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XI'S VISION | MAJOR COUNTRY DIPLOMACY

China's tireless pursuit of peace wins acclaim

Promoting dialogue among nations seen as key to productive solutions on hot spot issues

By ZHANG YUNBI
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In the eyes of Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, China's adherence to peace, amity and solidarity is deeply rooted in the nation's culture of thousands of years.

"In my own career, I have learned a lot from the teachings of ancient Chinese philosophers. One of my strong guiding principles is: 'A thousand friends are never enough; and even only one enemy is still too much,'" Prabowo said at a reception during his state visit to China last month, drawing huge applause from the audience.

During his talks with President Xi Jinping on Nov 9, he thanked China for upholding fairness and justice on the Palestinian question, and said Indonesia supports the three major global initiatives proposed by Xi — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

Leaders, officials and scholars have agreed, when assessing Beijing's major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, that China is a sincere, productive provider of peaceful solutions to hot spot issues and in global governance.

China has strived tirelessly for breakthroughs, using a range of innovative approaches, and is a keen supporter of true multilateralism, working consistently to make the voice of developing countries better heard regarding global justice, peace and development, analysts said.

Among the clear evidence in this regard is Beijing's role in successfully mediating and facilitating the landmark reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran last year.

"China, we have seen, is constantly pursuing different avenues to promote peace, to create dialogue among nations, to try to reduce tensions and sit everybody around the table. We saw this especially in the situation with the Middle East right now," said

Nicaraguan Ambassador to China Michael Campbell.

"We are committed to working hand in hand with China as we seek to create more democratic international relations for the world," Campbell told China Daily.

He noted that in many situations, China advances cooperation among countries "to find solutions, and to focus on the real priorities of the world, addressing issues such as climate change, helping to eradicate poverty, and promoting development and prosperity for everyone".

Building on the momentum of its facilitation of the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, China "has promoted de-escalation efforts and long-term peace" in the Middle East, according to an article published by British and Portuguese scholars in October at the website of the Georgetown (University) Journal of International Affairs.

Maria Papageorgiou, a China expert and researcher at Newcastle University in the United Kingdom, and Mohammad Eslami, an invited assistant professor at the University of Minho in Portugal, said that "China's most substantial engagement" in resolving the Palestine-Israel conflict came with the Beijing Declaration issued in July at the gathering of representatives of Fatah, Hamas and other factions of Palestinian.

"China's diplomatic support has also materialized in its organization of other states in seeking a long-term resolution to the conflict," the scholars wrote, noting that China presented a five-point proposal to the United Nations Security Council last year for establishing a comprehensive ceasefire to end the fighting in Gaza.

Regarding the Ukraine crisis, China and Brazil jointly proposed a six-point consensus for its political settlement. As of September, the proposal had received positive response from more than 110 countries, according to the Foreign Ministry.

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Protesters hold up signs that read "Step down President Yoon Suk-yeol" on Wednesday during a rally to condemn Yoon's surprise martial law declaration on Tuesday night and to call for his resignation, at the National Assembly in Seoul, Republic of Korea. KIM HONG-JI / REUTERS

Yoon faces impeachment over martial law order

By YANG HAN in Hong Kong
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Republic of Korea President Yoon Suk-yeol is facing impeachment over his declaration of martial law in the country on Tuesday night, an order he was forced to withdraw within six hours of announcement as ROK lawmakers unanimously voted against it.

An impeachment bill, submitted to the National Assembly on Wednesday afternoon by the main liberal opposition Democratic Party and five smaller

opposition parties, was expected to be introduced at a parliamentary plenary session in the early hours of Thursday, and could be put to a vote as early as Friday, local media reported.

China said on Wednesday that it had noted the short-lived declaration of martial law in the ROK, but "will not comment" on the country's internal affairs.

"We hope the ROK will take effective measures to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and institutions. China's position on the Korean Peninsula issue remains unchanged," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian.

According to ROK laws, a presidential impeachment motion

requires the agreement of at least two-thirds of the National Assembly members to pass. Impeaching Yoon would therefore require support from 200 of the National Assembly's 300 members. The Democratic Party and other small opposition parties together have 192 seats. In addition, at least six justices of the nine-member Constitutional Court must endorse the vote to remove him from office.

In a televised address on Tuesday night, Yoon shocked the nation and the world by declaring "emergency martial law" to contain "anti-state forces" and protect constitutional freedom. This was

the first time martial law was invoked in the country in more than 40 years.

The announcement drew heavily armed troops to encircle the ROK parliament, while lawmakers scrambled to reenter the building. People gathered in front of the National Assembly and at Gwanghwamun Square in the heart of Seoul, demanding Yoon's resignation, impeachment and arrest. The standoff played out over a few tense hours, with cameras capturing the moments of anger, bravery and defiance before Yoon was forced to back down.

Woo Su-keun, head of the Institute of East Asian Studies of Korea in Seoul, said that as only eight votes are needed from the ruling People Power Party, of which Yoon is a member, there was a possibility that the impeachment bill would pass.

In a statement, People Power Party chief Han Dong-hoon said that Yoon's declaration of martial law was "wrong", and urged all Cabinet ministers to resign.

Yoon's senior aides, including his chief of staff, offered to resign en masse after the martial law decree was blocked by the National Assembly. On Wednesday afternoon, ROK Defense Minister Kim Yong-hyun offered to resign, apologizing for the turmoil the country was cast into.

"People were shocked by President Yoon's order, because it is not a situation for implementing martial law," Woo said, adding that a president could declare martial law during wartime, war-like situations or other comparable national emergencies.

Hoo Chiew-ping, co-founder and senior fellow of the East Asian International Relations Caucus in Malaysia, said that Yoon frequently invoked the term "anti-state forces" in his remarks at various Cabinet meetings, a euphemism aimed at describing opposition parties and their members. However, "using such Cold War rhetoric to target a modern, democratic opposition is not only illogical but also profoundly inappropriate", Hoo said.

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, ROK's largest labor union, launched an indefinite nationwide strike starting on Wednesday, urging its members not to go to work until Yoon resigns.

Ryu Yong-wook, assistant professor at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at National University of Singapore, said, "If the president resigns, a presidential election must be held within 60 days, according to law."

If the impeachment motion is passed, Yoon can challenge its legality in the Constitutional Court, which could take months to make a decision, Ryu added.

Food aid



Bread is distributed to residents of Tel Rifaat in the Syrian governate of Aleppo, which has been seized by opposition forces, on Tuesday. Civilians are reporting growing shortages of food, fuel, medicine and other essential supplies. UGUR YILDIRIM / DIA IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

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Keep Global South united and cooperating to achieve inclusive development
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Sino-US unity key to strengthen globalization

WORLD WATCH
By Shakeel Ahmad Ramay

Globalization revolutionized the world economy, its growth and development. It fueled innovation, technological development and the expansion of new means of communication and transportation. World Bank data shows that global GDP increased from around \$3 trillion in the 1970s to \$105 trillion in 2023.

Now, digitalization has put globalization on the fast track and brought the world market at one's fingertips.

Globalization has helped the world pursue prosperity, tackle challenges and live peacefully. The United States, China, Europe, Japan, South Korea, member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

and the Gulf Cooperation Council states have been the biggest beneficiaries of a globalized world.

One can argue that the US has built its empire on the back of globalization. The US had a dream to access the global markets and expand its business and reach. Mechanisms like the World Trade Organization consolidated the US' role and helped it realize its dreams.

On the other hand, China is the best case for understanding the importance of globalization. The country began developing at pace after introducing reforms in the late 1970s. Joining the WTO in 2001 only accelerated the rate of its economic expansion, and it has, since then, developed by leaps and bounds.

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'MYSTERIOUS' MOUNTAINS START TO REVEAL THEIR NATURAL WONDERS

Online curiosity piques interest in subtropical region with rare animals, forest perils

By LI YINGQING in Kunming and ZHANG XIAOMIN



Driven by viral videos from influencers showcasing the perilous and rare beauty of the Ailao Mountains, the once-hidden range in Yunnan province has piqued a wave of curiosity in recent months.

The topic "A bird numbering only 1,000 worldwide observed in the Ailao Mountains" was a hit on the popular social media platform Sina Weibo.

"The white-eared night heron is hard to spot due to its small population and secretive habits," said Zhao Xuebing, a lecturer at Yunnan University's School of Ecology and Environmental Science.

Classified as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species, the bird has been given top-level protection by the Chinese government.

Located in the central part of Yunnan, the Ailao Mountains extend approximately 500 kilometers from northwest to southeast. The range is home to China's largest, least disturbed, and most intact subtropical montane wet evergreen broad-leaved forest ecosystem.

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This pristine environment is a home for many lesser-known creatures. A large number of them are rare and endangered animals, including the western black-crested gibbon, clouded leopard and green peafowl.

A vital pathway

The white-eared night heron has a wild population estimated at only 1,000 birds. However, in early October one was found at the Jinshan Yakou Xiping bird banding and monitoring station in the Ailao Mountain National Nature Reserve.

One of the most elusive members of the heron family, it breeds in the south and central provinces of China and migrates to the China-Myanmar border and Southeast Asia in autumn.

"The first discovery of the bird in the Ailao Mountains was in 2006," said Zhao, who is also secretary-general of the Kunming Bird-watching Association.

"After many years of silence, since 2021 it has been found here for four consecutive years, indicating that its population has reached a certain size."

Over the past 20 years, Zhao, whose main research focus is nocturnal bird migration, has visited the Ailao Mountains multiple times from September to November. Each visit he spends more than a month working with the station staff and his colleagues on bird banding and research.

Zhao said that the Ailao Mountains are an important corridor for migratory birds. The birds gather in lower passes in the mountain range to fly through.

The Jinshan Yakou Xiping banding station and Jinshan Yakou Zhenyuan banding station, where Zhao works, are located on either side of a ridge at the border of Xiping county in Yuxi and Zhenyuan county in Pu'er, with an average altitude of 2,400 meters.

According to the station's records, more than 200 species of migratory birds appear in that area each year, including the yellow-breasted bunting.

"It is now listed as a critically endangered species globally and a national first-class protected wild animal," said Zhao, adding that it used to be a common bird, and is similar in appearance to a sparrow.

"We used to be able to catch dozens each year for banding research, but now we might not catch even one in a year."

Cautious approach

Enveloped in dense mist, with towering trees obscuring the sky, vines intertwining with vegetation, and moss covering the rocks — the mountains' natural wonders have been attracting greater interest.

Zhang Junjie, who makes paints for artists, searches for rare pigments in the primeval forests. The videos about his searches went viral during the National Day holiday.

The mysterious allure of the Ailao Mountains has also been associated with the dangers its environment presents. A tragic event three years ago has been frequently cited as an example of its perilous nature.

In 2021, four geological survey workers went missing in the mountains and were later confirmed to have died of hypothermia.

Nevertheless, tourists have continued to flock to the area.

On Oct 6, the Ministry of Emergency Management issued a statement, warning that the Ailao Mountains contain unforeseeable dangers and urged tourists not to venture there recklessly. However, for some netizens, the dangers only add to the mountains' mystique.

Wu Fei, an associate researcher in ornithology at the Kunming Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, called for a sensible approach to dealing with the risks.

"There are no GPS signals, and the scenery looks almost identical everywhere. Once lost, it's very difficult to find your way back," he said.

Wu's doctoral research was conducted in the mountains, and most of the trails he trod were created by patrol personnel.

The unpredictable weather, and the high humidity at night and during rain-

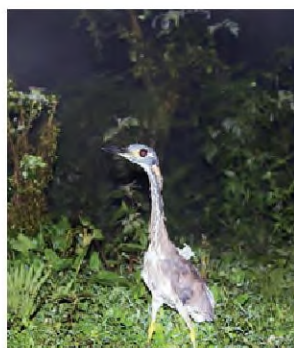


A green peafowl displays its tail feathers. YAN QIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Nature: Yunnan range home to important species



Male western black-crested gibbon
LI WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY



White-eared night heron
ZHAO XUEBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Female western black-crested gibbon
LI WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

The Ailao Mountains area is one of the regions with rich biodiversity in central Yunnan.

Jiang Xuelong, a researcher at the Kunming Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences

fall, are even more dangerous, he added. The range spans 16 counties and districts across five cities and prefectures, including Dali Bai autonomous prefecture, Chuxiong Yi autonomous prefecture, Yuxi city, Pu'er city, and Honghe Hani and Yi autonomous prefecture.

To protect the Ailao Mountains, multiple national, provincial, prefecture-level, and county-level nature reserves have been established within its expanse.

The Ailao Mountain National Nature Reserve, located in the central and northern parts of the range, protects rare and endangered plants and animal resources and their habitats.

It spans five counties and county-level cities in Pu'er, Yuxi, and Chuxiong.

The reserve is divided into core, buffer, and experimental zones, with tourism allowed only in the experimental areas.

It is home to 86 species of mammals, 65 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 430 species of birds. Among them, 35 species are listed as national first- and second-class protected wild animals. They

include the western black-crested gibbon, gray langur, stump-tailed macaque, clouded leopard, black bear, green peafowl, and black-necked long-tailed pheasant.

Several years ago, researchers from the Kunming Institute of Zoology conducted a groundbreaking study using DNA extracted from blood ingested by leeches to survey vertebrate biodiversity across the Ailao Mountain National Nature Reserve.

Spanning 677 square kilometers, the reserve was divided into 172 patrol zones. During their patrols, 163 forest rangers collected a total of 30,468 leeches.

Published in the journal *Nature Communications* in 2022, the study identified 86 vertebrate species, including amphibians, mammals, birds, and reptiles.

Notably, 15 of the species are listed by the IUCN as threatened or near-threatened, including the stump-tailed macaque, tufted deer, sambar deer, and the Asiatic black bear.

The study's findings revealed that species' richness increases with elevation and distance from the reserve's edge. This indicates

that the core areas of the reserve provide a crucial sanctuary for many species.

Green peafowl sanctuary

Among the fascinating animals in the Ailao Mountains, Wu is most concerned about the endangered green peafowl, also included on the IUCN red list.

The green peafowl, measuring 180 to 230 centimeters in length, is the only native peafowl species in China and the largest of the country's wild pheasants.

The males, having bright blue-green plumage with a crest of feathers on their heads, look robust and extraordinarily ornate.

These beautiful birds inhabit mainly deciduous broad-leaved forests and evergreen broad-leaved mixed forests along the banks of rivers, and feed on flowers, fruit and seeds, as well as termites, crickets and locusts.

Deep within the Ailao Mountains, in Shuangbai county of Chuxiong, a prefecture-level nature reserve named Konglong River was established in 2003 to protect the green peafowl.

At that time, there were eight to 10 groups of green peafowl in the reserve, totaling about 50 to 70 birds.

To better protect the green peafowl population and its habitat, the local authorities gradually expanded the reserve, built a monitoring network, and implemented rescue, protection, and restoration projects.

"As a flagship species, protecting the green peafowl also safeguards the river valley habitat and many other rare and endangered species within the original habitat," said Wu.

"It plays a crucial role in maintaining the stability of the river valley ecosystem," he said.

Sources from Shuangbai's forestry and grassland bureau told local media that as of November, the green peafowl population in the entire county was monitored by 66 groups with 430 individuals, making it the largest and best-protected habitat for green peafowls in Asia.

Observing rare gibbon

The critically endangered western black-crested gibbon, with a small, fragmented population of about 1,300 individuals, is mainly found in Yunnan, spanning the borders of China, Vietnam and Laos.

Due to its rarity, secluded mountain habitats, and extremely secretive behavior, this national first-class protected animal has always been shrouded in mystery.

With their long arms, almost twice as long as their body (about 50 cm), the gibbons can swing from branch to branch and travel long distances through the forest canopy.

These small apes eat fruits that are high in sugar (like figs), flowers, and younger and softer leaves. When these staples are not available they eat insects and small mammals.

The Wuliang and Ailao Mountains are the main distribution areas and important protection zones for the western black-crested gibbons.

In September, the Xiping section of the Ailao Mountain National Nature Reserve and the Kunming Institute of Zoology jointly established an observation point.

"The Ailao Mountains area is one of the regions with rich biodiversity in central Yunnan, home to important species such as the western black-crested gibbon and the Indochinese gray langur," said Jiang Xuelong, a researcher at the institute.

"Our recent survey of the gibbons highlights the significance of the area. It was quite necessary to set up an observation point here," he said.

Jiang said they hope to better understand the wildlife diversity in the Xiping section of the Ailao Mountains and provide scientific support and data for biodiversity conservation in central Yunnan.

Guo Bin, director of the Xiping administrative bureau of the Ailao Mountain National Nature Reserve, pointed out that collaborating with the Chinese Academy of Sciences will help provide scientific data for future conservation efforts.

"It will also lay the foundation for future national park applications," he said.

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The green peafowl, measuring 180 to 230 centimeters in length, is the only native peafowl species in China. PHOTOS BY YAN QIAN AND ZHANG XIAORONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Beijing, Tokyo called on to strengthen ties

Foreign Minister stresses the importance of steering relations in the right direction

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
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Chinese and Japanese officials and experts convened on Wednesday to advocate maintaining of the proper course of bilateral relations, fostering people-to-people exchanges and building a peaceful world through coordination and cooperation.

At the opening ceremony of the two-day 20th Beijing-Tokyo Forum held in Tokyo, Foreign Minister Wang Yi emphasized in a video address that the over-2,000-year history of Sino-Japanese interactions and more than 50 years of normalized diplomatic ties illustrate the importance of steering relations in the right direction.

"China has always regarded Japan as a vital partner and hopes Japan can objectively and rationally view China's development," Wang said. "Together, we should uphold the correct positioning of comprehensively advancing the strategic and mutually beneficial relationship and practice the shared understanding that we are cooperative partners and do not pose threats to each other."

He stressed that the four political documents between China and Japan form the bedrock of bilateral ties, warning against actions that blur, reverse or undermine these agreements.

To address global challenges such as unilateralism and protectionism, Wang said he encourages the two countries to resist external provocations, advance regional cooperation, restart negotiations on the China-Japan Republic of Korea free trade agreement and promote Asian economic integration.

Wang said he welcomes Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya's early visit to China and expressed his willingness to visit Japan at an appropriate time.

Iwaya highlighted the significant regional and global responsibilities shared by Japan and China, noting widespread anticipation for the constructive and stable development of their relations. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's recent talks with Chinese leaders reaffirmed a shared commitment to advancing strategic, mutually beneficial ties, he said.

Iwaya pledged to strengthen communication across all levels and sectors and expressed his intent to visit China as soon as possible to address unresolved issues, deepen cooperation and build on recent progress, including China's reinstatement of visa-free travel by Japanese citizens on short-term visits.

In a speech read out at the forum, former Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda warned against growing global division and called for international efforts to ease tensions and foster a cooperative world.

Fukuda commended President Xi Jinping's commitment at the G20 Summit to upholding the UN Charter's core principles, promoting an open global economy and opposing protectionism.

Fukuda also highlighted the importance of public exchanges as the foundation of Japan-China relations, welcoming China's visa-free policy as a positive step toward improving mutual understanding. He expressed optimism that the new Shigeru Ishiba Cabinet represents an opportunity for progress in bilateral relations, with the hope that next year will mark a fresh starting point.

