov 22. ZHANG NAN / XINHUA

million) last year, and again this year, to assist elderly individuals who face difficulties with home renovations, focusing on bathroom safety, indoor mobility features, smart monitoring and support equipment.

By the end of last year, 27,000 homes of elderly people in the province had been remodeled, with an additional 15,000 households expected to be upgraded by the end of this year.

Li Xirong, 77, said that the instal-

lation of an elevator in her apartment building has transformed her life in ways she had long dreamed of.

She had yearned for the freedom to take her grandson downstairs for leisurely walks and grocery trips, she said, without fearing a fall on wet steps or the exhaustion of the summer heat when tackling the eight flights of stairs leading to her home in the Longcheng subdistrict of Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

"I have to take a break after climbing each flight of stairs because my back and knees hurt so badly. So I tried to make do at home and avoided going downstairs whenever possible," she said.

With the recent installation of 395 elevators in Longcheng, over 30,000 people living on the upper floors of apartment buildings no longer need to struggle to go outside.

An accessible environment is essential for elderly individuals to participate fully and conveniently in social life, experts said. China enacted its first law on barrier-free environments in September last year,

making specific stipulations for the installation of elevators in older communities.

In the early morning light, 87-year-old Zhang Ling recently made her way to her community's elderly care center in Huichun, Jilin province, for a rejuvenating massage.

As she was soothed into relaxation, her 89-year-old husband, Yu Chenghai, played Chinese chess in an adjacent room where bursts of hearty laughter could be heard echoing through the walls.

"The dining hall here is convenient and offers great prices for us," Zhang said. "The community even brings health checkups right to our doorsteps. I couldn't be more content with life."

Last year alone, provincial authorities invested 100 million yuan to establish 102 elderly care centers and 100 dining halls at communities across Jilin. By the end of June this year, there were 410,000 elderly care institutions and facilities across the country. These included 369,000 community based ones, up 120 percent from 2019, according to official data.

XINHUA

Changsha polishes blueprint for tech-culture integration

Innovative approach spurs expansion of tourist industry



Changsha's Malanshan Video Cultural and Creative Industrial Park is known as China's "V Valley" because of its video industry concentration. CHENG LONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

By SONG MENGXING
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Limitless potential for revamping tourism is created when a city melds its dazzling culture with cutting-edge technology. Such is the case in Changsha, capital of Central China's Hunan province, where a whirlwind of "culture plus technology" is sweeping the city, spurred by concerted efforts to blend industries with culture and shape new paradigms for tourism.

New business modes

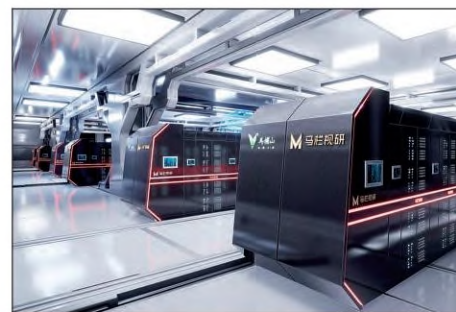
Located on the bank of Liuyang River, Changsha's Malanshan Video Cultural and Creative Industrial Park is home to more than 60,000 professionals who are excelling in the field of audio and video creation and production. With the support of technology, new cultural business modes have emerged there, forming a complete digital cultural industry chain that encompasses links such as content production, creativity, storage, broadcasting and trading.

At Skymedia, a large audio and video multimedia model released by Wondershare at Malanshan park, users can upload a photo and get a dynamic 3D effect video, or input text commands to generate music. The model boasts a wide variety of functions, including text-to-video generation, image-to-video generation and soundtracks, and is in commercial use. With the Skymedia model, creators can complete audio and video content production and editing more efficiently, significantly enhancing both the efficiency and quality of their creations.

As part of another project at Malanshan park, two people far apart don special pairs of "glasses" to become "close neighbors" in a virtual scene. Zou Jun, who is responsible for the project, said: "We define it as the next generation of communication, enabling real-time face-to-face interaction for remote business meetings, family communications and educational activities."

The deep integration of culture and technology has led to the continuous emergence of new business modes and new scenarios at Malanshan park. According to statistics, over the past two years, more than 60 percent of leading enterprises attracted to the park are engaged in new business modes.

The animation and video game industry has become one of the fastest-growing new cultural sectors in recent years. Thanks to new infrastructure such as a video cloud platform, a supercomputing center and shared production center, Malanshan park has



Clockwise from top: The third Malanshan digital cultural industry carnival opened in Changsha on Nov 29. A company based in Malanshan park uses supercomputing equipment to aid the video industry. Shanghai, a digital cultural museum application, is launched in Changsha in August. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

reduced the rendering time and costs for animation and game production by 30 percent. This has led to a strong trend of enterprises clustering together and scaling up capacity in the three-dimensional animation industry.

Currently, Malanshan park focuses on new technologies, new applications and new industries. It has established 16 scientific and technological innovation institutions and attracted 3,000-plus upstream and downstream enterprises.

By deeply applying digital technologies such as panoramic scanning, virtual reality and glasses-free 3D into the field of cultural heritage, other Changsha projects have brought precious historical relics back to life.

In August, Hunan Mango Digital Art Intelligence Technology launched a digital cultural museum application called Shanhai. This platform uses digital technology to present museum relics in a 3D form, allowing people to explore exhibitions anytime and anywhere on

their mobile devices. The app offers vast digital collections and integrates functions such as 3D artifact appreciation, AI interaction and personalized museum experiences. It has quickly become popular online.

Digital technology helps relics be "reborn", allowing audiences to seemingly travel back thousands of years while gaining an immersive understanding of the history and culture behind them. This year, Hunan Museum released a 3D digital image of Lady Xinzhui, a woman whose remains have been well preserved for more than 2,000 years. Through the integration of advanced AI technology, motion capture technology and multiple disciplines including medicine and archaeology, the "sleeping beauty" has been brought back to life.

Besides relics in the museum, heritage in the wild can be "revived" with the help of high-tech solutions. The Wuxi site of stone tablets in Hunan's

Qiyang city is a large open-air site that preserves stone inscriptions from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), making it a rare treasure trove of calligraphic carvings. Due to natural causes, the surfaces of the inscriptions have experienced varying degrees of weathering, rendering many characters blurred and difficult to discern. The Malanshan cultural digitization innovation center, in collaboration with a team, utilized various digital technologies to rejuvenate the historical and cultural heritage, collecting images of each stele, employing techniques to achieve high-precision digital imaging, and forming a stele database.

Today, the database stores basic information about the inscriptions, which have been made clear and distinguishable, and provides things such as original photos and micro-trace images, as well as calibrating relationships between several hundred steles and hundreds of famous individuals. In the future, it

could facilitate secondary creations around the inscriptions by experts, scholars and design teams.

Cultural tourism

Changsha's innovative integration of culture and technology has given rise to new cultural tourism scenarios and business modes. From traditional real-world sightseeing to immersive experiences that blend the real with the virtual, new technologies can be found in the creation and dissemination of cultural content and interactive methods in cultural tourism, providing visitors with entirely new experiences.

In September, a digital exhibition hall, located next to Tianxin Pavilion, officially opened. The hall houses a vast collection of relics related to figures from Hunan history and also offers an immersive cultural experience via new digital and intelligent technologies. In one example, a digital image of Zhu Xi, a renowned philosopher from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), appears on a screen and can answer questions asked by visitors. The "digital human" Zhu Xi was created based on national supercomputing. Through AI technology, the great scholar's attire, expressions and movements have been interpreted and he can engage in precise conversations with visitors. They can ask him abstract questions such as the meaning of "seeking truth from facts", as well as trendy enquiries like "What are some of the best foods in Changsha?" or "What drinks did people in the Song Dynasty enjoy?"

The digital cultural tourism industry is another significant achievement of Malanshan park's integration of culture and technology. The park utilizes new technologies such as VR, augmented reality and wearable devices to create multiple immersive cultural tourism projects, offering visitors an unprecedented travel experience. One representative project is *Dream of Youth*, created by TVZone.cn Corp. Since its launch in 2023, the drama has attracted more than 90,000 views and become a new landmark of Changsha's digital cultural tourism.

The play enhances cultural experience using technologies such as lighting, projection and digital media. The audience can engage in learning alongside the "new youth" roles of a century ago and talk with them. The interactive experience of "being in the play" has deeply moved spectators who immerse themselves in the heroic deeds of revolutionary martyrs and witness the historical changes in Changsha.



From left: Wondershare launches a large audio and video multimedia model at Malanshan park. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Part of Malanshan park. CHENG LONG / FOR CHINA DAILY Changsha Museum uses digital technology to exhibit its porcelain. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ADVERTORIAL

WORLDUS

Trump threatens BRICS tariffs over dollar

By HENG WEILI in New York
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The United States appears to be taking a stand against developing countries looking for an alternative to the dollar, which some experts say could backfire.

On Saturday evening, US President-elect Donald Trump threatened to impose 100 percent tariffs on BRICS countries — which include China and Russia — that do not use the dollar as their reserve currency.

"The idea that the BRICS countries are trying to move away from the dollar while we stand by and watch is OVER," he wrote on his Truth Social website, referring to the bloc that also includes Brazil, India and South Africa, and newer members Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the

United Arab Emirates.

"We require a commitment from these countries that they will neither create a new BRICS currency nor back any other currency to replace the mighty US dollar, or they will face 100 percent tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy," Trump added.

Last week, the president-elect said he would impose 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico if they did not stem illegal immigration into the US, and would increase existing tariffs on China by 10 percent.

During his presidential campaign, Trump also floated 60 percent tariffs on all Chinese imports.

The Chinese embassy in Washington said on Nov 25 that China believes China-US economic and trade cooperation is "mutually beneficial in nature" and "no one will

win a trade war or a tariff war".

At a BRICS meeting in Kazan, Russia, last month, one of the main topics was a proposal by the host country of a payments messaging system called the "BRICS bridge" as an alternative to the Western-dominated SWIFT system, which was established in 1973 and is headquartered in Belgium.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a speech at the meeting, accused Western nations of "using the US dollar as a weapon" over his country's military conflict with Ukraine. "We are not rejecting or fighting the dollar. But if we are not given the chance to use it, what can we do? We are then forced to look for alternatives," Putin said.

Chen Qi, a professor at the Institute of International Relations at Tsinghua University in Beijing, told the Financial Times of London:

"Non-Western emerging countries like China, Russia, India, or other countries, even Saudi Arabia, have the same kind of concerns about possibly one day being ousted by the United States from the SWIFT system. So if this substitute payment system comes out in the future, that would be welcomed by these (BRICS) countries."

Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative in India, told the Times of India: "The US has a history of leveraging its influence over global financial systems, such as the SWIFT network, to impose unilateral sanctions. SWIFT — the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication — is essential for secure and standardized international financial transactions."

"By blocking countries like Russia and Iran from accessing SWIFT, the

US has effectively weaponized the global financial infrastructure, forcing other nations to find alternative payment mechanisms to continue legitimate trade."

Srivastava said "Trump's threat is unrealistic".

"Tariffs of this scale would harm US consumers by raising domestic prices, disrupt global trade, and risk retaliation from key trading partners," he said. "A global shift away from (the) dollar is a complex process driven by economic diversification, not easily deterred by threats."

"Diametrically opposed" Michael Pettis, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote on X: "The US cannot both reduce its trade deficit and increase the global dominance of USD because these impose diametrically opposed conditions. "Reducing the trade deficit would

benefit American businesses, workers and middle-class savers. Increasing USD dominance would benefit Wall Street and the sanctioning power of the US government. The US must decide which constituency is more important."

In another post on X, AI Day Trading, a stock-trading service, wrote that the tariff threat could backfire: "The US has a \$433.5 billion trade deficit with BRICS. None of the BRICS partners or candidate nations (more than 50 countries in total) have significant trade deficits with the US, with Vietnam posting a \$104.62 billion surplus in 2023."

"The US depends on BRICS for a wide range of physical goods, from machinery and pharmaceuticals to rare earth minerals, with the bloc accounting for 40 percent to 70 percent of production in these sectors."

Biden pardons his son Hunter

WASHINGTON — US President Joe Biden said on Sunday he had pardoned his son, Hunter Biden, a reversal after pledging to stay out of legal proceedings against the younger Biden who pleaded guilty to tax violations and was convicted on firearms-related charges.

"Today, I signed a pardon for my son Hunter. From the day I took office, I said I would not interfere with the Justice Department's decision-making, and I kept my word even as I have watched my son being selectively, and unfairly, prosecuted," the president said in a statement.

The move is sure to bring about fresh scrutiny over the independence of the US judicial system — especially at a time when incoming president Donald Trump has moved to appoint loyalists to the FBI and Justice Department himself.

The grant of clemency said the president had granted "a full and unconditional" pardon to the younger Biden for any offenses in a window from Jan 1, 2014, to Dec 1, 2024.

Hunter Biden was convicted earlier this year of lying about his drug use when he bought a gun — a felony — and also pleaded guilty in a separate tax evasion trial, but did not face sentencing.

Joe Biden, who is in the final weeks of his presidency before Trump takes office on Jan 20, had repeatedly said he would not pardon his son.

Republicans criticized the president's move.

Trump said in a post on his Truth Social site on Sunday that the pardon was "such an abuse and miscarriage of Justice".

"Does the Pardon given by Joe to Hunter include the J-6 Hostages, who have now been imprisoned for years?" Trump asked, referring to those convicted for storming the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021, after Trump claimed that he had won the 2020 election.

Representative James Comer, chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, said, "Joe Biden has lied from start to finish about his family's corrupt influence-peddling activities."

Hunter Biden pleaded guilty in a tax evasion trial in September, facing up to 17 years in prison. For the separate gun charge, he was facing 25 years in prison.

His lawyers have said he was only being brought before the court because he is the son of the president.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



US President Joe Biden, accompanied by Hunter Biden and Beau Jr, walks out of a bookstore in downtown Nantucket, Massachusetts, on Friday. CRAIG HUDSON / REUTERS

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Pandas on parade



Two giant panda floats make their debut at the 92nd Hollywood Christmas Parade on Sunday along the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles, adding a touch of charm to the kickoff of the holiday season. RENA LI / CHINA DAILY

US again targets China with more chip curbs

By HENG WEILI

The outgoing Biden administration has again moved to restrict China's technological advance with a new round of semiconductor-related export curbs affecting nearly 150 companies internationally.

