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# CHINA DAILY

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## G20 talks sign of vast potential for Sino-UK ties

By XING YI in London  
xingyi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping's talks with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer during their meeting on Monday on the sidelines of the 19th G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, have underscored the vast potential for more collaboration between China and the United Kingdom, experts said.

This was the first face-to-face meeting between the two leaders after Starmer assumed office as British prime minister in July.

In recent months, China and the UK have witnessed healthy momentum in exchanges at various levels, with senior officials from the two countries, including ministers, holding talks covering areas such as foreign policy, the economy, finance and energy.

Jack Perry Junior, chairman of the 48 Group Club and CEO of London Export Corp, said both nations, recognized for their technological innovation and forward thinking, are facing a unique opportunity to drive high-quality development initiatives.

President Xi's emphasis on high-standard opening-up and extending zero-tariff treatment to least developed countries aligns with the UK's commitment to free trade and economic inclusivity, he said, adding that the UK's move not to impose extra tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles like the European Union has shows "the UK is doing what is best for its people and businesses".

He said there will be space for broad cooperation where the UK could participate in China's actions to support global development, including pursuing high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

"The Belt and Road Initiative is evolving into a more mature and sustainable framework, with its emphasis on a green and digital Silk Road. This signals China's understanding of global economic shifts and its desire to move from quantity to quality," Perry said, adding that for the UK, this represents an opportunity to integrate its world-class financial expertise and green technology solutions into this ambitious network. "Projects like these could set benchmarks for multilateral cooperation and elevate global infrastructure standards."

H-J Colston-Inge, co-founder of the Chopsticks Club and director of educational charity Engage with China, said it is encouraging that the two leaders have created a space to meet. "I hope that these high-level talks will be more than a backdoor to shifting the geopolitical climate but an open door to a new chapter of more positive bilateral relations," she said.

Increasing trade and boosting communications are "in all of our interests and may just help to stimulate thinking around what economic growth of the future might look like in a world with finite resources", she said.

## Hong Kong visit



The Hainan amphibious assault ship of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy docks at the China Merchants Wharf in Hong Kong on Thursday. A naval fleet consisting of the ship and the Changsha missile destroyer recently arrived in the city for a five-day visit. Tens of thousands of people are expected to visit the warships. EDMOND TANG / CHINA DAILY

# AI: Key to internet evolution

By CHENG YU in Wuzhen, Zhejiang  
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Chinese tech leaders and industry insiders are championing artificial intelligence as the next transformative force for the country's internet sector, citing its potential to redefine industries and boost future economic growth, at the ongoing 2024 World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province.

Their comments came as China's digital economy has leapt forward to become the world's second-largest after three decades of development, although the country's internet sector now faces mounting pressure to find fresh growth drivers amid rising global economic uncertainties.

Wu Hequan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said: "China's internet sector must find its position in the new era, in order to really transform and be digitalized to drive high-quality economic development. AI, without a doubt, holds the key to this evolution."

Noting that China achieved full access to the global internet in 1994, Wu said the country's internet sector has moved from

“AI will dominate the internet sector over the next five to 10 years, and is expected to transform every niche sector.”

Qi Xiangdong, chairman of cybersecurity company Qi-Anxin Technology Group

networking, or connecting, to digitalizing different sectors, and now it is witnessing a new wave of development driven by AI.

"The emergence of AI large models has not only revitalized the traditional internet sector, but also spawned numerous new business models and empowered many consumption and industrial applications," he said.

As a deep participant in every phase of China's internet development, Lei Jun, founder and CEO of Chinese tech giant Xiaomi, said the company sincerely feels that the country has been a "fertile ground" for continuous technological innovation in the

internet industry.

For the next phase of China's internet development, he said that AI should be "deeply integrated into various sectors, become practical, and serve the public good."

This is also why the Beijing-based company began its "all-in-AI" strategy in 2016, and expanded its business from smartphones and consumer electronics to smart manufacturing, Lei added.

Qi Xiangdong, chairman of cybersecurity company Qi-Anxin Technology Group, likened the current momentum of AI to "blowing the trumpet" as a rallying call.

"AI will dominate the internet sector over the next five to 10 years, and is expected to transform every niche sector. This has already been proved by both social and industrial enthusiasm for AI," he said.

However, Qi warned that as AI technologies challenge traditional defenses, security risks loom large. He called for AI-driven solutions to tackle these risks, improve response efficiency and increase investment in cybersecurity talent and industries.

"Once AI development starts, it doesn't stop, but safety must be

the foundation," he said, calling for a balance between innovation and protection while developing the internet sector.

Amid this new wave of internet development, almost all leading Chinese tech companies have invested in AI large models, a key technology that can recognize and generate texts, among other tasks.

According to a report published by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, China accounted for 36 percent of the 1,328 AI large models created globally. The United States has the largest share at 44 percent.

Zhou Hongyi, founder of Beijing-based internet security software provider and search company 360 Security Group, said that to stay ahead in future AI-driven internet development, Chinese companies don't need to follow their US counterparts in training vast data and scaling up the large models to be massive.

"Chinese internet companies can train AI large models tailored to specific industries using vertical data, which would better suit China's development needs and make AI large models more accessible and practical," Zhou said.

**WORLD WATCH**  
By Benyamin Poghosyan

## G20 crucial for global governance

Establishing a just and efficient global governance system is one of the critical challenges facing humanity. After the end of World War II, global political and financial institutions, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, were created to facilitate stability and prosperity worldwide. However, these institutions were influenced by a handful of states, while developing countries were left behind in the system.

The end of the Cold War ushered in an era of unipolarity, marked by the hegemony of the United States. The US-led international order was dominated by a few developed countries, and the pinnacle of the system was the G7, a union of seven of the most developed and industrialized economies. The G6 was established in 1975, and Canada joined in 1976. Russia joined the club in 1998, but in 2014, its participation was suspended.

The global governance bodies established and envisaged decades ago do not represent the current political and economic realities and are unable to solve the multiple crises facing humanity.

Such as climate change, pandemics, poverty and hunger. Economic power has shifted from the Euro-Atlantic area to Asia in recent years.

The emergence of new economic giants, such as China, India and member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has shaken up the existing economic structures. The significant developments in Latin America and Africa further emphasized the obsolete nature of current institutions of global governance dominated by the West.

Amid the transition of global order from a unipolar world to a more complex security architecture, there was an acute necessity to establish a broader format of cooperation, which would include the rising economies of the non-Western world. In this context, the emergence of the G20 was the right decision, adopted at the right time.

The G20 was founded in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis as a forum for finance ministers and central bank governors to discuss global economic and financial issues. It was upgraded to the heads of state/government level in the wake of the 2007-08 global economic and financial crisis and, in 2009, was designated the "premier forum for international economic cooperation".

The G20 Summit is held annually under the leadership of a rotating presidency. The G20 initially focused mainly on broad macroeconomic issues. However, it has since expanded its agenda to include trade, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, climate change and anti-corruption.

The G20 comprises 19 countries — Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States — and two regional bodies: the European Union and the African Union.

See G20, page 2

## Care for children



A Chinese doctor conducts free medical checkups for children in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, on Wednesday, as they joined the rest of the world in observing World Children's Day. CHEN CHENG / XINHUA

## DRAGON BOATS RIDE LATIN WAVE OF POPULARITY

Traditional Chinese sport enjoys growing acceptance in South America, fostering deep and strong links

By JIMENA ESTEBAN in Buenos Aires, Argentina  
For China Daily

The traditional Chinese sport of dragon boat racing has swept across Latin America over the last decade.

It has spread from one country to another, becoming increasingly competitive, spawning social teams, driving teamwork, inspiring the healing of cancer

**in-depth**

survivors, and fostering deep and strong links with China.

Popular with sports enthusiasts and amateurs, corporate and social teams are promoting camaraderie, teamwork and cultural exchanges.

"It's a sport where coordination and teamwork truly bring

everyone together, working as one, without one person standing out more than another," said Sergio Maximiliano Bracco, an Argentine dentist and avid dragon boat paddler.

Bracco, 51, is fascinated by the inclusive nature of a sport that allows women, men, people with disabilities, and the fit and not so fit, to work together with a single purpose.

See Dragon boats, page 4

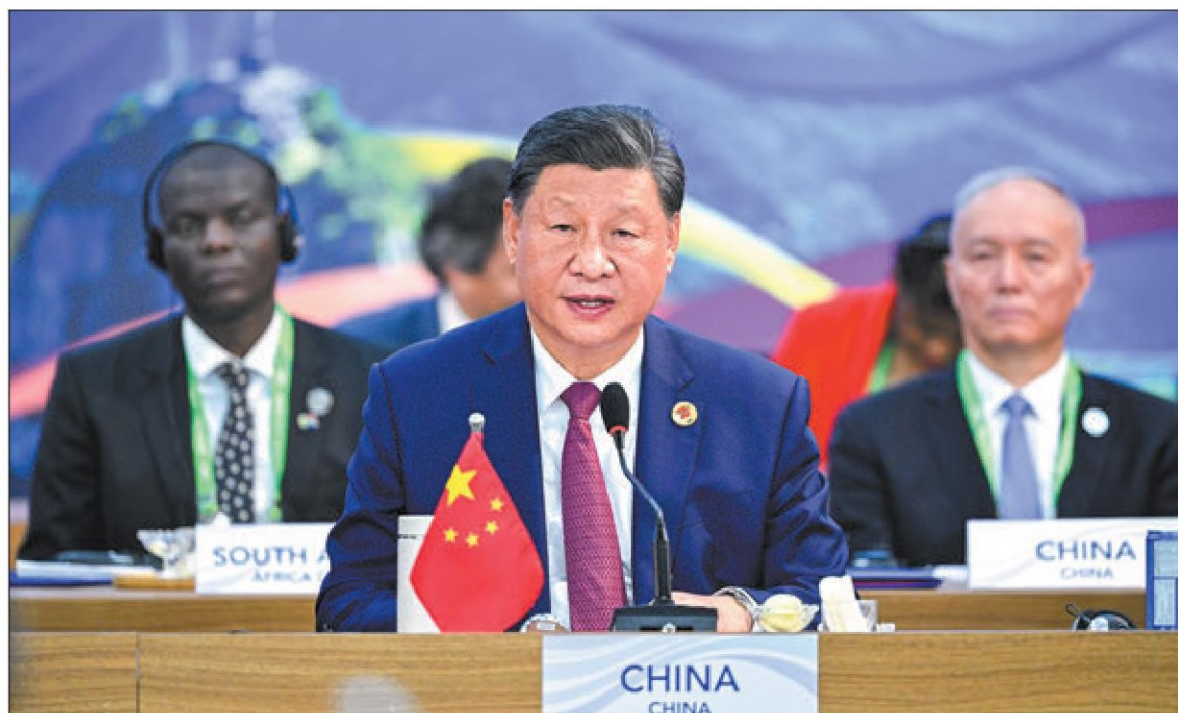
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# XI'S VISIT



President Xi Jinping delivers a speech, titled "Working Together for a Fair and Equitable Global Governance System", at the second session of the 19th G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Monday. LIXUEREN / XINHUA

## Xi's call at summit for fair governance hailed

President's speeches seen as 'clear guide for reform' of global system

By XU WEIWEI and JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong

President Xi Jinping's remarks at the 19th G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, have outlined how to work together for a just and equitable global governance system for the benefit of all, observers said.