Mo Gaoyi, director of China's State Council Information Office, called for enhanced interaction at all levels to deepen trust and ensure the stable, long-term development of bilateral relations.

"China and Japan are both key nations in Asia and globally. They should uphold strategic independence, foster good neighborly relations and turn their political consensus of partnership and non-threats into concrete policies and actions," Mo said.

He called for joint efforts to uphold the global free trade system, stabilize supply chains, and promote economic growth in the face of rising protectionism and unilateralism.

Since its inception in 2005, the forum has become a leading platform for public diplomacy between China and Japan.

The 20th forum, themed "Restoring peace and rebuilding a global order based on multilateral cooperation through Japan-China cooperation", featured discussions on topics such as politics, trade and security.

Trail of destruction



People walk around what remains of their flood-damaged homes on Wednesday in Tumpat, Malaysia's Kelantan state. Severe floods have killed more than 30 people in Malaysia and Thailand. MOHD RASFAN / AFP

Globalization: People-first approach needed

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At the time of joining the WTO, the size of the Chinese economy was \$1.3 trillion, and the total trade of China was worth \$509.8 billion. Now, China is the second-largest economy, with its GDP reaching \$18 trillion in 2022, and its total trade volume standing at \$6.3 trillion in the same year.

Globalization has become increasingly important in the age of global supply and value-added chains, which are major drivers of business and growth. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that more than 70 percent of global trade is routed through global value chains.

The situation demands strengthened globalization but this will be unattainable without close cooperation between the world's two biggest economies and trade partners, the US and China. Unfortunately, the US, once a leader and forceful advocate of globalization, appears to be changing its stance.

The process began with the 2008 global financial crisis, with rising debt further complicating the situation. Instead of fixing its domestic problems, the US launched a campaign against China. In 2009, then-US president Barack Obama introduced the "Pivot to Asia" policy to check China's peaceful development. Obama also excluded China from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, among other containments.

Donald Trump, during his first presidency, then raised the slogan "America First" and unleashed a vicious round of trade barriers, tariffs and sanctions, with China and Chinese companies the main targets, and Huawei had to bear the negative consequences.

After the 2020 election, it was hoped that President Joe Biden

would reverse the process and reinstate the old policy of globalization. Unfortunately, he opted to accelerate the anti-globalization drive further, specifically focusing on and targeting China and Chinese businesses. He introduced the CHIPS and Science Act to strengthen US companies and demoralize their competitors.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the Biden administration spent \$5 trillion on pandemic relief, and a major chunk of this money was given to US companies. This amount was more than what the US spent on the New Deal and World War II combined.

Moreover, to discourage investment in other countries and divert resources into the US market, the Federal Reserve increased interest rates to 5 percent. It attracted more than \$10 trillion from the global markets, which negatively impacted other countries by unleashing an inflation wave, with the least developed and poor countries becoming the worst victims of the policy. Now, Trump is to be back in the White House again, and it is feared that he will start a new trade war and anti-globalization drive.

Anti-globalization policies have hit infrastructure badly. The Global Infrastructure Hub estimates that the world needs to increase investment by around \$1 trillion to bridge the investment gap. The UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024 estimated that the investment gap for developing countries to meet the SDGs' needs is around \$4 trillion. China foresaw this situation much earlier, and to avert the worst consequences, it started constructing new mechanisms to sustain the globalization process.

First, it launched the Belt and Road Initiative. According to the latest available data, 153 countries and 32 international organizations have signed BRI cooperation agreements. China has invested almost \$1 trillion, which helped mobilize

\$2.49 trillion from partners while implementing 3,220 joint projects.

Second, China launched the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to contribute to bridging the investment gap. The bank was started with \$100 billion and 57 members. Now, it has 109 members and the AIIB also supports non-regional projects, so long as those projects help promote global trade, economic integration and linkage with Asia.

Third, the country launched the China International Import Expo to promote globalization. The idea of the CIIE is proposed, planned, deployed and promoted by President Xi Jinping himself to fulfill his promise of high-standard opening-up.

Fourth, China is also investing in infrastructure and trade linkages under development programs such as the Global Development Initiative and the South-South cooperation. Under the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, for instance, China has implemented projects in more than 50 countries, benefiting over 20 million people.

Now, imagine a world where China did not invest in infrastructure and globalization or create avenues for financial support and trade linkages — the picture would be very scary.

The challenges are numerous, and the investment gap is huge. However, China alone cannot fill the global gap. The same is true for the US. The two countries need to cooperate to strengthen globalization, and cooperation and globalization must be based on a people-first, not country-first, approach. Cooperation for globalization should lead the world to achieve sustainable development goals and build a community with a shared future for mankind.

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

Diplomacy: Initiatives show China's major role

From page 1

Also in September, China, Brazil and other Global South countries jointly launched the Friends for Peace group, which seeks a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis, at the UN headquarters in New York.

Wu Zhicheng, director and professor of the Institute of International Strategy at the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (National Academy of Governance), said: "To safeguard multilateralism, justice should be served and double standards should not be practiced. Major countries, in particular, should play an exemplary role, shoulder greater responsibility and fulfill their due role as major countries."

To safeguard multilateralism, justice should be served and double standards should not be practiced."

Wu Zhicheng, director and professor of the Institute of International Strategy at the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (National Academy of Governance)

"It is important to enhance the representation of developing countries in the global governance system, and to make international organizations such as the United Nations better represent the interests of the vast number of developing countries," he added.

Keith Bennett, a London-based senior analyst on international relations and co-editor of the Friends of Socialist China platform, warned that "the challenges facing humanity are growing", such as climate change and pandemics, and "none of these issues now can be reasonably tackled and addressed without the active involvement of China".

To address such issues, China has come up with proposals, solutions and theoretical frameworks, as summed up in the three global initiatives of President Xi, he said.

As a major country, China "is actually putting forward comprehensive and realistic proposals for addressing these issues in a way that is acceptable to the majority of countries in the world and certainly to the majority of the people of the countries in the world", he added.

Carmakers in Europe struggle amid weak demand and high costs

By SHAO XINYING
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All is not well in the European automobile sector. Multiple automakers have announced plant closure and job cut plans, with experts attributing these decisions to sluggish demand, rising labor costs and poor performance.

Slow transition to electric vehicles and supply chain disruptions have further complicated the situation, they said.

A prominent indication of the current turmoil came in the form of multinational carmaker Volkswagen proposing a 10 percent wage cut, saying it needs to slash costs and boost profits to defend market share in the face of competition and a drop in car demand. The company has also warned of plant closures in Germany for the first time in its nearly 90-year history.

"The closure plan itself is not expected to cause an immediate crisis but it does carry major symbolic weight," said Jian Junbo, deputy director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies.

"As car making is often seen as the crown jewel of industry, the move undermines confidence in



Flares are released by striking auto workers at a protest site in Hanover, Germany, on Monday. The agitators were opposing planned wage cuts and possible factory closures. FABIAN BIMMER / REUTERS

the manufacturing sector. It also raises concern about the sustainability of Germany's competitive advantages and its future in high-quality manufacturing," he told China Daily.

Volkswagen workers struck work on Monday at nine plants across Germany after the company dismissed cost-saving proposals of 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion). The strike organizer, labor union IG Metall, reported that nearly 100,000 workers took part in the protest.

The brand's chief executive Thomas Schaefer said in a recent interview

with the Welt am Sonntag newspaper that the company sees little chance of avoiding layoffs and plant closures in order to cut 4 billion euros (\$4.2 billion) in costs.

"The potential closure and other layoff move is primarily due to profit losses at the local plant, which are caused by high production and labor costs, compounded by a shrinking export market," Jian said. "These factors have led to losses the company cannot offset with profits from other regions."

Volkswagen apart, other European automakers and auto ancillary

suppliers have also made similar announcements.

Bosch, a major car parts supplier, plans to lay off some 5,500 employees in the next several years globally, including 3,800 posts in Germany, the company said on Nov 22.

Ford said on Nov 20 that it plans to cut 4,000 jobs in Europe by the end of 2027. Of the total cuts, 2,900 jobs would be lost in Germany, 800 in the United Kingdom and 300 in other European Union countries.

"These job cuts highlight the challenges facing the European automotive industry," said Zhang Xinyu, associate professor of industrial economics at the School of Economics at Liaoning University.

"Supply chain disruptions and weak demand after the pandemic have further strained operations. Combined with economic uncertainty and slow adaptation to market changes, companies are struggling to maintain profitability," she told China Daily.

The European Union passed a policy last year that will ban sales of new CO2-emitting cars in 2035, effectively ending sales of vehicles running on petrol and diesel.

More imminently, European carmakers face stricter emission targets from 2025 as EU rules require a 15 percent cut relative to 2021 lev-

els in the average amount of carbon emitted per car per kilometer for registered new cars.

While the regulations are aimed at accelerating Europe's green transition, it risks disrupting an industry that has traditionally been a cornerstone of the continent's economic strength, observers said.

BMW's chief executive Oliver Zipse said the 2035 cutoff point ban could "threaten the European automotive industry in its heart".

The warning came at a time when, in January-October 2024, battery-electric vehicle registrations in the EU dropped by 4.9 percent compared with the same period last year, according to data from the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association.

Meanwhile, the European Union in October decided to increase tariffs on Chinese-made electric cars up to 45.3 percent.

Carlos Tavares, then CEO of Stellantis, warned earlier in October that the proposed tariffs on Chinese cars would accelerate plant closures in Europe by prompting Beijing to shift manufacturing to the continent, thereby directly competing with European brands.

But Jian of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies said electric vehicles from China are

not the reason behind job cuts and plant closures at European automobile manufacturing companies. "At the current stage, Chinese brands still have a small market share in Europe, so they do not pose a real or significant threat to local car production in Europe," he said.

According to the environmental group Transport & Environment, about 20 percent of electric vehicles sold in Europe last year were made in China.

Data from the China Passenger Car Association, shows that from January to October 2024, new energy passenger vehicles were essentially dominated by domestic brands, with few models from European brands occupying the top 50 best-selling new energy vehicles.

"The root cause of European automakers' struggling is their lack of competitive advantage, stemming from high costs, limited pricing power, and slow adaptation to industry changes," Zhang said.

"European automakers should focus on building automated manufacturing lines to reduce costs. Further investments in artificial intelligence while optimizing financial structures are the way out," she said.

Chen Yitian contributed to this story.

CHINA

Largest UAV testing area gets approval

Shijiazhuang's expanded site propels low-altitude economy to new heights

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang
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An industrial park in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, has recently obtained approval for developing and managing the largest unmanned aerial vehicle test flight area in North China, promoting further development of the burgeoning low-altitude economy.

Covering an area of approximately 600 square kilometers in various districts and counties in Shijiazhuang, the UAV test flight area spans 25 km in length and 23 km in width, with a maximum flying altitude of 4,000 meters, surpassing the usual 3,000-meter altitude limit of typical test flight areas, according to Guo Ruigang, deputy director of the Administrative Committee of the Shijiazhuang Equipment Manufacturing Industrial Park in Luancheng district.

"The larger area resolves the issue of limited airspace for UAV operations, meeting the flight testing needs of numerous aviation manufacturing enterprises in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and even across China," Guo said.

The zone beneath the test flight area is primarily mountainous with low population density, making it ideal for companies to conduct UAV flight tests, according to Chen Chen, chairman of Hebei Aviation Investment Low Altitude Industry Development Co.

Zhang Minghui, chief engineer of CAIGA North China Aircraft Industry Co, added that the area is suitable for both unmanned and manned aircraft, facilitating various industries in the low-altitude economic scope, such as aviation emergency rescue, air transport, artificial weather modification, low-altitude tourism, pilot training and the testing of large industrial-grade UAVs.

"We will attract the upstream and downstream industries of general aviation and UAVs to the industrial park, contributing to the development of a low-altitude economic industry cluster," Zhang said.

As a leading enterprise in the

park, his company is also one of the largest and most comprehensive companies in China for general aviation and UAV research and manufacturing.

The low-altitude economy Zhang mentioned is an economic concept that relies on low-altitude airspace, involving low-altitude flight, air tourism, passenger transportation, general aviation services, and scientific research and education.

The value of China's low-altitude economy as of the end of last year was estimated at more than 500 billion yuan (\$69.78 billion) and is expected to rise to 2 trillion yuan by 2030, according to Xinhua News Agency, quoting the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

The low-altitude manufacturing and operational services will contribute the most — nearly 55 percent, according to Zhang Xueqian, deputy director of the park's investment promotion bureau.

"The development potential of low-altitude infrastructure and flight support has not been fully realized yet," Zhang said, adding that the low-altitude operational services are closely related to daily needs such as medical health, agriculture, forestry and emergency rescue.

Currently, the Hebei Aviation Investment Low Altitude Industry Development Co has collaborated with China Mobile to conduct UAV medical supply transportation projects at local hospitals in Shijiazhuang, accumulating a total flight distance of 25,000 km.

Additionally, in Luancheng district, UAV inspection scenarios have been established in terms of environmental protection and urban management. Companies are also exploring the application of UAV in delivery logistics.

Furthermore, a low-altitude airspace operation management company has been founded in the industrial park to specifically cater to the enterprise's test flight approval processes. And the park plans to continue applying for flight regions with diverse scenarios, terrains and climate types in the future.



Workers with the Hebei Aviation Investment Low Altitude Industry Development Co assemble two drones at the Shijiazhuang Equipment Manufacturing Industrial Park in Luancheng district of Shijiazhuang, Hebei province. ZHANG ZHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Storytelling museums



Visitors view digitally displayed cultural relics at the Second My Museum Story Achievement Exhibition held at the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) Deshou Palace Ruins Museum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. DONG XUMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Changbai Mountain welcomes wild Siberian tiger after 30-year hiatus

By YAN DONGJIE
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A wild Siberian tiger was spotted near Changbai Mountain in Northeast China's Jilin province on Tuesday, marking the return of the species to the mountain after a 30-year hiatus, according to the Jilin Provincial Forestry and Grassland Bureau.

Staff members from the Changbai Mountain Nature Reserve Management Center captured clear footage of the tiger near a tourist road on the western slope of the mountain. Seven days earlier, the reserve center personnel found what appeared to be wild Siberian tiger tracks, 300 meters away from the location.

The bureau said the discovery of a wild Siberian tiger, or Northeast China tiger, in the Changbai Mountain National Nature Reserve signifies an expansion of the tiger's habitat, which extends over 200 kilometers westward from the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park.

Staff members then deployed nine monitoring cameras near the discovery site and promptly devised a plan to prevent human-tiger conflicts, issuing warnings to the public and installing warning

signs at the location to alert people about the presence of tigers.

The bureau highlighted that in recent years, Jilin has intensified its ecological conservation efforts by prohibiting hunting and commercial logging in natural forests. The biodiversity of flora and fauna in the Changbai Mountain forests continues to thrive, with species like sika deer and roe deer increasing year by year.

Established in October 2021, the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park is located at the junction of Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces in China, in the southern region of the Laoye Mountain — a branch of Changbai Mountain. Over 6,800 patrol officers have been patrolling the 14,100 square kilometers of the Siberian tiger habitat.

In 2021, a joint research effort involving Professor Jiang Guangshun's team from Northeast Forestry University, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration's feline research center, and institutions including the University of California in the United States revealed that the northeastern region of China is a crucial habitat for Siberian tigers and could potentially support over 300 of the tigers in the future.

Jiang mentioned that amid the global trend of the rapid loss of tiger habitats, China's potential for the recovery of the Siberian tiger population and its habitat is enormous, making it one of the countries with the most promising prospects for tiger habitat restoration worldwide.

In April, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, the number of wild Siberian tigers living stably within the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park has reached around 70, nearly doubling from the pilot phase of the park in 2017. The population of wild Amur leopards has reached around 80.

Last month, an incident occurred in Boli county, Heilongjiang province, where a Siberian tiger entered a village and caused injuries to residents.

The management center of the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park told villagers that when encountering wild Siberian tigers or leopards, they should calmly withdraw to avoid behavior that may provoke or attract them. It is crucial not to approach or provoke the animals and to immediately contact local wildlife conservation authorities.

Famed romance writer Qiong Yao dies

By YANG YANG
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Renowned romance novelist Qiong Yao died in New Taipei City, Taiwan, on Wednesday. She was 86. The writer was found deceased after taking her own life at her residence, according to the local police and fire department.

Qiong was regarded as the most popular romance writer in the Chinese-speaking world, and her novels have been adapted into more than 100 films and television series. With a graceful and eloquent style, she crafted intricate, poignant stories reflecting her dreams and unwavering love, establishing contemporary classics that have captivated Chinese-speaking audiences for decades.

Upon learning of her death, many Chinese people fondly recalled their experiences reading her works online.

Yan Feng, a professor at Fudan University, said on Sina Weibo that Qiong's stories "portrayed pure, sincere, passionate, gentle, and firm love. It was a beautiful belief

that coexisted with life".

Qiong was named Chen Zhe when she was born in 1938 in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

In 1942, during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945), the family frequently relocated, exposing young Qiong to numerous atrocities and adversities that she later detailed in her works. In 1949, the family resettled in Taiwan.

Qiong made her literary debut at age 9 in Shanghai, and she rose to fame with the publication of her first novel, *Chuang Wai* (*Outside the Window*), in 1963.

By October 2019, when she completed her final work, *Meihua Yingxiang Meng* (*Plum Blossom Hero's Dream*), she had authored 67 works, including novels, autobiographies and essay collections.

In addition to her writings, films and TV dramas adapted from her novels have influenced generations. Her novel *Jidu Xiyang Hong* (*How Many Times the Sun Sets*) was adapted into a popular TV drama in 1985, marking the beginning of the "Qiong Yao romance era". TV

dramas based on her novels became well-known on the Chinese mainland.

After visiting relatives on the mainland in 1989 and traveling to various regions, including Beijing and the provinces of Hubei, Sichuan and Yunnan, Qiong published a book about her experiences titled *Jianbuduan De Xiangchou* (*The Nostalgia that Cannot Be Cut Off*). Her efforts led to cross-strait cooperation in the production of popular TV series such as *Mute Wife*, *Wan Jun* and *Three Flowers*.

Throughout the 1990s, TV adaptations of her works dominated markets across the Taiwan Strait.

Love remained a consistent theme in her writing. Her final published work before her death was *Wo De Gushi* (*My Story*), released by Writers Publishing House. In the postscript, she wrote: "I have always believed in love! To me, the word 'love' encompasses a wide spectrum — country, society, family, friends, readers, fans ... I have always given and received abundant love! This life has been truly meaningful!"

China to open its door wider to world

By ZHAO JIA
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Calling the Hainan Free Trade Port a hallmark of China's reform and opening-up in the new era, foreign envoys to Beijing on Wednesday expressed their belief that China's efforts in this regard will bring abundant opportunities to the world.

Addressing a promotional event for South China's Hainan province, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the Hainan FTP has become a new frontier of China's institutional opening-up, a new hotbed of mutual beneficial regional cooperation, and a new engine driving economic globalization.

He pledged that China's door to the outside world will open wider, emphasizing that choosing China is choosing opportunities, while embracing China is embracing the future.