In the third round of sweeping technology restrictions in three years on China's companies, the US Commerce Department announced it would curtail exports to 140 companies by placing them on its Entity List, which includes Chinese chip-equipment maker Naura Technology.

The new restrictions not only will have an impact on American companies but on companies in other countries.

In the US, the curbs could hit companies like Lam Research, KLA Corp and Applied Materials, but also Dutch equipment maker ASM International.

Applied Materials, which also makes chip equipment, reported that its net revenue from exports to China increased 86 percent in the nine months ending July 28 to \$7.9 billion, or 40 percent of its total revenue, The Wall Street Journal reported.

New controls on software tools for developing or producing advanced-node integrated circuits, including certain software that increases the productivity of advanced machines or allows less-advanced machines to produce advanced chips, could affect companies like Germany's Siemens, which is the parent company of the former Mentor Graphics, based in Oregon.

Another rule in the package restricts high-bandwidth memory used in artificial intelligence chips that correspond with what is known as "HBM 2" and higher, technology made by South Korea's Samsung

“China firmly opposes the US' overstressing the concept of national security ...”

Lin Jian, spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry

and SK Hynix, and US-based Micron Technology. The HBM rule compliance date was scheduled for Dec 31.

Industry sources expect only Samsung Electronics to be affected, according to Reuters. Analysts estimate Samsung generates about 30 percent of its HBM chip sales from China.

HBM is critical to both AI training and inference at scale and is a key component of advanced computing integrated circuits.

Lin Jian, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, told reporters on Monday that the export controls are detrimental to the interests of all countries.

"We have repeatedly made clear our position on this issue. China firmly opposes the US' overstressing the concept of national security, abusing export controls, and maliciously blocking and suppressing China," Lin said at a media briefing.

"This type of behavior seriously violates the laws of market economy and the principle of fair competition, disrupts international economic and trade order, destabilizes global industrial and supply chains and will eventually harm the interests of all countries," he said.

China's Ministry of Commerce called the restrictions "economic coercion" that "seriously" threaten the global supply chain.

The new entrants on the Entity List include semiconductor fabrication plants, also known as fabs; semiconductor tool companies, and investment companies allegedly "acting at the behest of Beijing to further China's advanced chip goals which pose a risk to US and allied national security", according to the US Commerce Department.

Chinese private-equity firm Wise Road Capital, tech firm Wingtech Technology Co and JAC Capital were added to the list.

Companies seeking licenses to ship to firms on the Entity List generally get denied.

The new rule also will expand US powers to curb exports of chipmaking equipment by American, Japanese and Dutch manufacturers made in other parts of the world to certain chip plants in China.

Equipment made in Israel, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan is subject to the rule, while Japan and the Netherlands will be exempt.

The expanded foreign direct product rule will apply to 16 companies on the Entity List that are seen as the most important to China's most advanced chipmaking goals.

The rule also will lower the amount of American content that determines when certain foreign items are subject to US control, which will allow the US to regulate any item shipped to China from overseas if it contains any American chips.

US chip toolmakers had lobbied the White House and Congress to limit the reach of the new controls on Huawei Technologies Co Ltd fabs and had some support in Commerce,

according to two US officials, The Washington Post reported.

But the White House and the State, Energy and Defense departments rebuffed Commerce, and the relaxation was rejected, the officials said, according to the Post.

"The news from a few days ago that Huawei's newest smartphone was created with the most sophisticated products was another reminder that China's biggest companies can take any tariff or import-ban punch and remain standing," Anthony Moretti, an associate professor in the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, told China Daily.

"Washington continues to be on the defensive, acting in a way that suggests it knows Beijing has the upper hand, and is desperate to stop China's momentum," he said.

"I anticipate Chinese companies, scientists, business leaders and the government will respond by rolling up their collective sleeves and continuing to find solutions."

In an extensive report titled "The True Impact of Allied Export Controls on the US and Chinese Semiconductor Manufacturing Equipment Industries", published on Nov 26 on the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) website, Gregory Allen detailed China's efforts to build up its own semiconductor industry long before US sanctions.

"There is simply no policy that the United States could articulate that would persuade China to abandon its goals of de-Americanization and decoupling in the semiconductor equipment sector," wrote Allen, who is the director of the Wadhvani AI Center at CSIS in Washington DC.

Agencies contributed to this story.

BUSINESS

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A view of the Baogang Group plant in Baotou, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA

Baogang sees rapid growth in steel exports

By LI JIAYING in Beijing and YUAN HUI in Hohhot

With expanded reach to key global markets, Baogang Group said it has achieved growth in both scale and quality, as well as significant progress in steel exports.

According to the latest data from the Baotou, Inner Mongolia autonomous region-based major steel manufacturer, Baogang exported a total of 1.376 million metric tons of steel in 2023 to 46 countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, solidifying its share on the global stage.

Among all the potential markets, Central Asia remains a key export destination for the group, it said.

For example, as the first Chinese enterprise to develop and mass-produce steel rails conforming to

Russian standards, Baogang has yielded tangible results in product promotion and sales in the region. In July, the group signed a 130,000-ton steel rail export order with Uzbekistan for the country's railway maintenance project.

Over the past decade, Baogang has actively ramped up steel exports. The number of export destinations has grown from 22 to 60, with annual export volume once reaching a peak of 1.8774 million tons — doubling from initial levels.

In addition, the company's product range has also expanded to include new categories such as plates, pipes, rails and wires.

"We have adopted a product-driven approach, focusing on upgrading and transforming our product portfolio. By reducing exports of general-purpose materi-

als and seizing opportunities in specialized steel markets along the BRI, we have seen growth in high-quality steel products for use in pipeline, wind power equipment, automotive sector, home appliances and rails," said Wang Wei, manager of the import and export division at Baotou Steel International Economic and Trading Co Ltd, a subsidiary of Baogang Group.

To further expand its global reach, Baogang plans to establish offices in the Middle East and Central Asia, creating international marketing stations and ultimately forming a globalized sales network, Wang said.

In addition, the group is preparing to sign a warehousing agreement with a logistics park at the Mandula Port on the China-Mon-

golia border. Currently in the preparatory and on-site investigation stages, the agreement is expected to pave the way for renminbi-denominated imports of iron ore and coal resources. Once operational, the port will serve as Baogang's largest transit hub for imported iron ore and coal, Wang added.

Beyond steel products, Baogang has also achieved record exports of non-steel products, surpassing 70,000 tons in the first eight months of this year, the group said. The products have been widely used in key projects around the globe, such as the Port Said development at the northern gateway of the Suez Canal and the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya.

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GWDC plans expansion in BRI economies

CNPC drilling unit hopes going global will significantly increase revenue

By ZHONG NAN
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The second drilling unit of CNPC Greatwall Drilling Co (GWDC), a Beijing-based State-owned enterprise, plans to deploy more resources and offer customized solutions in economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative in order to expedite its pace of internationalization, a senior executive said.

In the first 11 months of this year, the company — a unit of State-owned China National Petroleum Corp — spudded 61 wells and completed 54 wells in international markets, primarily in economies involved in the BRI, with a total drilling depth of 168,100 meters.

Highlighting that these efforts will notably support local economic growth and energy security, Li Hong, head of the international business branch at the second drilling unit of GWDC, said that by tapping into international markets, particularly resource-rich regions, Chinese drilling companies can significantly boost their revenues and diversify their market base.

The second drilling unit of GWDC worked in close collaboration with its client, Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (ADNOC), a state-owned oil company in the United Arab Emirates, to achieve a record-breaking completion cycle of 23 days for the FL49 well in the UAE in late October.

This set a new benchmark for the fastest single-well construction in the UAE's Falah oil and gas field, breaking records for both the highest single-day footage and the shortest third-section drilling cycle.

The FL49 well is a three-section directional well with an actual drilling cycle of 20 days and a completion cycle of 23 days. The project encountered several major challenges, including a high risk of leakage in the second section, the potential for leakage-to-kick transitions in the third section and elevated hydrogen sulfide content.

To deal with these difficulties, the second drilling unit of GWDC maintained sustained real-time communication with ADNOC, meticulously refining operational processes in advance and allocat-

ing tasks to ensure seamless workflow integration.

"This remarkable speed improvement is the result of continuous investment and innovation in drilling technology. We hope this achievement serves not just as a single-well success but as a foundation for future projects," said Li.

The successful drilling and record-breaking performance of the FL49 well demonstrate the comprehensive technical capabilities of GWDC in the field of drilling technology, laying a solid foundation for developing an unconventional oilfield in the early phase, he added.

The going global business of Chinese companies is undoubtedly a significant force. They have evolved from "capital going abroad" and "products going abroad" to the stage of "capability going abroad," said Vianne Cai, head of marketing solutions for China at LinkedIn, a California-based professional networking platform provider.

However, they need to participate in the global value chain division at a more advanced level, establish more resilient and stable global value chains, and demonstrate higher corporate responsibility and sustainable development capabilities, she said.

China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment surged 10.6 percent year-on-year to \$115.83 billion between January and October, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

In the same period, Chinese companies invested \$26.65 billion nonfinancial capital in countries and regions participating in the BRI, up 3 percent from the previous year.

With an annual drilling capacity of 1.7 million meters, the service scope of the second drilling unit of the GWDC primarily includes drilling, pre-drilling engineering and well completion operations, capable of handling various types of drilling and well-servicing projects for oil, natural gas, and coal-bed methane, as well as geothermal and water resources, up to 9,000 meters in depth.

The company has built a market presence in 11 countries, including Algeria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.



An engineer from the second drilling unit of CNPC Greatwall Drilling Co instructs a local worker at an oilfield in Azerbaijan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Over \$21b in deals inked at supply chain expo

The second China International Supply Chain Expo wrapped up over the weekend in Beijing, having witnessed the signing of over 210 trade deals and tentative agreements totaling more than 152 billion yuan (\$21.2 billion), according to the event's organizer, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

During the five-day expo, over 600 exhibitors from nearly 70 countries and regions established cooperative ties with more than 37,000 upstream and downstream suppliers, the organizer said.

The CCPIT scheduled over 6,000 matchmaking sessions for exhibitors and visitors, facilitating the establishment of more than 6,700 cooperation intentions.

This year's expo attracted over 200,000 visitors, an increase of about a third compared to the inaugural event.

As the world's first national-level expo focusing on supply chains, the event has garnered significant interest from foreign firms. Nearly one-third of this year's exhibitors came from overseas, up from 26 percent over last year. Major global players, including GE HealthCare and SAP, have already secured their participation at the third edition of the expo.

Zhang Shaogang, vice-chairman of the CCPIT, emphasized that the expo is a platform for both domestic and foreign firms to showcase their innovations, engage in meaningful business discussions and exchange views on strengthening supply chain cooperation.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Unified power market on track

By ZHENG XIN
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China is on track to establish a national unified power market by 2029 with a preliminary structure to be established by 2025, further integrating renewable energy sources while optimizing the distribution of power across the vast national grid, said industry experts.

Clear pathways will be defined for renewable energy participation, while mechanisms to ensure reasonable returns on renewable energy investments will be explored, according to the National Unified Power Market Development Plan Bluebook released by the China Electricity Council in Beijing on Friday.

A national unified power market is a system where electricity is bought, sold and distributed across the entire country in a standardized way. It connects all regions, ensuring equal access to power, promotes competition and allows for efficient pricing.

The goal is to improve energy reliability, lower costs and integrate renewable energy sources like solar, wind and hydropower into the grid more effectively. Such a market also ensures fair regulation and supports investment in modern energy infrastructure.

According to the bluebook, before 2025, more than 50 percent of renewable energy will be integrated into the market and all of the renewable energy will fully participate in the market by 2029, with steady progress in the marketization of hydropower, nuclear power and distributed renewable energy.

With increasing pressure to absorb the ever-climbing amount of renewable energy in the country, market mechanisms needed

684.5 b
kilowatt-hours
total market-based electricity transactions for renewable energy nationwide in 2023

to handle the volatility and forecasting challenges of renewable energy are still underdeveloped, making it necessary to design a market system and trading mechanisms that are tailored to the characteristics of renewable energy to better support its integration into the market, it said.

S&P Global Commodity Insights had previously forecast that China aspires to establish a national unified power market preliminarily by 2025 and at a basic level by 2030.

Power market reform in China has made major strides forward since late 2021, with all coal-fired power entering market trading, abolishment of regulated retail tariffs for commercial and industrial (C&I) power users, start of pilot trading of green power contracts, and liberalization of ancillary services, it said.

China is already accelerating the pace of renewable energy market integration, said Pan Yue-long, supervision chairman of the council.

In 2023, the total market-based electricity transactions for renewable energy nationwide reached 684.5 billion kilowatt-hours, accounting for 47.3 percent of all renewable energy generated, with some large power companies seeing their share of renewable energy in market transactions exceed 50 percent, said Pan.

The scale of green power and green certificate trading also continues to expand. In the first half of 2024, the national green power trading volume reached 151.93 bil-

lion kilowatt-hours, a year-on-year increase of 233 percent, while 160 million green certificates were traded, he said.

According to the council, the volume of electricity traded in the national market has also been climbing, reaching 5.67 trillion kilowatt-hours in 2023, accounting for 61.4 percent of total electricity consumption nationwide. The market size has grown nearly fivefold since 2016.

The volume of inter-provincial and inter-regional market transactions nationwide approached 1.2 trillion kilowatt-hours, highlighting the increasing role of the market in optimizing the allocation of electricity resources over a larger geographic area, it said.

The scale of medium- and long-term electricity transactions has continued to grow. In 2023, medium- and long-term transactions accounted for more than 90 percent of the total electricity traded in the market, effectively playing a key role in ensuring supply stability and price control.

Zhang Lin, director of the council's planning and development department, said it is necessary to incentivize the role of various flexible power sources, to better reflect the capacity and regulatory value of conventional units, while expanding the ways in which new energy storage can participate in the market and establishing market mechanisms to leverage the regulation capabilities of pumped-storage hydroelectric stations.

Further optimization and improvement of green power and green certificate trading are also necessary. This involves continuously expanding the scale of green power trading and enhancing the issuance and trading mechanisms for green certificates, she said.

Briefly

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 12 pips to 7.1865 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

4.57 trillion yuan in new local govt bonds

China's local governments issued new bonds worth 4.57 trillion yuan (\$628.4 billion) in the first 10 months of this year, data from the Ministry of Finance showed. Of the total, special bond issuance came in at 3.91 trillion yuan, while the issuance of general bonds amounted to 656.8 billion yuan. In the 10-month period, local government bonds were issued with an average term of 13.4 years and at an average interest rate of 2.33 percent.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Data center built by CIMC online

Ultra-large project in Malaysia seen as a milestone in IT infra construction

By ZHOU MO
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Constructed by Shenzhen CIMC Construction Co Ltd — a unit of China International Marine Containers (Group) Co Ltd — the “Malaysia 2312” ultra-large data center built with modular integrated construction (MiC) method started operations recently in Johor, marking a milestone globally in information technology infrastructure construction, CIMC Construction said.