Xi's speech was "comprehensive, compact and a clear guide for reform of the prevailing governance system," said Irfan Shahzad Takalvi, founder of the Eurasian Century Institute, a think tank in Islamabad, Pakistan.

It is a resounding message that the "business as usual" approach to global governance serves the purposes and interests of only a few leading nations and ignores the aspirations and genuine rights of the majority of the world's nations and their people, he said.

According to Takalvi, Xi has rightly highlighted that global security governance is part and parcel of global governance, and institutional bodies like the United Nations Security Council must play their role and take up the responsibility expected of them.

Takalvi said Xi represented the entire developing world in voicing that it is imperative to reform shareholding and decision-making in leading international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

"That is how the emerging developing economies of the world can reclaim their lost space in global financial and economic decision-making," Takalvi said.

He noted that Xi once again urged countries to see one another's development as opportunities, not challenges, and to view one another as partners, not rivals.

This spirit can take the world on the way toward the goal of win-win cooperation and shared prosperity, Takalvi said.

Karori Singh, former director and an emeritus fellow of the South Asia Studies Centre at the University of Rajasthan in India, said that the G20 Summit sessions focused on pressing global problems such as poverty eradication and the path to global prosperity and stability — central issues of global significance in which technology and climate justice play roles.

"The Chinese president spoke

eloquently in both sessions, with clarity and purposefulness," Singh said, noting that Xi outlined China's eight major actions to shore up global development, from high-quality Belt and Road cooperation to high standard opening-up.

Xi's remarks therefore aligned with the message of the United Nations on the eradication of poverty, as people must come together in solidarity of purpose, Singh added.

Sujoko Efferin, a professor on the faculty of business and economics at Universitas Surabaya in Indonesia, said Xi took a holistic approach to empowering nations economically, with a strong focus on the development of digital technologies, science, entrepreneurship, innovation and barrier-free international trade.

"His arguments are supported by empirical evidence drawn from China's direct experiences in combating poverty," the professor said, adding that the Chinese president envisions a future economic system centered on green technology and sustainable development. To achieve this vision, he emphasizes the importance of enhanced coordination among G20 nations.

Maarif Farooq, deputy editor-in-

chief at Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group, said that Xi's remarks at the G20 Summit presented a bold and comprehensive vision for reforming global governance.

Xi underscored China's "steadfast commitment to fostering a fair, inclusive and sustainable international system that addresses the pressing challenges of our time," Farooq said.

"By emphasizing multilateral cooperation, economic inclusivity and sustainable development, President Xi positions China as a key driver of positive change in global governance," he added.

Central to Xi's message is the need for a governance system that reflects the realities of a multipolar world, prioritizing equality, collaboration and mutual respect, he said.

Xi's remarks also reaffirmed China's role as a champion of true multilateralism, a builder of partnerships, and a steadfast advocate for the shared future of humanity, according to Farooq.

Michael Ricafort, chief economist of Rizal Commercial Banking Corp, one of the Philippines' biggest commercial banks, said China, as the world's second-largest economy, is asserting an increased global role and influence.

He noted that China is contributing to more inclusive economic growth and development, such as helping to alleviate poverty in least-developed countries.

Prime Sarmiento in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

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## BYD revs up enthusiasm for Chinese EVs in Brazil

By MINLU ZHANG in Rio de Janeiro minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

A 40-minute drive west of Rio de Janeiro's city center — past vast neighborhoods and elevated highways — leads to the expansive Atlantic coastline of Barra da Tijuca, an upper middle-class neighborhood known for its stunning beaches.

Here, BYD opened its first dealership in Rio, marking a milestone for the city's electric vehicle market.

Marcus Vinicius, 47, is the director of BYD Itavema, located in the heart of Barra da Tijuca. Three years ago, BYD approached him to head the dealership, and that's when he decided to buy a Chinese EV for himself.

"I absolutely love it. I'm very passionate about electric vehicles," he said, adding that some of the 35 employees of the store — all Brazilians — also drive BYD vehicles.

The dynamics of Chinese companies are quite different, Vinicius said. "Chinese companies have a different culture from Brazilian companies. The reaction of BYD to the market is much faster and more dynamic compared to other brands in Brazil."

In January, BYD invited Vinicius to visit Shenzhen in South China's Guangdong province for a training program in trade marketing. "It was amazing. I loved the city and the people. The Chinese reception was very welcoming. It was a great cultural experience. The experience of visiting BYD was very memorable."

Vinicius said his son, who will turn 8 this year, has already shown a knack for cars, adding that he believes that one day, his son will also own a Chinese EV.

As of May, BYD had about 100 dealerships in Brazil, and it plans to bring that number to 250 by the end of the year, according to a news release.

At BYD Itavema on Monday morning, newlywed couples browsed cars hand in hand, young parents with their baby checked out the latest models, and business professionals relaxed on a couch as they waited for service.

The dealership, which sees about 200 visitors each week, mostly attracts affluent residents from nearby neighborhoods.

Victor Satiro first heard about BYD in April and decided to immediately buy one of its EVs. He previously owned an Audi, which is considered a hallmark of German engineering. "I used to spend a lot of money on gasoline. Now I spend nothing on fuel," he said.

Satiro said his decision was influenced by a recommendation from a friend who bought the Chinese EV in February. "My friend is a mechanical engineer, so I trust his opinion. I'm happy with this purchase," he added.

BYD now ranks 10th in sales among all automotive brands in Brazil. From January to October, the company sold 58,690 units, a 227 percent increase over the 17,937 units sold during the same period last year.

Agenor Medrado, 68, said he had been a loyal customer of South Korean automaker Kia until last week. Medrado and his wife initially planned to upgrade to a fifth-generation Kia, but they were open to exploring other brands, especially hybrids.

The Kia hybrid was priced at around 250,000 reais (\$43,000), Medrado said. "Since we live nearby, we decided to come here and test-drive the BYD hybrid, which was under 200,000 reais," he added.

Medrado recalled that they decided to switch loyalties and go for the Chinese EV as soon as they got inside the car.

"We saw that it had a very modern design, fully digital and electronic, unlike traditional cars that still have a lot of mechanical gauges. The electric and combustion engines are also very quiet," he said.

Medrado, who holds a master's degree and a doctorate in mechanical engineering and has worked in the steel industry for 32 years, said he is very eager to see China bring more technology to Brazil.

"Currently, electric cars in China have advanced features, including self-driving capabilities. They can even return to the charging station automatically when the battery is low, without any manual operation," said Medrado, who has visited China at least 10 times.

He recalled that the first time he went to Beijing in 1998, he was almost hit by a bicycle. "Back then, there were millions of bicycles. ... I've returned (to China) several times and witnessed the evolution of transportation, especially in Beijing. Today, cars dominate," he said.

Medrado noted China's significant transformation over the years. "In 1998, almost nobody spoke English. Today, almost everyone can speak English," he said.

"It's clear that China is undergoing a rapid change, and is on track to become the world's largest economy. I believe that by the end of this decade, China will be at the top of the global economy," he added.



An attendee records a video with Chinese automaker BYD's Yuan Pro electric vehicle during a launch event on Sept 5, 2024, at Clube Monte Libano in Sao Paulo, Brazil. MAIRA ERLICH / BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES

## G20: Voice of developing countries brought to center stage

From page 1

The G20 members represent around 85 percent of the global GDP, over 75 percent of the global trade and about two-thirds of the world population.

The members of the G20 have a primary responsibility toward billions of people. It is an international body that unites Western and non-Western countries, allowing them to discuss all fundamental issues faced by mankind and bringing the voice of developing countries to the center stage of global governance.

The issues such as the fight against hunger and poverty occupy a significant place in the discussions of the G20. At the initiative of the 2024 G20 Summit host country, Brazil, the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty was launched on Nov 18, the first day of the summit.

In the declaration of the summit, G20 members reaffirmed the role of the G20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation. They emphasized a collective responsibility for the effective stewardship of the global economy, fostering the conditions

for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive global growth.

China has always been one of the key members of the G20.

Being the second-largest world economy, China has been pushing forward the idea of a responsible great power. From 2021 to 2023, President Xi Jinping proposed three large-scale global initiatives: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative. These initiatives provide insights into Chinese perceptions of its role and responsibilities as a great power.

Thus, the G20 is gradually taking center stage in the system of global governance, reflecting the shifts in the global economy and providing a venue for developing countries to take part in the decision-making process. Further development of the G20 is essential for overcoming the challenges and ensuring stability, prosperity and security of mankind.

The author is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, Armenia. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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## Joint effort foils telecom fraud in Myanmar

By JIANG CHENGLONG

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The Ministry of Public Security announced on Thursday that all major telecom fraud operations in northern Myanmar near China's border have been eradicated.

In a news release, the ministry said that law enforcement cooperation and joint actions between China and Myanmar have led to the arrest of over 53,000 Chinese suspects involved in related crimes, since a special operation to combat telecom fraud involving Chinese nationals in northern Myanmar was launched last year.

The ministry also disclosed details of a recent joint law enforcement operation in which 1,079

suspects involved in cross-border telecom fraud were apprehended in Tangyang, Myanmar, on Sunday.

Among them, 763 were Chinese nationals, all of whom have been handed over to Chinese authorities, it said. Sixty-nine of the 763 Chinese apprehended had been designated fugitives.

The news release noted that, deterred by the recent crackdown, fraudsters had been relocating to areas such as Wan Hai, Tangyang, and Myawaddy in Myanmar.

These fraudsters continued to recruit and lure Chinese citizens to illegally cross the border and participate in telecom fraud activities, leading to severe violent crimes such as illegal detention, intentional injury, kidnapping and even

murder, posing significant threats to the safety of Chinese citizens, it said.

In response, the Ministry of Public Security directed police officers in Yunnan province to collaborate with relevant law enforcement departments in Myanmar to carry out a crackdown operation.

In addition, a large number of tools used in the crimes, including computers, mobile phones and fraud scripts, were also confiscated, according to the ministry.

The news release described the joint action as another "major breakthrough" in the ongoing operation against telecom fraud crimes involving Chinese citizens in northern Myanmar.

A ministry official was quoted

in the release as saying that public security authorities will continue to maintain a "high-pressure crackdown" on cross-border telecom fraud crimes, especially those in "dens or clusters" such as Wan Hai, Tangyang and Myawaddy along Myanmar's border with China.

The official pledged to intensify efforts to strengthen law enforcement cooperation to resolutely eliminate the "cancer" of telecom and cyber fraud crimes involving Chinese nationals.

At the same time, public security authorities are urging the public not to easily trust "high-paying job offers" from overseas to avoid falling into criminal traps, and to effectively safeguard their own legal rights, according to the official.