The Hainan FTP, which began construction in 2018, enjoys the highest degree of openness and the most favorable policies in China, covering the widest geographical areas. Hainan is the southernmost province of China and is at the forefront of China's reform and opening-up efforts.

Feng Fei, secretary of the Communist Party of China Hainan provincial committee, said the Hainan FTP, boasting China's most favorable tax policies, the shortest negative list for foreign investment access and most liberal entry policy, holds significant importance for the world.

"The Hainan FTP is constructing a new paradigm for China's opening-up towards, and integration with, countries and regions along the Belt and Road and from the Global South, contributing more to economic globalization and to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind," he said.

"The Hainan FTP serves as an important demonstration of China's commitment to reform and opening-up, as well as China's vision for high-quality development," Singaporean Ambassador to China Peter Tan said, lauding innovative policy measures taken by Hainan as bold and forward-looking.

Given Hainan's geographical and cultural proximity to Southeast Asia, the Hainan FTP is positioned as a "useful vehicle" to strengthen China's cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, China's largest trading partner, he said.

Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to China Hussain bin Ibrahim Al Hammadi described the Hainan FTP as a successful example of Chinese modernization, noting that it has made remarkable progress over the past six years.

He mentioned that Hainan has formulated and implemented over 200 policy documents, introduced three zero-tariff lists and raised the personal duty-free shopping limit to 100,000 yuan (\$13,756).

With both the UAE and China committed to a shared vision of innovation-driven and sustainable development, the ambassador said the UAE and Hainan have signed a number of agreements to strengthen cooperation in logistics, technology and other areas.

Calling the Hainan FTP a manifestation of China's advocacy for free trade, Swiss Ambassador to China Jurg Burri said the free trade agreement between the two countries, which came into effect in 2014, has brought positive results for both sides.

In September, China and Switzerland officially launched negotiations for upgrading their free trade agreement.

PLA hosts leaders of African navies

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai
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In a bid to bolster collaborative maritime security efforts, China's People's Liberation Army Navy convened naval leaders from 18 countries across the Gulf of Guinea region in Shanghai on Wednesday for the second seminar on the Gulf of Guinea maritime security situation.

The two-day seminar aims to

deepen strategic trust and pragmatic cooperation between the PLA Navy and its African counterparts in tackling challenges in the gulf.

At the opening ceremony, PLA Navy Commander Hu Zhongming highlighted the fruitful results achieved through existing cooperation between the Chinese navy and African naval forces, underscoring the global significance of joint efforts.

"The Gulf of Guinea's security and

stability is crucial not just for countries in the region and Africa, but for the entire world," Hu said. "We must join hands to build a bay of friendship, cooperation, prosperity and security through enhanced multi-level exchanges, joint operations and cooperation across domains."

Hu stressed that the seminar exemplified the vision of forging an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future. He also reaffirmed China's commitment to

seeking collaborative security solutions under this unified framework.

"The Chinese navy is willing to work with friends from the Gulf of Guinea to jointly contribute our wisdom and strength in promoting greater peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region," Hu added.

Nigerian Navy Vice-Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla welcomed China's role as "a global actor and player in maritime security" whose cooperation can bolster prosperity in the region.

"Safety and security in the maritime domain is a shared responsibility with no borders at sea," Ogalla

said. "Collaborating with the Chinese navy will definitely improve the situation in the Gulf of Guinea, and enhance economic stability and prosperity for our region and globally."

He underscored the importance of information sharing and capacity-building initiatives to align efforts toward "achieving our desired objectives" in line with Nigeria's development agenda.

Charles Hubert Bekale Meyong, chief of Naval Staff for the National Navy of Gabon, also commended the diverse avenues of existing China-Africa defense cooperation, from personnel exchanges to joint naval

drills and Chinese support in supplying patrol ships.

"We are looking forward to discussing information sharing, maritime supervision and personnel training during this seminar," he said. "We wish to collaborate with China and other nations to address maritime security issues and better maintain and raise the security level in the Gulf of Guinea."

As China and Gabon celebrate the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic ties this year, he voiced hopes for "deeper all-around cooperation, especially stronger naval engagement" between the two nations.

CHINA

Top marks given to 75 years of educational progress

Higher education has played pivotal role in development

By ZHAO YIMENG
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In the 75 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, education has emerged as a powerful driver for implementing major national strategies and fostering the nation's socioeconomic development, officials and experts said.

China has continuously advanced education reform and development, aligning it with national strategies, to serve the achievement of the Chinese path to modernization, said Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng, at a September news conference about the continuous developments in Chinese education since 1949.

"In any country, the quality and capability of higher education institutions are among the most valuable resources. Universities not only generate innovative outcomes but also cultivate high-quality talent and continuously transfer technology to serve social development," Huai said.

Higher education institutions have played a pivotal role as the backbone of basic research and the primary source of major technological breakthroughs. National projects such as the Shenzhou space program, the Jiaolong deep-sea submersible and the Beidou navigation satellite network, have all relied on critical technologies provided by universities, according to the ministry.

At the 2023 National Science and Technology Awards, university teams won 75 percent of all the natural science awards, 75 percent of the technology invention awards, and 56 percent of all the science and technology progress awards, the ministry said.

Recent notable breakthroughs include the chemical induction of reprogramming human cells using small molecules, which was led by Peking University professor Deng Hongkui. Details of the breakthrough were published in *Nature* in 2022, greatly contributing to human health and the treatment of major diseases.

Late last year, the world's first fourth-generation nuclear power plant was put into commercial operation in China.

Zhang Zuoyi, chief designer of the nuclear power plant project and dean of the Institute of Nuclear and New Energy Technology at Tsinghua University, led the development of the landmark breakthrough, which possesses completely independent intellectual property rights as part of a major national science and technology initiative.

Researchers at the Tsung-Dao Lee Institute at Shanghai Jiao Tong University are stretching the boundaries of fundamental scientific questions by examining the origins, evolution and structural formation of matter, exploring the connections between the "extreme" and "minuscule" in deep space, the deep ocean and the deep Earth.

Ding Kuiling, president of the university, said free exploration in frontier fields is a crucial avenue for uncovering the mysteries of nature and expanding the boundaries of human understanding.

"Universities should focus on the forefront of global science and technology, distill fundamental scientific questions and accelerate the establishment of forward-looking basic research," he said.

The reform of engineering education has been prioritized over the past



Clockwise from top: College students interact with a soccer robot during a science fair at Southeast University in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, in October. YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE A teacher introduces chemical agents to Taiwan students visiting Fuzhou University in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in July. XIE GUIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY Students learn about Western pastry making at a vocational technical education center in Weixian, Hebei province, in June. WANG XIAO / XINHUA

75 years on

75 years. China is advancing outstanding engineer education and training programs, aimed at cultivating a new generation of strategic talent that will drive innovation and support the nation's modernization efforts.

The program introduces a model that involves recruitment and training, as well as shared project outcomes between universities and companies.

"This approach can break traditional barriers between academic and industrial training, ensuring that students gain practical experiences and contribute directly to industry advancements," Huai said.

Liu Fuxing, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of Education, said China should integrate the current education and talent cultivation frameworks to create a system that is tailored to the needs of an innovative nation.

"Over the past 40 years of reform and opening-up, the education and talent development systems that were initially designed to meet the needs of a world-class manufacturing hub and a global factory are no longer fully compatible with the demands of socioeconomic development," Liu said.

"We need to innovate vocational education to cultivate application-oriented talent who can master and develop new types of productive resources," he said, adding that reforms should be deepened in vocational education to promote the integration of vocational and general

education, as well as the collaboration between industry and education.

Universities are expected to innovate curriculum design, integrating vocational education and key industries that reflect the demands of new quality productive forces, such as the digital economy and green economy, Liu added.

According to the ministry, over 70 percent of new workforce entrants in modern manufacturing, emerging industries and modern services come from vocational institutions.

Meanwhile, the development of digital education in recent years has empowered the construction of a learning-oriented society.

Wang Guangyan, vice-minister of education, said the National Smart Education Platform has become the world's largest platform of digital education resources, and has been accessed over 50 billion times by users spanning more than 200 countries and regions.

Last year, the platform was awarded UNESCO's highest prize for education informatization — the King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize.

In the past three years, China's global digital education development index has risen from 24th to ninth place, Wang said.

The country is further implementing artificial intelligence-powered education initiatives, which include establishing education evaluation systems supported by big data and enhancing the digital literacy of both teachers and students, he added.

After 75 years of effort, a new pattern of proactive international educational exchange and cooperation is taking shape, enhancing China's global influence in education.

Vice-Education Minister Wu Yan

said the Chinese language has been incorporated into the national education systems of 85 countries, and there are now over 200 million international Chinese learners and users. Students from 195 countries and regions are studying in China, with over 60 percent of students pursuing academic degrees.

China's contribution to education is growing in the world, highlighted by the UNESCO Institute for STEM Education which was established in Shanghai, and the Luban Workshops that cooperate with African countries in vocational training, Wu said.

Chinese universities have already taken the lead in initiating two major international scientific projects. The "Deep-Time Digital Earth" program has attracted participation from scientists in over 100 countries, while the "Ocean Negative Carbon Emissions" program involves collaboration with scientists from more than 30 countries.

"Both of these large-scale scientific projects represent contributions to humanity, providing Chinese solutions to address the global challenges we all face," Wu said.

Over 75 years, education in China has evolved greatly. In the early days after the founding of the People's Republic of China, only 20 percent of the population had literacy skills. Last year, the average time spent in education for a new entrant into the labor force was 14 years.

University graduates have surged from 147,000 in 1980 to over 10 million in 2022.

There were about 300,000 students in vocational schools in 1949, while 10 million are now trained annually.

To keep the education evolution moving, the ministry said it plans to

implement initiatives that combine higher education development with the establishment of scientific centers and innovation hubs, Huai said.

One such place that has already done this is Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, Hubei province, which has established 25 joint laboratories with leading enterprises, gradually forming a national science and technology base cluster that spans basic research, key technological breakthroughs and technology application.

As a result, 130 high-tech enterprises have emerged from the university's technological innovations, supporting the development of China's "Optics Valley" with a business volume surpassing 600 billion yuan (\$84.8 billion).

Recent efforts to create regional technology transfer centers to enhance university-industry collaboration aim to align educational outcomes with national strategic needs. "Such initiatives facilitate the integration of knowledge and practical problem-solving, enabling universities to play a crucial role in addressing real-world challenges and advancing economic development," Huai said.

East China's Jiangsu province plans to cooperate with the ministry to build a platform for regional technology transfer and to attract universities to engage in industries such as biopharmaceuticals and advanced materials.

The country will encourage younger educators to engage in long-term foundational research, focusing on not only yielding groundbreaking discoveries but also preparing a workforce equipped to meet emerging technological and industrial demands, Huai said.

Charting decades of achievements in learning

1949: China has 205 higher education institutions, with a gross enrollment rate of 0.26 percent. The total number of students enrolled was less than 120,000, including only 30,000 in engineering programs.

1977: The national college entrance examination, or *gaokao*, is restored, with 5.7 million candidates sitting the exam.

1978: The first group of 52 Chinese students since the founding of the People's Republic of China travels to the United States to study abroad.

1980: The Academic Degrees Regulations are passed after final review.

1983: The first 18 PhD graduates in China complete their studies.

1985: A notice to establish a reward system for scientific and technological progress is issued, recognizing individuals or groups in higher education institutions who made significant contributions to advancing science and technology.

1992: Project 211 is introduced, focusing on improving 100 key higher education institutions to prepare for the 21st century.

1995: Interim provisions on Sino-foreign cooperative education are released, stating that collaborative education is an important form of China's international education exchange.

1998: Project 985 is launched, providing support to selected domestic universities to develop into world-class and high-level universities.

1999: The expansion of university enrollment begins, signaling the transition of higher education into a phase of mass education.

2000: The notice on implementing higher education teaching reform in the new century is issued.

2007: The opinions on implementing the undergraduate teaching quality and teaching reform project for higher education institutions are issued.

2014: The opinions on deepening the reform of the examination and enrollment system are released, marking the largest reform of the *gaokao* system since its restoration in 1977.

2017: The measures for promoting world-class universities and disciplines are issued, which later replaced Project 211 and Project 985.

2018: China has 2,663 regular higher education institutions, with a total student enrollment of 38.33 million, becoming the largest higher education system in the world.

2019: The implementation plan for the reform of national vocational education is released.

2021: A new category of interdisciplinary studies is added to China's academic discipline classifications.

2022: The National Smart Education Platform is launched.

2023: China completes improvements to its employment and entrepreneurship service system for university graduates.

2024: The World Digital Education Conference is held in Shanghai.

ZHAO YIMENG AND FANG BILING



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Nation's study potential unleashed over time

When I was researching the figures on China's higher education development over the past 75 years, I was shocked by the great leap in the scale of both universities and students.

In 1949, China had only 205 higher education institutions, with a gross enrollment rate of just 0.26 percent. The total number of students enrolled in universities was fewer than 120,000. Last year, there were 3,074 universities and 47.6 million college students, and the gross enrollment rate had soared to 60.2 percent.

Unlike 75 years ago, getting into a



Zhao Yimeng
Reporter's
log

university is no longer a distant dream for the majority of Chinese people. That explains why my grandfather, born in 1929, a member of the vast working class, was so proud of me when I became the first in the family to attain a master's degree in 2018.

"We have a graduate student.

That's brilliant! She contributes to the country's development," the former factory accountant often told relatives and neighbors. He did not realize I was just one of the country's 540,000 master's graduates that year.

China started to adjust the training methods of college students to meet the needs of industrial development early in the 1950s.

Fan Zude, former vice-president of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, recalled that in 1955, the university underwent multiple large-scale departmental adjustments. For instance, the financial management department moved to Shanghai

University of Finance and Economics, and most of the teaching resources for mathematics and physics at the university were transferred to Fudan University.

To develop education in line with national industrial construction, the university's enrollment grew from 851 students in 1950 to 2,194 in 1956, while the number of graduates increased from 540 to 1,350 in the same period, providing a great number of professionals for the country's industrialization.

The adjustments made decades ago shed light on the efforts of China's universities to cultivate talent suited for national development in

the following decades.

In 1977, the resumption of the *gaokao*, the national college entrance examination, after a decade of suspension due to the "cultural revolution" is regarded as a pivotal moment for the country's higher education development and changed the life of many candidates.

The late distinguished geophysicist Huang Danian was among the 5.7 million test takers in the *gaokao* that year. Then a worker in geophysics in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Huang was successfully enrolled by Changchun Geosciences College in Jilin province, and later became a globally well-known strategic scientist and geophysicist.

This year, he was posthumously awarded the national honorary title

of People's Educator ahead of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Meanwhile, 13.4 million *gaokao* candidates, more than twice the number in 1977, sat the exam in June and are expected to contribute to the nation's development after graduation.

Apart from graduates from domestic higher education institutions, Chinese students studying overseas also play a vital role in building the country and connecting China with the world.

The first group of 52 individuals who set off for the United States in 1978 marked a big move for China's opening-up in higher education. Over 8 million Chinese students have since studied abroad in more than 100 countries and regions.

CHINA

By ZHU XINGXIN in Qixian, Shanxi and CHEN LIANG

Three hundred years ago, merchants from Shanxi province exported tea to foreign countries on the Eurasian continent, and in turn they brought back the secrets of glassware manufacturing.

Luo Qinqin, a 40-year-old native of Qixian county in Shanxi, is a skilled glassworker at Shanxi Dahua Glass Industrial Co. She is one of the few female artisans who have mastered the craft of glass pulling.

"I treat each of my products like my own children," she said.

In a workshop in Qixian, where glassware is handmade with the aid of blowpipes, Luo and her colleagues are busy fulfilling overseas orders.

The workshop's primary heat source is the furnace, where the molten glass is heated to 1,500 C.

Every day, Luo works in extreme heat, with the workshop temperature exceeding 40 C, often soaking her clothes with sweat. Despite this, she must push and pull a 1.5 meter, 1 kilogram blowpipe 5,000 to 6,000 times.

"Glass pulling tests not only one's eyesight and precise hand coordination but also the ability to endure high temperatures of the blowpipe," Luo said. "I often get burned by the hot blowpipe and have been injured multiple times."

Nowadays, Luo can complete over 300 stems in an hour. The glass-pulling process, a critical step in the ancient craft of handmade glassware, is challenging due to the need to control length, thickness and gloss.

For instance, when producing a wineglass stem, the length must be controlled within 1 to 2 millimeters, and the thickness within 0.5 mm. Luo can control the deviation to within 0.2 mm.

Wineglasses made by glassblowers in Qixian account for about 80 percent of the national production. Qixian is also the largest production and export base for handmade glassware in the country.

From raw materials to finished products, glassware undergoes more than a dozen processes, some requiring dozens of steps. The most difficult part of handmade wineglass production is the glass-pulling process. The biggest advantage of handmade glassware is its unique, delicate design, though it inevitably results in lower production volume and higher costs.

"Watching the red-hot molten glass pass from one worker to another and finally transform into crystal-clear glassware is like magic," Luo said. "I really enjoy the process, as each piece of glassware is born in my hands like artwork."

In 2000, after graduating from middle school, Luo joined the company as a delivery worker. She developed a strong interest in glassblowing and secretly practiced with leftover materials after work.

She said that even with two layers of gloves, the blowpipe was heavy and hot, causing her palms to blister over time. "Women's hands are usually delicate, but mine are covered with thick calluses," she said, showing her hands to a China Daily reporter.

The work of a glass smith is intense and technically demanding, so few women take on the role. Among the nearly 2,000 employees at her company, only about a dozen are glassblowers, and Luo is the only woman.

"When I work, I clear my mind of everything else and focus solely on glass pulling," Luo said.

In 2003, she achieved her dream of becoming a glassblower, which also brought her a better income. By then, she had mastered all the skills in the factory, including feeding materials, shaping molds, blowing and pulling glass. "After long hours of practice, I not only mastered the technique for pulling short glass stems of 100 mm but also the skills for pulling stems over 200 mm," Luo said.

Now, Luo can simply glance at a sample glass and touch it to know how much force to use to meet a customer's specifications.

In 2013, Luo won first place in the glass pulling category at the first glassware industry skills competition in Qixian. She has also received the National May 1 Labor Medal and the title of Qixian Glassware Artisan.

In 2018, as a front-line worker, Luo was elected as a representative of the Shanxi Provincial People's Congress.

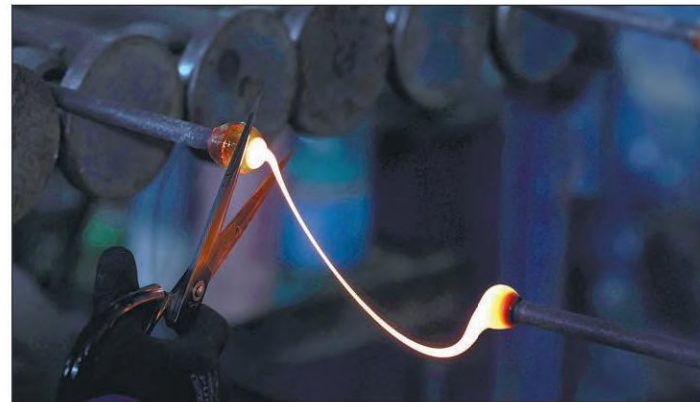
"Being a representative is both an honor and a responsibility," she said.