Covering 240,000 square meters, the data center project, which consists of three buildings, was delivered to customers in November.

It integrates functions such as big data processing, computing power support, cloud computing services and high-efficiency information management to provide strong infrastructure support for data pro-

cessing business, which could significantly enhance safe storage and high-efficiency processing capability of data.

The first and second buildings are already operational, while the third building will be put into operation in the near future, the company said.

“The successful operation of the modular data center once again demonstrates the value of modular construction in the building of large-scale data centers,” said You Deqiang, general manager of CIMC Construction.

MiC is an innovative approach to construction that involves assembling buildings using prefabricated modules or components that are manufactured off-site and then transported to the construction site for final assembly.

Data center projects in Malaysia normally take 18 months to be completed using traditional construc-

“The successful operation of the modular data center once again demonstrates the value of modular construction in the building of large-scale data centers.”

You Deqiang, general manager of CIMC Construction

tion methods. With the MiC, it took the builder less than a year and brought many benefits, such as improved efficiency, the company said.

The development comes as a growing number of Chinese technology companies are building data centers overseas to provide IT support for the expansion of over-

seas business among Chinese enterprises.

For example, Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing unit of Chinese tech giant Alibaba, said earlier this year that it would build new data centers in five countries — South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Mexico.

Many enterprises choose to build data centers in Southeast Asia as the digital economy in the region has seen significant growth in recent years.

According to a report by global consultancy Research and Markets, the market value of data centers in Southeast Asia is projected to expand from \$9.68 billion in 2022 to \$14.19 billion by 2028, representing a compound annual growth rate of 6.57 percent over the period.

Malaysia has emerged as a preferred destination in the region. A separate report by the consulting firm shows that the size of data centers in Malaysia is expected to grow from \$1.31 billion in 2022 to \$2.25 billion by 2028, or an annual growth rate of 9.4 percent.

Xiong'an New Area becoming mecca for AI enterprises

By ZHANG YU in Xiong'an, Hebei
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With an increasing number of artificial intelligence-related enterprises setting up in Xiong'an New Area — an emerging innovation center near Beijing — AI sector players are rapidly converging in the area, intensifying its innovative atmosphere and inspiring entrepreneurial passion in talent, local officials said.

“The area is striving to build an open and comprehensive industrial ecosystem for AI development in Xiong'an,” said Ding Xiaolong, deputy director-general of the area's administrative committee.

Ding made the remark at an AI robotics innovation ecosystem development conference held in the area on Thursday.

During the conference, Mech-Mind Robotics, a unicorn company specializing in AI robotics, made its official debut and commenced operations in the area, injecting fresh momentum into the area's burgeoning AI sector.

Founded in 2016 in the capital, the company relocated its headquarters to Xiong'an in September.

“The relocation was motivated by the area's perfect location, comprehensive AI industry planning, robust infrastructure, talent incentives and favorable business environment,” Shao Tianlan, founder and CEO of Mech-Mind Robotics, told China Daily on Thursday.

Located about 100 kilometers southwest of downtown Beijing, Xiong'an was established in April 2017, dubbed a future city, with innovation and intelligence being two outstanding attributes.

“We will continue to delve into cutting-edge technologies in this field, expand applications and promote more innovative achievements to the global market from Xiong'an,” Shao said.

Specializing in computer science, Shao graduated from Tsinghua University in 2012 before going to Germany for graduate studies. Together with two fellow alumni, Shao created Mech-Mind Robotics in 2016, guided by Zhang Jianwei, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

“My aim was to make industrial robots smarter, and capable of dealing with more complex environments and changes,” Shao said.

His goals have been realized. To date, Shao's company has swiftly risen to become a prominent high-tech enterprise at the forefront of the global AI robotics sector.

“Leveraging key technological advantages in making industrial 3D cameras and AI-powered software

“The area is striving to build an open and comprehensive industrial ecosystem for AI development in Xiong'an.”

Ding Xiaolong, deputy director-general of the Xiong'an New Area's administrative committee

for intelligent robotics, we hold a leading position globally in such technologies and production capacity,” Shao said.

Having secured the top rank in domestic sales of AI robots for four consecutive years, Mech-Mind Robotics has expanded its business footprint to over 50 countries and regions worldwide, including the United States, Japan, South Korea, Germany and India.

“With a very promising start, we believe our development will be even better in Xiong'an by yielding more achievements,” Shao said, adding that the AI robots can be applied in multiple fields, including manufacturing, logistics and healthcare.

In addition to Mech-Mind Robotics, several other AI robotics companies from Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, Guangdong province sealed cooperation agreements with the area's reform and development bureau on Thursday.

Furthermore, over 40 AI-related enterprises have been attracted to the area, encompassing various aspects of the AI sector including chips, storage, optical modules, data services and algorithms, Ding said.

A robotics industry alliance was also established to foster the coordinated development of the AI robotics sector, and enhance exchanges and cooperation among upstream and downstream enterprises in the industrial chain.

Ding highlighted the area's strategic emphasis on key directions within the AI sector, such as vertical large models and applied large models, with the establishment of multiple development platforms, including an AI industrial park, urban computing center and pilot base for science and technology innovation.

The AI sector's advances have found applications in diverse sectors within Xiong'an, spanning aerospace information, meteorology, urban operations, water management, transportation and smart homes, Ding added.

“The rich AI applications will comprehensively empower urban operations,” he said.

Ant Group further taps payment biz with Tap!

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
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Alipay has expanded the nation's payment services market, with its new product — Alipay Tap! — recently becoming available in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

According to the company, tens of thousands of stores and restaurants across the city have started using the service.

With the service, which was introduced by Ant Group's payment arm in July, users can make payments simply by keeping the phone screen unlocked and then tapping their smartphones against the cash register.

“Many young people appreciate our new payment solution, while those who are senior or visually impaired can now make payments without finding a payment code, which has significantly reduced the barrier to using mobile payments,” said Gao Zheng, product manager of Alipay Tap!.

Many stores, supermarkets and restaurants in Guangzhou have already accepted payment by Tap!, the company said, adding that about 100,000 restaurants nationwide, including some McDonald's outlets, have applied to start using the new technology.

“We will continue to focus on key



A moviegoer pays with Alipay Tap! at a cinema in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in November.

cities like Guangzhou, optimizing product experiences, expanding scene openness through partnerships and conducting diverse operational activities to boost local consumption vitality,” said Gao.

“Foreign visitors in China can also use the service.”

The nation released a guideline earlier this year to continue optimizing payment services in the country.

The guideline, issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, focused on providing higher-quality, more

effective and more convenient payment services for senior citizens and foreign visitors.

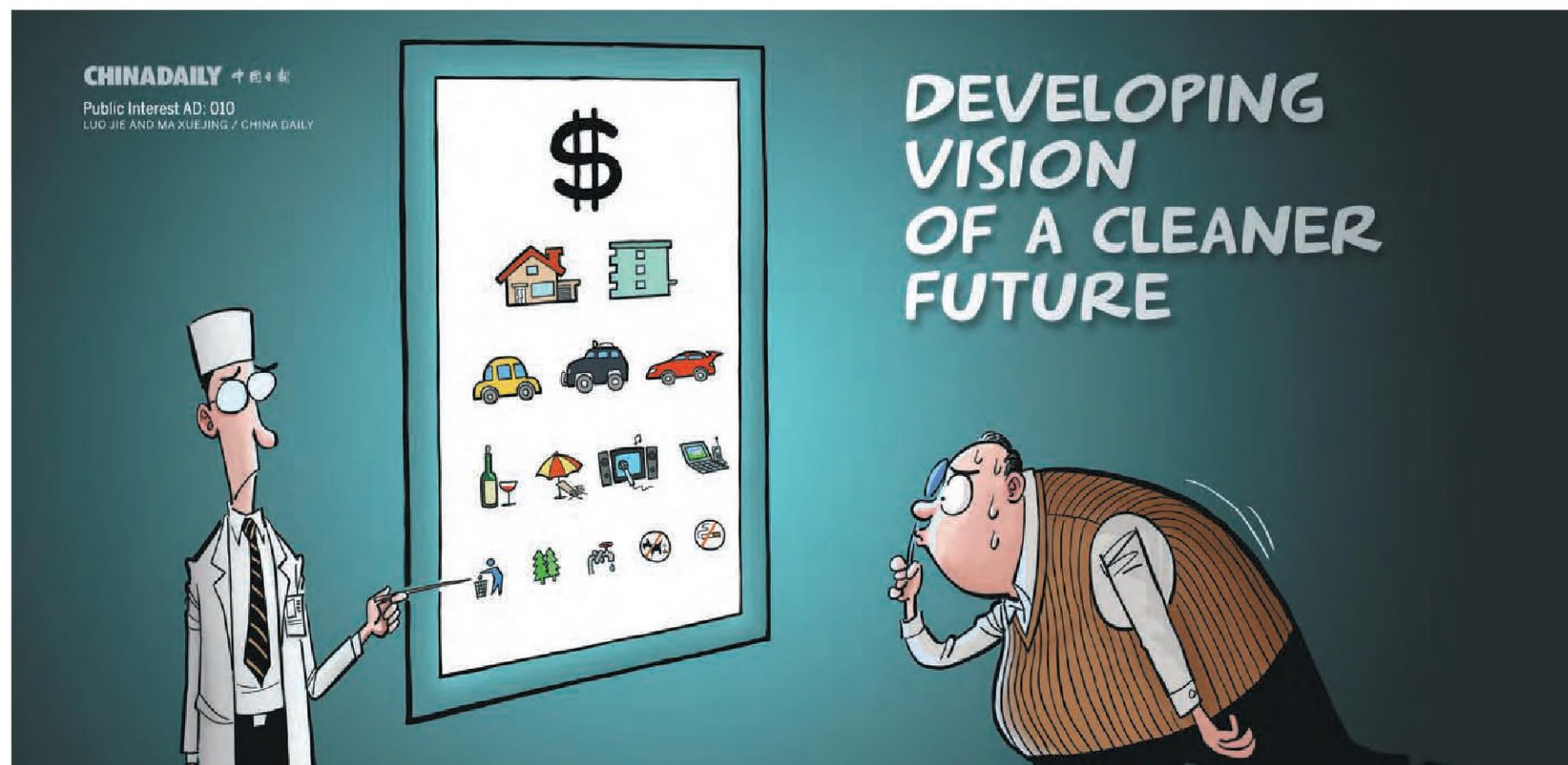
The guideline stresses the need to expand the acceptance rate of bank card payments to meet the demand of the elderly and foreigners who use bank cards in various scenarios.

China will facilitate the use of cash and currency exchanges, according to the guideline document. Banks and payment institutions are encouraged to work with clearing houses and upgrade their

services for the convenience of seniors and overseas visitors, as per the guideline.

It states that large business districts, tourist attractions, hotels, hospitals and other key locations are required to support diversified payment options, including mobile, bank card and cash payments.

The guideline also highlights efforts to streamline account-opening services and enhance the promotion of various payment services.



BUSINESS FOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Global energy giants ramp up China presence

Country's expansion of petrochemical capabilities in line with its strategy to reduce dependence on imports, bolster industrial supply chains

By ZHENG XIN
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The rapid growth in China's petrochemicals output, part of the nation's drive for self-sufficiency and to climb up the global value chain, is reshaping global oil demand and drawing greater interest from multinational companies seeking a foothold in the world's largest consumer market, said industry experts and company executives.

In recent years, China has ramped up investments in advanced petrochemical facilities, including construction of refinery-petrochemical complexes capable of converting crude oil directly into high-value chemicals used in plastics, textiles and electronics. This expansion aligns with Beijing's strategy to reduce dependence on imports for critical materials and bolster its industrial supply chains, they said.

This shift has captured the attention of multinational petrochemical and refining corporations such as US chemicals firm Dow, Germany's BASF and Saudi Arabian Oil Co (Saudi Aramco), which are ramping up investment in China.

Saudi Aramco, for instance, recently announced plans for the construction of a \$10 billion mega oil-refining and petrochemical project in East China's Fujian province, as it eyes downstream expansion in the world's second-largest economy.

"Aramco sees opportunities for further investments in integrated downstream projects in China, spanning oil supply, refining, chemicals and lubricants, and we plan to continue expanding our presence in China to support the country's energy security and development trajectory," said Yasser M Mufti, executive vice-president of products and customers at Saudi Aramco.

Clariant, a Swiss specialty chemicals company, has also made significant investments in the past few years in expanding its footprint in China, including its regional headquarters and innovation center in Shanghai and new production plants in Daya Bay of Guangdong province's Huizhou and Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, for more than \$300 million.

"Clariant has been dedicated to supporting China's high-quality development with our sustainable solutions and we are confident that these investments will enable us to achieve our growth target as well as the sustainable development of the chemical industry," said Jens Cuntze, president of Clariant Catalyst & Asia Pacific.

Sabic, a global leader in diversified chemicals, signed a potential investment agreement with the Fujian government in August to



A view of Dow's booth during the seventh CIEE in Shanghai on Nov 5. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

build an engineering thermoplastics compounding plant to further strengthen its roots in the Chinese market, while Dow signed more than 20 memorandums of understanding or strategic cooperation agreements with domestic customers or partners from various industries during the seventh China International Import Expo last month.

China has become Dow's second-largest market in the world, said Kevin Kolevar, the company's vice-president.

Over the past few years, Dow has come up with a world-class research and development facility in Shanghai and a manufacturing facility in Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province, which is one of its largest manufacturing plants in Asia, he added.

An analyst said the focus of multinational petrochemical and refining corporations in the Asia-Pacific region, especially China, a powerhouse representing 40 percent of global chemical product sales, is rooted in expectations of resilient chemical demand growth in the region.

China's petrochemical feedstock demand, driven by continuous growth of downstream derivatives such as plastics, is expected to almost triple by 2050 from 2021 levels, with demand from the rest of the Asia Pacific to more than double during the same

"Aramco sees opportunities for further investments in integrated downstream projects in China, spanning oil supply, refining, chemicals, and lubricants, and we plan to continue expanding our presence in China."