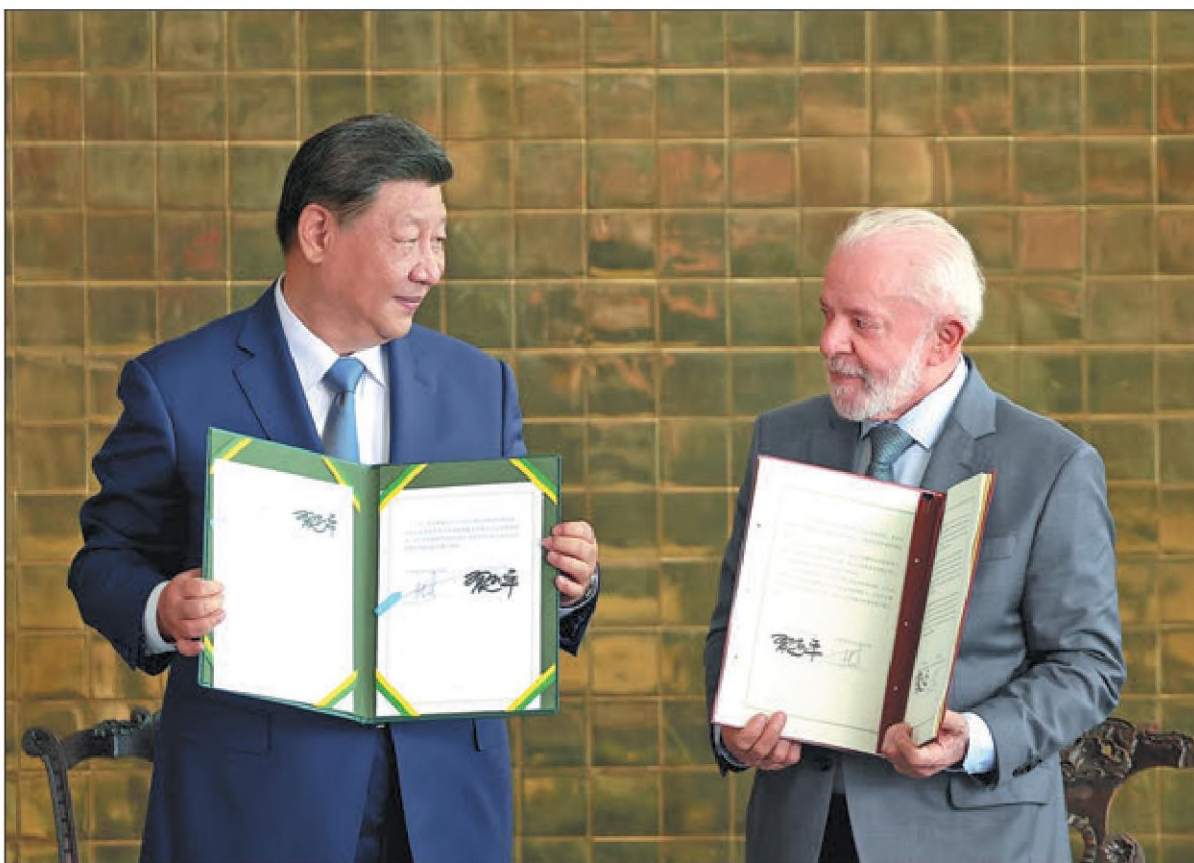
# XI'S VISIT



President Xi Jinping attends a grand welcoming ceremony hosted by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his wife, Rosangela da Silva, prior to the talks between the two leaders, in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, on Wednesday. Xi arrived in Brasilia on Tuesday for a state visit to Brazil after attending the 19th G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro. LI XUEREN / XINHUA

## FORTIFIED FRIENDSHIP IN FOCUS

Pivotal and unforgettable moments from President Xi Jinping's friendly, rewarding trip



President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva pose for a photo on Wednesday in Brasilia after the signing of bilateral agreements between China and Brazil. SHENG JIAPENG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



**Top:** President Xi Jinping is greeted with rhythmic drumbeats by a local Bata band at an air base upon his arrival in Brasilia on Tuesday for a state visit to Brazil. **Above:** President Xi Jinping holds talks with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at the Alvorada Palace in Brasilia, Brazil, on Wednesday. PHOTOS BY LI XUEREN / XINHUA



Representatives of overseas Chinese, Chinese enterprises and Chinese students wave the national flags of China and Brazil in Brasilia as President Xi Jinping leaves for the airport on Thursday. WANG TIANCONG / XINHUA



President Xi Jinping's official state car is escorted by a cavalry in Brasilia on Wednesday. A grand welcoming ceremony hosted for President Xi by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva also featured a marching honor guard. DING LIN / XINHUA

G20  
BRASIL 2024

## XI'S VISIT

## Dragon boats: Paddling toward strength, unity

From page 1

"I was amazed to see at the last (Paradragons) World Championship amputees, paraplegics, and especially blind athletes competing and coordinating their paddling perfectly in boats with 12 and 22 paddlers, even though they lack one of the senses," Bracco told China Daily.

The International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) holds Paradragons as a separate category for paddlers with some form of physical impairment during the Dragon Boat World Championship. The last championship was held in Thailand in 2023 and the next one will be staged in Germany in 2025.

When paddling, Bracco usually sits in the "rocket" position, the last row of the boat, providing power or extra paddling.

Bracco has competed in the sport since 2019, when the Argentine Dragon Boat Association, the country's official organizer of dragon boat races, was formed. His participation was spurred by a friend who was interested in Chinese culture.

"We used to row together in Puerto Madero, and one day we saw a sign inviting us to try out this 'new' sport. We went, and that's where it all began," said Bracco.

Their first instructor was Diego Laje, an Argentine who lived in Beijing and Hong Kong for years.

Bracco and his team now train with Mauricio Acuna Kluge, a professional kayaker, in boats that hold 12 or 22 paddlers.

Last year, Bracco participated in the 16th International Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Pattaya, Thailand. He also competed in this year's 14th IDBF Dragon Boat Club Crew World Championships in Ravenna, Italy.

"The sport is just beginning to grow in Argentina. Together as an association and paddlers, we are learning and evolving side by side," said Bracco.

## Long tradition

Dragon boat racing started in ancient China more than 2,000 years ago. It is traditionally linked to the legend of Qu Yuan, a famous Chinese poet and statesman from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC).

According to legend, Qu Yuan drowned himself in the Miluo River to protest corruption. Locals rushed to the river in long boats but were too late to save him. They beat drums and splashed their paddles in the water to honor Qu's memory and ward off evil spirits. That tradition evolved into modern dragon boat racing.

Today, the sport is commemorated annually during the Dragon Boat Festival — on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar — in late May or early June.

Dragon boats are long, narrow, and adorned with intricate designs. Teams of paddlers, along with a drummer to set the rhythm and a person to steer, race over a set distance.

Along with the drummer and helmsman, standard boats have 18 to 20 paddlers and smaller boats have eight to 10.

As a competitive event, modern dragon boat racing began in the late 20th century, with the first international dragon boat races organized in Hong Kong in 1976.

The IDBF was formed in 1991. Since then, dragon boat racing has spread worldwide with major competitions held in Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America.

The IDBF estimates that more than 50 million participate in races in China alone.

Worldwide there are over 300,000 paddlers in the UK and Europe, 90,000 in Canada and the US, and hundreds of thousands in Asia, the Caribbean and Africa.

Dragon boat racing requires 22 people to work together, and they are rewarded as a crew rather than as individuals.

"This harmony of purpose can only be achieved through many hours of training in the boat, learning to be a complete crew and developing the team spirit and understanding necessary to work together, as



Left: Paddlers race during a 'dragon boat' regatta at Dock 1 of Puerto Madero on Feb 4, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Right: Wang Wei, China's ambassador to Argentina, paints the dragon's eyes to begin the event. PHOTOS BY LUCIANO GONZALEZ/ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES



Above: A dragon boat crew competes during the Feb 4 regatta. LUCIANO GONZALEZ / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES Left: A teacher explains dragon boat racing to children at a primary school in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in June, 2023. LIN CHUNYIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Our goal is to promote dragon boat paddling among cancer survivors as a sport that supports physical and emotional recovery. Paddling aids physical rehabilitation after mastectomy or breast cancer diagnosis."

Floribeth Campos de Finizio, president of Pink Warriors Panama

one unit, for the common good," according to the IDBF.

## Healing benefits

The vigorous sport quickly has attracted avid paddlers looking to stay fit. But somewhat unexpectedly it has also attracted enthusiasts who have discovered its significant healing benefits. This is particularly true among women recovering from breast cancer.

While team training is demanding, dragon boat groups have helped breast cancer survivors thrive — overcoming not just cancer, but any doubts about their capabilities on the water.

This was the goal of Floribeth Campos de Finizio, president of Pink Warriors Panama, when she started the dragon boat team with 14 members five years ago.

Originally setting out to inspire survivors to "move forward after cancer," Pink Warriors Panama has grown to a 40-member team.

"Many of the women who row today had never done sports before, so this is a great achievement for a group like ours," de Finizio

told China Daily. "We are incredibly proud of everything we've achieved. We proved that it's possible to become athletes after cancer."

A growing pool of academic research has shown that dragon boat racing can make a significant difference in helping survivors who have undergone breast cancer treatment or surgery to recover.

Research pioneered by Don McKenzie at Canada's University of British Columbia in 1996 found paddling helps cancer survivors avoid painful swelling caused by lymph node removal.

Inspired by McKenzie's work and subsequent research, "pink boat" events have sprouted across Latin America. Teams promote the fitness and team-building benefits of joining a dragon boat team while spreading the word about its health benefits.

## Pink warriors

Pink Warriors Panama began when an Argentine team asked de Finizio to search for other breast cancer survivors in Panama to join their team.

The Chinese-Panamanian Association was already hosting dragon boat races in Panama at the time, but there was no cancer survivor category.

So, de Finizio set out to start one while building a nonprofit organization to promote the sport.

"Our goal is to promote dragon boat paddling among cancer survivors as a sport that supports physical and emotional recovery. Paddling aids physical rehabilitation after mastectomy or breast cancer diagnosis," said de Finizio, who is also the president of Pink Warriors Panama's nonprofit board.

"Equally important, though, it offers psychological benefits. Being part of a team and community always seems to help people move forward in their cancer journey."

According to the International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission, there are now more than 260 breast cancer paddling teams across 33 countries.

Pink Warriors Panama has competed worldwide, from the idyllic mountain town of Bariloche in Argentina to Brazil, the Baha-

mas, and Miami in the United States.

A team delegation attended the World Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Championship in New Zealand and the World Club Championship in Ravenna ranking fifth in the 200-meter race — their strongest event.

"We are incredibly proud of everything we have achieved. We improved all our times and proved that it's possible to be athletes after cancer," de Finizio said.

"Many of the women who row today had never done sports in their lives, so this is a great achievement for a group like ours.

"We also aim to inspire others. That is truly our goal," she said.

## Raising awareness

Dragon boat racing was already well-established in Brazil and Panama before pink boat events began spreading and further boosted the sport's popularity.

It is particularly popular in Argentina, where the sport first arrived in 2014. Over the past 10 years, it has gained significant traction.

Maria Bolatti, a 65-year-old doctor, is now an avid paddler, having been introduced to the sport through a breast cancer survivor's team.

In La Plata, a city near Argentina's capital Buenos Aires, Bolatti helped start a 10-member group called Dragones Rosas La Plata (La Plata Pink Dragons).

As membership grew, the team started training in various locations around the city.

Team members used kayaks and canoes to train until they received their first dragon boat five years ago.

The team members wear pink life vests and exercise at the Plaza Malvinas Argentinas park before getting on the water. Each member plays a role in preparing the boat, from attaching the dragon head to setting up the vital drum.

"I haven't stopped practicing this sport since 2019," Bolatti told China Daily.

Annual Lunar New Year celebrations in Buenos Aires now feature dragon boat races along the Puerto Madero riverfront showcasing local teams and drawing in large crowds.

In 2023, Argentina's national team debuted at the World Championships in Thailand. Silvia Caruso served as the team's helmswoman, which involves steering the boat and communicating with the crew. Caruso had previously participated in the Club World Championship in Ravenna.

Caruso's own experience with dragon boating has also evolved.