During her tenure, Luo proposed suggestions on cultivating high-tech talent, rural development and the glassware industry's growth, based on her research and observations. "In addition to doing my job well, as a representative I must actively reflect the opinions and suggestions of the public," Luo said. "I always prioritize the interests of the people and strive to solve their problems."

Luo believes that regardless of the task, one must avoid speaking or acting without understanding the subject. This is the only way to live up to the heavy responsibilities on her shoulders, she said.

Chen Yuyu, head of the company's research and development department, said they are strengthening innovation to meet customers' high-quality lifestyle needs. Over 98 percent of the company's products are exported, with orders from Europe and the United States accounting for over 70 percent. Many of these products are crafted by Luo.

Qixian has nearly 60 glassware production enterprises, producing over 8,000 types of products, including tea sets, candleholders, vases and lamps, which are sold in more than 80 countries and regions.



Left: Luo Qinqin works at the factory of Shanxi Dahua Glass Industrial Co in Qixian county, Shanxi province. Right: Molten glass goes through the pulling process at the factory. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Glassblower hopes to pass down skills of traditional craft



Luo teaches Bakhrieva Takhmina, an international student from Shanxi University, how to blow glass through a blowpipe.



Workers prepare to pull molten glass at the factory.



Left: Two glassworkers blow molten glass through blowpipes at the factory. Right: Workers tidy up handmade wineglasses in the factory.

However, Luo is still concerned about the future. "Looking at the current state of the glass industry, there are fewer young people in the factories," she said.

She's had many opportunities to move away from the front line, and the factory leaders had repeatedly offered her office management positions. "I feel that the furnace and

the workshop are my stage," she said.

Luo expressed concern about the inheritance of the craft. The glassware manufacturing process has evolved over several generations, from simple daily-use glass to gifts, crafts and even art pieces.

Bakhrieva Takhmina, an international student from Shanxi University, is fascinated by

glassware crafts. She was delighted to find Chinese ink paintings adorning glass salad bowls, reflecting innovative designs that blend Chinese and Western elements. Takhmina believes that glassware crafts need continuous inheritance and innovation to win the favor of consumers at home and abroad.

"I want to make our Chinese glassware

products better through my efforts, so that more foreign friends will like our products," Luo said.

Wang Wendong contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at zhuxingxin@chinadaily.com.cn

ACROSS ASIA

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.



Strips of fabric dyed with bright colors used for sari clothing are laid out and dried under the sun, in Narayanganj, Bangladesh, in 2022. JOY SAHA / SOLENT NEWS

FACING THREADS

Bangladeshi artisans of traditional sari clothing struggle amid economic woes



From top: A man suns dyed yarn material in Narayanganj, Bangladesh, in 2022. JOY SAHA / SOLENT NEWS Women wear traditional sari attire in Dhaka in 2022. PIYAS BISWAS / NEWS.COM A woman dries yarn material outdoors in Sirajganj, Bangladesh. MD MANIK / NEWS.COM

The industry behind traditional southern Asian attire like the sari and panjabi, worn in areas such as Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan, is increasingly facing the challenge of economic change and development.

Bangladesh's traditional textile sector has deep roots, extending back centuries and interwoven with the nation's cultural identity. The taant sari, traditional female Bengali clothing, can be traced to the eastern Bengal region.

The sari, woven from cotton threads and distinguished by its lightness and transparency, is considered to be extremely suited to the hot and humid climate of the Indian subcontinent.

Bangladesh's taant industry is a vital piece of its cultural and economic fabric. The traditional art of weaving is considered the best sari of its kind, listed by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

The sector's resilience has withstood economic downturns and other challenges but it is now facing a major threat — consumer disinterest, limited local support and imported alternatives.

Kutub Uddin, from the Benaroshi Polli, Mirpur 10 area of Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, has been weaving since childhood. He reflected on how his career began out of necessity amid Bangladesh's development,

with his poverty-hit family relying on weaving to survive.

Over the decades, he watched as demand for handloom Benaroshi sari products fluctuated, with recent years seeing a noticeable decline.

"Ten or 12 years ago, Benaroshi sari was in high demand," he said. "But now, the industry is in crisis."

Although demand rises slightly during the wedding season, imported sari products, especially from India, flood the market and divert customers away from local artisans, he said.

The weaver said that creating a Benaroshi sari can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on its intricacy. In the past, he worked alongside a team where each person specialized in a step of the process, such as twisting threads.

But many of his former colleagues have left the industry, taking up jobs as rickshaw pullers or in restaurants to support their families.

Today, local weavers like him said they are overshadowed by cheaper, imported alternatives, which deprive Bangladesh's taant industry of the support it needs to survive.

The process of creating a handloom sari is labor intensive and requires immense skill, yet the artisans are paid modestly for their work. One weaver said that they can be paid per yard, with a single weaver managing to produce three

to four yards on a good day.

Each piece they create is a labor of love, meticulously crafted to perfection. But it is also a product of rising material costs. The price of thread, dye and silk has increased significantly over the years, squeezing profit margins and leaving weavers struggling to sustain their craft.

The weaver pointed out that while one might expect the wedding season to boost demand, reality paints a different picture. Customers often overlook locally made handloom sari in favor of imported options, limiting local weavers' access to new business.

Tough times

For many artisans, the art of weaving is a family tradition, with skills passed down from generation to generation. But the economic realities of weaving have made it harder for artisans to encourage their children to continue in their footsteps.

Sari seller Sandip Basak described how increasing production costs and low sales affected his business during recent festive seasons when demand was expected to rise.

Sales were disappointing and many artisans now face the prospect of leaving the handloom industry altogether.

"If this trend continues, we might not have anyone left to pass

on this knowledge," he said.

The loss of generational knowledge is one of the most significant threats facing the handloom industry. If young people do not see a viable future in weaving, they may pursue other professions and that will lead to the disappearance of traditional techniques that have been refined over centuries, many in the industry said.

A weaver named Md Sajib who once served a steady base of clients has found himself in a difficult position, with his most loyal clients beginning to cancel orders due to rising prices. He has reached out to banks to secure a loan to sustain his business, only to be denied.

Banks do not want to lend their support because they believe the market is struggling, he said. For him, the future of the taant industry relies on customers and financial backing.

Weavers' calls for financial assistance are considered to be more than pleas for personal relief — they reflect the need to protect an industry deeply connected to Bangladesh's identity. Industry observers said that without support, the weavers risk losing their income and a part of their heritage.

One weaver said the country's sari is unique and people should understand that, "so weavers like me can continue our work."

THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH

Stopover nod set to grow air links for ASEAN

Airlines under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will be allowed to operate flights with stopover rights among members of the regional grouping starting next year, moving toward more seamless air travel across the region.

The move will come into effect once all ASEAN countries sign Protocol 5 on "Own Stopover Rights" between points within the territory of any other ASEAN member state, Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke said.

The signing of the protocol has been held in conjunction with the recent 30th ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting and the 58th ASEAN Senior Transport Officials Meetings, along with dialogue partners such as China, Japan and South Korea.

Prior to the change, airline operators could only fly to their destination within member states before having to return.

Under Protocol 5, Loke said airlines are allowed to stop over at ASEAN member state airports before heading to another point within the region.

"Although ASEAN open-skies policy allows airlines to operate freely within the region, it previously limited flights to a single destination before returning to the origin," Loke said.

"With this new protocol, airlines can now make stopovers and travel to the next points within the ASEAN region."

However, he did not specify when the policy could be fully implemented as Myanmar and Indonesia have yet to sign the protocol.

Shared benefits

Loke said the move will boost regional air connectivity.

"It facilitates greater operational flexibility for carriers, promotes tourism and enhances trade by providing more seamless and convenient air travel options across the region," he said.

He also said ASEAN airlines, including Malaysian flight operators, can benefit given their various travel destinations within the region. "For ASEAN member states that have yet to sign, we will circulate this to them," Loke said.

"Once all have signed, the protocol will come into force by next year."

Separately, he said ASEAN transport ministers agreed to adopt guidelines on light electric vehicles like electric scooters, bikes and small cars within the region.

"They outline standards and best practices for integrating these vehicles into transport systems," he said. "It also aims to address environmental concerns by reducing carbon emissions and encouraging sustainable energy usage in transportation."

Other adopted initiatives include guidelines on urban freight transport, focusing on improving efficiency and minimizing environmental impact.

Loke said ASEAN is also committed to advancing negotiations and finalizing air services agreements with China, Japan and South Korea.

"This is pivotal for strengthening regional and interregional connectivity by enabling greater market access, promoting air transport liberalization, and fostering closer economic and cultural ties," he said.

In welcoming the news, the president of the Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations, Datuk Tan Kok Liang, said it would boost the tourism industry.

"It will also enable the promotion of multiple destination packages and give travelers the freedom to choose," he said.

"It does have the potential to reduce prices for tickets," Tan said.

"But more importantly, this agreement will see improvements in air connectivity."

THE STAR, MALAYSIA



Planes are seen parked at Changi Airport in Singapore on March 24. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Climate change hits Jeju island's mandarin oranges

The pillar mandarin orange sector on South Korea's Jeju island is facing mounting challenges as climate change disrupts traditional cultivation practices, with prolonged tropical nights and rising temperatures delaying harvests and impacting fruit quality, according to latest industry reports.

"Mandarins develop their yellow color when nighttime temperatures fall below 20 C," said Hyun Jong-ho, manager at the Namwon Agricultural Product Center, one of Jeju's busiest distribution centers.

"This year's prolonged heat has reduced the quantity of harvest-ready mandarins," Hyun said.

Hyun explained that extreme conditions are increasingly causing delays in ripening and disruptions to harvest timelines, with the challenges prompting the island to adapt its agricultural practices.

According to the Korea Meteorological Administration, tropical

nights lasted 63 days from July to September — nearly double the previous year — while heatwave days, when temperatures exceed 33 C, totaled 21.4 during the same period.

Jeju's deep-rooted affection for mandarin oranges reflects their importance to the island's identity and economy.

As of 2023, the oranges accounted for 55.8 percent of Jeju's total agricultural revenue, generating 1.32 trillion won (\$941 million) that year, with 35.7 percent of Jeju's arable land devoted to citrus farming, according to the Korea Rural Economic Institute.

The significance of mandarin oranges is part of the 2024 Jeju citrus expo, which is celebrating its 12th year. The event features exhibitions, business consultations, and forums addressing climate resilience and varietal development.

Mandarin oranges are also a



Mandarins are more than just a crop — they're a symbol of Jeju's heritage and resilience."

Ko Byung-gi, chairman of the organizing committee of the 2024 Jeju citrus expo

symbol of Jeju's agricultural history as the fruit trees on the island bloom during the harvest season.

The cultivation of the fruits has been a part of Jeju's agriculture for generations. They are the pride of the island's residents and are usually considered as gifts, especially during festive seasons, due to the meanings of health and wealth attached to them.

Ko Byung-gi, chairman of the organizing committee of the 2024 Jeju citrus expo, highlighted the industry event's dual role in advancing the oranges and fostering global collaboration.

"Mandarins are more than just a crop — they're a symbol of Jeju's heritage and resilience," Ko said.

Taking action

To address the latest challenges, Jeju authorities revised regulations in October to allow the sale of green mandarin oranges if they meet strict sweetness standards.

The adjustment, along with modified size and quality criteria, is expected to slightly boost harvested volume.

But local officials acknowledged the growing challenges posed by erratic weather patterns, including decreased fruit size and delayed coloring.

Meanwhile, subtropical crops are

emerging as a potential alternative as Jeju's climate grows warmer.

The Agricultural Research Institute for Climate Change Adaptation, under the Rural Development Administration, has introduced 58 subtropical crops and identified 17 promising varieties, including mangoes, passion fruit and dragon fruit.

"To address the declining cultivation areas for traditional crops, we need to develop new varieties and expand subtropical farming techniques," said Han Hyun-hee, a researcher at the institute.

Transitioning to subtropical fruits is still considered a challenge because their cultivation requires costly greenhouses and a shift from traditional mandarin orange farming methods.

"Farmers remain hesitant to switch to subtropical crops due to higher initial investments and unfamiliar farming practices," Han added.

THE KOREA HERALD, SOUTH KOREA

WORLDUS



Former US ambassadors to China, Max Baucus (second from left), Terry Branstad (third from left) and Gary Locke (right) participate in a panel discussion at the China General Chamber of Commerce Chicago's 8th Annual Gala on Tuesday. MINGMEILI / CHINA DAILY

Trump tariffs seen to stunt Europe's growth

By XING YI in London
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The proposed tariffs by the United States President-elect Donald Trump will hit Europe by weakening economic growth and result in a lose-lose situation for both sides of the Atlantic, European officials and experts have said.

In a recent interview with the Financial Times, Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, cautioned against Trump's blanket tariff of up to 20 percent on all US imports, saying a "trade war at large" was "in nobody's interest" and would lead to "a global reduction of GDP".

Taking aim at Trump's claims that he could "make America great again", the ECB chief said: "How do you make America great again if global demand is falling?"

According to the European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, the trade in goods and services between the US and EU stood at 1.54 trillion euros (\$1.62 trillion) in 2023, with both being each other's largest trading partner.

Lagarde said Europe should offer to buy certain things from the US to avoid pure retaliation, which can lead to a tit-for-tat process where no one is really a winner, as the ECB's Vice-President Luis de Guindos said earlier that Trump's tariff policy risked setting off a vicious cycle of trade wars.

This could weaken growth, push up inflation, and impact financial stability in a "lose-lose" situation for everyone, he told Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat.

Ma Xuxin, a senior economist based in London, said if Trump's tariffs are implemented, the US nominal GDP growth would decrease by around 1.3 to 1.8 percentage points over the next two years, and in the scenario of the tariffs being met with retaliation by other countries, the global GDP will decline immediately by around 0.7 percent.

Top victim list
With more than three-quarters of

their exports going to the US, Mexico and Canada will be the most affected, but the top 10 victim list also includes small open economies like Switzerland and some Eastern European countries which are highly sensitive to the trade of manufactured goods, such as Hungary and Poland, Mao said.

A study by the London School of Economics and Political Science on the economic impacts of Trump's tariffs proposal finds that the EU would face a more modest reduction of 0.11 percent in its GDP, and certain sectors, particularly Germany's automobile exports, would be disproportionately affected.

The study also said that retaliatory measures by the EU would likely worsen economic outcomes for all parties involved, potentially sparking a damaging trade war.

Andras Savos, president of the German-Hungarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, told Reuters last month that the tariff policy would deal a blow to the German economy and have a knock-on effect on Hungary.

German auto exports to the US were worth \$24.6 billion in 2023, while Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary exported car parts worth \$19.9 billion to Germany, figures from Eurostat show.

"If the German economy is struck, this will affect us (Hungary) exponentially," Savos said, adding that planned investments in Hungary were on an "astonishing" nose-dive.

Clare Lombardelli, a deputy governor of the United Kingdom's central bank, the Bank of England, holds a similar view that Trump's tariffs could dent productivity throughout the world, even in nations that are not directly subjected to tariffs.

"They (trade barriers) certainly are negative for growth in the short, medium and long term," said Lombardelli in her interview with the FT after Trump vowed to impose 25 percent tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada.

China-US trade ties take stage

At Chicago business gala, collaboration is on display amid calls for renewed dialogue

By MINGMEILI in Chicago
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A business event in Chicago has brought together prominent current and former officials from the United States and China to discuss opportunities for deeper bilateral cooperation.

Themed "Charting New Horizons", the 8th Annual Gala of the China General Chamber of Commerce Chicago focused on initiatives and development in rising industries such as new energy, which are also crucial to shaping the future of China-US relations.

The chamber has played an important role in strengthening trade ties between China and the US. With a strategic focus on 11 Midwest states — Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin — it collaborates with more than 260 member and partner organizations to drive local and international economic growth.

"The American Midwest has always been a fertile ground for our economic cooperation," China's Ambassador to the US Xie Feng said in a video address to the event held on Tuesday.

Member companies under the chamber have invested more than \$144 billion in the US economy, directly creating more than 230,000 jobs and indirectly

supporting more than 1 million additional employment opportunities nationwide, Xie said.

"The US relationship is again at a new historical starting point," he said, noting that the theme of the annual gala could not be "more relevant".

"It reflects the resolve of people with vision from both countries to seek new opportunities and a sense of responsibility to strive for new achievements," Xie said.

"Taking stock of the experience and inspirations from the past 45 years of China-US diplomatic ties, President Xi Jinping observed that when our two countries treat each other as partners and seek common ground while shelving differences, our relationship will make considerable progress.

"But if we regard each other as rivals and engage in vicious competition, we will roll the relationship or even step back."

Xie said history has shown that both countries stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation, and both need to increase cooperation.

"China continues to rank among the top in major economies. Additionally, both the green industries and investment in high-tech industries have continued to grow in double digits," he said.

US firms such as Qualcomm, Intel and Apple have a strong presence in China, he said, just

as Chinese companies, including Wanxiang Group and Fuyao Glass, have made significant investments in the US.

"Weaponizing tariffs is no panacea and could easily cause a tit-for-tat vicious cycle," he said.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson encouraged Chinese companies to explore "opportunities in the greatest city".

Johnson highlighted the long-standing sister-city relationships between Chicago and various cities in China, as well as the enduring economic ties.

Also in attendance was Mike Pence, former US vice-president in the first administration of President-elect Donald Trump.

"China is our rival and an economic competitor, but China must not become our enemy," Pence said. He expressed hope that the tariff issue would encourage both sides to return to the negotiating table and produce a positive long-term effect on businesses and the economy.

"As we go forward, let us pursue a future of peace and prosperity with resolve and faith," he said, adding he hopes the two nations could "forge a relationship grounded in mutual respect where we can stand together proudly as partners and friends".

Gary Locke, former US ambassador to China, reflected on the bilateral relationship during his tenure, saying it was at its "peak" because of initiatives such as SelectUSA, which encouraged foreign investment, created jobs, generated income and promoted

scientific exchanges.

He expressed concern that such exchanges have been paused under the current "small yard, high fence" approach.

"Opposed to tariffs"

"The tariffs ... raise the price in the United States because consumers cannot find an alternative avenue to buy that same product," Locke told China Daily, adding he is "very much opposed to tariffs".

"That will only lead to a trade war, and in a trade war, people and the workers of both countries are hurt by it," he said.

There are always opportunities to negotiate and discuss the differences between the two countries, he said. "Trump has threatened tariffs. He has not implemented them, and so let's hope that those tariffs can be avoided."

Max Baucus, former US ambassador to China, told China Daily that there is still uncertainty over whether new tariffs will be implemented.

"Let's watch what happens. Words are one thing; actions are something else. Let's see what Trump actually does," he said.

"The bottom line is the United States and China ... have to work together. It may take some time, may take a year or two, but eventually, I think we're going to get there," said Baucus, who recently traveled to China.