Yasser M Mufti, executive vice-president of products and customers at Saudi Aramco

time, said BloombergNEF.

"This would make the Asia Pacific a new hub of global petrochemical production," said Hong Luxi, head of downstream oil and chemicals at BloombergNEF.

"From 2024 to 2030, we expect 60 percent of global ethylene capacity addition will be located in the Asia Pacific, with China alone contributing to almost 60 percent of global propylene capacity addition during the same period," Hong said.

Since 2015, China has accounted for the majority of ethylene and propylene supply additions globally, with its olefin capacity increasing at a compound annual growth rate of about 12 percent for ethylene and 10 percent for propylene, compared to capacity growth of 6 percent and 2 percent in the United States, and about 2 percent to 3 percent in the Middle East, according

to data released by S&P Global. In 2023, China accounted for 60 percent of the increase in petrochemical capacity worldwide. Responsible for two-thirds of the newly added ethylene capacity, the country is also set to triple its domestic paraxylene capacity, a critical raw material for polyester production.

China's push is expected to add significantly to global oil consumption, as the petrochemical sector accounts for a growing share of crude oil use. According to the International Energy Agency, petrochemicals will represent over a third of oil demand growth through 2030, largely driven by Asia.

Wang Lining, director of the oil market department under the economics and technology research institute of China National Petroleum Corp, said

China's pursuit of self-reliance in chemicals also signals a transition up the value chain, moving from basic refining operations to advanced chemical production.

This not only supports the country's ambitious goals for industrial upgrading, but also aligns with its broader economic strategy of fostering innovation and higher-value manufacturing, he said.

Multinational chemical giants are well positioned to seize this opportunity and drive chemical innovation that will propel these industries toward a more sustainable future, Wang said.

BASF-YPC said the company would continue to enhance its footprint in China, which "has become a major player in the global petrochemical market and will continue to drive significant growth".

"While the industry is going through challenges with unbalanced market and supply demand over the short term, we believe the long-term focus should shift toward the development of high-end and sustainable value chains of petrochemical products," said Bram Jansen, president of BASF-YPC Co Ltd, a joint venture between BASF and China Petroleum & Chemical Corp.

"China is defined as one of the 'advance countries' in BASF's new corporate strategy and we will continue to enhance our footprint in China," he said.

This year, BASF-YPC announced a joint investment in an olefin platform, which will incorporate cutting-edge carbon reduction technology and utilize 100 percent renewable energy, resulting in a significantly reduced carbon footprint for olefins and enabling sustainable growth of its downstream value chains.

The project will further contribute to sustainable growth and self-sufficiency of high-end value chains in China, he said.

The Gulf States have also emerged as major players in China's oil sector, engaging in numerous JVs with Chinese enterprises. The refineries and petrochemical plants will not only secure a market share for Gulf crude exports through utilizing crude feedstock imported from the Gulf, but also facilitate China's advances in petrochemical facilities expansion in recent years.

Aramco, for example, sees the use of goods such as plastics outlasting the growth in consumption for gasoline and diesel amid the energy transition, with much of the expansion in chemicals likely coming from Asia.

With China's petrochemical capacity expected to continue growing in the next five years, Wang predicts further shifts in global oil flows and increasing competition in Asia's high-demand chemical markets.

Some of China's leading oil refineries are building plants specializing in petrochemicals, rather than gasoline and diesel. This serves as a strategy for State-owned and private enterprises to navigate the transition toward green energy by diversifying away from traditional transport fuels into alternative energy sectors, he said.

Chinese enterprises are already spearheading the transition from producing basic petrochemicals to manufacturing higher-value products, including ultra-high-molecular-weight polyethylene for lithium-ion battery separators and carbon fiber for wind turbine blades.

With a strong demand-growth recovery in China anticipated, it is believed the country will expect a modest improvement in market conditions of the petrochemical sectors, with demand growth at or slightly above 2023 levels.

Due to the rapid rise of electric vehicles, liquefied natural gas-powered heavy trucks — and the adoption of new energy sources like hydrogen — a peak in Chinese petroleum demand is predicted by 2029, said financial services provider UBS Securities.

Relevant companies should expedite their green transformation, embracing new energy sources as China's gasoline and diesel demand — two essential products in petroleum refining — has already hit their peaks, according to UBS Securities.

Aramco to expand liquids-to-chemicals business in nation

By ZHENG XIN

Driven by rising petrochemical consumption in Asia's emerging economies, especially China, Saudi Arabian Oil Company, Saudi Aramco, has vowed to further expand its liquids-to-chemicals business in the region to meet growing demand while guaranteeing long-term supply of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, the world's largest exporter of crude.

"With the global petrochemical landscape rapidly evolving and demand growth anticipated to accelerate, Saudi Aramco will continue to grow our liquids-to-chemicals business, with a goal to increase throughput in integrated refining and petrochemicals complexes to up to four million barrels per day — up from two million a day currently," said Yasser M Mufti, executive vice-president of products and customers at Saudi Aramco.

"We expect to see growth driven by rising consumption from Asia's emerging economies and Saudi Aramco already has new investments, such as the Gulei project, a \$10 billion mega oil-refining and petrochemical project that began construction in late

November in East China's Fujian province, the largest industrial investment in Fujian to date," he said.

Expected to be fully operational by 2030, the project, a collaboration between China Petroleum & Chemical Corp, Saudi Aramco and Fujian Petrochemical Co Ltd, is a significant milestone in China-Saudi energy collaboration. It aims to have a 16 million metric ton-per-year oil refining unit, a 1.5 million ton-per-year ethylene unit, 2 million tons in paraxylene and downstream derivatives capacity, and a 300,000-ton crude oil terminal.

"The project is key to downstream expansion as we continue to provide chemicals to some of the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world," said Mufti.

"As a big believer in China's long-term potential with a positive view of the Chinese economy going forward, we are confident of the great value in ongoing investments as well as helping China to realize its ambition of transforming its economy and enabling growth and prosperity to the Chinese people," he said.

The liquids-to-chemicals strategy is a way in which energy com-



Chinese and Saudi workers at a factory in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, in 2018. WANG BO / XINHUA

panies turn oil or other liquid fuels into chemicals that are used to make everyday products like plastics, detergents and fabrics. This comes at a time when demand for oil as fuel, like gasoline for cars, is projected to decrease gradually once renewable energy and electric vehicles become more popular, even as

that of chemicals used in manufacturing everyday items is growing.

Aramco sees the use of goods such as plastics outlasting the growth in consumption of gasoline and diesel amid the energy transition, with much of the expansion in chemicals likely coming from Asia.

The company expects global oil demand to reach 106 million barrels per day by the end of 2025, with 65 percent of that growth driven by Asia.

"Total demand in China is expected to reach 17.4 million barrels per day in fiscal year 2024 and 17.7 million barrels per day in fiscal year 2025, driven by jet fuels and petrochemicals as we see resilient export volumes and increased aviation traffic," said Mufti.

With chemical product demand in China expected to grow along with economic recovery, multinational chemical corporations like Aramco and BASF have been prioritizing downstream assets in the country, an analyst said.

The focus on the Asia Pacific, especially China, is rooted in the expectation of resilient chemical demand growth in the region, said Hong Luxi, head of downstream oil and chemicals at BloombergNEF.

China is currently a powerhouse representing 40 percent of global chemical product sales. Eyeing the potential opportunities, Saudi Aramco has been stepping up collaboration with domestic players in recent years, including the two

agreements last year for multi-billion dollar liquids-to-chemicals investments in China — the acquisition of an interest in the Rongsheng Petrochemicals Co in Zhejiang province for \$3.4 billion and a partnership in Liaoning province at a cost of \$12 billion.

China is strategically important to Aramco's business growth in Asia and worldwide and the company plans to continue expanding its presence here to support the country's energy security and development trajectory, said Mufti.

He said, the ventures in China enable the company to help create new pathways for growth by driving the deeper integration of refining and petrochemical processes.

"We will continue to support China's long-term energy security and economic growth, eyeing greater investment and cooperation opportunities amid the country's high-quality development," he said.

"Looking ahead, we see opportunities for further investments in integrated downstream projects spanning oil supply, refining, chemicals and lubricants."

COMMENT

Editorials

Nepalese prime minister's visit will help boost shared development and prosperity

Next year will mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Nepal. Nepalese Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli's four-day visit to China starting on Monday looks set to help open up new prospects for the development of China-Nepal relations by accelerating practical cooperation across the board.

Oli has previously visited China twice as Nepal's prime minister, visits that have marked the advancement of China-Nepal relations. During his ongoing visit this time, the Nepalese head of government is scheduled to meet not only the Chinese leadership but also representatives of the business community and cultural and social circles to deepen the two neighbors' traditional friendship, expand Belt and Road cooperation, promote economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, and strengthen the two countries' coordination on regional issues of mutual interest.

Despite the changing international and regional landscape over the past decades, bilateral ties have maintained sound and steady growth, setting a fine example of equality and win-win cooperation between countries of different sizes.

In 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a historic state visit to Nepal during which the bilateral relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship for Development and Prosperity. After that, the two sides have been earnestly delivering on the important common understanding reached between the leaders of the two countries, achieving fruitful outcomes.

With a three-dimensional interconnectivity network across the Himalayas taking shape, China is ready to work with Nepal to promote infrastructure connectivity, expand transit transport cooperation, and help Nepal transform from a "landlocked country" to a "land-linked country".

Specifically, the two sides are looking to strengthen cooperation in port and channel construction to further facilitate the cross-border circulation of materials, and deepen their cooperation in aviation, tourism and other fields.

China and Nepal have broad common interests in international and regional affairs, and China is willing to strengthen multilateral cooperation with Nepal to safeguard the common interests of the two countries. China is a long-term partner and friend that Nepal can trust and rely on.

China highly appreciates Nepal's consistent adherence to the one-China principle and its firm support for China in safeguarding its core interests. China also firmly supports Nepal in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and national dignity, and supports Nepal in exploring a development path that suits its national conditions.

China-Nepal relations have withstood the test of the evolving international landscape and the two countries' relationship has maintained a sound and stable development momentum. History and facts have proved that China-Nepal friendship is in line with the fundamental and long-term interests of the Nepalese people. Beijing is willing to maintain high-level exchanges with Kathmandu to consolidate their political mutual trust and traditional friendship and ensure the correct direction of China-Nepal relations.

The two countries should take the opportunity of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations to deliver on the important common understanding reached between the leaders of the two countries, push for new progress in the China-Nepal strategic partnership of cooperation featuring everlasting friendship for development and prosperity, and build an even closer China-Nepal community with a shared future.

Those trying to hype up that Oli has broken a tradition of Nepalese leaders of making his first overseas visit to China rather than India should be reminded that this is his fourth time serving as prime minister of the Himalayan nation. They should also bear in mind that Sino-Nepalese cooperation does not target any third party. Instead, China is always open to cooperation with the other like-minded partners to promote regional common development, and safeguard regional peace and stability.

Mutual trust stable foundation to build on

The China-Central Asia relationship, steeped in history and driven by broad actual needs, is brimming with vigor and vitality.

Through their joint endeavors, Chinese and Central Asian peoples made a historic contribution to the interaction, integration, enrichment and development of world civilizations by promoting the expansion and prosperity of the ancient Silk Road. Over the past decade, China and the Central Asian countries have worked closely together to fully revive the overland Silk Road and actively deepen their future-oriented cooperation.

Last year, President Xi Jinping and the heads of state of the five Central Asian countries gathered in the historical Chinese city of Xi'an, Shaanxi province, the starting point of the ancient Silk Road, for the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit, which marked the completion of the platform building and overall planning for China-Central Asia cooperation in the new era and the China-Central Asia community with a shared future.

The Fifth China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Sunday, underscored China and its Central Asian neighbors' joint commitment to building a closer China-Central Asia community with a shared future.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi chaired the meeting, which was attended by his counterparts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. They held in-depth discussions on comprehensively advancing cooperation and made political preparations for the second China-Central Asia Summit scheduled for next year in Kazakhstan. They also agreed to establish a themed cooperation year every two years to foster the high-quality development of China-Central Asia relations.

As Wang rightfully pointed out, under the China-Central Asia Mechanism, which has been operating for four years, the six countries have advanced their reciprocal cooperation embracing the spirit of good neighborliness, solidarity and pragmatism with close affinity and shared conviction.

Since then, significant progress has been made, with over half of the relevant projects being implemented or making substantial progress. The two sides have also established ministerial platforms in such areas as trade, customs, agriculture, transportation, and industrial investment.

Since China established diplomatic relations with the five Central Asian countries 32 years ago, two-way trade between China and the five countries has seen 100-fold growth. Several major projects have been completed, including the China-Central Asia natural gas pipeline, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan highway, and the Pengsheng Industrial Park in Uzbekistan, which have brought tangible benefits to these countries. Building upon these achievements, China and Central Asian countries are drafting an action plan for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, a permanent good-neighborliness and cooperation treaty, and agreements in a number of other significant areas that will no doubt signal the injection of new vitality into China-Central Asia cooperation.

China's efforts to boost ties with Central Asia do not target any third party, nor does it seek to compete with other mechanisms. The thriving China-Central Asia cooperation not only benefits the six countries themselves but also contributes to the prosperity of the region at large. Central Asia, as a crossroads connecting the East and West, the North and South, has the potential to become an important connectivity hub of Eurasia. To maintain regional peace and security, they should continue to jointly combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism, firmly oppose external interference in Central Asian countries' internal affairs and any attempts to create chaos and turbulence in Central Asia, and support Afghanistan in achieving peace and reconstruction.

China is ready to help Central Asian countries strengthen their capacity building for law enforcement, security and defense, and to deepen cooperation in such priority fields as trade facilitation, industrial investment, connectivity, green mining, agricultural modernization, and people-to-people exchanges. There are also bright prospects for expanding their cooperation in desertification control and higher education.

By working closely together to pursue common development and common prosperity, all six countries can embrace a brighter future, and in doing so rise to the challenges of the times and build an even closer China-Central Asia community with a shared future, producing positive energy for the world at large.