She aims to grow her Guardianas Rosas (Pink Guardians) team, which is made up solely of women diagnosed with breast cancer.

"The uniqueness of this team is that it is made up of women diagnosed with breast cancer. It is a great commitment. Beyond the physical exercise, it is highly beneficial for the recovery from the disease," Caruso said.

"We want to raise awareness about the benefits of practicing this sport and to promote early detection and care of the disease. We need the entire community's support to continue this project.

"I came looking to practice a water sport. I went to take rowing lessons and found a group of women practicing dragon boat paddling," said Caruso. "They invited me to join, and I've been practicing ever since.

"This discipline is very complete. You work your entire body: strength training, endurance, and, most importantly, your work as a team. Coordination is necessary. Everyone has a role. We are all important."

Dragon boat racing takes more than just physical training.

"It requires camaraderie, commitment, and discipline from every team member," said Caruso. "And through our efforts, we stay connected to nature itself."

The author is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



People race in dragon boats in Amador Causeway, Panama City, Panama, on Sept 29. MATIAS DELACROIX / AP

G20  
BRASIL 2024

## XI'S VISIT

ENRIQUE DUSSEL PETERS

## Certainty in uncertain times

LAC countries are searching for opportunities to improve their people's quality of life and China is sharing its experience and opportunities

In less than a week, Latin American and Caribbean-China relations have been strengthened strategically as a result of the APEC meeting in Peru and the G20 summit in Brazil. APEC integrates 21 economies, including Chile, China, Mexico, Peru and the United States, and accounts for almost two-thirds of global GDP, while the G20, including Argentina, Brazil, China, Mexico, and the US among others, accounts for around 66 percent of the global population and 85 percent of global GDP.



Both meetings deliberated on the demands of the Global South. The APEC meeting highlighted inclusive growth and the global risks and challenges such as overall policy uncertainty, protectionism and trade restrictions, as well as increasing food prices. At the G20 meeting, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva emphasized that "neoliberal globalization has failed. In the midst of growing turbulence, the international community seems resigned to navigating aimlessly through hegemonic disputes." His call for action explicitly criticized the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as impasses on health and biodiversity and environment topics. He urged a review of financial and policy rules that disproportionately affect the Global South.

From a LAC perspective, speeches and commitments by leaders from the US and China could not have been more contrasting. In the case of the US, President Joe Biden's presence was second-

ary: globally and in both meetings all members were preparing for President-elect Donald Trump's threats to "Make America Great Again" with unilateral measures against trade and foreign direct investment flows in general and against specific countries and global and regional institutions. Massive global uncertainty has been generated by the founder of the current global order and Bretton Woods institutions.

In both meetings, the presence and speeches of Chinese President Xi Jinping were enlightening for LAC countries and the whole Global South. He proposed to "foster an open, inclusive and nondiscriminatory environment for international economic cooperation" at the G20 summit. At the APEC meeting, President Xi detailed the importance of an "interconnected paradigm" for Asia-Pacific cooperation, the necessity of green innovation, and an inclusive vision for Asia-Pacific development and highlighted the support of life in a community with a shared future. From this perspective, APEC and the G20 should integrate innovation, new-quality productive forces and global ecological governance through concrete policy measures. Crises in Ukraine and Gaza and the required



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

China's cooperation has been of outstanding importance for LAC countries in many fields, including trade, financing, investments and infrastructure.

energy transitions and reform with regard to the legal framework of the World Trade Organization are fundamental for a world order. True multilateralism is crucial for establishing the new before abolishing the old. This is particularly relevant in 2024.

This November has been fundamental for LAC countries. Beyond geopolitical discussions, both meetings have been critical for understanding different development paths and the potential of LAC-China socioeconomic relations. LAC countries will continue with "new triangular relationships" in which the US is still a point of reference from multiple perspectives. Nevertheless, China offers serious and long-term cooperation proposals that no other global partner, neither the US nor the European Union, suggests. At the APEC meeting in Peru, President Xi inaugurated the largest port in the LAC region, with an investment of \$1.3 billion that will substantially lower transportation costs and time from the LAC region to Asia and China. Facts are relevant, beyond speeches.

China's cooperation has been of outstanding importance for LAC countries in many fields, including trade, financing, investments and infrastructure. As of 2023, everyday life in LAC countries has substantially improved through more than

250 infrastructure projects, generating almost 800,000 jobs. Chinese investments in subways, telecommunications, ports and airports and infrastructure projects are helping to power development in LAC countries. China matters in everyday life in the Global South and in LAC countries in the 21st century.

However, new triangular relationships between LAC countries, the US and China will not be easy in the coming years. Mauricio J. Claver-Carone, advisor to Trump's team, recently suggested that a 60 percent tariff should be applied to any product going through Chancay or any Chinese-owned port in the region.

New triangular relationships will continue in the short, medium and long term. However, from a LAC perspective, overall cooperation and President Lula's specific requests at the G20 meeting, as well as President Xi's proposal for building a community with a shared future, are fundamental for the Global South and the LAC region.

LAC countries are searching for development opportunities to improve the quality of life of their population, including the eradication of absolute poverty, and China is sharing its experience and opportunities with the Global South and LAC countries through concrete concepts and projects.

The author is a professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and coordinator of the university's Center for Chinese-Mexican Studies. 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.

JIN XIAOWEN

## Modernizing the Global South

At the G20 summit, Brazil proposed the creation of a Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, something on which it can draw experience from the world's largest-developing country

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Brazil. As the two largest developing countries in the Eastern and Western hemispheres, China and Brazil have adhered to mutual respect and equal treatment over the past half century, and bilateral



relations have maintained a sound momentum of development. Stefan Zweig, an Austrian writer, once described Brazil as "country of the future", extolling its development potential. However, on the road to modernization, Brazil is facing ups and downs. As the economy sways between export orientation and import substitution, as well as superpower aspirations and strategic retrenchment on the international stage, Brazil is torn between acting on its own and turning to the West.

Brazil has rich natural resources. Since the colonial period, Brazil's economy has been heavily dependent on the Western market, forming an economic development model that is highly dependent on exports of agricultural products, mineral resources and other commodities, and greatly affected by the international market. Entering the 20th century, Brazil realized that in order to shield itself from the influence of external fluctuations, it must get rid of its dependent economic structure and carried out an import substitution industrialization strategy, and implemented state-led development.

However, after the 1980s, affected by the debt crisis, Brazil began to implement neoliberal policies at the request of the West. The characteristics of "deindustrialization" were significant, making Brazil return to the mode of relying on commodity exports.

Currently, agricultural products account for nearly half of Brazil's total exports, while the share of manufactured goods in exports is relatively limited. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva launched a re-industrialization program this year, pointing out the

need to solve the problems that have caused Brazil to always be close to but never become a developed country and brought Brazil to a crossroads on the road to development once again.

Brazil is also a member of the G20 and BRICS, and one of the most frequently elected non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. It has a certain influence among developing countries and has long pursued the dream of becoming a great power. But, constrained by its own strength, Brazil's great power aspirations have always been difficult to support.

As early as after World War I, Brazil wanted a permanent seat in the League of Nations to prove its great power status. However, Brazil found that other powers did not recognize it as a great power, but only as a subordinate of European countries; even other South American countries did not recognize it as a leader or representative of the region. Since then, Brazil has adjusted its foreign policy to forge a strong relationship and extensive cooperation with the United States. After World War II, however, the US and other world powers opposed Brazil's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, prompting Brazil to realize that it must seek a more independent foreign policy.

It was not until Lula was elected president of Brazil in 2003 that Brazil really clarified its identity as a major power, strengthened its role as a regional power in South America, and built up the strategic demands of emerging powers. After taking office again as the president of Brazil in 2023, Lula has led Brazil to actively speak out for the Global South and promote the development of the international order in a

more just and reasonable direction. Brazil's strategic scholars have gradually realized that Brazil does not belong to the West, and that strengthening cooperation with emerging powers such as China is the way forward for Brazil. This has also created favorable conditions for Brazil to return to South-South cooperation and promote cooperation with China and other countries of the Global South.

China has been Brazil's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, and is the first trading partner in Brazil's history to export goods worth more than \$100 bil-

lion. In addition to traditional economic and trade fields, bilateral cooperation also covers high-tech fields such as resource satellites, regional aircraft, biotechnology and deep-sea oil exploration. Brazil is also the first developing country to carry out cooperation with China in high-tech sectors such as satellites.

Ever since the two countries signed an agreement on joint development of Earth resources satellites in 1988, they have jointly developed six Earth resources satellites and sent them into space. China and Brazil are also strengthening cooperation in the fields of the digital

economy, low-carbon development, intelligent manufacturing and other frontier areas, which continue to inject new vitality for bilateral relations. As one of the major sources of investment in Brazil, Chinese investment in Brazil has not only brought economic development, advanced technology and job creation, but also widely benefited the lives of local people, becoming a vivid practice of building a China-Latin America community with a shared future.

China is promoting high-quality development and high-level opening-up, promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese modernization, and bringing more opportunities to Brazil and other countries in the world. At the just-concluded Seventh China International Import Expo, an increasing number of Brazilian companies were looking forward to entering the Chinese market and enhancing cooperation with Chinese partners. Whether it is increasing exports to China in the field of traditional agricultural products, or strengthening cooperation with China in the field of green environmental protection and carbon emissions reduction, Brazil looks forward to achieving "re-industrialization" through cooperation with China. There is still a huge space for cooperation between China and Brazil. On the new journey of Chinese modernization, China and Brazil should further strengthen communication and exchanges and synergize development strategies, consolidate the foundation of cooperation, create more highlights of cooperation, and bring benefits to more people.

Chinese modernization has shown to Brazil and other Global South countries that Westernization is not the only mode of modernization. Neoliberalism was once regarded as a road to economic prosperity, which was mistakenly imposed on Latin America, resulting in unfair social distribution and poverty problems that have long plagued Brazil. At this year's G20 summit, Brazil proposed the creation of a Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty. As the world's largest developing country, China has accumulated rich experience in poverty alleviation. China and Brazil should continue to strengthen the exchange of governance experience, jointly explore a development path suited to their own realities, and promote the modernization of the Global South countries.

The author is secretary-general of the Center for Latin American Studies at Renmin University of China. 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.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

## CHINA

# Chinese botanists protect plants in Africa

Research reveals intricate web of factors that govern diverse habitats and living conditions of endangered species

By CHEN LIANG  
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While the majority of Chinese botanists have directed their research efforts toward studying the rich flora of China, a select few have ventured into the unexplored realms of African flora. Wang Shengwei stands out as one of these explorers.

Since embarking on his doctoral studies at the Wuhan Botanical Garden of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 2017, Wang has delved deep into the intricate tapestry of African plant diversity and distribution. His doctoral thesis focuses on the plant diversity and conservation of tropical East Africa.

Over the years, the 35-year-old has traveled to African countries such as Madagascar, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe many times. Collaborating with local universities and research institutes, he has participated in joint expeditions spanning more than 300 days in Africa.

After completing his PhD, Wang began working at the Wuhan Botanical Garden in 2021, where he contributes to the plant diversity and evolution research group.

With his research endeavors primarily anchored within the framework of the academy's Sino-Africa Joint Research Center, the first center of its kind in Africa.

The center is a hub of Sino-Africa collaboration on biodiversity-related research and also focuses on areas such as wildlife protection, the prevention and treatment of desertification, climate change monitoring and modern agriculture demonstration.