"The real problem with the relationship is a lack of trust. The solution is more Americans going to China, seeing that Chinese people are just like American people."

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The Belt and Road Initiative will help tap market potential in these regions, promote investment and consumption, generate demand and job opportunities, enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges among the peoples of involved countries and enable them to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace and prosperity.

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Unified stance against latest US crackdown

Washington's semiconductor move to have 'limited' impact on China

By CHENG YU
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The United States' third crackdown on China's semiconductor industry in three years will have "limited" impact on Chinese companies and only accelerate the self-reliance of the world's most crucial chip application market, the largest consumer of automobiles and the single largest smartphone market, industry insiders said on Tuesday.

They made the comments as four of the country's top industry associations on the semiconductor, automotive, internet and telecommunications industries hit back at the latest US move to expand export restrictions to 140 Chinese companies from accessing US semiconductor-making equipment and advanced chip technology.

"The unified stance expressed by industry associations, particularly the call for prudence in purchasing US chips, is unprecedented," said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, a telecom industry association.

Xiang said that it sent a very clear message that China's technological prowess has reached a point where the country no longer needs to tolerate this.

"If the US continues to impose sanctions round after round, it will end up losing the entire chip market, and US chips will only be left at home and be 'eaten like cookies'," he said.

Such statements are a "trendsetter," suggesting that other Chinese industries may follow to accelerate the adoption of domestic chips, driving local chip breakthroughs, a CITIC Securities report said.

On the other hand, some multinational enterprises are likely to implement "China for China" strategies, producing chips within the Chinese mainland to meet local demand, which is expected to boost the development of China's chip manufacturing sector as a whole.

The report emphasized: "As the market has already anticipated this, many Chinese firms have made prior preparations, thus the short-term impact is limited."

Naura Technology Group, a major chip firm added to the new control list, responded that its operations remain normal and that being listed "would not substantially affect its business".

In a statement on Tuesday, the China Semiconductor Industry Association said that recent moves have made US chip products "no longer secure and reliable", forcing Chinese companies to be more cautious in purchasing US chips.

"If the US continues to impose sanctions round after round, it will end up losing the entire chip market ..."

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance

The Internet Society of China urged domestic companies to think carefully before procuring US chips and seek to expand cooperation with chip firms from countries and regions other than the US. It also encouraged domestic firms to proactively use chips produced by both domestic and foreign-owned enterprises in China.

The China Association of Communication Enterprises vowed that the Chinese government should investigate how secure the supply chain of the country's critical information infrastructure is and should take actions to ensure its safe operations.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers also said that the Chinese automotive industry's trust and confidence in purchasing chip products from US companies are being "shaken".

China has long been the most crucial application market for the global integrated circuit industry. The country is the world's largest producer and consumer of automobiles and the single largest smartphone market.

Data from market consultancies like TechInsights showed that last year, China accounted for about 30 percent of global semiconductor demand, but its production represented only 7 percent of the global total, with a self-sufficiency rate of approximately 23 percent. Of this, 12 percent came from domestic enterprises while 11 percent was contributed by foreign companies manufacturing in China.

Fu Qiang, an analyst from Ping An Securities, said that the semiconductor industry relies on globalization to reduce investment risks for individual regions and leverage comparative advantages.

"US moves will only fragment global supply chains and hinder healthy industry development," Fu said. "Also, as China is a critical market for semiconductor products and equipment, many US firms have significant involvement in China, and US restrictions will only limit their own growth opportunities."



Employees check auto components bound for Germany at a German-funded enterprise in Taicang, Jiangsu province. JI HAIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

German firms eye localization strategy

By ZHONG NAN
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Amid growing competition and price pressure, German companies are increasingly adopting a localized strategy in China, operating with greater autonomy and aligning their operations with the mindset and practices of local businesses, a survey published by the German Chamber of Commerce in China revealed on Wednesday.

According to the chamber's 2024-2025 business confidence survey, about 40 percent of respondents reported operating more independently from their headquarters — marking a significant 12 percentage point increase from last year.

The survey, conducted between Sept 3 and Oct 8, gathered responses from 546 member companies of the chamber, which represents around 2,100 members across China, including Covestro, Mercedes-Benz Group, Siemens AG and SAP.

To maintain their competitive edge, more than 50 percent of German companies plan to increase investments in China within the next two years. Among these, 87 percent identified staying competitive as their primary motivation — an 8 percentage point increase from last year.

"By deepening localization strategies, German companies are addressing current market challenges and mitigating risks while positioning themselves to take advantage of the opportunities at hand," said Clas Neumann, chairperson of the board of the German Chamber of Commerce in East China.

When ranking business opportunities in China, the internationalization of Chinese companies stood out as the sole category experiencing growth compared to last year and the leading business opportunity, according to the chamber's study.

The survey further revealed that about 55 percent of German firms expect Chinese competitors to become innovation leaders in their industry within five years, with 8 percent indicating this is already the case. By comparison, only 5 percent of respondents held this view last year, while 46 percent expected such leadership within five years.

With the structure of foreign investment continuing to be optimized, China saw the high-tech manufacturing sector utilize 80.18 billion yuan (\$11.03 billion) in foreign direct investment between January and October this year, accounting for 11.6 percent of the national total, statistics from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

In the meantime, German investment in China surged by 7.5 percent year-on-year.

As China fosters more favorable conditions to transform and modernize traditional industries while nurturing emerging sectors, executives from German corporations are confident about the substantial growth opportunities and greater commercial engagement in the world's second-largest economy.

Highlighting that Chinese consumers have a strong preference to embrace innovative products, Hubert de Haan, senior vice-president and chief sales and marketing

officer for China at BSH Home Appliances Group — a German manufacturer with more than 10,000 employees in China — said his company fully embraces this market opportunity by focusing more on research and development in China.

"By adopting the localization approach in the next level, we can better meet the growing demand of Chinese consumers for increasingly advanced home appliances, laying a stronger foundation for our future growth," he said.

Anna An, president for China unit at Henkel Group, a German industrial and consumer goods company, expressed a similar view.

As China develops new quality productive forces, innovative technologies are driving the transformation toward digitization and green, low-carbon development, which have provided companies like Henkel with broader development opportunities, An said.

Henkel accelerated its local innovation pace in China in recent years. It has established an Asia-focused consumer goods research and development center and a South China electronics adhesive application center within the country.

The German company is currently building an adhesive innovation experience center in Shanghai, along with a new manufacturing facility in Shandong province.

Similarly reflecting its long-term confidence in the Chinese market, German carmaker BMW Group announced in April an additional investment of 20 billion yuan to expand its production base in Shenyang, Liaoning province.

Briefly

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 62 pips to 7.1934 against the US dollar on Wednesday, said 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.

Wholesale NEV car sales surge

China's new energy passenger vehicle market continued to see robust growth in November,

with wholesale figures reaching 1.46 million units, industry association data showed. The figure marks a 51 percent year-on-year increase and a 6 percent jump from the previous month, according to the China Passenger Car Association.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Hebei leads in green power transition

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang
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Hebei, a province in North China known for its traditional resources and high energy consumption, has achieved a significant milestone in its comprehensive green transformation, by making its renewable energy capacity take the lead instead of coal power.

The total installed capacity of wind and solar power in the province surpassed 100 gigawatts on Saturday, accounting for over 60 percent of the total installed power capacity in the province, placing Hebei at the forefront nationwide, according to the Hebei Development and Reform Commission.

The milestone was reached as a batch of wind and solar projects, including a 600,000-kilowatt photovoltaic project in Shangyi county, Zhangjiakou, were connected to the grid for power generation on Nov 30.

Zhangjiakou, located in the transitional zone between the Mongolian Plateau and the North China Plain, is one of the regions in North China with abundant wind and solar energy resources.

It is an important national production base for renewable energy and a key node for electricity transmission in China.

"In recent years, Hebei has been vigorously promoting wind and solar projects, accelerating the construction of a robust smart grid, enhancing power regulation capabilities, and facilitating the high-quality and high-proportion integration of clean energy sources," Yue Lixin, an official with the Hebei Development and Reform Commission, was quoted as saying in a report by Hebei Daily on Sunday.

He added that this new development in Zhangjiakou marked a historic shift from coal-dominated power generation to its gradual

replacement by wind and solar power, establishing itself as one of Hebei's primary energy sources.

However, the intermittency of wind and solar power poses challenges due to fluctuations in wind speeds and sunlight.

After more than a decade of technological breakthroughs, Hebei has transformed the electricity generated from wind and solar sources into steady green power, continuously flowing into the national grid.

Hebei has developed a dozen world-leading technologies in the transformation, including creating the world's largest capacity device for alternating current (AC) energy consumption and a direct current (DC) circuit breaker with the world's highest voltage level, according to Jin Haiwang, a senior expert at the State Grid Jibei Electric Power Co.

Currently, the province produces over 150 billion kilowatt-hours of green electricity annually, saving



A wind farm seen in Zhangbei county, Hebei province.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

more than 45 million metric tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 120 million tons, according to the commission.

According to the province's plan, Hebei is accelerating the construction of a diversified energy system comprising wind, solar, hydroelectric, nuclear and hydrogen, aiming to establish a preliminary new energy system by 2030.

Hebei's leading wind and solar

grid-connected capacity in the country and innovative applications of renewable energy technologies are addressing the challenges of green energy integration, providing a Chinese solution for combating climate change, Chen Yong, who is in charge of sustainable urban energy projects at the International Renewable Energy Agency, was quoted as saying by Hebei Daily.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BRI plays key role in driving economy

CAIRO — The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) plays a significant role in driving economic development across participating countries, an Egyptian economic expert said.

Waleed Gaballah, a member of the Egyptian Association for Political Economy, Statistics and Legislation, said the initiative is a groundbreaking model for fostering global growth, highlighting its transformative impact on infrastructure, trade and technology.

"Launched in 2013, the BRI ... aims to create new paths for the global economy, by pumping huge investments into the participants," he told Xinhua News Agency in a recent interview.

The initiative is working to promote international trade by fostering a broader and less costly exchange, while supporting the development of industries that create more job opportunities, Gaballah said.

He further noted that the BRI is distinguished by its focus on infrastructure projects, along with its emphasis on social sectors like health and education.

Gaballah also highlighted the extensive reach of the initiative, under which over 150 countries and over 30 international organizations have signed cooperation documents with Beijing, and its implementation has a well-planned and adaptable timetable that avoids both impulsive actions and undue caution.

The Egyptian expert praised China's commitment to fair and mutually beneficial economic cooperation within its initiative, affirming that China "seeks to share the benefits with all involved, rather than monopolizing them for itself".

The BRI stands out due to its non-competitive nature, he noted, adding that the West failed to implement similar infrastructure investment projects with their stated intentions in Africa and other regions.

"The BRI has fostered increased development rates in participating countries. This is achieved through its infrastructure projects, including roads, ports, railways and other projects, which have generated employment opportunities for local populations and contributed to an improved quality of life," the expert said.

He explained that the initiative's focus on facilitating more affordable foreign trade has contributed to lower inflation rates in participating countries, adding that China's openness to technology transfer and clean energy projects is transforming life in countries involved in the initiative.

Gaballah highlighted several projects in Egypt that fall under the BRI, including the textile city project in Sadat City, north of Cairo, the Central Business District (CBD) of Egypt's new administrative capital, and the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone in Ain Sokhna, east of Cairo.

"Chinese projects have shifted the perception of the average Egyptian citizen toward China. Previously seen as a source of imported goods, China is now increasingly viewed as a development partner that contributes to job creation and improved living standards," the expert said.

Chinese companies have a considerable presence in Egypt's renewable energy sector, the expert said, pointing to their involvement in projects such as the Benban solar plant and wind farms in the Gulf of Suez. These projects are instrumental in enhancing the sustainability of Egypt's energy mix, he said.

"China possesses future technology' in sectors such as solar and wind power generation, electric vehicle production and other areas that are highly sought after globally," Gaballah said. "Providing access to these technologies at a reasonable cost to countries participating in the BRI could significantly make a major shift in the way of life in their societies."

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS



The 100,000th China-Europe freight train arrives in Duisburg, Germany, on Tuesday. DU ZHEYU / XINHUA

China-Europe freight train service hits milestone

DUISBURG — The 100,000th China-Europe freight train arrived in Duisburg, Germany, on Tuesday morning, marking a historic milestone for this rail link.

The train, X8083, which had departed from Chongqing, arrived at Duisburg's terminal at 9:10 am local time, carrying electronics, industrial parts, and household appliances. The train's cargo was quickly unloaded for distribution to various destinations across Europe.

Duisburg, once known for its steel industry, is now a prominent trade gateway between Europe and Asia. The freight trains, often referred to as "steel camels", are a critical component of this transformation. The trains carry a variety of European goods on their return journey.

"The service has enhanced transport efficiency and trade ties, showcasing the Belt and Road Initiative's

role in fostering connectivity," said Chang Haitao, acting consul general of China in Dusseldorf, during a reception at Duisburg's terminal to mark the milestone.

Looking ahead, Chang emphasized the service's potential to further promote collaboration and progress. "The China-Europe freight train will remain a catalyst for openness and partnership, fueling enhanced connectivity across Eurasia and fostering sustained global economic development," he noted.

"The train connection has definitely led to a win-win situation for both countries," Markus Teuber, China affairs commissioner of the City of Duisburg, said.

Teuber added that he is confident the service will continue to thrive, as its benefits for imports and exports remain strong, and more companies recognize its value.



The service has enhanced transport efficiency and trade ties, showcasing the Belt and Road Initiative's role in fostering connectivity."

Chang Haitao, acting consul general of China in Dusseldorf

Markus Bangen, CEO of Duisburger Hafen AG (Duisport), a German company running the port of Duisburg, said the railway service is strengthening ties between Europe and China, opening up a new inter-

national transport market that benefits both economies.

Duisburg is steadily growing as a key stop along the route, attracting investment, creating job opportunities and driving growth in the logistics sector, he added.

Since 2016, annual train operations have surged from 1,702 trips to over 17,000 trips, with transit times steadily improving, said Tian Zhongyu, general manager of China Railway Container Transport Co Ltd's subsidiary in Europe, noting that the time required to complete 10,000 train journeys has also decreased from 90 months to just six months.

Duisburg Port has attracted over 100 logistics companies and created more than 20,000 jobs since the trains began operating, Tian added.

The service has also boosted development in regions along the route.

XINHUA

Nation's carbon goals a boon for energy firms

GE Vernova exec says committed to supporting country's green transition

By ZHENG XIN
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China's commitment to energy transition and progress in building a new power supply system, as well as its increasingly supportive innovation environment, are creating a promising ecosystem for foreign firms to bring their cutting-edge technology to the market, said a senior executive of the United States energy company GE Vernova.

"With its vast population and status as an innovation hub, and large energy consumption, China plays a significant role in the world's energy transition process," said Ramesh Singaram, president and CEO of gas power in Asia, GE Vernova.

"China, with a large renewable installed base and strong renewable manufacturing capability, has been one of the most important markets for GE Vernova and an integral part of our global supply chain," Singaram said.

"GE Vernova is committed to supporting a low-carbon transition through our long-term investment, technological innovation and talent nurturing in this remarkable market."

China has been intensifying efforts in its energy transition in recent years, making significant strides in advancing renewable energy technologies. The country commissioned last year as much solar power as the entire world did in 2022, with its wind additions up by 66 percent year-on-year, according to the International Energy Agency.

As the world's renewables powerhouse, China's role is critical in reaching the global goal of tripling renewables as the country is expected to install more than half of the new capacity

required globally by 2030, it said. An analyst said China's supportive policies and strong demand for advanced energy solutions make it an attractive choice for foreign energy companies, leading to growing foreign investment in renewable and low-carbon technologies in the years to come.

"As China progresses with its dual carbon goals, it creates a substantial market for foreign firms in green technology," said Wang Lining, director of the oil market department under the economics and technology research institute of China National Petroleum Corp.

Singaram said green hydrogen is an environmentally friendly fuel that can replace natural gas and improve China's energy security by reducing carbon emissions.

"We believe that gas power generation can serve as a vital support for the construction of the new electricity system with its dependability, efficiency and flexibility, supporting grid stability and tremendous renewable power installation and connection to the grid," he said.

"We look forward to collaborating with Chinese partners and making active contributions to the revolution in China's energy production and consumption, ensuring national energy security."

The US company signed a cooperation agreement with Heilongjiang province-based Harbin Electric Corp last month to provide two heavy-duty gas turbines for CHN Energy Investment Group's Anji power plant in Zhejiang province. Expected to be operational in 2026, the project, with an installed capacity of more than 1.6 gigawatts, will support the continued expansion of renewable energy deployment in Zhejiang, it said.

Zhejiang to upgrade grid with next-gen transformers

By LI JIAYING and
TAN GUOLING

In an effort to reduce electricity losses and improve operational efficiency, Zhejiang province recently announced plans to upgrade its electrical grid with next-generation transformers.

The move will boost construction of a green power grid with an energy-saving and environmentally friendly power system in Taizhou, Zhejiang, said the local power supplier.

To achieve the goal of energy saving and environmental protection, State Grid Zhejiang Taizhou Power Supply Co carried out inspections of high-energy consumption transformers and found that a total of 109 transformers need to be replaced. The replacement will reduce power loss by about 470,000 kilowatt-hours per year, it said.

"Major malfunctions were found during the inspection, such as oil leakage of old transformers. The timely replacement of out-of-date trans-

formers is surely conducive to normal production and safety," said a technician from the power supply company, adding that the usage of energy-saving transformers is expected to help upstream enterprises and downstream users achieve better economic, social and environmental ends.

The move is part of the country's efforts to boost power industry upgrades. An implementation plan for large-scale equipment upgrades in key energy fields was unveiled in August, with a focus on fostering

innovation, phasing out outdated equipment and leveraging higher standards to guide the sector's sustainable development.

According to the plan, investment in critical energy equipment is set to increase by over 25 percent by 2027 compared to 2023. Key initiatives include upgrading power generation, transmission and distribution systems, implementing advanced recycling of power equipment, and fostering a clean, low-carbon, safe and efficient energy system.

In order to enhance industrial capabilities and boost domestic consumption, the central authorities issued a notice in July, announcing an allocation of approximately 300 billion yuan (\$41.2 billion) in special long-term treasury bonds to support large-scale equipment upgrades and promote the replacement of outdated consumer products.

One of the key priorities is the modernization of the grid distribution network, the notice said. Measures include increasing transformer capacities in older residential communities, upgrading power lines and deploying smart metering systems to enhance grid efficiency and reliability.

According to China Electric Power News, relevant data estimate that initiatives such as equipment upgrades, recycling programs and the replacement of old systems could generate a trillion-yuan market, providing unprecedented opportunities for innovation and growth in the energy sector.

In this regard, State Grid Zhejiang Taizhou said it will continue to deploy technological innovation in power network upgrading, providing end users with advanced and secured solutions and services.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Manila should be aware that Washington has given it dangerous toys to play with

Manila does have the "sovereign prerogative" to retain the Typhon mid-range missile launchers that the United States installed in the north of the Philippines in April. But the pretext it is employing to do so is overstretched, since it claims the move is for its "security" needs in the face of the "threat" posed by China; a threat that does not exist except as an excuse for the Philippines' own aggressive posturing.