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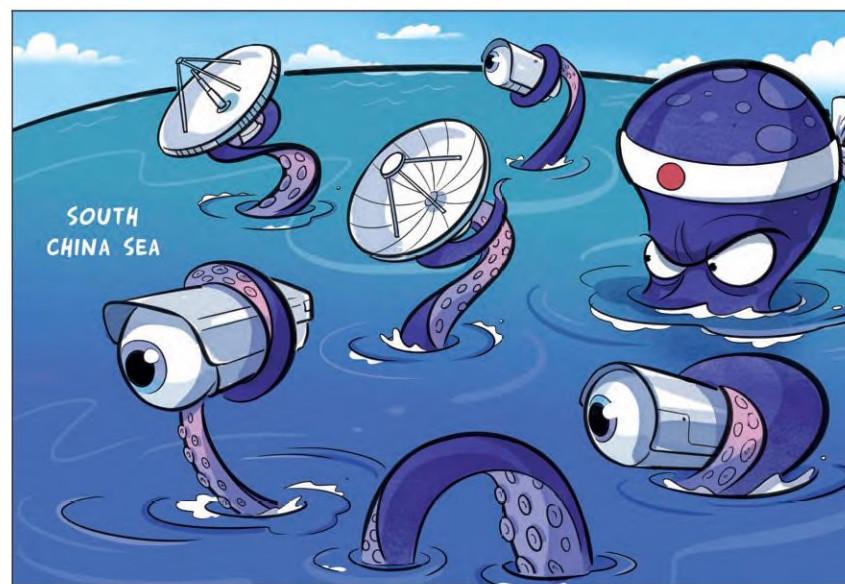
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Song Chen



Opinion Line

Carefully picking countries for security aid odd way for Tokyo to mend ties with Beijing

The Japanese government has announced the inclusion of the Philippines, Mongolia, Djibouti and Indonesia as recipients of Japan's official security assistance, or OSA, in fiscal year 2024, which not only reveals how Japan is drifting farther away from its postwar military and foreign policy, but also exposes its deep strategic intention to contain China, while threatening peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and increasing the potential of escalating conflicts in the region.

Unlike government development assistance that is limited to nonmilitary areas, the OSA program covers direct military equipment supply and infrastructure construction assistance under a mechanism launched

by Japan for "like-minded countries". The addition of the four countries lays bare Japan's ambition to further loosen decades-long shackles on its military development after World War II.

Considering the deep ties between these countries and China, it also makes clear Japan's intention of trying to drive wedges between them and China.

Considering the Philippines and China's disputes in the South China Sea, Japan's provision of OSA to the Philippines will undoubtedly add more destabilizing factors to an already complicated situation in the region.

In recent years, Japan has become the bridgehead of the United States'

China-containment strategy, not only courting the Philippines and other Asian countries but also actively pushing relevant countries to jointly establish an anti-China security alliance to deal with "an increasingly assertive China".

Since taking office, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has expressed goodwill toward China, saying he will work to build constructive and stable Japan-China relations and strengthen dialogue and cooperation with China.

We hope that Japan will not say one thing and do another, otherwise the commitment to improving China-Japan relations will end up becoming empty talk.

— WU YUXUE, CHINA DAILY

Promoting cultural exchanges through visa policy

That people from 38 countries can enter China and stay up to 30 days for business, tourism and other purposes without a visa, while nationals from 54 other countries can enjoy 72- or 144-hour visa-free transits shows China's determination to further open up to the world.

The optimization of the visa policies addresses the concerns of global tourists. Earlier reports had quoted many overseas tourists as saying that 15 days are "not enough to enjoy China".

China has also introduced a series of policies to make foreigners' lives in China more convenient. They can now enjoy "one-stop" services at

reserved windows for the rapid processing of work and residence permits, pay for their daily expenses via mobile channels, bank cards and cash almost everywhere, while domestic telecommunications operators are opening outlets, enhancing foreign language services, and launching new packages to make it easier for foreigners to access the 5G network.

Statistics show that the number of foreign tourists entering China is edging closer to pre-pandemic levels.

When these tourists share their firsthand experience in China on social networking sites, it helps

reshape global perceptions about China. That they are also paying more attention to exploring local culture helps promote the attractiveness of Chinese culture.

Continuously expanding the scope of visa exemption not only facilitates international economic and trade exchanges, but also conveys China's confidence in expanding its openness. Despite some countries tightening their visa policies toward China, the country's pace of opening-up has not paused and it remains committed to promoting cultural exchanges and fostering people-to-people connectivity.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Germany should put its weight behind EU autonomy

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's ongoing visit to China marks her second visit to Beijing. During her two-day stay, Baerbock plans to hold talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, which will be their fourth this year — they also had talks during her previous visit and in Munich and New York. Baerbock is also scheduled to co-chair with her Chinese counterpart the seventh round of the China-Germany Strategic Dialogue on Diplomacy and Security.

Considering that the two countries' state leaders have met twice this year — in Beijing and Rio de Janeiro — and they have agreed to further consolidate the 10-year-old Sino-German comprehensive strategic partnership through more win-win cooperation, it is fair to say that bilateral ties have maintained steady and healthy development featuring frequent exchanges and mutual trust despite the vicissitudes of Sino-EU relations.

That Germany strongly opposes the European Union levying steep "anti-subsidy" duties on Chinese-made electric vehicles also consolidates Beijing's confidence that Berlin is a reliable partner it can work with to uphold free trade and economic globalization and promote multilateralism in global governance.

So after Baerbock said that "China is opposing our core European interests with its economic and weapons aid to Russia", in a statement ahead of her visit — a claim she also made before meeting with the Chinese side previously,

some Western media outlets hastily, as before, tried to define that as the whole of the Sino-German relations, ignoring the fact that, despite Baerbock's tough stance on the Ukraine crisis, she cannot afford to use her trip as an opportunity to lecture her hosts.

As a matter of fact, what Germany is hoping for is that China will exert any influence it may have on Russia, to end the Ukraine crisis at an early date. In other words, the truth, which Baerbock should also accept, is that the Ukraine crisis cannot be resolved by either party winning the conflict on the battlefield, only political means.

But before trying to dictate to China what it should do in its normal economic and trade cooperation with Russia, Germany should bear in mind that China-Ukraine ties also remain stable, and it should reflect on the effects and rationality of its one-sided US-led pro-Ukraine approach that has technically served to fuel the escalation of the conflict in a direction of no return.

China calls for not only an early end to the Ukraine crisis but also the establishment of a lasting, balanced and workable peace mechanism in Europe. That also serves Germany's interests.

It does not take weapons and sanctions to realize these goals but wisdom, flexibility, vision and foresight. Given her close relations with Washington and other China hawks in the European Union and NATO, Baerbock should be well aware of the nature of the Ukraine crisis being a

geopolitical game orchestrated and prolonged by the United States, with the intention of trying to kill three birds with one stone — weakening Russia, controlling Europe and entangling China.

That Lithuania, an EU and NATO member, actively threw its weight behind the US "Taiwan card" by announcing on Monday that it would list the relevant diplomatic personnel of the Chinese mission in Vilnius as "persona non grata" and demand they leave the country within a certain period of time, should prompt major EU players such as Germany to play a leading role in the bloc to uphold its strategic autonomy in handling relations with China.

Sixty-three percent of sampled EU citizens are increasingly skeptical of the US, as a new survey after the US presidential election shows, and believe it is time for the bloc to pursue its own foreign policy and reduce ties with Washington. Nearly half of the respondents no longer see the US as their most important ally, preferring other countries in the world, such as the United Kingdom (13 percent) or China (10 percent).

With Germany restricting its assistance to Ukraine, the top German diplomat should make good use of her China trip to seek the possibility of making breakthroughs in the two major countries' coordination to accelerate a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Wang Yiming

Powering growth through policies, reforms

China's economy has remained stable overall this year, with major macroeconomic indicators meeting expectations and its fundamentals holding steady. But the challenges it faces, particularly low growth of demand, have become increasingly apparent. Supply currently outpaces demand, with external demand stronger than domestic demand, highlighting an imbalance in economic dynamics.

Industrial production and exports have significantly contributed to economic growth this year. From January to October, industrial output grew by 5.8 percent year-on-year, exceeding GDP growth for the same period. The export growth of 6.7 percent (in yuan terms) during this time was fueled by global trade recovery, inventory replenishment, and enterprises accelerating shipments ahead of expected tariff hikes. However, with slowing global trade and increasing restrictions, the pace of export growth is likely to decelerate, amplifying the pressure on domestic demand.

To address these challenges, boosting effective domestic demand and rebalancing supply and demand are essential. These steps will not only resolve imbalances but also improve market expectations, bolster social confidence and support sustained economic recovery.

Insufficient demand stems from systemic, cyclical and structural factors. For example, China's economic growth relied heavily on investment and exports for the past few decades. And in times of external shocks or economic downturns, debt-driven investment projects were used to stimulate growth.

While effective in addressing infrastructure gaps, this approach has seen diminishing returns as local government debt rises and investment efficiency declines. Investment increases supply capacity, but as global capacity normalizes, the mismatch with relatively low domestic demand becomes more evident.

Also, the deep adjustments in the property market have led to a significant reduction in demand. At its 2021 peak, the real estate market saw 1.8 billion square meters of property being sold for 18.2 trillion yuan (\$2.51 trillion). But in 2023, property sales plummeted to 1.12 billion square meters for 11.6 trillion yuan. And in the first 10 months of this year, property sales declined by 20.9 percent — at this pace of decline, annual sales are projected to shrink further to just 9.2 trillion yuan. This decline has created a wide gap in demand that emerging industries such as electric vehicles and renewable energy, though growing rapidly, cannot immediately fill.

The COVID-19 pandemic and declining real estate prices have eroded household wealth, reducing consumption. Rising corporate leverage has weakened investment capacity, while lower fiscal and land sale revenues have constrained local governments' activities, including investment and purchase activity. Addressing these balance sheet challenges depends on broader economic recovery and asset price stabilization, both of which require time.

To ensure sustained recovery, China must combine immediate policy measures with deeper structural reforms.

To begin, it needs to strengthen counter-cyclical measures. In fact, the government has implemented policies to help boost economic recovery, including cutting reserve requirement ratios and interest rates. Additionally, the recent approval of a 6-trillion-yuan local government debt-swap program is aimed at reducing interest burdens and freeing up funds for development. But enhanced coordination across departments is essential to ensure policies are both targeted and effective.

Expanding domestic demand should focus on boosting consumption. Currently, commodity consumption is relatively saturated, so efforts should be made to actively expand service consumption. Initiatives such as birth subsidies and extending public services to migrant populations can stimulate household spending. Expanding access to high-end healthcare, tourism and

eldercare services can also cater to diverse consumer needs.

To promote the stabilization and recovery of the real estate market, and on the supply side, stricter control over new construction, optimizing existing stock and improving housing quality are important. Also important is boosting loan support for "white-listed" projects with clear guidelines and accountability measures to ease bank financing concerns. On the demand side, policies should be introduced to support the purchase of unsold inventory for affordable housing by enabling the use of special-purpose bonds, enhancing re-lending mechanisms and establishing clear price evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective implementation.

Besides, reforms need to be implemented to support private sector development by ensuring fair access to markets, enforcing intellectual property rights and resolving issues such as delayed payments to businesses. And to enhance economic efficiency and regional financial autonomy, a unified

national market should be built and the fiscal relationship between central and local governments be adjusted, including by shifting the collection of consumption taxes to local governments and allowing them to set flexible tax rates within defined limits.

The difficulties facing China's economy today reflect the pains of transition. However, these challenges also present opportunities to transform growth models and adjust economic structures. By focusing on rebalancing supply and demand, stabilizing key sectors and pursuing comprehensive reforms, China can lay the foundation for a new cycle of sustainable growth.

Economic resilience and adaptability will be critical as China navigates this period of adjustment, turning challenges into a springboard for long-term prosperity.

The author is vice chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Marcus Vinícius De Freitas

China ready to meet challenges of Trump era

The meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden on Nov 16 has set a crucial stage for the future of China-US relations. As the world's two largest economies navigated through fraught dynamics during Biden's tenure, this meeting offered a glimpse into their intentions for shaping global stability. Both leaders expressed optimism about trade cooperation and the fight against climate change, though significant disagreements on the Taiwan question and technology transfers were apparent.

The outcomes of this meeting underscore the complex interdependence between the United States and China. Biden aims to leave office with a stable bilateral relationship — though his actions contradicted this purpose — but the return of Donald Trump to the White House as the 47th president of the US creates new uncertainties for global geopolitics, particularly concerning China.

A hawkish stance toward China marked Trump's first term as US president. Trump has emphasized the importance of reducing trade imbalances, addressing intellectual property rights concerns and countering China's growing global influence, and his "America first" strategy, defined by economic nationalism and strategic competition, could intensify tensions between the two countries.

Trump's likely focus on domestic priorities — such as re-industrialization and reshoring manufacturing — may restrict his capacity to engage in multilateral diplomacy. This could lead to a more unilateral and selective approach to foreign engagements, creating a power vacuum in

global governance.

However, his transactional approach to international relations could lead to unpredictable engagements with China, ranging from escalated economic decoupling to selective cooperation on issues such as Korean Peninsula denuclearization issue or supply chain stability. This shift in US foreign policy under Trump may present opportunities for other global players, particularly the BRICS-Plus bloc, to play a bigger role in global affairs. The potential impact of Trump's policies on US-China relations could lead to a more confrontational approach, creating more opportunities for BRICS-Plus to expand its influence.

As US-China relations face renewed volatility, BRICS-Plus has an opportunity to position itself as a stabilizing force in a fragmented world. The bloc's capacity to provide alternative frameworks for development and cooperation makes it uniquely suited to address the Global South's ever-growing needs, including economic development, infrastructure improvement and sustainable growth.

The group's economic agenda, including the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and Brazil's expertise in agricultural innovation, could help address critical challenges such as food security and sustainable infrastructure development across Africa and Asia, one of the main issues raised in the last G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Furthermore, the potential de-dollarization of the global economy — driven by

China's economic policy and ongoing initiatives within BRICS-Plus — signals a shift away from the long-standing dominance of the US dollar. This transformation could empower emerging economies to pursue development models independent of Western financial systems.

BRICS-Plus can seize the opportunity to advocate for significant reforms in key international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. By championing multipolarism and localized solutions, the bloc could inspire greater autonomy and resilience among its member states and partners, leading to a more equitable and diversified global order.

This era of uncertainty offers BRICS-Plus the opportunity to redefine the Global South's role in global governance. With its potential to establish itself as a credible alternative to the US-led world order, the bloc can inspire hope and optimism through initiatives focusing on trade liberalization, regional integration and sustainable development. Such efforts would enhance economic growth and address pressing global challenges such as climate change, digital inclusion and infrastructure deficits, instilling a sense of hope for a better future.