"My research focuses on plant diversity and conservation in East Africa, specifically trying to figure out how many plant species there are, their unique distributions and why they are distributed there," Wang told China Daily.

"We pay special attention to the distribution and protection of flagship species such as endangered and endemic plants."

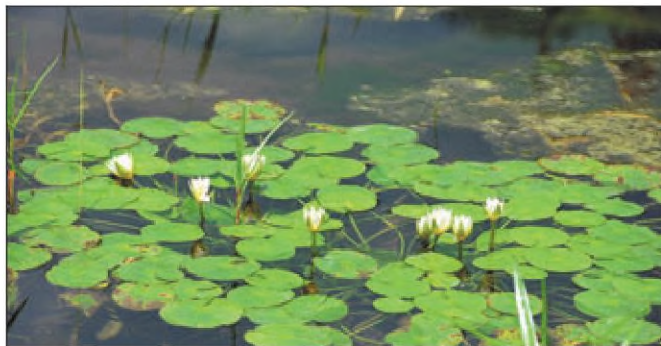
Because of his work, he and his colleagues can solve questions surrounding the distribution of baobab trees in Africa and shed light on the intricate web of factors that govern the habitats of these iconic trees.

## Endangered giant trees

The baobab tree, often referred to as the "tree of life" in Africa, is revered for its multifaceted utility. Its fruits are edible, and its massive trunks store water, serving as a vital resource for nearby communities and wildlife during dry seasons.

Baobab trees encompass eight globally recognized species within the *Adansonia* genus, seven primarily found in Africa and one in Australia. Wang's fieldwork in Madagascar has revealed the diverse habitats where baobab trees thrive.

"Before I visited Madagascar, I thought baobab trees only lived in the drier regions of Africa," he said. "But in Madagascar, I saw different species of baobab trees, living in diverse habitats. For example, in northern Madagascar, there are many baobab trees



Clockwise from left: Wang Shengwei checks the health status of a baobab tree with a local collaborator during a field survey in Madagascar. Wang measures an endemic plant during a survey in Kenya, with several Kenyan colleagues. Dwarf Rwandan water lilies (*Nymphaea thermarum*) bloom in a pond in Rwanda. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

growing in forests. They are called the 'mothers of the forest' by the locals."

They can also grow in villages and cities, he added.

During their field surveys, Wang and his colleagues encountered three endangered species within the baobab genus. Of particular concern was *Adansonia perrieri*, with fewer than 200 individuals remaining in the northernmost region of Madagascar. Classified as critically endangered, these trees face the looming threat of extinction in the wild.

While *Adansonia suarezensis* is distributed over even smaller areas compared to *Adansonia perrieri*, the former is only classified as endangered due to its bigger population size.

*Adansonia grandidier*, despite its frequent appearance in photographs showcasing Madagascar's baobab trees, is also categorized as endangered due to its restricted distribution in western Madagascar.

As Wang and his colleagues conducted their survey and collected samples in the wild, they came to the profound realization that the endangered status of many baobab species may have been underestimated.

Upon returning to their laboratory, Wang and his colleagues started a series of experiments and data analyses. By integrating genomics and ecological data in a comprehensive manner, they reconstructed the global evolutionary history of baobab trees.

Their research revealed findings regarding

the population dynamics and habitat adaptability of the trees over the past million years. They observed a pattern of population increase followed by decline, with the three endangered species experiencing more rapid declines. Among the species studied, *Adansonia za* demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to various habitats, while other species had more restricted and smaller ranges.

These discoveries prompted a reassessment of the conservation status of *Adansonia suarezensis*, leading the researchers to recommend upgrading its classification to critically endangered. Their research was published in an article titled "The Rise of Baobab Trees in Madagascar" in the journal *Nature* in May.

After the publication of the article, Wang said, their work will expand to conservation of baobab trees in Madagascar. They carried out health checks on some of the older baobab trees and encouraged local villagers to collect the plants' seeds, cultivate saplings and plant them in their natural habitats.

"At a village in northern Madagascar, I purchased 20 baobab tree saplings and became the villagers' first customer," Wang said. "Then I donated the saplings to the University of Antananarivo in the country's capital. They are now growing on the campus of the university."

## Finding new populations

Wang's research work also led him and his colleagues to Rwanda, where they gained a deeper understanding of dwarf Rwandan water lily (*Nymphaea thermarum*), the world's smallest water lily species once thought to be extinct in the wild.

*Nymphaea thermarum* was discovered in

1987 by German botanist Eberhard Fischer. The epithet *thermarum* refers to the hot spring and temperature that provided its native habitat.

The plant's native habitat was damp mud formed by the overflow of a freshwater hot spring in Mashyuza, southwestern Rwanda. Unfortunately, due to residents clearing the spring's river to cultivate farmland, the habitat disappeared, leading to the extinction of the plant population.

The last recorded photograph of the plant was in 2005, and by 2008 the species was officially declared extinct in the wild.

Fortunately, Fischer had foreseen the risk of extinction for this species. He took prompt action by transferring seeds and some plant specimens to the Botanical Garden in Bonn, Germany, for preservation. Later the Bonn Botanical Garden shared these resources with the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew in the United Kingdom for ex-situ conservation.

In 2009, Kew successfully propagated a batch of dwarf water lilies from the seeds, indicating that although the species had gone extinct in the wild, it had not completely disappeared as it continued to thrive in botanical gardens and laboratories.

In July last year, an exciting piece of news spread throughout the scientific community when botanist Thomas Abeli rediscovered this rare water lily in northwestern Rwanda.

The discovery surprised Wang and his colleagues, igniting a strong desire to conduct further research. Fortunately, they had a joint field biodiversity survey with the University of Rwanda scheduled for November 2023, providing them with the opportunity to look for the water lily.

Where did Abeli find the first population?

Surprisingly, Wang said, it was next to a pathway in a village, with mango trees on one side and fields growing bananas and pineapples on the other.

The second population discovered by Abeli was even more miraculous — it was in a fishpond. The water lilies in this pond were abundant, with larger plant specimens and larger flowers.

After finding the two populations, Wang's colleague, Wei Neng, pointed out that there were likely other populations nearby. As a result, they centered their search around the two populations discovered by Abeli and conducted a systematic search within a few kilometers of the area.

Fortunately, they did discover new populations.

The first location, two to three kilometers from Abeli's sites, was a small ravine between some rice fields and an area where local farmers planned to grow medicinal herbs. They noticed that the population was not large, with only about a dozen plants. Then, they saw a hot spring waterfall nearby, with water temperatures exceeding 40 C.

The discovery of the second population left them astonished. In the middle of a cornfield pathway, they observed thousands of the water lilies densely growing.

"It was Nov 20, a day I will never forget. I and Dr Wei Neng were fortunate to witness plants that we had only seen in documentaries and books before. What was even more exciting was that we discovered entirely new populations of the plant."

They talked with the locals. Some elderly villagers aged over 60 told them that the plant had always been present in the areas where they grazed sheep during their childhood. "So, why was there talk of extinction before?" Wang said. "The reason is simple: our botanical surveys were not thorough enough, and we did not venture into this particular region. This has provided us with valuable insights. When determining whether a species is extinct or assessing its endangered status, we must exercise caution and refrain from rushing to conclusions."

However, the conservation work for the dwarf Rwandan water lily has only just begun. Many questions regarding this species remain unanswered, Wang said, such as what its life cycle entails.

"Most of the information currently available is derived from preserved samples in Kew Gardens or other botanical gardens, rather than observations from wild populations, making it not entirely accurate," he said.

"Also, we need to accurately describe its morphological characteristics, study its genetic diversity, determine its position in the evolutionary process, and understand how it adapts to the hot spring environment. These questions all require further research and resolution."

Currently, less than 60 percent of African plants have been assessed and classified for their endangered status by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, indicating that a large number of plant species have yet to be evaluated.

"So we still have a lot of work to do," Wang said. "The work we are conducting in Africa is a reflection of our response to the global call for biodiversity conservation."



The endangered baobab trees, *Adansonia suarezensis*, dominate a slope in Madagascar. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

HEFEI — When the United Nations World Tourism Organization announced this year's winners of the "Best Tourism Villages" last week, a small village in Anhui province found itself in the global spotlight.

Xiaogang village in Fengyang county, popularly known for being the forerunner of China's rural reform, won the honor at a UN Tourism meeting held in Cartagena, Colombia. It came as a recognition of the village's achievements in promoting tourism by tapping into the rich local culture. "In my wildest dreams, I never imagined that Xiaogang, once so destitute we could barely fill our stomachs, would one day feast on the riches of tourism," Yan Jinchang, an 81-year-old local, said after UN Tourism's announcement. In the first three quarters of this year,

## First village in rural reform wins UN honor

Xiaogang had received over 410,000 visits, a testament to its growing appeal. But it wasn't always this way.

Once plagued by barren land and water scarcity, the village was home to people who struggled to make ends meet. That all changed in 1978 when 18 farmers, including Yan, made a bold decision in a dilapidated thatched cottage. They pressed their red fingerprints onto a contract to seal the deal, dividing the land among individual households in a move that sparked China's rural reform and earned Xiaogang the title of the "first village in rural reform."

Today, Yan's legacy is carried on by his son, Yan Deshuang, who runs the bustling Jinchang Restaurant in the village. "We grow seasonal vegetables in our backyard and source fresh ingredients from the local market every morning, ensuring our guests get the true taste of farmhouse cuisine," Yan Deshuang said, reflecting on the restaurant's journey from having a single stove to becoming a thriving establishment with over 30 tables and a professional chef.

According to Li Jinzhu, first secretary of the village's Party committee, Xiaogang has integrated its rich cultural heritage into its

tourism development. This includes introducing over 10 intangible cultural heritage projects and traditional skills — such as Fengyang flower-drum dance and Fengyang paintings — into the scenic area, creating a livestream base for intangible cultural heritage and establishing an exhibition area for traditional culture.

One of the village's most visited spots is a farmhouse built on the site of the historic contract signing, where 78-year-old Deng Fanlan now performs the Fengyang flower-drum dance, a traditional folk art form combining opera, singing and dancing.

"When I was young, after the harvest, I would follow my grandmother and mother to perform the flower-drum dance to beg for food. I never imagined that this traditional art form would become an intangible cultural heritage and that, in my old age, I would be able to perform it for tourists," Deng said.

Last year, the village earned 150 million yuan (\$20.8 million) in tourism revenue, with half its villagers engaged in the sector.

The "Best Tourism Villages" initiative was launched by UN Tourism in 2021 to promote the protection of rural cultural heritage and sustainable development through tourism. With Xiaogang's inclusion, China now has 15 villages on this prestigious list.

XINHUA

## 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.

## Retreating glaciers top concerns

Pakistan's 'climate refugees' pin their hopes on COP29

As world leaders gather for the COP29 global climate change conference, the Ismail family is among the millions of people whose plight serves as a stark reminder of the human cost of environmental threats.

In the remote highlands of northern Pakistan, members of the family once lived in harmony with the towering glaciers that crowned their village. They had deep ties to the land — an enduring connection forged through generations of farming, herding and living in the shadows of majestic mountains.

But in 2022, a catastrophic glacier outburst flood ravaged their home and with it, their way of life. The flood swept through the village, leaving them with nothing but the painful memories of a once-thriving existence.

Ismail, the sole breadwinner of the family, recalled the fateful day as if it were yesterday.