The mid-range missile launch system, which is capable of firing both Tomahawk cruise missiles and the SM-6 surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles, is aggressive in intent as it puts not only southern Chinese military bases within range, but also the Taiwan Strait, and a large part of the South China Sea.

Reinforcing the antagonistic nature of its insistence on its "sovereign prerogative", Manila is reportedly also mulling the deployment of other advanced weapons systems from the US in its northernmost bases, which will overlap the field-of-fire of the Typhon system, turning the Philippines into a well-equipped military bridgehead for the US.

Although the Taiwan question and the South China Sea maritime disputes between Beijing and Manila are different in nature, with the former being strictly China's internal affair, Washington makes no bones about its intention of weaving the two together under the military dimension of its "Indo-Pacific" strategy.

As part of this, it is getting its allies in Asia to deploy mid-range missile launch systems. The Republic of Korea deployed the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system in 2016 and Japan has agreed to the US deploying the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System in temporary bases along the Ryukyu Islands starting from September, citing "threats" from regional countries.

Manila's longing to retain the weapons as its permanent "toys" is hard to understand for any peace-loving mind. Many European countries tried their best to shun the hot potatoes at the height of Cold War as they would have invariably become prime targets in a conflict.

Since mid-range missiles are extremely aggressive strategic weapons that can easily provoke geopolitical confrontation and an arms race, after the end of World War II, major countries have been extremely prudent about deploying them, with the US and Soviet Union's mid-range missile treaty being a testament to this.

The ease with which the US can install a mid-range missile system in the Philippines, taking advantage of what the two sides called a routine drill in April and have Manila retain the system on Philippine soil exposes the collusion between Washington and Manila.

Manila's seeming ignorance on the potential dangers of its "toys" indicates what an ideal choice the US has made in making it its marionette in the region.

The move is provocative and dangerous for not only the Philippines but also the whole of the Asia-Pacific. In putting at risk regional peace and stability so it can be a key player in Washington's geopolitical game, Manila is being extremely irresponsible.

The restraint the Chinese side has been exercising in the face of the Philippines' continuous provocations regarding Chinese islands, reefs and surrounding waters in the South China Sea — with the latest ones being staged around China's Houteng Reef and Huangyan Island earlier this week — should drive home the message that China has not thought of settling the disputes by force, but only by political means.

Although it appears that some in Washington and Manila are eager to see a conflict break out between China and the Philippines, the two neighbors have had some past success in trying to resolve their disputes through negotiations and dialogue, which are the only meaningful ways to settle their maritime disputes, and the only way to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea, and the Asia-Pacific region beyond.

Opportunity for seeds of peace to be planted

Until quite recently, a negotiated end to the Russia-Ukraine conflict seemed to be a non-option for either Ukraine or the NATO countries which promised to have its back. Negotiating with Russia, as opposed to defeating it, was apparently off-limits for both Kyiv and its NATO supporters. Anything short of Ukraine reclaiming territory lost to Russia since 2022, even 2014, appeared to be unacceptable.

There has been a subtle change in the rhetoric of Ukraine's Western allies, however, that may have significant implications for the way the conflict, which has lasted nearly three years, unfolds, or even potentially ends.

While the latest discussions about NATO's support for Ukraine remain focused on sustaining, if not significantly boosting, the flow of aid to it, that might not be simply business as usual.

In a news conference on Tuesday, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte urged allies to increase military aid to strengthen Kyiv's position should it enter negotiations with Moscow.

Likewise, while warning that a Russian victory would threaten Europe's security, stability and prosperity, United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer for the first time mentioned the prospect of the war ending in a negotiated settlement.

Even the letter Ukraine's Foreign Ministry sent to the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in session now in Brussels effectively opened the door to a negotiated solution, although the precondition of NATO membership is likely to be a stumbling block.

How things actually play out, however, probably hinges on how the incoming US administration approaches the situation.

While mystery surrounds the US president-elect's claim that he will be able to end the conflict in "24 hours" after his inauguration, with much speculation about what, if anything, he has up his sleeve, the fact that maneuvering a negotiated end to the conflict has become a common topic itself brings hope that there is a general consensus building that the hostilities have dragged on for long enough.

Despite some obvious foot-dragging at times, the NATO allies have generally followed the Joe Biden administration's lead on Ukraine. A lead that has been characterized by its consistent pugnacious animosity.

While the Biden administration is fast-tracking military aid to Ukraine in its last days in office, it is probably not with the intention of giving Kyiv leverage in negotiations with Moscow, but rather with the aim of convincing it that it can prevail by force of arms.

Having finally given the green light to Ukraine to use US-supplied long-range missiles against targets inside Russia, the Biden administration on Monday announced a new package of weapons for Ukraine worth \$725 million.

The challenge now for the international community is how to seize the window of opportunity that has opened to get the two belligerents to sit down for actual negotiations and make the necessary compromises to secure a deal.

Since Kyiv's demand for NATO membership would seem to preclude the possibility of any face-to-face talks with Moscow, a way must be found to provide the two conflicting parties with credible security guarantees as a prelude to meaningful talks aimed at a political solution.

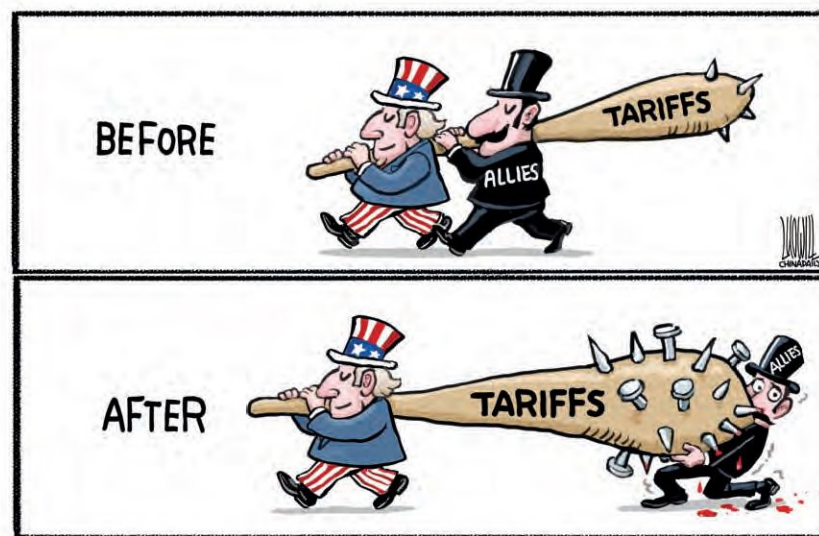
Throughout the conflict, China has held an objective and impartial position and promoted peace talks. To this end, it has consistently urged the parties to the conflict to de-escalate the situation and create conditions conducive to direct dialogue.

With talk of negotiations on NATO's lips, China hopes that the belligerents will step away from their entrenched positions on the preconditions for peace talks, so they can explore the pathways to a lasting political settlement of their differences.

China will continue to carry out exchanges with all stakeholders and concerned parties in the belief that seeds of hope can be planted for peace.

Although the protracted conflict between Russia and Ukraine has deep-rooted causes, China believes that, if handled with care, the toxicity of these rotten roots can be treated so there is fertile soil for a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Escalation of the situation in Syria detrimental to region and world

The recent escalation of the situation in Syria is of great concern to the international community, and highlights the desperate need for various stakeholders to make substantial efforts to prevent it from spiraling out of control.

The current deterioration of the situation is a ramification of the lingering tensions in the Middle East. That is why United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a statement on Monday expressing alarm, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urging all stakeholders to assume their obligations under international law, including humanitarian law, and immediately resume a political process in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 of 2015.

In a country torn by nearly 14 years of war and chaos, the latest developments pose severe risks to civilians and have serious implica-

tions for regional and international peace and security, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Otto Pedersen said, urging the Syrian parties and key international stakeholders to engage earnestly in meaningful and substantive negotiations to find a way out of the conflict.

As a promoter of peace around the world, China is deeply concerned about the situation in Syria, supports Syria's efforts to maintain national security and stability, and is willing to make positive efforts to prevent the situation there from further deteriorating.

Syria has an important strategic position in the Middle East, so it has always been an important venue for power wrestling among global and regional players. This is also an important reason why the country has been plagued by war, conflict, chaos and instability. The recent significant advances by Hayat Tahrir

al-Sham, which the UN Security Council identifies as a terrorist group, are to some extent a spillover of the Israel-Hamas conflict that erupted last October.

In the face of the current tensions in Syria, which is causing heavy civilian casualties, major stakeholders should stop seeing Syria as a bridgehead in their power games. They should realize that if the Syrian civil war escalates further, it could evolve into a broader regional conflict that will likely undermine the just-concluded and still fragile Israel-Lebanon ceasefire agreement and further destabilize the entire region.

Tensions in the Middle East have always been under the shadow of major powers, especially the United States. The Syrian crisis should not be left for Syria to settle alone. All parties should make joint efforts to prevent the crisis from spreading.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

Political wranglings in ROK bad for its people

Republic of Korea President Yoon Suk-yeol announced through a televised address around 4:27 am on Wednesday that he had decided to accept his parliament's request to lift martial law in the country. The decision came just about six hours after he had imposed martial law, at 10:25 pm on Tuesday.

Later, several senior advisers in the ROK government announced their resignations, while the nation's largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Korea, held an emergency parliamentary meeting and asked Yoon to immediately step down or face impeachment.

The incident is indicative of serious divisions in ROK politics. Yoon and his wife Kim Keon-hee are at the center of a political scandal for allegedly trying to influence the ruling People Power Party to pick a certain candidate to run for a parliamentary

by-election in 2022.

The opposition party's push to pass legislation targeting her and to impeach public officials, including prosecutors, may have pushed Yoon to declare martial law. However, his decision met severe challenges as Lee Jae-myung, head of the main opposition party, held a live televised address in parliament, while 190 lawmakers entered parliament and voted to lift the martial law.

The development casts a shadow on Yoon's political career: His approval rating in a recent poll stood at just 17 percent, while the main opposition party led by Lee continues its attack against the Yoon administration.

In April, the opposition Democratic Party of Korea registered a landslide victory in legislative elections, securing 175 of the 300 seats together with its allies. In the party leadership

election in August, Lee Jae-myung was reelected and has now set his sights on the next presidential election.

On Nov 25, the Seoul Central District Court acquitted Lee of charges that he persuaded a witness to lie in court to understate his past criminal conviction, a breather for him from legal troubles that threaten to derail his political career. Prosecutors have decided to appeal against the ruling, but some argue it is a "political trial" aimed at eliminating the political opposition.

While the opposition is actively mobilizing supporters to hold rallies in protest, calling for President Yoon's impeachment and early presidential polls, the political divide continues to widen and it's the ROK, society and its people that suffer.

— CHINA NEWS SERVICE

What They Say

Zero-tariff policy promotes common development

China continues to take positive and effective actions to promote high-level opening-up and introduce more autonomous and unilateral opening-up policies, and further expand the global network of high-standard free trade zones.

Starting from Sunday last week, China has granted zero-tariff treatment to 100 percent of the tariff items of all the least developed countries that have established diplomatic relations with it.

China is the only major economy to implement this measure. The move is conducive to expanding market access to the least developed countries, promoting inclusive economic globalization, and contributing to global poverty reduction.

China pursues a mutually beneficial and win-win opening-up strategy. Despite the rise of unilateralism and protectionism, the general trend

of economic globalization has never changed.

From steadily expanding institutional opening up to deepening the reform of foreign trade, foreign investment and outbound investment management systems, from optimizing the regional opening-up layout to improving and promoting high-quality joint construction of the Belt and Road, China is firmly promoting high-level opening up to a larger scope, wider fields and deeper levels.

From this year to 2030, China's cumulative imports from developing countries are expected to exceed \$8 trillion, demonstrating China's commitment to sharing its development opportunities and promoting the construction of a fair world of common development.

Global prosperity and stability cannot be built on a widening develop-

ment gap between countries. China advocates a path of economic globalization that is people-oriented, balanced and inclusive, so that different countries can share the fruits of development.

In recent years, China has actively played the role of being a green channel for African products to enter the world market by supporting the imports of agricultural products from the least developed African countries, helping them to develop their cross-border e-commerce and holding expos to showcase their products to the world.

China's actions have created new opportunities for developing countries and enabled more of them to participate in the process of economic globalization, taking advantage of their comparative advantages in the global industry and supply chains.

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COMMENT

Dinesh Bhujra

Charting Nepal's path to progress with China

Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is on an official visit to China from Monday to Thursday during which the two sides are expected to discuss new ways to revive the Belt and Road projects, which have failed to materialize even seven years after being signed. The visit will also allow the two countries to contemplate their historical ties, forged under the shadow of the mighty Himalayas.

Nepal and China share a 1,414-kilometer border and an even longer history of camaraderie, marked by the exchange of knowledge, including science and technology. The early interactions between Nepal and China were primarily religious and philosophical in nature, with figures like Buddhahadra, Faxian and Xuanzang contributing to the spread of Buddhism in China. A significant historical figure in this relationship is Araniko, a Nepali artisan who traveled to China at the age of 18 and contributed to numerous architectural and artistic projects in China, including the iconic White Pagoda in Beijing.

Araniko's collaboration with Chinese astronomer Guo Shoujing on advanced astronomical equipment shows his expertise in science and technology. Though forgotten in Nepal for centuries, his legacy was revived through Chinese historical records, which revealed his great contributions to art and science.

Amid the fast-paced developments of the 21st century, Nepal and China are striving to embrace the winds of change and meet the aspirations of their people. China has made monumental strides on the economic front, becoming a global economic powerhouse with GDP of \$17.79 trillion. On the other hand, Nepal is poised to graduate from its least-developed country status. This transition will be a crucial milestone in Nepal's developmental journey, marking a shift from reliance on international support to becoming self-reliant.

China's remarkable economic leap owes much to its focus on research and development. From 1990 to 2020, China's per capita GDP grew from \$318 to \$10,409. During the same period, its gross investment in R&D increased from 0.8 percent to 2.4 percent of GDP. This strong correlation between R&D investment and GDP growth underscores the transformative power of science, technology and innovation.

In fact, China has further increased its investment in R&D. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China invested \$470 billion, or 2.65 percent of GDP, in R&D in 2023.

Besides, global poverty remains one of the biggest challenges that modern development efforts must address. China has emerged as a global leader in poverty alleviation, lifting an astounding 800 million people out of poverty in the past more than four decades.

Speaking at the recent G20 Summit



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

in Rio de

Janeiro, Bra-

zil, President

Xi Jinping

underscored

China's devel-

opmental

journey thus: "If

China can make it,

other developing

countries can make it

too." His statement

serves as an inspi-

ration for countries

striving to end the

vicious circle of poverty,

as well as a reminder

that poverty alleviation

demands sustained

efforts and a well-

crafted strategy. And

central to this endeavor

is the role of science,

technology and inno-

vation.

This is Oli's third

visit to China as

Nepal's prime minister.

During his earlier

two visits, in 2016

and 2018, the two

sides signed more

than a dozen agree-

ments, including a

memorandum of

understanding on

cooperation in rail-

way projects. Also,

nine agreements

were signed between

Nepali and Chi-

nese enterprises.

Nepal should review

these agreements,

prioritize the key

initiatives and imple-

ment them to trans-

late its commitments

into tangible out-

comes.

An MoU on coopera-

tion under the frame-

work of the Belt and

Road Initiative was

signed by Nepal and

China in 2017. Dur-

ing Oli's visit to

China in 2018, the

joint statement issued

by the two countries

emphasized the im-

portance of imple-

menting the MoU to

enhance connectivity

through land ports,

roads, railways, air-

ways and telecommu-

nications. This MoU

was reaffirmed in

the joint statement

issued during the

visit of former Nep-

ali prime minister

Pushpa Kamal

Dahal "Prachanda"

to China in 2023.

The Belt and Road

Initiative is more

than just a trade

partnership; it is a

catalyst for enhanc-

ing science, tech-

nology and innova-

tion capacities. A

recent study pub-

lished in a Nature

Portfolio journal

showed the initia-

tive has

strengthened the

foundation for

boosting the inno-

vation capability

of participating

countries, and

helped increase

the proportion of

cooperative pat-

ents among its

partner economies.

One critical but

often overlooked

area in Nepal's

politics is the

prioritization of

science, technol-

ogy and innova-

tion. China's

remarkable

success on

almost all fronts

demonstrates

how strategic

investments in

R&D and pro-

motion of inno-

vation can facili-

tate sustained

growth.

As such, Nepal

needs to shift

away from tradi-

tional policy

priorities and

focus on sci-

ence and tech-

nology, and

capacity build-

ing. And since

the exodus of

young talents

poses a signifi-

cant challenge

to Nepal, the

country has to

take measures

to retain and

empower hu-

man resources

in order to

achieve long-

term develop-

ment.

China's focus

on science, tech-

nology and inno-

vation is rooted

in its vision of

"four moderniza-

tions" — advan-

ces in agricul-

ture, industry,

national

defense, and

science and

technology —

which is also

part of China's

14th Five-

Year Plan.

In March 2024,

China's National

People's Congress

made the devel-

opment of "new

quality product-

ive forces" a top

priority, so as to

miss out on the

"Fourth Indus-

trial Revolution".

And to develop

new quality

productive forces,

China has put

emphasis on

advancements

in science, tech-

nology and inno-

vation. As Presi-

dent Xi has been

reiterating, ad-

vancements in

science and

technology

should serve

humanity as a

whole, and en-

able China to

help develop-

ing countries

build capacity

and promote

the global flow

of knowl-

edge.

The 1960s were

challenging

times for both

Nepal and

China. Yet as a

goodwill ges-

ture, China

provided

assistance in

building the

Kodari Road,

which gave

Nepal's capi-

tal of Kathman-

du, its first

alternative

trade route.

Known as the

Araniko High-

way (National

Highway 34),

this vital route

is a living tes-

tament to

China's good-

neighborly

act. But mind-

ful of the

Cold War's

geopolitical

complexities

in the 1960s,

China prud-

ently ended

the highway

in Bhaktapur,

about 12 km

south of

Kathmandu.

Given the

significance

of Oli's third

visit to

China, all

sectors of

Nepali

society

should

champion

the tradi-

tional

friendship

between

the two

countries.

And the

Nepali

delegation,

compris-

ing law-

makers,

advisers,

govern-

ment

officials,

journal-

ists, busi-

nesspeo-

ple and

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ics, should

draw

inspira-

tion from

China's

advan-

ces in

GLOBAL VIEWS

SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI

Maximum cooperation is needed to achieve progress

China leads the Global South in realizing its aspirations for inclusive, fair, ecologically sustainable and people-centered human development

As 2024 draws to a close, the prevailing landscape of global development presents two contrasting features. The Global North, the collective of rich Western nations, is steadily losing its economic dominance. This decline is more starkly evident in Europe, as highlighted



by Mario Draghi's seminal report "The Future of European Competitiveness", released in September this year. Authored by the

former Italian prime minister, it warns that the European Union faces an "existential challenge" because of its multiple weaknesses: economic, industrial, financial, technological and even political. The decline of Japan — an Asian nation that has made a common cause with the West — is also undeniable. The economy of the United States continues to show some vibrancy, but this is sustained more by the dollar's global dominance than by the intrinsic strengths of its own industry.