The meeting between Xi and Biden has underscored the urgent need for pragmatism and cooperation in addressing the world's pressing challenges. As Trump prepares to take office, his policies will undoubtedly reshape US-China relations, creating challenges and opportunities for the international community. BRICS-Plus, with its collective economic strength and a shared vision for a fairer world, holds the potential to lead the way in this new era of

global transformation, inspiring and motivating the international community to act swiftly and decisively.

Finally, it is important to stress that the widespread flawed concept of the "Thucydides trap", a term used to describe the likelihood of conflict when a rising power challenges an established power, while provocative, needs to be revised when applied to China. This concept needs to consider the rich nuances of Chinese history and its historical commitment to peaceful coexistence.

Unlike the Western tradition of zero-sum power struggles, China's historical approach to international relations has often emphasized the importance of harmony, balance and mutual benefit. A long history of 18 centuries as one of the world's largest economies shows a country not imposing its military power on other countries in the way Western powers have historically done. China has traditionally been a center of gravity for neighboring states through cultural and economic influence.

Projecting a Western historical pattern onto a fundamentally different civilization ignores China's long commitment to resolving power transitions through diplomacy and strategic accommodation. China's rise is a clear testament to its will to pursue peace, prosperity and stability, not a new Cold War. BRICS-Plus will follow the same commitment, and the new administration in Washington must keep that in mind when shaping its policies.

The author is a visiting professor at China Foreign Affairs University and a senior fellow at the Policy Centre for the New South. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

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Authorities need to do more to make elderly people's life convenient

My wife was recently hospitalized to undergo a thorough physical check-up after doctors suspected she could have developed a heart problem. The atmosphere in the four-patient ward was mostly grim, though there were occasions when the four patients burst out laughing.

After my wife was shifted to a bed, the nurse pointed to a QR code sticker on the bedside and told us that we could scan it to order food. My wife did accordingly and ordered her lunch and dinner within seconds. To be honest, the food-ordering system of the hospital was efficient, convenient and labor-saving. However, the hospital authorities neglected the fact that most of the patients are elderly people who may have difficulty in using smartphones, let alone the apps that come with them.

At lunch-time, a woman brought food enough for six people for a patient surnamed Li, who was in her early eighties. When Li asked why she got so much food, the woman said those were exactly what she had ordered through the system and added: "I was wondering if you are hosting a banquet in the ward." We could not help but burst out in laughter.

At dinner-time, the woman walked in with a plastic bag for a patient surnamed Hou, who was in her late seventies. In the bag, there were 10 big steamed buns, enough for her to survive a couple of days. Rechecking the food ordering system, it was confirmed that Hou had placed the order herself, though she wanted only one bun. When her roommates suggested that she set up a stand in the hospital's corridor to sell the extra buns, laughter again burst out in the room.

The elderly women were trying to cover their embarrassment by laughing at themselves and at each other. While China is progressing fast toward digitalization, many elderly people face embarrassment for not being able to catch up with the trend. As a result, many elderly people, who should have been proud of their life and professional expertise, now seem helpless in the face of new technologies.

To see a doctor, one has to download an app and complete the procedure for registration and appointment beforehand. The traditional registration windows have largely stopped providing any service. To rent a wheelchair, one has to scan a QR code and complete the required procedure before one can unlock one.

When you eventually get to sit face-to-face with a doctor, the latter asks the required questions for diagnosis while busy hitting the keyboard of a computer or tapping on her smartphone before telling you that you have such and such problem and need to take some tests, or you are alright. Many hospitals in China are going paperless, though elderly people like me feel uncomfortable when we don't get a sheet of paper with the diagnosis and/or prescription. We are informed that we could go to a machine to get a printed diagnosis, prescription and/or receipt, and pay the medical bill. But the process involves a lot of scans and multiple choices that can be as difficult for elderly people as climbing Mount Qomolangma.

Elderly people face the same, or even bigger, problems in a bank, a restaurant, or while checking into a hotel or using public transport in other cities, or even using a toilet.

With China fast becoming a cashless society, we elderly people have to tolerate the sneers of salespersons and other shoppers when we pay in cash; it seems as if we are wasting their time. The only time we elderly people feel cool is when we visit museums and tourist sites. While others are busy scanning QR codes to make reservations and pay for the entrance fees, all we need to do is to show our ID cards and enter free of cost. Although there have been calls from the government and society to help the elderly people to overcome the digital divide, I feel the digital gap is widening. As a senior citizen, I want my fellow senior citizens to keep familiarizing themselves with the apps. But I also request the relevant departments to pay attention to the woes of the elderly people and do more to make their life convenient.

GLOBAL VIEWS



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

JOHN QUELCH

Joining hands for a modernized world

China can strengthen the capacity of Global South countries to advance their societies and address their individual and shared challenges

In our increasingly interconnected world, we stand at a pivotal moment where cooperation and inclusivity can reshape the future for billions of people. The Global South's growing momentum signals not only a rebalancing of the global economic order but also an opportunity to embrace a new commitment to shared progress.



The global economic landscape has shifted dramatically this century. In 2000, North America, Europe, Japan and the Republic of Korea accounted for 23 percent of the world's population and held around 66 percent of global nominal GDP. Today, their population share has declined to around 19 percent and their combined GDP contribution has decreased to around 50 percent.

This shift is not just a decline of one group but a testament to the rapid economic rise of regions such as Asia, Africa and Latin America, facilitated by a more free and open global economy. The demographic growth in these regions and their increasing entrepreneurial spirit are reshaping global priorities, and the Global South is emerging as a key driver of future prosperity.

Despite this economic shift, almost 90 percent of international transactions are still settled in US dollars. This underscores the dollar's entrenched position, but it also highlights an opportunity for innovation from the Global South. Leveraging technologies such as blockchain could lead to faster, cheaper settlement alternatives, using, for example, the renminbi, which China actively promotes.

China's remarkable economic success exemplifies the possibilities for the Global South. Through strategic planning, infrastructure development, education, technological innovation and hard work, China has lifted 800 million people out of abject poverty and built a globally competitive economy with a vibrant culture grounded in 5,000 years of history. This transformation is also evident in the hallways of educational institutions.

China's achievements increase its credibility among the Global South countries. Unlike historical colonial powers or the hemispheric dominance implicit in the Monroe Doctrine, China emphasizes mutual respect, economic partnership and

infrastructure investment without territorial ambitions.

China's initiatives have become a vital force in advancing the modernization of the Global South, fostering collaboration and development in transformative ways. The expansion of the BRICS group to include countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Ethiopia exemplifies efforts to amplify the voices of the Global South in global governance. This expansion, representing nations accounting for over 40 percent of the global population and 32 percent of global GDP in terms of purchasing power parity, is a major step toward ensuring more equitable participation in global decision-making processes.

The Belt and Road Initiative is another cornerstone of China's engagement with the Global South, encompassing over 150 partner countries. Since its inception, the BRI has mobilized over \$1 trillion in investments, transforming infrastructure landscapes by building railways, ports and energy projects critical for economic growth. Notably, projects such as the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya and Gwadar Port in Pakistan have accelerated trade, created jobs and fueled regional connectivity. China's efforts in Latin America are similarly impactful. Chinese President Xi Jinping recently visited Peru to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting. There, he inaugurated the massive Port of Chancay on Peru's Pacific coast. This mega-port project will shorten shipping times between Asia and Latin America, reduce costs by 20 percent, and serve as a foundation of the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road.

China's engagement with the Global South extends beyond infrastructure. By sharing its expertise in areas such as smart agriculture and renewable energy, China can address developmental needs while promoting sustainability.

Agriculture, a key source of livelihood in many developing countries, which can benefit from China's expertise in smart farming and water management. Localized manufacturing hubs can create employment and foster technological transfer, while infrastructure investments under the BRI should emphasize both large-scale ventures and community-focused programs.

Capacity building by improving health and education systems is also critical. China's advances in telemedicine can revolutionize healthcare access in rural areas of the Global

South. At the same time, investments in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and digital platforms can equip younger generations with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Combating climate change remains central. With its leadership in green technologies, from solar panels to electric vehicles, China is uniquely positioned to assist the Global South in transitioning to low-carbon economies. Establishing training hubs and collaborative research programs can be important to accelerating the adoption of solutions.

Global governance reform is critical to ensuring that institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations reflect the demographic and economic realities of the 21st century. In addition, convening an annual New World Economic Forum in Shenzhen or the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region might enable China to ensure that AI technology does not lead to a new digital divide for the Global South. Convening this New World Economic Forum, if conducted with diversity, South-North as well as South-South collaboration, and practical results in mind, can be a catalyst for the transformation of the Global South. By locating this forum in Shenzhen or the Hong Kong SAR, China can show its commitment to bridge-building and equitable global development while amplifying the goals of the Global South.

While ambitious, through these multiple approaches, China can reaffirm its role as a partner and advocate for the Global South. It can not only champion a more balanced global economic order but also strengthen the capacity of Global South countries to advance their societies and address their individual and shared challenges. Together, the Global South can and will chart a path toward a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous world.

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LU JIAJUN AND BEN SHENGLIN

Partnership of promise

Climate finance and green technology transfer represent pivotal areas for China-Peru cooperation

China and Peru have great potential for collaborating on green technology and climate finance.

China has made remarkable strides in developing and deploying green technologies. In 2023, it became the world's largest investor in renewable energy, allocating over \$100 billion annually to clean energy projects. The country leads in solar power production, wind energy capacity and electric vehicle manufacturing, accounting for more than 30 percent of global renewable energy capacity, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency.



Lu Jiajun



Ben Shenglin

China's progress includes advancements in energy storage, carbon capture and storage, smart grid technologies, and EVs. These efforts have reduced China's carbon footprint and established a thriving green technology industry. China's carbon neutrality goal before 2060 aligns with the Paris Agreement, and highlights its potential as a global climate leader.

Peru is committed to carbon neutrality by 2050 and plays a critical role in preserving the Amazon rainforest, essential for global biodiversity and climate regulation. However, it faces challenges such as deforestation, air pollution and limited energy access in rural areas. Despite these obstacles, progress has been made, about 60 percent of Peru's electricity came from renewable sources in 2023, mostly hydroelectric power. However, Peru enjoys vast untapped potential in solar and wind energy. China's expertise in clean energy technologies offers sustainable solutions to these challenges and can help accelerate Peru's energy transition.

China's renewable energy capabilities present significant opportunities for Peru. Vast areas such as the Atacama Desert and the Andean mountains are ideal for solar and wind energy generation. Chinese expertise in renewable technologies and energy storage can help Peru transition faster. Moreover, smart grid technology from Chi-

na could modernize Peru's energy infrastructure, reducing energy losses and enhancing efficiency. Joint ventures, research collaborations, and investments would reduce renewable energy project costs and increase production capacity. China is also a global leader in EV technology. In 2023, it accounted for more than half of global EV sales. Chinese EV technologies could help Peru address transportation challenges, especially in urban centers such as Lima, where air pollution and traffic congestion are prevalent. Sustainable transport infrastructure, including electric buses and charging networks, would cut emissions, improve air quality, and foster economic opportunities in Peru's EV sector.

Peru faces significant financial constraints in achieving its climate goals. Developing countries require up to \$3 trillion annually in climate finance, according to the Global Environment Facility. China's expertise in green financing could help narrow this gap. Through mechanisms such as the Belt and Road Initiative, green bonds, concessional loans, and support from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China can provide Peru with resources to fund renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and forest conservation. These initiatives align with China's focus on green infrastructure and sustainable development, helping Peru transition to a low-carbon economy.

To fully realize the potential of this partnership, several strategic policy actions are necessary.

First, establishing bilateral platforms for the transfer of green technology is crucial. These platforms could focus on renewable energy, carbon capture and storage, and sustainable agriculture, facilitating joint research, capacity building, and technology demonstrations. Tailored to Peru's needs, these collaborations would enhance knowledge exchange and innovation.

Second, both countries should leverage multilateral financing institutions such as the Green Climate Fund and AIIB. China's experience in funding large-scale green projects can help Peru access necessary resources for renewable energy development and climate adaptation. Green bonds and sustainable investment funds could back ambitious initiatives such as solar and wind farms or urban electrification projects.

Third, aligning regulatory frameworks would facilitate green technology deployment. Peru could adopt policies similar to China's, such as tax credits and incentives for renewable energy, to attract investments. Harmonizing regulations governing environmental standards would further promote innovation and ensure environmental integrity.

Fourth, public-private partnerships are essential for scaling green technologies. Drawing from China's experience, Peru could foster long-term collaborations with Chinese companies in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green transportation sectors. Financial instruments such as green bonds would provide new avenues for financing large-scale projects, accelerating Peru's green transformation.

Last, building skilled human capital is vital for implementing green technologies effectively. It would prepare a workforce capable of driving the green transition while fostering collaboration between Chinese and Peruvian professionals.

The growing urgency of climate action presents both a challenge and an opportunity. By deepening cooperation in climate finance and green technology transfer, China and Peru can achieve their ambitious climate goals while fostering sustainable growth. China's leadership in green technologies and Peru's commitment to environmental preservation make this partnership extremely promising. Aligning policies, leveraging multilateral financing, and creating a collaborative framework for technology transfer will position China and Peru as leaders in the global green economy. This cooperation extends beyond climate action, laying the foundation for innovation, resilience, and long-term prosperity. Together, China and Peru can chart a sustainable and prosperous future for generations to come.

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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

When the Armazem Theatre Company brought its theatrical production, *Water Stain*, to the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, in 2017, the Brazilian theater group received an enthusiastic reception from audiences and the shows sold out fast.

This success saw the company touring China in 2019 and it returned to the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in 2023 with *Bras Cubas*, which again became a smash hit with audiences.

Bras Cubas was staged in Shanghai in October, and the company made its debut in Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center with the same production at the end of the month. The production was then staged in Foshan, Guangdong province.

"The performance was very Brazilian with a joyful and lively South American flair," commented a fan from Shanghai. "There was a one-person band onstage and at the end, there was a song that perfectly matched the theme. The actors also performed synchronized dances multiple times, full of energy. It was a performance with a strong sense of unity and coherence."

Another fan from Foshan commented: "The last time I saw the performance by the Brazilian company was in Wuzhen. The performance is like traditional Chinese opera style with a narrator telling the story throughout the entire show. One actor played multiple roles, embodying the characters mentioned by the narrator. The actors are all great, excelling in both singing and dancing. The musician onstage, playing the guitar, drums and keyboard, while the actors singing and dancing reflected the unique passion of South America."

According to Paulo de Moraes, director of *Bras Cubas*, at first, they were truly amazed by the connection that their performances established with Chinese audiences. Brazil and China are geographically far apart, and there are many cultural differences, but the director says that they share a similar sense of humor.