"I was in the fields when the Earth began to shake. By the time I got back to the house, the water was already at our doorstep. My wife and children were trapped inside. I had no choice but to grab them and run," he said, his voice breaking with the weight of the loss.

The family barely escaped with their lives but their home, along with their crops, livestock and belongings, were swept away by the torrent of water and debris.

Ismail's family consists of seven members: himself, his wife Zahra, their three children — Sana, Bilal and Rashid — and his elderly parents, Zulfiqar and Shahida. Before the flood, their lives revolved around farming and raising livestock.

"We lost more than just our home; we lost a part of ourselves," Zahra said, looking out across the barren landscape where their once-flourishing farm stood.

"My children don't play the way they used to. They look at the mountains with fear now, not with wonder." Ismail's parents are still in shock.

"We never thought something like this could happen to us," Zulfiqar said, his frail voice trembling.

"We've lived here all our lives. These glaciers were our protection, our lifeblood. Now, they have turned against us."

## Displacing lives

Pakistan is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to glacier-lake outburst floods, with about 800,000 people living within 15 kilometers of a glacier. Many residents in the Karakoram range have built their homes on fertile land along rivers fed by glaciers, unaware of the growing risks posed by the melting ice.

These glaciers, once stable, are rapidly retreating due to rising temperatures. As the glacier's meltwater accumulated, the lake grew larger and more unstable. Eventually, the pressure became too great and the lake breached, unleashing a devastating wave of water and debris down into the steep-sided valley below.

The May 2022 flood displaced over 1,000 families across the Hunza and Nagar districts in the Gilgit-Baltistan area.



A view of the Passu Glacier, situated below the Passu Peak, which reaches an altitude of about 7,500 meters within the Karakoram range, on Aug 15. Many of the more than 7,000 glaciers in Pakistan's mountainous regions are found in its Gilgit-Baltistan area. NURETTIN BOYDAK VIA GETTY IMAGES



From above: Residents wade through a flooded area in Sindh, Pakistan, in 2022. Flood-hit residents navigate the waters in Sindh, Pakistan, in 2022. Melting glaciers in Pakistan's northern mountains fed floods that affected at least 33 million in 2022. PHOTOS BY FARHAN KHAN VIA GETTY IMAGES

In Hunza, about 500 families were forced to leave their homes, particularly in Hassanabad and nearby villages, as floodwaters swept away homes, infrastructure and agricultural land, leaving hundreds stranded and in urgent need of assistance.

In Hassanabad, the idea of leaving

their ancestral land fills many residents with disbelief. These families have lived on the lush orchard fields, nestled among towering mountains, for over 400 years, cultivating crops and grazing livestock in the high plains.

For many, the village is not just home and the thought of relocating

feels unimaginable. With limited resources and deep emotional ties to the land, most residents said they simply cannot afford to leave the place that has been their life for generations.

With no permanent shelter, they have sought refuge in nearby towns and villages, living in temporary shelters and struggling to find work and rebuild their shattered lives. But even in displacement, they face the ongoing fear of future climate events, as the threat of floods, landslides and extreme weather events continues to loom large.

Amna Batool, a schoolgirl from Hassanabad, vividly recalled the harrowing day in 2022 when part of her town, along with a crucial highway bridge, was swept away by the torrents of meltwater cascading down the Hunza River, a tributary of the Indus.

"The flood didn't just destroy my home and belongings; it took away all my childhood memories," she said, her eyes fixed on the pile of rubble where her house once stood. The flooding was triggered by unusually high temperatures that caused a lake to form behind the Shisper Glacier.

## Plugging gaps

According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, or ICIMOD, glaciers in South Asia are on track to lose up to 75 percent of their ice by the century's end due to global warming. As a result of this melting, Pakistan experienced 14 glacier-lake outburst floods between 2018 and 2021, but that number surged to 75 in 2022, according to data gathered by the UNDP.

Miriam Jackson, senior cryo-

sphere specialist at ICIMOD, has discussed at length the alarming shift in the Karakoram region, where glaciers that were once stable or growing are now melting at an accelerated rate.

A 2023 ICIMOD report revealed that glacier melt has increased by 65 percent over the 2010-2019 decade compared to the previous one. This is particularly concerning for agriculture, which relies on glacier meltwater, as shrinking glaciers will eventually lead to reduced runoff.

This year, Pakistan is presenting its case to the international community at COP29 being held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from Nov 11 to 22, with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the conference on Nov 12. The country's delegation includes key representatives from the Ministry of Climate Change and the National Disaster Management Authority.

Romina Khurshid Alam, the Pakistan prime minister's coordinator on climate change and environmental coordination, stressed the crucial role of COP29 as a platform for Pakistan to showcase its climate actions, challenges and potential solutions. She stressed the importance of global collaboration to achieve climate diplomacy goals, promote gender equality and advance smart agriculture initiatives through greater private sector involvement.

Alam also highlighted the urgent need to address climate change in Pakistan. Despite contributing less than 1 percent of global carbon emissions, she pointed out, Pakistan is bearing the brunt of severe climate disasters — such as floods and droughts — that have devastated infrastructure and livelihoods.

According to Alam, Pakistan, alongside other vulnerable nations,

will strongly urge wealthy, high-emission countries to fulfill their climate finance commitments. This funding is crucial to help developing countries cope with the worsening impacts of climate change and support their transition to a low-carbon future through adaptation and mitigation strategies. More importantly, it will decide whether Ismail's family — and millions like them — get the assistance they so desperately need to restart their lives.

Finance has taken center stage at COP29, with the Baku summit dubbed the "Finance COP." The focus is largely due to the spotlight on the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, or NCQG.

An evolution of the 2015 Paris Agreement, the NCQG is designed to replace the previous target of \$100 billion in annual climate finance from developed to developing countries. This target, established in 2009, was meant to be met by 2020. But most analyses indicated that the actual funding provided has fallen short, despite contrary claims.

For the Ismail family and millions of others like them, COP29 is not just about seeking aid. They are calling for comprehensive policies and long-term solutions that address the root causes of forced migration and provide displaced families like theirs with the tools they need to rebuild their lives and secure a sustainable future.

The socioeconomic challenges they face are emblematic of the broader crises affecting millions of climate refugees around the world, making urgent action at the global stage more critical than ever.

DAWN, PAKISTAN

## Vietnam tackles harms of tobacco use

Vietnam's law on preventing and controlling the harms of tobacco use has come under revision at the country's National Assembly question-and-answer session, Vietnamese Health Minister Dao Hong Lan said.

During the Nov 11 session, deputy Pham Thi Kieu from the Central Highland Province of Dak Nong voiced public concerns regarding the current use of electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco among young people.

When the law was first drafted and implemented over a decade ago, new products like e-cigarettes did not exist, Lan said.

Based on an assessment of the current situation and consultations with the World Health Organization and other relevant groups, the

health ministry has maintained its stance that the use of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products is rapidly increasing and poses potential health and safety risks, especially for young people.

The ministry has conducted surveys on the use of the products among adults, with results showing that the highest use of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products are among those aged 15-24.

Notably, usage has risen among young people, especially teenage girls. The rate of e-cigarette use among students aged 13-15 increased from 3.5 percent in 2022 to 8 percent in 2023.

The ministry has submitted a report to the government assessing the impact of the new tobacco products.

It also plans to introduce stricter measures to control e-cigarettes in the future, Lan said. It has submitted a report to the National Assembly proposing a ban on e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products before the revised Law on Prevention and Control of Tobacco Harms is reviewed and passed.

Lan expressed hopes that the assembly would issue a decision to ban the products to protect public health.

Regarding new tobacco products, deputy Nguyen Thi Mai Thoa from the northern province of Hai Duong raised questions about programs to stop smoking among children in local areas.

Lan said that the Vietnam Tobacco Control Fund currently organizes a network to get people to stop

smoking. The ministry has 24 units participating in the network, including hospitals under the ministry and those serving large numbers of patients.

Bach Mai Hospital has set up a center to help stop smoking and the health ministry has also introduced a hotline offering counseling sessions.

In response to questions on a special consumption tax for new tobacco products, the minister urged legislators to consider the tax implications on tobacco.

She pointed out that for every dollar gained in tobacco tax, five dollars are spent on addressing public health impacts, apart from the long-term health effects on future generations — she therefore expressed the hope that the National Assembly will support a ban on new forms of tobacco.

VIET NAM NEWS, VIETNAM

## Dressed to impress



Camels take part in a "Camel Decoration Competition" event during a camel fair in Pushkar, India, on Nov 10. Thousands of livestock traders from the region head to the traditional fair where livestock, mainly camels, are traded. ABACA VIA NEWSCOM

## BUSINESS

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## Urban village renovation efforts to step up pace

By WANG KEJU  
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China will push ahead with its urban village renovation program, which will cover a much wider geographical area and shift toward monetary compensation, in an effort to stabilize the real estate sector and help the country hit its annual growth target, analysts said.

In a major policy shift, China is expanding its support for urban village redevelopment to nearly 300 cities from the previous 35 major ones, according to a notice issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the Ministry of Finance.

"As cities have expanded, many new urban villages have sprung up, often with suboptimal land use, safety concerns and inadequate public services," said Li Yujia, a researcher on residential policy. "Redeveloping these areas is crucial for achieving equitable urban development."

Beyond just improving physical infrastructure and housing, the urban village transformation initiative also aims to facilitate the integration of new urban residents — often migrant workers and their families — into the fabric of the city, Li added.

Prior to the notice, Chinese authorities had rolled out an initiative to renovate 1 million more homes in urban villages and dilapidated housing in October, noting that the number of homes in urban villages alone that require redevelopment in 35 major cities has reached 1.7 million units.

With the expanded scope of the urban village redevelopment initiative, the number of eligible projects is expected to grow substantially, paving the way for the transformation of an additional 1 million homes, said Chen Wenjing, director of policy research at the China Index Academy.

According to the latest notice, projects included within the expanded program's scope can now benefit from a range of supportive measures, such as inclusion in local government special bond financing, access to special-purpose loans from policy-oriented financial institutions, and tax and fee incentives.

The policy support is already being swiftly exercised on the ground. In a recent development, Guangzhou, Guangdong prov-

ince has secured the first specialized urban village redevelopment loan in the province, with China Development Bank and Agricultural Development Bank of China set to provide an initial 250 million yuan (\$34.54 million) in dedicated financing.

The notice also emphasizes the need for local governments to consider the existing inventory and projected future supply of commercial housing stock within their respective real estate markets while implementing monetized resettlement models.

Monetized resettlement models include pure monetary compensation, residents' self-purchase and government-led acquisition of existing commercial housing units for resettlement purposes.

An urban village redevelopment project in Guangdong's Foshan has also received a 1.19 billion yuan specialized loan from the two aforementioned policy banks to fund the purchase of resettlement housing.

The monetized approach shortens the transition period for those in the process of being resettled. Rather than waiting for new housing units to be constructed, residents can quickly find and move into alternative accommodation of their choosing, said Yan Yuejin, deputy head of the Shanghai-based E-House China R&D Institute.

Meanwhile, it is expected to help accelerate the absorption of existing housing inventory in the market, Yan said.

If 1 million homes in urban villages and dilapidated housing are monetarily resettled at an average size of 100 square meters per unit, that could drive roughly 100 million square meters of residential sales. This would account for approximately 10 percent of the total market volume, according to a study by the China Index Academy.

The influx of this pent-up demand entering the market is expected to substantially enhance overall transaction activity, said Chen, who is with the academy.