In contrast, the Global South, the collective of developing and underdeveloped nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America, is steadily rising economically. For instance, the share of the BRICS members alone in global GDP has reached 35 percent in terms of purchasing power parity, exceeding that of the G7 countries. This unstoppable trend also signifies democratization of

the global economy since the Global South, accounting for nearly 85 percent of the world's population, is now challenging the hegemony of Western powers and finding its rightful place in a fairer and more balanced world. China is, of course, at the forefront of this history-changing trend. China's economic rise, powered mainly by home-grown advancements in futuristic technologies and innovations, is now widely recognized, including, grudgingly, by the West.

In line with its rapid progress in economy, technology and even international diplomacy, China has now also become the leading voice of the Global South in the discourse on development. Until recently, this debate was almost entirely dominated by Western think tanks and academic institutions. Naturally, the West shaped it in ways that desperately sought to perpetuate today's unequal and unfair world order and present Western values and paradigms as universal ones.

The fact that China has begun to reshape this discourse with its own narrative, which is in alignment with the narrative of other developing and underdeveloped countries, is evident from a new report produced by the Centre for International Knowledge on Development, a reputed Beijing-based think tank. Titled "Global Development Report 2024 — A World of Turbulence and Change: Cooperation to Address Global Common Challenges", it not only comprehensively examines

the problems plaguing mankind's development, but also offers practical ideas for overcoming them. All its solutions converge around one big idea: What the world needs is maximum global cooperation — not only South-South cooperation but also South-North cooperation — to achieve inclusive, fair, ecologically sustainable and people-centered development that does not exclude anyone among the billions of people on Earth.

This is indeed the idea that animates the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for a global partnership to realize 17 Sustainable Development Goals that prioritize ending poverty, improving health and education, reducing inequality, tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans, forests and other precious ecological resources. In this sense, the CIKD report faithfully captures the spirit of the China-proposed Global Development Initiative, which aims "to close the development deficit and accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda".

Whereas the UN calls for deepening and broadening global cooperation, the troubling reality is that the ruling elites of the US-led Western powers are moving toward anti-globalization, unilateral tariff hikes, protectionism, technology denial, illegal sanctions and confrontation.

There are two principal forces that promise to drive the global

development in a positive direction: leading technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and new planet-protective energy sources that are green, clean, low-carbon and, most importantly, affordable.

Thoughtful development experts around the world have observed these trends. Whereas the US offers war-igniting weapons and militaristic ideas to developing countries, China offers practical examples to promote human welfare based on its own success stories. I was particularly struck by one specific use of digital technologies — in school education. The CIKD report says: "By the end of 2023, China's Smart Education platform, which had been online for just over a year, had attracted more than 100 million registered users, over 36.7 billion page-views, and 2.5 billion visitors, giving many children in rural and remote areas the access to the 'same class' as those in big cities and enabling online learning for nearly 200 million primary and secondary school students in China."

I believe India and other developing countries can learn from such examples to accelerate their own progress in education and other areas of human development. CIKD's analysis and recommendations on global poverty reduction are especially instructive. Its report expresses four serious concerns. First, "global poverty reduction progress has slowed down." It points out that "growth in countries with severe poverty lack inclusive-



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development." Second, it cautions that "the concentration of global trade and investment has led to the marginalization of countries not yet integrated into global value chains." Third, "the shift of FDI to high value-added sectors has narrowed the development window for developing countries." Fourth, "conflicts undermine the development foundation of countries with concentrated poverty." As a remedy, the report suggests that the "effectiveness of international cooperation for poverty reduction needs to be enhanced". In this context, I must point out that China's epoch-changing success in complete eradication of extreme poverty by the end of 2020 has many valuable lessons for other developing countries (including India) that still have a large burden of poverty.

I have a suggestion for the con-

sideration of the Chinese authors of this report. It can also provide focus on the development lessons offered by India, which has now emerged as the world's most populous nation. India is predicted to become the world's third-largest economy in the coming years. I believe that India and China, as the only two nations each with a population of over 1 billion, should expand all-round cooperation based on mutual learning. This will prove highly beneficial to inclusive global development.

The author is the founder of Forum for a New South Asia and was an aide to India's former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

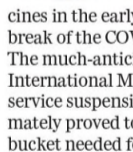
ZHOU TAIDONG

Keep Global South united and cooperating

China must do more to accurately identify the most urgent and sustainable projects in recipient countries, concentrating limited funds and promoting overall impact

The Global South's economic power and political prominence is expanding. In 2024, BRICS countries hold 35 percent of the world's GDP compared to 30 percent held by G7 countries.

Meanwhile, the convergence of several crises over the past years has deepened the divide between the Global South and the Global North. The West was slow in delivering medical supplies and vaccines in the early days of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The much-anticipated World Bank International Monetary Fund debt service suspension initiative ultimately proved to be a drop in the bucket needed for managing debilitating debt, and the Western calls for friend-shoring, decoupling and de-risking will only make things worse. The weaponization of the West's institutional architecture is also causing grave concern given the impression that sanctions are a tool for defending Western interests.



Comparatively speaking, cooperation among the Global South countries has several strengths. First, it emphasizes the principles of solidarity and cooperation, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual respect. Cooperation among Global South countries is different from the North-South cooperation, which is attached with conditionalities. It is driven by the demands of the countries in the Global South and ensures their "ownership" of the projects.

Second, it emphasizes mutually beneficial cooperation. Cooperation among Global South countries contributes to developing a greater sense of self-responsibility for development in developing countries, provides opportunities for trial and error, builds development capacity

and enhances sustainability.

Third, it makes development a priority, making great contributions to industrialization, urbanization, economic growth and job creation.

Fourth, the policies and technical solutions explored by the Global South countries during their development are more-often-than-not dynamic, applicable and economical, and their willingness to share their experiences and best practices with other countries is greater.

A 2016 policy brief by the United Nations Development Programme outlined six important aspects of the developmental role of cooperation among the Global South countries. They include: helping liberate and upgrade production capacities, promoting the return of the infrastructure development agenda, facilitating low-cost skills and technology transfer, sharing more relevant and adaptable public policies, providing emergency humanitarian assistance, and exploring joint solutions to address common challenges.

In addition, regional cooperation mechanisms such as the African Union or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, have also contributed significantly to the resolution of collective problems.

Nevertheless, there are multiple threats to cooperation among the Global South countries. The first one is related to the divergent interests resulting from the imbalance in development. Development conditions and stages of development determine the wide variation in cooperation needs of the Global South countries. The second is about interference, divisions and competition among countries of the Global North. Changes in the international landscape and great power rivalries are making development assistance an important tool of geopolitical competition. Third, mutual understanding among the countries of the Global South is limited



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

and easily influenced by Western narratives. Currently, the West has a monopoly on media and information resources, and countries of the Global South often rely on Western media rather than direct communication to understand each other. Many of the Western narratives do not take into account the differences in the starting points and stages of development of different countries in the process of modernization.

Over the years, China has become an important contributor to the development of the Global South. First, China provides new conceptual leadership. The community with a shared future for mankind, as the biggest concept that China contributes to the international community in the new era, aims to advocate a new type of partnership with mutual respect and equal treatment, a global governance pattern of joint contribution, shared benefits, and extensive consulta-

tion, a global development prospect with win-win cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, a pluralistic civilization system of harmony, inclusiveness, and respect for differences, and a global ecosystem that puts Mother Nature and green development first.

Second, China provides new development mechanisms and approaches. China's proposal and efforts to promote international cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative, its creation or joint creation of investment and financing platforms such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank and the Silk Road Fund, and its initiative to host the China International Import Expo, have played a key role in leading the process of economic globalization.

The Global Development Initiative and its call for the creation of a global community of development are aimed at promoting world eco-

nomomic recovery and the post-pandemic reconstruction in developing countries, pushing global development toward a new stage of balance, coordination and inclusiveness, and pushing the international community to accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In terms of cooperation modalities, China focuses on combining "hard" and "soft" assistance, integrating foreign assistance with mutually beneficial cooperation, dovetailing with the development strategies of recipient countries, and realizing economic complementarity and common development. In terms of the types of cooperation, it pays more attention to "small and beautiful" livelihood projects, while at the same time, it brings into play its traditional strengths.

Third, China provides new development knowledge. China's governance experience and development model have been important topics for global knowledge transfer. China has accumulated a great deal of experience in industrialization, urbanization, agricultural development, poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and the introduction and use of foreign investment and technology. As a complete theoretical system, the Chinese path to modernization breaks the monopoly of the West over modernization practices and theories, encourages countries of the Global South to explore modernization paths suitable for their own development in the light of their own national conditions, and enhances their confidence and determination in taking control of their own destinies and achieving independent modernization together.

Fourth, China provides tangible support to the countries of the Global South in addressing development challenges. Substantial assistance in areas such as poverty reduction, climate change, public

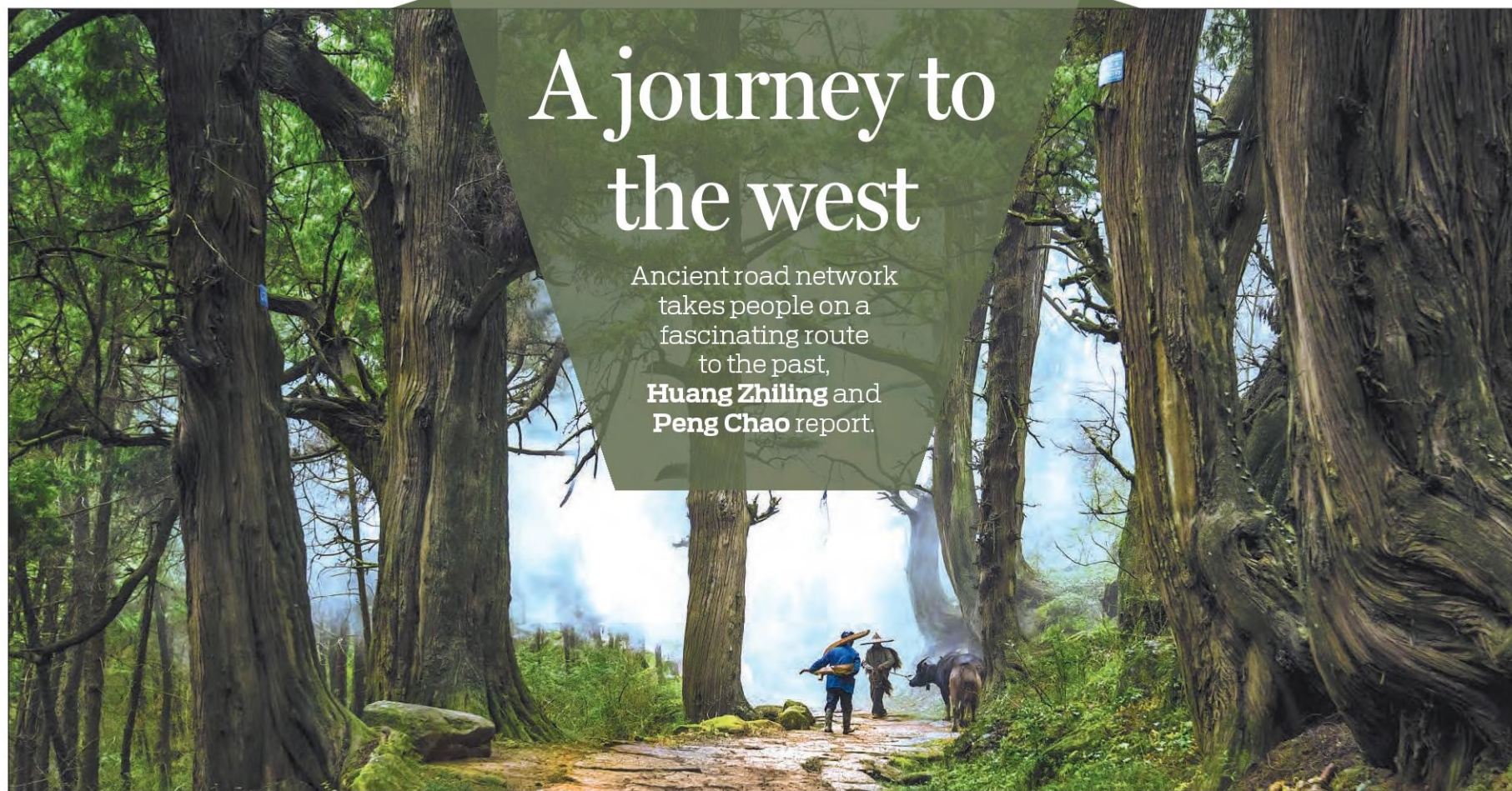
health and agricultural development have been offered to many developing countries. China's foreign aid flows mainly go to low-income and lower-middle-income countries, which accounted for about 97.37 percent of the total amount from 2018 to 2022. In cooperation with more than 20 UN agencies, China has implemented more than 160 projects in more than 60 developing countries since 2016.

Faced with the great changes in the world, the necessity and significance of further promoting cooperation with the Global South are becoming increasingly prominent. The need to adhere to Global North countries as the main resource providers, North-South cooperation as the main channel, and South-South cooperation as a beneficial supplement and pragmatic carrier remains. In the future, China can strengthen top-level design and be systematic in development cooperation through formulating targeted regional and country planning documents and better complementing the bilateral and multilateral channels.

More efforts can be made to accurately identify the most urgent and sustainable projects in recipient countries, concentrate limited funds, and promote the overall impact. China can innovate cooperation approaches, focus on enhancing the independent development capabilities of partner countries, and combine "aid in commodities, aid in technology and aid in capacity building". Monitoring and evaluation and the participation of multi-stakeholders can also be further enhanced.

The author is vice-president of the Center for International Knowledge on Development. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LIFE



Yuan Tingdong had a pleasant surprise when he came across the Chinese edition of US writer Hope Justman's *Guide to Hiking China's Old Road to Shu*, which was published recently by the Sichuan Ethnic Publishing House.

Justman had visited different parts of the *shudao*, or Shu Roads, 24 times, either alone or with family members or her friends from the United States, since she first stepped on it in 2001.

The world has two ancient paths on the UNESCO's World Heritage List, Camino de Santiago in Spain and the Kumano Kodo in Japan. To Justman, an 82-year-old resident of Philadelphia in the US, China's Shu Roads are as deserving as both to be on the list.

Yuan, 84, a senior researcher in the culture of Sichuan province and neighboring Chongqing municipality, says he highly respects Justman for her knowledge of the Shu Roads, also called Ancient Shu Roads.

"I did not expect a foreign friend to have such an intense love for the Ancient Shu Roads, and therefore hold her in high esteem," says Yuan, the Sichuan-based researcher.

Shu is short for Sichuan and was its ancient name as well. The Ancient Shu Roads are a system spanning more than 1,000 kilometers that connect today's Xi'an, Shaanxi province, and Chengdu, Sichuan province, over the Qinling and Daba mountains. They were built more than 2,000 years ago. The part that is not within Sichuan is also called *shudao*, which means it is the way to the Shu.

On the northern section of the Ancient Shu Roads are the Chencang, Baoxie, Tangluo, Ziwu and Qishan roads, and on its southern section are the Jinniu, Micang and Lizhi roads.

Many Chinese know the Ancient Shu Roads from the works of poet Li Bai of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), a household name in China, who once wrote "the roads to the Shu are harder than climbing the sky". The Ancient Shu Roads were built on mountains so precipitous that Li lamented this feature in his poem, *Shu Dao Nan* (Hard Is the Road to Shu).

The road to Shu in Li's poem is in the Jinniu Road of the *shudao*, running from Hanzhong in Shaanxi to Chengdu, more than 600 kilometers in length.

Hailed as a world-class living fossil of ancient land transportation, the Guangyuan section of the Jinniu Road in Sichuan is nearly 260 km long, well-protected and boasts many visitor destinations.

The best-known site is the Jianmen-guan, or Jianmen Pass (literally "sword gate pass"), a towering V-shaped mountain pass in Jiange county, Guangyuan. It's said to be the major fortress on the



Main picture: Farmers walk oxen along the Cuiyunlang corridor in Jiange county, Guangyuan, Sichuan province. **WEI YUNHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY** **Clockwise from top:** The Mingyue Gorge plank road in the Guangyuan section of the Jinniu Shu Road in Sichuan. Tourists are dwarfed by cypresses along the Cuiyunlang corridor. A brick at the root of a cypress along the corridor said to be made during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). The Adou cypress, named after the pet name of Liu Shan, the last leader of the Shu Dynasty (221-263). **PHOTOS BY LIU LANYING / FOR CHINA DAILY**

Ancient Shu Roads and is a must-see place while on a trip to Sichuan. The famous quote from the great poet Li — "One man guards the fortress, 10,000 men can't pass" — is inspired by it.

Since 316 BC, some 100 battles have been fought there. Because the pass is so steep, not a single frontal attack has been successful.

During the Three Kingdoms (220-280) period, the Wei (220-265), Shu (221-263) and Wu (222-280) dynasties were entangled in fighting in their attempts to reunify China, leaving countless heroic stories in their wake.

In order to conquer the Shu Dynasty, Deng Ai, a general of the Wei Dynasty, bypassed the precipitous and well-guarded Jianmen Pass in AD 263.

He and some 5,000 soldiers were said to have wrapped up in felt and rolled down a high mountain far from the pass to reach Sichuan.

Zhao Xiaohua, a senior tour guide in Jiange, narrated the story: "Only 2,000 soldiers survived after rolling down. But they managed to force Liu Shan, ruler of the Shu Dynasty, to surrender, as Shu people had lived in peace for too long and didn't want to fight as warriors," Zhao says.

About a 20-minute car ride from the pass is the Cuiyunlang ("green cloud" corridor), a captivating sight on the Shu Roads.

The corridor, a stone-paved and cypress-shaded post road, fascinated Justman, as recorded in her book.

In ancient times, important letters of

state were carried by couriers on horseback along the Ancient Shu Roads.

As snow often covered the roads in winter and the summer sun gave the couriers a scorching ride, local officials had cypress trees planted on both sides of the road, to provide shelter and shade all year round.

The planting, which began in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), lasted until the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). By then, in excess of 100,000 trees had been planted, over 10,000 still surviving to this day.

The corridor has Pu'an town in Jiange at its center, extending to Sichuan's Langzhong city to the east, Zitong county to the west and the Zhaohua district of Guangyuan to the north. More than 7,800 ancient cypresses are in the Jiange

section of the corridor.

The average age of the cypresses in this section is 1,050 years, according to a report by the Xinhua News Agency.

Visitors can clearly see bricks stuck in the mud around the roots of several cypresses.

"The bricks were made during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220)," says Wang Guangming, head of the general office of the Party's publicity department of the Jiange county committee.

One tree called Adou is special. The tree is named after the pet name of Liu Shan, the last leader of the Shu Dynasty. The cypress is said to be where Liu took shelter from rain on his way to Luoyang, capital of the Wei Dynasty, in 263 after the demise of the Shu Dynasty, according to Wang.