"We gradually realized that the sense of humor in both Brazilian and Chinese people is surprisingly similar," he says, adding that this feeling became apparent starting with their first performance in China seven years ago," he says. "Initially, we were concerned about whether we could clearly convey our ideas to Chinese audiences, but the moment we took the stage at the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, those worries vanished."

According to the director, *Bras Cubas* is adapted from the novel, *The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas*, by the late Brazilian author Machado de Assis (1839-1908). The Armazem Theatre Company, founded in 1987 and one of the most high-profile in Brazil, creatively breaks away from the original linear recollection, adopting a parallel three-line narrative structure.

The director also uses a live band with a variety of instruments to create modern, classical and soft sounds, helping the audience enter the various eras and places implied in the play.

Music becomes a bridge that connects the audience with the different periods and settings of *Bras Cubas*' journey, immersing them in the shifts of time and perspective that the narrative unfolds.

"In this production, we witness both the deceased *Bras Cubas* describing himself and the living *Bras Cubas* existing within each of the individual stories. Meanwhile, the author Machado de Assis makes



Brazilian theater group delights with performances based on old novel that seems unbelievably modern, **Chen Nan** reports.



Scenes from *Bras Cubas*, by Brazilian theater company Armazem Theatre Company and director Paulo de Moraes. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

an appearance onstage, acting both as the judge and recorder in the third narrative thread. At times, he engages in witty exchanges with *Bras Cubas*, and at other moments, steps out of the story to discuss the play itself," the director says.

He adds that the original novel provides deep inspiration for this play, and this rich, engaging theatrical work expands the possibilities of the original novel.

The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas is widely regarded as one of the most important novels in Brazilian literary history. Although it was written in the late 19th century, its themes and form remain eternally relevant. The lead character, *Bras Cubas*, comes from a wealthy family and was expected to achieve much, but his life is marked by failure and insecurity. He is a figure of

self-importance, arrogance and the embodiment of failure, ultimately revealing the process by which Brazil's economic elite came into being.

"As a Brazilian artist, I believe this is an important way to understand how we have developed into what we are today, and also a path to explore our future direction," says the director. "Turning all of this into theater, transforming it into stage action, is a challenge I have been eager to face."

"Theater is a visual world: At specific moments, the audience shares the same scene," he adds. "However, the combination of these scenes allows for the possibility of experiencing the work from a personal perspective, because not everyone sees the same content at the same time. What we perceive may be invisible to others. In this highly individualized experience, theater may have the

power to illuminate our beliefs, doubts, emotions and thoughts."

Born in 1965 in Brazil, De Moraes began his career in 1987 as a director, set designer and playwright. In the same year he founded the company.

Based in Rio de Janeiro, he has won numerous awards in the Brazilian theater scene. Under his leadership, the company has won more than 100 Brazilian theater awards, establishing it as a national treasure.

"I was passionate about acting. However, the sudden death of my previous company's director — who was also very young — made me feel that I needed to explore directing. I gathered a group of actors younger than myself and founded this theater," the director recalls.

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Myanmar tourism gets major boost from China funding

YANGON — In downtown Yangon, China-funded training programs are providing professionals with updated skills and knowledge to help revive Myanmar's tourism sector after the pandemic.

Lin Latt Phyto, a final-year tourism student at the National Management Degree College, was one of those who participated in the tour operator and travel operation training sessions.

"I joined this course to expand my knowledge of tourism. Here, I've learned about marketing strategies, destination management, and travel itinerary planning," she says.

She is working on her final-year research paper. "The knowledge gained from this course will enhance my writing," she adds.

The course, which concluded recently, emphasized preservation of Myanmar's tourism destinations to attract more international visitors. "The training covered both theoretical and practical aspects," she says.

It included seven courses, covering digital skills, training for tour operators and guides, and hospitality-related skills. The program was funded by the China Foundation for Rural Development, and organized by the Myanmar Tourism Federation and other organizations.

Min Soe Thura, an experienced tour guide fluent in English, also attended. "The training helped me update my knowledge. We even went on a day trip to Yangon Heritage Trust sites," he says.

“Thanks to the China Foundation for Rural Development's financial support, we were able to offer the courses free of charge. This was extremely beneficial for the trainees.”

Naing Htoo Aung, course teacher and tour guide

"The tourism industry is struggling to recover in the post-pandemic period, and this training gave us ideas about how to boost it," he continues, acknowledging current challenges.

The 10-day course was attended by around 50 trainees, including students, tour guides and tour operators.

"The purpose was to refresh the skills of individuals in the tourism industry," says Naing Htoo Aung, one of the course's teachers and a tour guide.

"I teach responsible practices to ensure safety and reduce environmental impact for sustainable tourism. Our curriculum was made in line with ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) competency standards."

The course was also designed to help address gaps in the workforce following the pandemic, which caused many tourism professionals to switch careers.

"Thanks to the China Foundation for Rural Development's financial support, we were able to offer the courses free of charge," he says. "This was extremely beneficial for the trainees."

Trainees also learned about Chinese culture to be better able to communicate with Chinese tourists, he says.

Tourism is not solely about economic benefits, it also fosters meaningful cultural exchange, he adds.

XINHUA

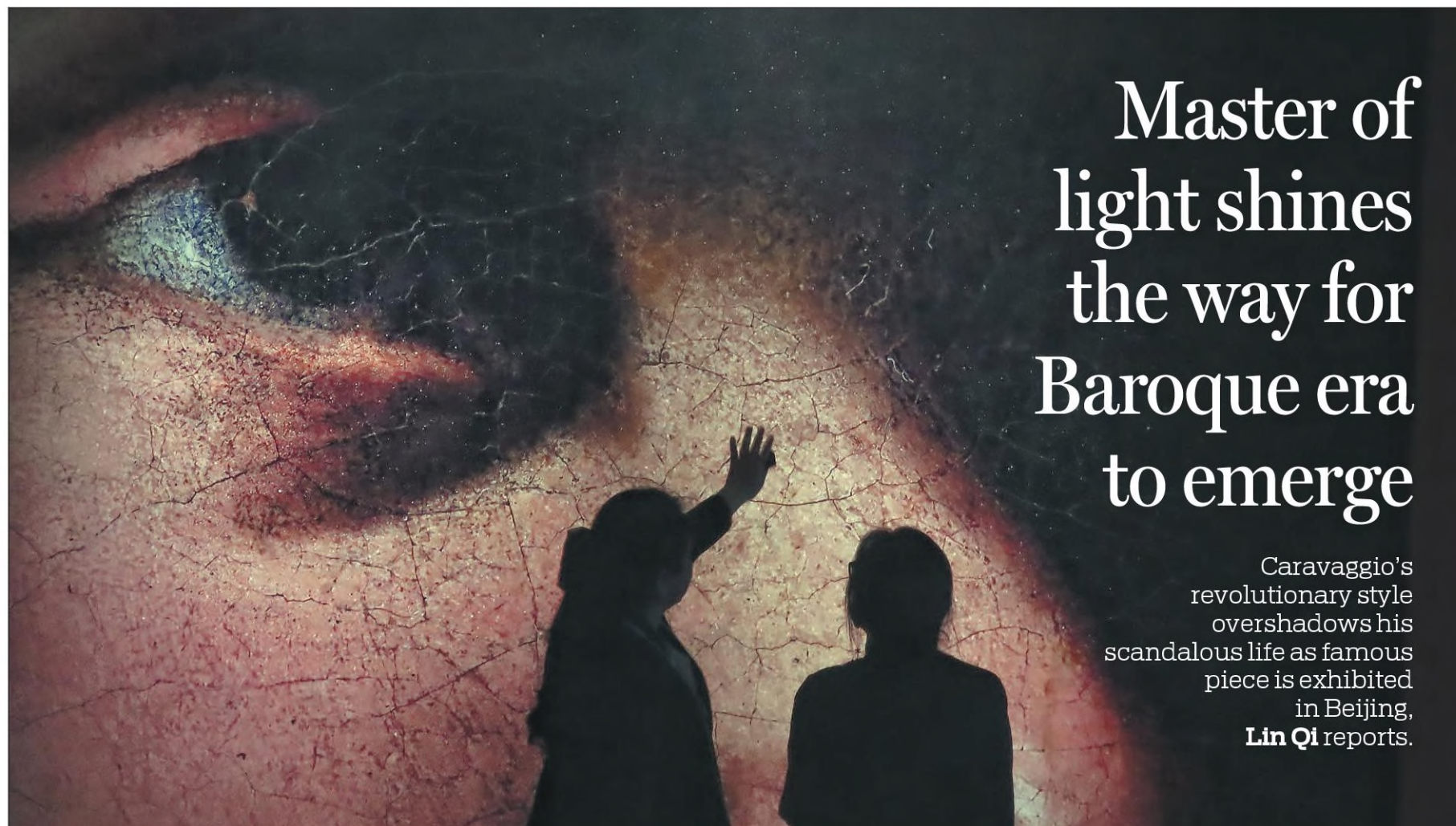
Cutting edge



Artist Gao Shaoping, nicknamed "golden scissors", beside her works, and chatting with visitors to her paper-cuts exhibition in Fuzhou, Fujian province, last month. The national inheritor of the paper-cutting craft has been engaged in the art since her teens. In 2009, the craft was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Gao has visited more than 30 countries, showcasing the unique appeal of Chinese paper-cutting to international friends. PHOTOS BY XU XUEYI / XINHUA



CULTURE



Master of light shines the way for Baroque era to emerge

Caravaggio's revolutionary style overshadows his scandalous life as famous piece is exhibited in Beijing, Lin Qi reports.

Porto Ercole is a charming seaside town in Tuscany, Italy, that provides soothing beach views and summertime getaways for city travelers.

It was also where Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) took his last breath.

On July 18, 1610, the legendary painter died in a sanitarium alone, exhausted, feverish, and suffering injuries from several brawls.

Until his death, Caravaggio didn't obtain a long-awaited papal pardon to return to Rome where he had garnered fame for his unrivaled painting techniques as he was unfavorably known for committing various crimes. His stormy, enigmatic personality finally went too far — an escalating argument ended when he committed murder. He fled Rome to avoid a life sentence.

Caravaggio's revolutionary style helped anticipate the Baroque period. However the sudden end of his dramatic and turbulent life — at the age of 38 — also ended his short-lived career.

He was buried in haste and was forgotten until the early 20th century, when his art was rediscovered by historians.

Caravaggio and his works have since returned to the limelight. A show featuring his paintings drew enthusiastic audiences and one of his most famous works resurged to public attention.

This was the situation when, in 2014, a painting depicting the biblical figure Mary Magdalene was identified as work of Caravaggio's. It then embarked on a global tour adorning the walls of museums worldwide.

Now, *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*



Clockwise from top: An enlarged detail of Caravaggio's work at the *Caravaggio's World of Art* exhibition. The master's *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* on show at the National Museum of China. A virtual reality tour is offered at the exhibition to explain the artist's turbulent life.

PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

has come to illuminate the exhibition halls of Beijing.

The National Museum of China and the Italian embassy in China jointly present a show specially for and displaying only *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy*.

The exhibition *Caravaggio's World of Art* also centers around the restoration work done to return this Caravaggio work back to its glory.

Until the end of March, people can "face" Caravaggio, celebrated as the founding father of Baroque art.

In this painting, they will see his smart utilization of reduced colors — primarily black, white and red — as well as his revolutionary usage of strong contrasts between light and dark, also referred to as *chiaroscuro* in Italian, for which he is best known.

Caravaggio has made recurring appearances in Chinese art scene these two years.

His *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* was on show at *Botticelli to Van Gogh*, an exhibition of masterpieces from the National Gallery London held from Jan 17 to May 7 last year at the Shanghai Museum.

From Dec 12 to April 12 this year, *Caravaggio: Wonders of the Italian Baroque*, an exhibition at the Museum of Art Pudong in Shanghai, gathered six works by Caravaggio, including *Boy with Basket of Fruit*, an iconic piece in the collection of the Borghese Gallery, Rome.

Caravaggio: Eternal Ecstasy, which opened in July through to the end of October at M Woods in Chengdu, Sichuan province, marked the debut of *Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy* in China before it traveled to Beijing.

For the exhibition at the National Museum of China, a 12-minute virtual reality tour is offered to embark

upon the life journey of Caravaggio — tremendous, yet tragic.

Cinzia Pasquali, who headed the restoration team that worked on the painting for over six months in 2018, says the piece was believed to have been made following his escape from Rome after killing Ranuccio Tomassoni during a row in 1606.

A manuscript note was found at the back of the canvas, reading, "Magdalena, reversed by Caravaggio in Chiaia, there to be kept for the benefit of Cardinal Borghese of Rome". The note is also displayed.

A video rotates at the exhibition showing the restoration steps carried out by Pasquali, who also co-curated the current exhibition at the National Museum of China, and her team years ago.

Their work engages the audience with the quietness in which Caravaggio focused wholeheartedly on

shading, forgetting about his troubled life — the creases of Mary Magdalene's robe, the luster of her soft hair and the tears dripping from the corner of her eye.

Dutch painter Karel van Mander (1548-1606), a contemporary of Caravaggio, authored *Het Schilder-Boeck* (The Book of Painters).

In the book, he mentions Caravaggio's work and life: "Indeed, he does not devote himself continually to study, but when he has worked for a couple of weeks, he goes wandering for a month or two, with a sword at his side and a servant behind him, and turns from one ballgame to another, always ready to start a brawl and to scuffle, so much so that it is rare to see him regularly. ... Nonetheless, his painting is beyond question."

Pasquali says: "The exhibition allows close examinations of the

painting to understand the distinguished way that Caravaggio depicted his subjects.

"The theatrical representation and the dramatic effects of light and darkness, characteristic of his work, can be seen in the work."

She says the exhibition explains vividly why Caravaggio is recognized as "a revolutionary of light" and a great artist in history.

Zhuge Yingliang, co-curator of the exhibition at the National Museum of China, says the show provides people with the perspective of the restorers to understand Caravaggio and his art.

"To compare the similarities and differences in the work of Chinese and Italian restorers, we've set up a section at the end of the exhibition to show the process of preserving classic Chinese ink painting and calligraphy.

"It is not only to show the knowledge, patience and time invested in the work. The significance of art restoration is ultimately to enrich the essential values of these extraordinary artworks, to revive the thoughts of the artists, and to share them with the public," she says.