A portion of this 1 million unit resettlement pool could translate into actual home sales by the end of this year and throughout 2025, providing a tangible boost to new property transactions. Furthermore, the report notes that there is potential for the scale of this resettlement program to expand even further in the future, according to the academy.



A visitor tries an intelligent medical imaging system under the guidance of a staff member at the Light of Internet Expo in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, on Thursday. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## Nation makes moves in digital culture mkt

Chinese mini-dramas, online lit, video games, animation surging overseas

By LI JIAYING and CHEN YE in Wuzhen, Zhejiang

With a focus on emerging digital opportunities around the world, the latest internet development reports highlight China's global leadership in the digital industry, with the country showing rapid growth and expanding international influence in the digital culture sector.

According to the World Internet Development Report released on Thursday at the ongoing 2024 World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, China ranks second among the 52 involved economies worldwide in internet development, with a score of 69 — just behind the United States.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of China's fully functional access to the global internet, during which time the country has witnessed a steadily improved cyber ecosystem, rapidly advanced core technologies, comprehensively enhanced cybersecurity capabilities, deepened legal governance and expanded international cooperation, said Wang Jiang, head of the Chinese Academy of Cyberspace Studies, the reports' publisher.

Based on six indicators — information infrastructure, digital technology and innovation capability, digital economy, digital government, cybersecurity and international governance in cyberspace, it said the global digital economy is experiencing a new wave of growth, with more development potential rapidly unfolding.

With a specific focus on China's performance in terms of digital development, another report by the academy highlighted the impressive

performance of the country's digital culture industry in recent years.

According to the China Internet Development Report 2024, the country's online audiovisual market — including long videos, short videos, livestreaming and audio sectors — had reached a market size of 1.15 trillion yuan (\$159 billion) by end-2023. Meanwhile, the domestic gaming industry's actual sales revenue stood at about 303 billion yuan during the same period.

"In recent years, China's digital culture has flourished, producing high-quality works across fields such as mini-dramas, online literature, video games and digital animation," Wang said.

The country's digital culture vitality is not merely limited to its domestic market. According to the report, China's online literature sector has also seen remarkable success overseas, with export sales of over 4 billion yuan, attracting 230 million overseas readers last year. Additionally, domestically developed games generated overseas sales of \$16.37 billion in 2023, marking the fourth consecutive year of surpassing the 100 billion-yuan threshold, it said.

"Our digital cultural products are now more diverse and globally accessible. A large number of high-quality creations have transcended cultural boundaries and gained recognition from audiences worldwide," said Qian Xianliang, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Cyberspace Studies.

For instance, the Chinese mythology-inspired video game *Black Myth: Wukong* has captivated domestic and international audiences, driving widespread discussions and sales of over \$1 billion on online gaming platform Steam

by October, Qian added.

In addition, Chinese science fiction television series *Three-Body* has spearheaded Chinese cultural productions' globalization, reaching audiences in over 190 countries and regions, he said, adding that many Chinese online literature works have also been translated into English, French, Spanish, Arabic and many other languages, further extending their global reach.

"The digital culture industry, represented by video games, short videos and livestreaming, has now become a cornerstone of China's cultural sector. It plays a pioneering role in driving the deep integration of culture and technology, embedding China's rich traditional culture into the fabric of modern civilization through digitalization," said Sun Jiashan, associate researcher at the Central Academy of Culture and Tourism Administration.

Sun also emphasized the key role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and large language models in driving digital culture growth.

"Cutting-edge technologies are reshaping the international dissemination of Chinese culture. For example, AI-powered translation has significantly reduced the cost of translating Chinese online literature into multiple languages, enabling broader global accessibility in a way more efficient than ever," Sun said.

"The achievements in digital technology and infrastructure are not only fueling localized production and dissemination of cultural works, but also promoting the values of cultural diversity and fostering dialogue and mutual respect among different cultures on a global scale," he added.

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## Regulatory reforms encourage pharma innovation

By LIU ZHIHUA  
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Members of the R&D-based Pharmaceutical Association Committee, or RDPAC, are deeply committed to China, with most regarding the country as a strategic market for the next three to five years, said Renaud Gabay, managing director of the organization.

He made the remarks in an exclusive interview with China Daily during the 7th China International Import Expo, which was held from Nov 5 to 10 in Shanghai.

"RDPAC, representing 46 leading multinational pharmaceutical companies with R&D capabilities, has been operating in China for 25 years," Gabay said. "This year, 23 of our members participated in the expo, with most having attended all seven (editions of) CIIIE since its inception. This demonstrates the strong commitment of our members to China's market."

The average approval time for clinical trial applications has dropped from 16 months to just 50 days. New drug application approvals take about 18 months, significantly shorter than the 33 months previously required."

Renaud Gabay, managing director of the R&D-based Pharmaceutical Association Committee

Among RDPAC members, 29 companies boast histories exceeding a century, and 24 have been operating in China for over 30 years. These companies have established more than 40 manufacturing plants and more than 30 R&D centers across the country, employing more than 130,000 people, he said.

They contributed 30 billion yuan (\$4.14 billion) in taxes in 2023 alone, and invest over 12 billion yuan in R&D annually in China, he said, adding a recent internal survey by RDPAC showed that more than 90 percent of the members regard China as a strategic market for the next three to five years.

Gabay also spoke highly of China's drug regulatory reforms that encourage pharmaceutical innovation.

"The average approval time for clinical trial applications has dropped from 16 months to just 50 days. New drug application approvals take about 18 months, significantly shorter than the 33 months previously required," he said.

The median time for a drug from approval to inclusion into the national reimbursement drug list is now around one year, with many drugs being listed the same year they are approved, Gabay added.

Looking ahead, RDPAC and its members are committed to deepening their presence in China and collaboration with Chinese stakeholders, he said.

"The collective mission we share among our industry is to discover, develop, manufacture and commercialize breakthrough innovations that change patients' lives," Gabay said. "We look forward to continuously contributing to a thriving innovation ecosystem."

Over the past quarter-century, RDPAC members have introduced more than 800 innovative drugs to China, with significant progress made in addressing critical healthcare needs.

Since 2017, 161 of these drugs have been added to China's national reimbursement drug list, accelerating patient access to cutting-edge pharmaceutical innovations.



A view of an urban village renovation project in Jinan, Shandong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Briefly

## Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 1 pip to 7.1934 against the US dollar on Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the inter-bank market each business day.

## Nonfinancial ODI up in first 10 months

China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment increased 10.6 percent year-on-year to \$115.83 bil-

lion in the first 10 months of the year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed on Thursday.

## Power use up 7.6% in January-October

China's electricity consumption, a key barometer of economic activity, rose by 7.6 percent year-on-year in the first 10 months, official data showed. In October alone, power usage climbed 4.3 percent from one year earlier, according to data released by the National Energy Administration. During the period, power consumption of China's primary industries increased by 6.7 percent year-on-year, while power consumption of its secondary and tertiary sectors rose by 5.6 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

## Global cooperation key to green goals

By LIU YUKUN  
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Enhanced global cooperation to address the challenges from climate change and technological advancements is urgently needed, said officials and experts, adding that green transformation and digital innovation are key to driving sustainable development.

Fazael Najeeb, ambassador of Maldives to China, said the world is grappling with an unprecedented climate crisis — rising temperatures, melting glaciers and biodiversity loss. It is also navigating the complexities of rapid technological transformation.

"We must recognize, as we do, the incredible synergy between digital innovation and sustainable development. Digital innovation is about inclusivity. More than 3 billion people worldwide still lack internet access. Expanding connectivity through technologies like low-earth orbit satellites or community-based internet solutions can unlock economic opportunities for underserved regions. It can

also democratize access to climate education, enabling more people to contribute to sustainability efforts."

The remarks were made at the ongoing Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Digital Technology Empowering Green Development International High-Level Talent Development Program that will conclude on Saturday.

Abolfazl Olamaei Far, deputy head of mission at the embassy of Iran in China, said digital technology and green development are inevitable necessities during the modernization process and essential paths to achieving global sustainable development.

"This means that we have no choice but to look for collective cooperation in order to promote digital technology and green modernization. We could deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in green infrastructure, green energy, green industry, green trade, green finance and other fields. The SCO is one of the best platforms for achieving this highly valuable objective. We could align our devel-

opment strategies, share digital technology development experiences, and together accelerate the comprehensive green transformation of our economies," he said.

Accelerated global action is needed to meet climate goals as the world is currently off track in achieving the goal set at the 2023 COP28 climate conference, which is to triple the installed capacity of renewable energy by 2030, in order to cut emissions and keep the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 C within reach, according to estimates from the International Renewable Energy Agency.

To advance global cooperation, Mu Ying, an official at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, called for accelerated efforts of sharing practical experience in digital technology for green and low-carbon development. Mu also advocated deepening exchanges and cooperation in green technology, equipment and standards to contribute more to global sustainable development.

# BUSINESS

## Kingdee ups software ops in SE Asia

Exec: Singaporean data center marks pivotal step in globalization strategy

By CHENG YU  
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Kingdee International Software Group, a Chinese information technology industry pioneer, is looking to beef up its presence in overseas markets with its latest move to build a new branch and open a data center in Singapore.

Jason Zhang, president of Kingdee, said: "The Singaporean data center marks a pivotal step in the company's globalization strategy. Such a move is expected to deliver more stable and efficient cloud services for Kingdee's global customers."

Through its Singapore subsidiary, Zhang said that the company will build a robust project delivery partner network and expand its presence in the Southeast Asian market in the short term.

"We already have built localization teams in economies like Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia to meet demand from the Southeast Asian market," he said.

"But over the long term, we aim to leverage Singapore's status, which serves as an international financial center in Asia, to expand our global market footprint and meet our goal of topping the world in software services by 2030," he added.

As of now, Kingdee's businesses span 172 countries and regions, with its products supporting 42 languages, and serving over 1,000 enterprises in achieving digital transformation abroad.

Zhang said Kingdee will strive to offer localized services, but with a global vision for its data center in Singapore.

Aotecar New Energy Technology Co, one of Kingdee's clients and an automotive air-conditioning compressor manufacturer, now operates six global production bases and serves 80 percent of the world's auto production regions.

Using Kingdee's cloud solutions, Aotecar, which is also a Tesla supplier, implemented its Chinese management model across North America and Mexico, including production, supply chains, finance and data analytics.

"Our Singaporean business

Such a move is expected to deliver more stable and efficient cloud services for Kingdee's global customers."

Jason Zhang, president of Kingdee

aims to serve as a strategic gateway to the Asia-Pacific and global markets, empowering businesses with localized yet globally integrated solutions," Zhang said.

To meet overseas financial compliance standards, Kingdee's solutions already include pre-configured packages tailored to specific countries. These packages cover localized compliance requirements and align with local usage preferences, enabling businesses to operate seamlessly and flexibly.

Zhang said: "Kingdee has launched solutions adhering to international accounting standards, as well as localized packages, for countries including Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia. By 2025, packages for Japan and Mexico will also be available."

According to a report by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology — a government think tank — China's cloud market is growing faster than the global average and is expected to more than triple over the next three years.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, a telecom industry association, said in a separate interview that Chinese cloud computing enterprises should not only speed up the construction of cloud infrastructure assets abroad, but also enhance innovative capacities in key software applications, so as to better serve foreign clients.

Kingdee's booth during a high-tech expo in Qingdao, Shandong province. The information technology company is expanding its global presence with its latest move in Singapore.