About 70 minutes of car ride from the Cuiyunlang corridor is a plank road built in the Guangyuan section of the Jinniu Shu Road.

When the builders of the roads approached the Mingyue Gorge in what is present-day Chaotian district of Guangyuan, they found it impossible to continue, as the cliffs were too steep. After much thought, they came up with a bold idea — they chiseled holes at three different heights into the cliffs and inserted wooden beams into them.

The upper beams were covered with planks to form a road for pedestrians, and the second and third lower holes held buttresses.

During the Three Kingdoms, Zhuge Liang, an outstanding prime minister of the Shu Dynasty, used the plank road to transport troops to fight against the Wei Dynasty. The plank road was burned down and rebuilt many times during various wars. Now, part of it has been restored to allow travelers to admire this man-made wonder.

"When I walked on the plank road, built into the dangerous cliffs above the gushing Jialing River, I was in awe of those who built it," says Wu Dan, a female tourist from Beijing.

About 55 minutes from the plank road is the Zhaohua ancient town in the Guangyuan section of the Jinniu roads.

To Justman, Zhaohua, a beautiful town in a bend of the Jialing River, a tributary of the Yangtze River, is one of Sichuan's best-preserved towns as she recorded in her book.

History runs like a current through the river as seen in Zhaohua town with its well-maintained buildings that take visitors on the Shu Roads back to the old days and gives them a sense of destination.

Contact the writers at huangzhiling@chinadaily.com.cn

Scientists unravel wheat's 'genetic code' to open avenue for improvement

A collaborative study between Chinese and Australian scientists has uncovered the genomic basis for the coevolution of wheat varieties with their habitats and food culture. This was achieved by studying the genomic architecture and footprints of Chinese wheat cultivars.

The research, conducted by scientists from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, China Agricultural University, Murdoch University in Australia and other institutes, was published in the latest issue of the multi-

disciplinary science journal Nature.

This study focuses on developing a comprehensive pangenome of wheat and its application for improving wheat varieties, showcasing China's globally leading contribution to wheat research.

Wheat is the second-largest food crop in China, with a good breeding system and pedigree record. Investigating the genomic footprints of wheat cultivars has opened up potential avenues for future breeding efforts, which could assist China's wheat production.

The researchers have developed a wheat pangenome using newly assembled representative Chinese cultivars, revealing that the dynamic use of structural variations evolved alongside wheat habitats and food culture.

"To capture the genomic diversity of common wheat cultivars representing a breeding history spanning 70 years in China, we selected 17 cultivars for de novo (from the beginning) genome assembly," says Zhang Xueyong, a CAAS wheat scientist.

"This study provides valuable genetic

resource information for future genomics-assisted breeding improvement in wheat," Zhang says.

Zhang adds that it also reveals the effects of different levels of structural variation on wheat adaptation and breeding, providing new perspectives and strategies for the integration and utilization of global germplasm resources to support future breeding.

According to Liu Xu, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, the study will promote the research of crop

germplasm resources in China to formally enter the era of big data and accelerate the research of mining and utilization of important genes.

This project unravels the "genetic code" behind wheat's environmental adaptations and quality formation. It will also provide important genomic support and theoretical guidance for intelligent design breeding, says Sun Qixin, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

XINHUA

CULTURE

As a legendary figure in Chinese literature, poet Li Qingzhao's early life was dazzling. At the young age of 16, she rose to prominence as a literary star in the male-dominated Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). She was only 18 when she married scholar Zhao Mingcheng. Together, they shared a mutual passion for epigraphy and art in a harmonious marriage that lasted nearly three decades.

Tragically, the dynasty collapsed due to the invasion of the Jurchen troops from the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) in the north, which forced Li to flee amid wartime turbulence. She struggled to preserve the couple's art collections, endured the pain of her husband's death and suffered from a severe illness that nearly claimed her life.

Amid harsh times, 48-year-old Li got remarried to Zhang Ruzhou, a low-ranking military officer who coveted Li's valuable collections. They divorced just over 100 days after Li refused to endure her second husband's abuse due to her refusal to satisfy his greed.

When film director Wang Xin delved deeper into historical materials for the documentary *Phoenix: The Story of Her*, she was surprised to find that Li's brief second marriage had been regarded as a "stain" by some scholars in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911) who adored her literary talent, claiming that such records during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) were fabricated.

"It's interesting that those who believed in Li's remarriage and those who didn't formed two schools of thought," Wang tells *China Daily* during a telephone interview.

Wang says such academic arguments were created by gender inequality, as a widow's chastity was cherished to an unprecedented degree due to historical reasons.

Hardship and struggle

In the Northern Song Dynasty, it was normal for women to remarry, but this changed after the dynasty's darkest chapter. Emperor Qinzong and his father Emperor Huizong were captured and forced to send thousands of royal and aristocratic women to the Jin capital as war "compensation". Many of these women endured torture and a few chose suicide for defending their reputation. Their being abused was regarded as a humiliation by later generations of historians in ancient China. This resulted in the strengthened advocacy of the value of virtue.

"The history was written by and for men, a view I heard in a speech delivered by historian Mao Liping several years ago. Even the ancient biographies with women as protagonists were written for men, as these works encourage and praise fidelity and chastity," says Wang.

Driven by a strong interest in revisiting ancient Chinese female celebrities from a more modern perspective, Wang and her fellow creators spent four years preparing for and producing the documentary.

With each of the four episodes featuring one famous woman, the documentary recounts the stories of Li, as well as Wu Zetian, China's first and only empress; Princess Jieyou, whose political marriage to a ruler of the Wusun Kingdom and later marriages to his successors benefited the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24); and Shen Shou (1874-1921), a Suzhou embroidery legend who earned recognition in the West.

Wang says it's the rising popularity of female-centered movies and TV shows that inspired them to produce the documentary.

However, the creative team soon encountered their biggest challenge — historical records of women are far less comprehensive than those of men, with some women only mentioned by surname and a few lines of text.

Additionally, demonstrating the lives of these historical figures within a condensed span of 45 minutes per episode presented another challenge, says Zhu Lexian, the executive producer and head of the documentary production sector at Tencent Video, the show's financier.

Zhu reveals that the team ultimately decided to focus on a special period in each protagonist's life, examining how they fought against adversity with resilience and intelligence.

"We don't want to just revisit the four women's most glorious moments. Instead, we aim to explore the hardships and strug-



Poster for the documentary *Phoenix: The Story of Her*, which features four legendary women. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Series showcases strong women of ancient China

Four famous females are topics of documentary that covers reputation, resilience and gender equality, Xu Fan reports.



Clockwise from middle: Scenes feature four renowned women who made distinctive contributions to Chinese history, namely poet Li Qingzhao, Empress Wu Zetian, embroidery artist Shen Shou, and Princess Jieyou.

gles they endured behind the scenes," adds Wang.

Unconventional storytelling

Yang Le, chief executive officer of Huanyu Entertainment Co Ltd, the show's produc-

tion company, reveals that the idea benefits from the company's years of experience in producing costume dramas, providing the month-long shoot with an abundant supply of exquisite clothing and jewelry.

With an unconventional approach to sto-

rytelling, the documentary includes a voice-over that acts as an invisible second person, engaging with the protagonists as they navigate their inner struggles.

Actress Tao Xinran, who plays poet Li in the first episode, says it felt like a dream

coming true when she was asked to portray the literary legend.

After much preparation, Tao gained a comprehensive understanding of Li, a free-spirited genius who strived for free will, even at a painful cost.

During the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the law did not allow women to file for divorce. Li came up with a drastic way to end her suffering in her second marriage. After discovering Zhang had forged documents to obtain an official position, she exposed him. As a result, Zhang was punished with exile, dissolving their marriage. However, Li was also sentenced to jail for violating the law prohibiting wives from suing their husbands.

"Despite Li's poems being known for their gentle, restrained and soft tones, she was a woman of remarkable courage and determination," comments Tao.

Wu Zetian's story illustrates that even the most powerful woman couldn't act on her desires. Rising from Tang Dynasty (618-907) Emperor Gaozong's queen to founding the Zhou Dynasty (690-705), she faced the difficult decision of choosing a crown prince in her later years.

Whether Wu chose her son or nephew, she risked her posthumous title being replaced by her husband or brother, jeopardizing the fate of the Zhou Dynasty. In China's patriarchal society, which adhered to a father-to-son inheritance norm, this became an unsolvable dilemma for Wu.

The Zhou Dynasty ultimately ended with Wu as its only ruler. "From a modern perspective, it was also caused by gender inequality. That has interested me most," says Wang.

When speaking of Princess Jieyou, who was sent by Emperor Wudi of the Western Han Dynasty to marry the ruler of the Wusun Kingdom for *heqin*, the director recalls that they found fewer than 1,000 characters documenting her turbulent life in historical archives.

Heqin, or marriage alliance, was a strategic policy used to stabilize border peace across regimes. This required princesses to take on roles more complex than just being wives; they had to be capable diplomats, says Wang.

Probably the least known among the four, Shen Shou, a talented embroiderer during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and early Republican period (1912-1949), is depicted as sort of a "China's Nora Helmer" (the main protagonist of Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*) by the director.

With her lifelike embroidery skills, Shen received praise from Empress Dowager Cixi, which provided her with opportunities to travel to Japan and Europe to refine her artistic creations.

Her most famous works combine Western painting techniques with traditional Chinese embroidery, including a portrait of Elena of Montenegro — the Queen of Italy — and a portrait of Jesus Christ.

Despite her artistic success, Shen's marriage was marred by sorrow. Unable to bear children, her husband took two concubines. Under the patronage of entrepreneur Zhang Jian, she lived a solitary life in Nantong, Jiangsu province, teaching students at an embroidery school.

In her will, she specified to be buried independently in Nantong, refusing to be laid to rest in her husband's family tomb in Suzhou. This choice embodied her Nora-like declaration of independence and departure in her final moments, explains Wang.

Throughout ancient China's history, each dynasty imposed restrictions on women, notes Li Qian, vice-president of Huanyu and the producer of *Phoenix: The Story of Her*.

"Although these constraints have dissipated, we hope the documentary can showcase the remarkable bravery, resilience and determination of Chinese women in their refusal to succumb to their destinies," she adds.

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Film week aims to strengthen cultural exchanges with UAE

ABU DHABI — The 6th China Film Week in the United Arab Emirates opened in late November at VOX Cinemas in Yas Mall with an exclusive screening of the Chinese film *Panda Plan*.

The film is an action comedy about a panda's rescue from a criminal plan. Its lead actor Jackie Chan greeted the UAE audience via video and the film's staff brought panda toys and postcards as gifts for the film week.

The event ran over seven days and was launched with a ceremony with over 200 attendees, including government officials, filmmakers, film enthusiasts and diplomats from various countries.

"Film is an art of light and aesthetics and a key medium for the exchanges of civilizations," Chinese Ambassador to the UAE Zhang Yiming says in his opening remarks. "The China Film Week has evolved into an

important cultural event for fostering mutual understanding between our peoples. We look forward to deepening our cooperation in film, music and art to strengthen the bonds of cultural exchanges," Zhang adds.

During the opening ceremony, professionals of the UAE and Chinese film industries held a forum discussing ways to enhance film exchanges and cooperation

between the two countries.

Organized by the Chinese embassy in the UAE and the China Film Administration with support from the China Cultural Center in the UAE and China Film Archive, the film week screened 10 Chinese films, including comedies *YOLO* and *Successor*, as well as *Decoded* and *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*.

Lu Liang, deputy head of the film administration, says the film week has become a

brand event among the two countries' active and fruitful people-to-people exchanges.

The film week was held to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of China-UAE diplomatic relations and invite audiences to experience acclaimed Chinese films to become immersed in modern-day Chinese culture.

XINHUA

LIFE



Musician gives the guitar a Brazilian heart

Celebrated Chinese-born player brings taste of Latin America to home country, **Chen Nan** reports.



Clockwise from above: Classical guitarist Yang Xuefei plays at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing in February 2023. Musicians from the China NCPA Orchestra join Yang's concert with pieces by Brazilian composers at the NCPA on Sept 5. Yang plays with Brazilian guitarist Fabio Zanon during the concert. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese-born musician Yang Xuefei is a celebrated figure in the world of classical guitar. Known for her technical precision, emotional playing, and ability to bridge musical traditions, Yang has created a space for herself in contemporary classical music.

Her journey into the world of Brazilian music in particular highlights her expansive approach to the guitar, and her openness to musical exploration. This interest in Brazilian music has led to numerous collaborations with Brazilian musicians and guitarists.

This year, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Brazil, Yang has given a series of concerts inspired by Brazilian music.

For example, there was the special chamber concert featuring Brazilian music at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on Sept 5, in the company of musicians from the China NCPA Orchestra and Fabio Zanon, a leading Brazilian gui-

tarist. The concert featured music ranging from the classical compositions of Heitor Villa-Lobos, to the more modern and popular styles of jazz, samba and bossa nova, such as songs by composer Baden Powell.

On Sept 21, Yang performed during the 2024 NCPA Percussion Festival alongside percussionist Zheng Yu, showcasing pieces by the likes of Marco Pereira and Antonio Carlos Jobim. She will give a recital of Baden Powell's *Winter Song* in Shanghai on Dec 21.

"I have long been an aficionado of Brazilian music. My first encounter was at the age of 12, when I began to play classical guitar. I heard *Sounds of Bells* by Joao Pernambuco at a Beijing show. The performers left the score behind, so I was able to practice it with my classmates later," says Yang.

She was born in the capital and graduated with a bachelor's degree in classical guitar from the Central Conservatory of Music before winning a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music in London in 2002.

As a soloist, she has been living in London for the last 20 years and played in more than 50 countries and regions at numerous venues, including the Royal Albert Hall in London and New York's Carnegie Hall.

"Brazil is one example of how my horizons have been broadened by exposing myself to different cultures and their music. With more experience of life, I am now able to recognize why I love Brazilian music so much," says Yang. "There are many reasons, but essentially it comes down to the fact that it has everything music can offer, beautiful heart-aching melodies, complex but attractive harmonies, and a wide variety of exciting intricate rhythms."

"Yang took us across mountains and rivers to Brazil where music is a magical force that transcends boundaries, and brings people closer together," says Fang Yali, an undergraduate at the Zhejiang Conservatory of Music who attended Yang's concert in Hangzhou in April. Yang's foray is a testament to the unifying power of music across cul-

tural boundaries.

By drawing on Brazil's extensive musical heritage, she enriches her own artistry and introduces audiences around the world to the warmth, complexity and joy of Brazilian music. As she continues to blend classical techniques with Brazilian influences, she not only honors both traditions, but also contributes to a global musical conversation that celebrates diversity and artistic exchange.

In 2016, she released *Colors of Brazil* on Decca. The album includes 21 pieces by guitarists like Jobim, Villa-Lobos and Pernambuco. She recorded *Morning of the Carnival*, one of the first pieces she heard, and which remains her favorite. The song is probably the most notable in the bossa nova canon, and was written by Luiz Bonfá, a Brazilian guitarist and composer who achieved fame for his music for the film *Black Orpheus* (1959).

Other highlights from the album

include *Bate-Coxa*, a sensual dance piece written by Pereira, which is rooted in Brazil's musical tradition with influences from jazz as well as from other Latin American traditions. *Farewell*, by Sergio Assad, is dedicated to the memory of the composer's late first wife.

"Brazilian music is characterized by its blend of indigenous, African and European influences, which have combined over centuries to create a varied and vibrant musical tradition. The album has been a longtime wish. It reflects my personal favorites from the wide, deep pool of Brazilian music," Yang says.

She adds that its warmth and vibrancy has encouraged her to infuse a different emotional palette into her playing. While performing,

she makes use of her classical technique, but lets the pieces breathe with a rhythm and spirit that is distinctly Brazilian. She has also begun to incorporate its rhythmic influences in her interpretation of other pieces, blending the rigor of classical with the spontaneity and warmth of Brazilian music.

"What I find most compelling is the wide variety. It's the musical equivalent of Chinese food — if you go to a Chinese restaurant, there are hundreds of delicious dishes on offer — but it's all Chinese food. The same is true with all these Brazilian styles — all wonderful but still part of something bigger and recognizably Brazilian," she says.

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Museum experts brainstorm on the future of the past

By **WANG QIAN**
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The Natural History Museum of China has put out an appeal for private donations to expand its collection for a new pavilion which has been under construction since late September and is due to open in 2029. The museum authorities made the announcement at a forum on the sustainable development of natural science museums recently.

The notice to accession for large, rare, unique and valuable exhibits over the coming five years from collectors — individuals or institutions — was released with the goal of expanding the collection and meeting the needs of the new exhibition halls.

"With a floor area of 193,800 square meters, the pavilion is expected to become a world-class museum," Liu Linde, deputy director of the museum, said at the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development of Natural Science Museums in Beijing on Nov 26.

As a regular part of the annual Zhongguancun Forum, the event brought experts from China and abroad to discuss how museums, museum theory, function and man-



Left: Paleontologist Meng Qingjin addresses the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development of Natural Science Museums in Beijing on Nov 26. **Right:** Experts from home and abroad at the event. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

agement evolve with time.

Liu says that through insightful lectures and discussions, experts were able to contribute their experience and perspective on the shaping of the new pavilion.

With a collection of 400,000 historical and contemporary specimens, and a history of more than 70 years, the new facility will play an essential role in scientific research, developing learning programs, and deepening international communication.

Covering an area of 68,000 sq m, the new venue along the southern end of the Beijing Central Axis, is expected to receive 5 to 7 million visitors a year, while the current venue, with a floor area of 23,000 sq m, receives some 1.8 million visits a year and is unable to meet surging demand resulting from the ongoing museum craze.

"In the process of preparation for the new facility, we have collaborated with major research institutes



and natural history museum professionals across the country on extensive preliminary discussions and evaluations. Currently, the planning for educational courses has been completed, and we are now focusing on refining the exhibition aspects. Next, we will concentrate on museology and talent nurturing," Liu says.

He adds that talent is one of the major challenges, and is a strong foundation in enhancing a museum's ability to innovate and

develop sustainably.

Talking about future trends for natural science museums at the forum, Meng Qingjin, vice-president of Chinese Association of Natural Science Museums, and chief scientist of the Natural History Museum of China, called for innovation and improvement of in-depth interpretation of the research results, and a range of science popularization products, in addition to modern designs and an array of

exhibits, which requires a change in management by museum operators.

"With education as one important function, museums should be a place for people of all ages, where nature, culture, art, technology and history meet," Meng says, adding that museums should also consider breaking barriers, including walls, to allow the public a glimpse behind the scenes, which would help change the way visitors see museums.

Sharing her experience at the forum via video, Brigitte Franzen, president of Germany's Offenbach University of Art and Design, and former director of the Senckenberg Natural History Museum in Frankfurt, says the expression of natural sciences should be presented in a way that can be understood through contemporary visual and cultural systems.

For Xu Xing, director of the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, digital technology, including the metaverse and artificial intelligence, will bring new immersive experiences to museumgoers.

"The museums of the future should adopt the digital approaches, going beyond traditional ways, and encourage full contact, allowing knowledge to reach more people."