The exhibition marks the latest progress in the cultural exchanges between China and Italy through staging well-curated exhibitions at the National Museum of China. Previous collaborations include *Renaissance in Florence: Masterpieces and Protagonists* in 2012, *Four Centuries of Painting in Venice* in 2016 and *Tota Italia: Origins of a Nation* in 2022.

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Chinese web novels added to British Library collection

LONDON — The British Library expanded its Chinese collection on Nov 21 by adding printed copies of 10 novels originally published online by Chinese authors, including *Lord of the Mysteries*, *Soul Land* and *Joy of Life*.

This follows the library's first inclusion of 16 titles of online Chinese literature in 2022.

The newly included novels are deeply loved by readers worldwide. Among them, *The King's Avatar*, about esports, is said to have attracted 135 million readings by overseas readers.

These novels, originally published on platforms operated by Yuewen, an online Chinese literature company, were donated to document the cultural significance and rapid development of web literature in China.

Chief Operating Officer of the British Library Jas Rai says the library is excited to collaborate with Chinese publishers to engage audiences in the United Kingdom, highlighting the library's dedication to enhancing accessibility and diversifying its offerings.

Rai adds that online Chinese literature showcases the growing diversity in storytelling, offering innovative ways for global audiences to connect with stories.

By the end of 2023, the number of Chinese literature readers online reached a record 537 million, with the overseas market for this genre surpassing 4 billion yuan (\$552 million), spanning most of the world's countries and regions.

The Web Novel website under Yuewen has trained and signed 430,000 overseas authors who write original online novels in English and other languages. In the UK alone, its readers reached 6.8 million, a yearly increase of 30 percent.

Qianshanchake, a Chinese web novelist whose work *Stacie* was included in the library's collection, expresses excitement and surprise at the recognition. Her fantasy story revolves around a modern-day female office worker who struggles against fate after being dragged into a world where monsters and kung fu coexist.



Left: Visitors to the British Library as it marks the expansion of its Chinese collection by adding 10 new copies of online literature on Nov 21. **Right:** Some of the exhibited titles. PHOTOS BY LI YING / XINHUA

The writer believes the adventurous themes and oriental elements will resonate with British and European readers. "The core themes of novels are universal, transcending cultural boundaries," she says.

The announcement also marked

the launch of a three-year collaboration, Literature in the Digital Age, between the British Library and Yuewen. A roundtable forum on the theme was held in London, bringing together publishing professionals from both nations to share insights.

"This is a burgeoning cultural collaboration between the UK and China," says Rupert Daniels, director of creative, consumer, sports, and education at the UK Department for Business and Trade. He hopes that the partnership will introduce glob-

al readers to captivating stories through innovative technologies.

The British Library houses over 170 million items, including books, manuscripts, newspapers, and audio recordings.

XINHUA

LIFE

Seeds of hope grow into a force of nature

World renowned primatologist in Beijing to celebrate key anniversary of wildlife program, **Zhao Xu** reports.

A dangling, moon-shaped feeding device for playful cubs to cling to, allowing food to fall through its holes; a geometric structure of interconnected triangles, strung together with plastic cups cut from water bottles to hold honey; and a pair of nut-filled cylinder tubes wrapped in wool yarn and painted with paw-print patterns — these are the toys designed for moon bears, named for the crescent-shaped white marking on their chest. The toys were handmade by Chinese students aged 10 to 17 back in 2011, before they were sent to a moon bear protection center in Chengdu, Sichuan province. This center has served as a sanctuary for the creatures, also known as the Asian black bear, which is native to the region.

"With this rather primitive work for mine comes my sincere wish that the bears, who themselves had endured human cruelty, would be able to recover physically and mentally, and live in love and in peace," wrote Li Zhao, one of the students who made the toys back then, explaining her design idea on paper. She was referring to the highly controversial practice of bear-bile farming, which is primarily conducted in parts of Asia and involves extracting bile from captive bears through invasive methods.

In 2011, Li's design won first prize in a designing-for-moon bear competition, one of the organizers of which is the Beijing branch of Roots and Shoots, a youth-led community action program launched two decades earlier by the internationally renowned primatologist Jane Goodall.

"Many young people who were with us have later gone on to take leadership roles in China's ongoing effort to balance development with environmental protection," says Goodall, who's currently in Beijing, leaving on Thursday. Her groundbreaking research into chimpanzees has transformed the human perception of both apes and themselves.

Jiang Yan, 62, joined the Beijing office in 2006 and is meeting Goodall for the 10th time. "At 90, she's here to celebrate with us the China program's 30th anniversary, and to show that when one is immersed in something one truly loves, there's no such thing as retiring," Jiang says.

One television journalist, during an interview with Goodall in the early 1970s, asked, "How long are you going to be associated with the chimpanzees?" Goodall quipped: "I should say it's a rough guess until I die, but I can't tell you how many years that will be."

No more than two hours after Goodall's arrival in Beijing around noon this past Saturday, she was in the China Science and Technology Museum collecting stories from young followers from the Roots and Shoots program who had come from all over the country.

One team that won a "Persistence Award" on Saturday hails from Qingdao, a



Internationally renowned primatologist Jane Goodall at a public event themed on animal protection in Beijing on Sunday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: Goodall with youth participants of the Roots and Shoots program at Beijing's Olympic Forest Park in 2010.



Right: Goodall during a public lecture in Beijing in November 2019. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ROOTS AND SHOOTS BEIJING

coastal city in East China's Shandong province. Since their inception under Roots and Shoots, the team — now boasting over 1,000 members — has engaged in a wide range of projects, from mapping the region's water resources to protecting the endangered finless porpoise inhabiting the bays of China's Yellow Sea.

The award-winning project involves collaboration between high school and university students and local fishermen, who have come into direct contact with the water mammals in their daily work. The students support the fishermen's children through free tutoring sessions — an example of the community-based conservation that Goodall has always championed.



Goodall in Tanzania in the 1960s. PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE AND HUGO VAN LAWICK

"We are a grassroots organization with a bottom-up approach. Anyone who wants to join our program can do so by forming a team with like-minded friends and neighbors. From there, they can develop their own ideas — whether it's building roosts for migrating birds or conducting a study on waste disposal. Our role is mainly supportive: We provide the resources, guidance, and platform the young people need to bring their visions to life," says Jiang, reflecting on the fact that Goodall launched the Roots and Shoots program in 1991, after a talk on the back porch of her home in Tanzania with a group of 12 local teenagers eager to develop solutions to the environmental and ecological challenges

they saw around them.

Writing in an article on June 4, 2017, one day before World Environment Day, Goodall recalled her China experiences which started with her first visit to the country in 1998, upon the invitation of Liang Congjie (1932-2010), a prominent Chinese environmentalist and social activist, and four years after the Roots and Shoots program was brought to China by a Canadian friend of hers who also helped found the Western Academy of Beijing, a school for the city's growing expatriate community.

In the article, Goodall recalled her conversations with George Schaller of the World Wildlife Fund, the first Western scientist invited by the Chinese government to work at the Wolong National Nature Reserve. This reserve, located in Sichuan near the border of the Xizang autonomous region, is home to the giant panda. "When he left (in the 1980s), he told me he was pessimistic about the future of the iconic animal in the wild," wrote Goodall.

A few thousand words later, Goodall's readers got an update: "The situation regarding wild pandas has improved to the extent that it is now classified as 'vulnerable' rather than 'endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. This is due to enforcing bans prohibiting poaching and the government decision, in 2006, to expand and connect the scattered nature reserves ... where half of China's wild pandas live," she wrote. "I'm told that Schaller commented how glad he was that things had turned out so much better than he had predicted."

Optimism has been the driving force behind Goodall's relentless advocacy for animal rights and environmental protection.

Back in 1966, Goodall watched helplessly as a devastating polio epidemic struck the chimpanzees at Tanzania's Gombe Stream National Park, where she had made her world-famous study on what she called "our closest kin".

Mr McGregor, one of the chimps Goodall had studied and befriended, lost both legs and was "unable to use even one arm" — to quote the primatologist — due to the epidemic, which was likely to have been transmitted from humans.

"We immediately found out that we could vaccinate the chimps. It was a bit late, but maybe it (the epidemic) would have gone on if we hadn't (vaccinated them)," said Goodall to her interviewer many years later. "But McGregor had to be shot (due to the seriousness of his condition)."

When prompted by a reporter that some fellow scientists believe that she should have "let nature take its own course," Goodall answered, "Sorry, I don't care what anybody said ... I couldn't watch an animal suffering any more than I could watch a human suffering and not help if I could."

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By ZHAO XU

"Staring into the eyes of a chimpanzee, I saw a thinking, reasoning personality looking back," said Jane Goodall in the 2017 National Geographic documentary *Jane*. The film, crafted from more than 100 hours of previously unseen footage, captures the now world-renowned British primatologist during her work in the 1960s at Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania.

Though widely viewed as a trailblazer today, back in the initial few months of her stay in Gombe in 1960, Goodall saw herself as "the white ape," an intruder desperate to be accepted and embraced by her long-armed kin.

The breakthrough came one morning after Goodall had "tramped up and down three different valleys in search of chimps but had found none", to quote herself. That's when she spotted an adult male whom she had long known by sight. This time, he didn't run.

David Greybeard was the name Goodall gave the ape with a tuft of distinctive white hair on his chin. The very first individual of his community to have trusted her, David Greybeard led the budding primatologist to her first major discovery about the chimps as toolmakers.

"I watched spellbound as the chimps set off to a termite mound, picked a small leafy twig, and stripped it off its leaves. That was object modification, the crude beginning of tool making," said Goodall, referring to the fact that the chimps used the sticks to get termites out of their tunneled home.

"At that time, in the early 1960s, it was held by many scientists that only humans had minds and were capable of rational thought. Fortunately, I hadn't been to university and did not know these things," recalled Goodall.

In fact, that was exactly one of the reasons Goodall was chosen by Louis Leakey, one of the world's leading anthropologists at the time, to study chimpanzees in the wild. Leakey, who wanted someone with a mind

unbiased by existing theories, also found in Goodall a passion for knowledge, a love for animals and monumental patience — the things that are still with her today.

Back in 1960, Goodall's discovery was met with a telegram from Leakey: "Now we must redefine man, redefine tool, or accept chimpanzees as humans!"

While Leakey's goal was to gain a deeper understanding of his Stone-Age ancestors, for Goodall, her involvement with the animals, especially a female chimpanzee she named Flo and her children, "were very important to my own development," to quote Goodall.

"She was all things that a chimp mother should be — affectionate, playful and supportive. That's what my mother was — she supported me," said Goodall, who was accompanied for the Gombe research by her mother Margaret Myfanwe Joseph (1906-2000), who wrote under the name Vanne Morris-Goodall and passed her writer's genes to her daughter.

Goodall herself became a mother on March 4, 1967, having married three years earlier. Her husband Hugo van Lawick, a Dutch wildlife photographer, was sent in 1962 by National Geographic to film Goodall in Gombe.

According to Goodall, only after becoming a mother herself did she understand why "a chimpanzee mother furiously waved her arms and barked out threats to anyone who approached her infant too closely."

Yet that "anyone" didn't include Goodall. By the time Flo gave birth to her son Flint in 1964, around the time of Goodall's marriage, she had long been an unofficial member of the chimpanzee community. Under Lawick's camera, Goodall played with Flint the toddler, trying to attract his attention with a stuffed toy chimpanzee. In fact, it was a toy chimpanzee given to Goodall by her father that first triggered her interest

Lady who launched an evolution revolution



Jane Goodall with baby chimpanzee Flint, the son of Flo, at Tanzania's Gombe Stream National Park in the 1960s. PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE AND HUGO VAN LAWICK

toward the animals. That childhood interest, kept alive by Goodall, led the young woman to accept a schoolmate's invitation to the latter's family farm in Kenya, where Goodall met Leakey and proved her worth to the anthropologist.

In the 1960s, Goodall's observation, which challenged human uniqueness, was met with "a violent uproar" to use her words. Some sought to discredit her on the ground of Goodall being a young woman. "Comely Miss Spends Her Times Eyeing Apes" was the headline carried by one newspaper.

But Goodall's fame continued to grow. "I was the Geographic cover girl and people said my fame was due to my legs. ... By this time I needed to raise money myself, so I made use of it," said Goodall in the 2017 documentary *Jane*, which shows her roaming the Gombe reserve in the 1960s wearing her

now-iconic Khaki shirts and shorts. The man behind the video camera was Lawick, whose 100 hours of previously unseen Goodall footage was only discovered in National Geographic's archives in 2014, twelve years after his passing in 2002.

In 1977, Goodall established the Jane Goodall Institute to support the Gombe research and spearhead multiple community-centered conservation and development programs in Africa and elsewhere. Among these programs is Roots and Shoots, which allows young people to take the initiative in environmental protection.

Acutely aware of the social constraints faced by women, Goodall's research center at Gombe today hosts many woman scientists, who were nearly absent from the field when Goodall began. Goodall also launched projects under JGI to support young African

girls by offering them access to reproductive health education and through scholarships to finance their college education.

Goodall herself, unable to initially go to college due to financial constraints, gained her PhD at University of Cambridge in 1966, the eighth person to be allowed to study for a PhD at Cambridge without first having obtained a bachelor's degree.

Horrified by the natural degradation she saw all around her, Goodall has devoted herself to advocacy since the mid-1980s. Having celebrated her 90th birthday this April, she continues to travel approximately 300 days a year over the past few years.

Back in the 1970s, Goodall experienced "a very dark time" as she witnessed the prolonged brutal conflict between two rivaling groups of chimpanzees who used to belong to one big chimpanzee community that included Flo and her children.

"I'd come to accept that the dark and evil side of human nature was deeply embedded in our genes, inherited from our ancient primate ancestors," lamented Goodall.

The "Four Year War", as Goodall calls it, erupted two years after the death of Flo, a dominant female member of her community and the beloved mother of Flint, who was captured on camera as trying to get onto his mother's back as an adult male, when Flo was already "too old to push him (Flint) to independence."

"From time to time, he (Flint) approached her (dead body), as if begging her to groom him, to comfort him as she had always done throughout his life," said Goodall. "Three weeks after Flo died, Flint died too."

At the chimpanzee rehabilitation center founded by Goodall in Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo, chimpanzees orphaned by the bushmeat trade are nurtured with love and care before being released. In a video on JGI's website, a female chimpanzee named Wounda, who was rescued as a baby and grew up at the center, enveloped Goodall in a gentle hug before heading into the wild.

"The warmth of her embrace is something I shall never forget," said Goodall.