Kingdee's booth during a high-tech expo in Qingdao, Shandong province. The information technology company is expanding its global presence with its latest move in Singapore.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Consumers browse products at a Sam's Club store in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, in May.

YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Walmart reports strong Q3 growth

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Walmart Inc has delivered strong growth in its fiscal third quarter, driven by a steady performance from its membership-only store chain Sam's Club and e-commerce operations in China.

The retailer reported a 5.5 percent increase in revenue to \$169.6 billion and an 8.2 percent rise in operating income to \$6.7 billion compared to the same period last year.

Globally, e-commerce spearheaded the growth with a 27 percent increase.

Membership income grew 22 percent globally, led by gains in key markets such as Flipkart in India, Walmart in Mexico, and China, according to Walmart's third-quarter results report.

International sales were up 8 percent to \$30.3 billion, while global revenue for Sam's Club climbed 3.98 percent to \$22.9 billion.

The retailer's performance in China stood out.

Its net sales climbed 17 percent year-on-year to \$4.9 billion, with comparable sales up 15 percent and net sales of e-commerce rising 25 percent, bolstered by robust growth during the Mid-Autumn Festival holiday.

Both Sam's Club and its hypermarkets saw steady gains in offline traffic, according to Walmart China.

Its net sales in the first three quarters totaled \$15.2 billion, a number that is expected to exceed

last year's revenue of \$12 billion.

During a recent trip to China, Walmart CEO Douglas McMillon inaugurated the company's 50th Sam's Club store in the market with some 60,000 members.

"All 50 clubs are performing well, and we have more to come," McMillon said.

"About half our sales in China are digital, thanks in part to our network of over 350 club distribution points, which provide one-hour delivery service to members, extending the reach of our traditional clubs."

He said the company has learned a lot from operating around the world, and continues to learn from places like China, where social commerce, including livestreaming, is growing quickly.

John David Rainey, executive vice-president of Walmart Inc, said membership income in China grew more than 30 percent as customer numbers continued to rise.

Jason Yu, general manager of Kantar Worldpanel China, a research institute on fast-moving consumer goods, said Sam's Club has outpaced other membership store operators, thanks to its strong merchandise offerings and rapid expansion into more cities.

"The retailer's localized distribution points, which enable delivery within 30-60 minutes, now account for over half of Sam's Club's revenue in China, and are complementary to its stores."

The country's retail landscape showed steady growth during the

quarter. Urban consumer goods sales were up 3.3 percent in the first three quarters, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Modern trade, which rose by 3.6 percent in sales in the first three quarters, continued to show a trend of fragmentation with small supermarkets and convenience stores maintaining their excellent performance, according to Kantar.

Increased consumption has been seen in lower-tier markets and Chinese consumers maintained their proximity shopping habits, according to Kantar's report.

Sam's Club's sales growth in smaller cities is significantly higher than in upper-tier cities, indicating an increasing demand for the membership store model in lower-tier markets, it said.

Another membership store operator MCG — formerly known as METRO — said its store traffic had grown nearly 30 percent this year, and the ratio of private brands has reached 70 percent, with more stores in the pipeline.

Major retailers are exploring new development strategies including premiumization, digitalization and multiformat operations.

For example, some retailers are transforming and innovating by accepting adjustments from Chinese supermarket chain Pangdonglai, or through self-improvement. Yonghui Group has adjusted and upgraded its stores nationwide with the assistance of Pangdonglai and its successful experience.

## Breeding paddies pad farmers' pay

By ZHUANG QIANG  
and PANG BO

In an autumn rice frog co-breeding base in mid-November in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, rice stalks sway in a light breeze while frogs croak in a cacophonous chorus.

Seeing this new-type agricultural industry that combines traditional rice planting with frog breeding, farmer Zhang Kaihua in Chun'an county beamed with satisfaction, saying, "This year's rice grains are plump and full, and the yield will definitely see a new breakthrough."

With a history of over 5,000 years and now acting as a semi-provincial level city, Hangzhou administers 10 districts, one county-level city and two counties including Chun'an, and sticks to a strategy of "letting the fields bring more benefits", making progress in

elevating its status as a city with agricultural heft.

While developing new-type planting and breeding areas covering 7,200 hectares in 2023 — which helped farmers increase their incomes by more than 250 million yuan (\$35.2 million) — the city also netted a total output value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and aquaculture of 53.4 billion yuan in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 3.8 percent.

Zhang said the new method can not only help increase crop yields, but also reduce environmental pollution.

During the critical period for rice harvesting, employees of State Grid Chun'an County Power Supply Co are busy running about the rice paddies bringing much-needed power services to farmers and ensuring reliable power supplies for the autumn harvest.

Jiang Jun, an employee, said State Grid Chun'an has designated key power-checking zones based on its daily data collection, sending employees to conduct comprehensive "physical examinations" of agricultural lines and power supply equipment in the county, and trying to eliminate all safety hazards.

Earlier, State Grid Chun'an established WeChat service groups with each village and residential community as well as growers in the county, reminding them to pay attention to power safety.

Jiang said State Grid Chun'an will open more green channels for power supply, promoting online electricity supply services to help every user and applicant have access to timely power supplies.

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## Digitalized cultural biz accelerating in GBA

By QIU QUANLIN  
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New cultural formats characterized by digitalization, networking and artificial intelligence, are propelling the cultural industry of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area onto a rapid growth trajectory, said industrial insiders.

"Integration of cutting-edge technologies such as AI has helped continuously expand the boundaries of the cultural sector in the GBA," said Tao Feng, dean of the institute of industrial economics at Jinan University.

Tao made the remarks when delivering a report on the cultural industrial development of the GBA during a three-day cultural investment conference, which opened in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Wednesday.

The conference, with participating representatives from over 100 investment institutions, 40 listed companies and over 100 unicorns and cultural and technological innovation companies, introduced a series of cultural investment projects and released a number of high-quality cultural industry research results.

Focusing on the mutual promotion of cultural industry and technology, the event also showcased a batch of cutting-edge cultural technology achievements with independent intellectual property and application scenarios.

According to the report on the GBA's cultural development, the cultural industry in the area has grown significantly over the past few years, with particularly robust development in new business models.

Cultural investment and financing in the GBA also show signs of great vitality, with the total financing amount for the cultural industry reaching approximately 52.8 billion yuan (\$7.3 billion) over the past five years.

"The cultural industry of the GBA, with its massive scale and sustained growth momentum, has become a significant growth pole for the national cultural industry," said Tao.

Guangdong has reported an annual growth rate of more than 10 percent in the cultural industry in the past 20 years, with the sector's revenue exceeding 2.24 trillion yuan in 2023.

Citing the world's first trans-temporal participatory museum, a collaborative work by technology giant Tencent and Dunhuang Academy to recreate historical scenes of over 60,000 precious artifacts, Tao said the interaction and integration across multiple fields are driving the cultural industry towards intelligent and integrated development in the GBA.

Creating fine works characterized by traditional Chinese culture has also become a trend for local companies, according to Yan Bing, vice-president of Winsing Animation.

"As an animation company rooted in the field of original IP, we are committed to promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of China's outstanding traditional culture, allowing young users worldwide to experience the essence of Chinese culture," said Yan.

The company, based in Guangzhou, released its latest anime movie — *One Last Fly* — during the cultural investment event.

## Low-altitude economy takes off in Shandong

By ZHAO RUIXUE  
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Zhang Xinyi, a resident of Rizhao, Shandong province, recently discovered a new perspective on her city as she took a helicopter tour, experiencing low-altitude flight and enjoying a bird's-eye view of the coastal city.

"From the sky, the mountains look like graceful curves, and the sea sparkles like a diamond set in the Earth, presenting a different view," Zhang said.

Her helicopter tour is part of a pilot project in Rizhao aimed at

developing the city's low-altitude economy. This initiative seeks to integrate general aviation with consumer activities, fostering new business models in the low-altitude sector.

Policies supporting the low-altitude economy have been introduced at both national and local levels recently, underscoring the industry's vast potential and promising future.

On Nov 5, the transportation bureau of Shenzhen, Guangdong province sought public opinion on measures to support high-quality development of the low-altitude econ-

omy in the city. The draft proposes various subsidies, including support for low-altitude economy enterprises, certification of eVTOL, or electric vertical takeoff and landing, and unmanned aerial vehicles, expansion of the low-altitude logistics market, opening of short-haul general aviation routes and construction of low-altitude infrastructure.

Similarly, the Shandong provincial government released a three-year plan for the low-altitude economy that aims to establish a provincial comprehensive flight service station and over three city-level low-altitude flight management

service platforms by 2027.

It also includes building 35 general aviation airports and opening at least 50 intra-city and 20 inter-city drone logistics routes.

The province designated the low-altitude economy industrial cluster of Rizhao as a provincial strategic emerging industrial cluster.

"Developing the low-altitude economy is an inevitable trend. It can enhance the efficiency and quality of traditional industries and expand market space," said Zhao Yan, deputy director of the airport economic development zone management committee in Rizhao.

Rizhao has initiated low-altitude applications in public service areas such as agricultural and forestry inspections, as well as safety and environmental monitoring. These applications are gradually expanding to include aviation manufacturing and maintenance, flight training, drone logistics, as well as emerging fields such as aviation sports, aerial tours and scientific experiments.

The city is enhancing its aviation vocational talent training system, with eight schools offering aviation-related courses to over 2,900 students.

Among the schools, Rizhao Polytechnic has established programs in aircraft maintenance technology, aircraft digital manufacturing tech-

nology, general aviation operations and drone application technology. It plans to add programs such as aviation logistics to better support the development of the regional low-altitude economy with intellectual and talent resources, said the polytechnic.

Rizhao has designated 21 low-altitude airspace areas, covering 23,000 square kilometers. Over the past five years, the annual volume of general aviation flights has exceeded 100,000, with more than 30,000 flight hours.

"For the next step, we will continue improving airspace classification and optimizing air management and monitoring," said Yang Xiaodong, deputy director of the commerce bureau of Rizhao.

# BUSINESSFOCUS

## China's NEV boom boon for global auto sector

CIIE highlights importance of market to foreign car manufacturers

SHANGHAI — As the new energy vehicle boom continues in China, global players in related sectors are eyeing a vast array of opportunities and are exerting efforts to tap into this promising market.

At the 2024 edition of the China International Import Expo, held from Nov 5 to 10 in Shanghai, the trend is obvious — with innovation, openness and cooperation proving to be buzzwords at the trade emporium.

Focusing on sustainability and future mobility, the vehicle category at the expo featured 12 Fortune 500 automakers. Nearly 90 percent of all brands on display showcased NEV models, and the use of recyclable and bio-based materials was increasingly common.

At Toyota's display, two Crown sedans were prominently placed, with the model being among the Japanese auto giant's top sellers.

One of the sedans was a 1964 model, marking the company's first entry into the Chinese mainland, while the other was the latest intelligent hybrid version, a testament to advancements in NEV technologies that have benefited the brand's growth and followed the trend in the Chinese market.

The two models, six decades apart, symbolize Toyota's long-term growth in China.

"China is now not only the world's largest automotive market in terms of volume, but also a global leader in smart and electric vehicle development," said Xu Yiming, Toyota's head for brand and communications in China.

According to official data, NEV market share in China was just above 1 percent in 2015, but has since surged thanks to an expedited green transition of the Chinese economy.

In July this year, NEVs made history by surpassing fuel-powered vehicles for the first time in terms of market share, with retail sales nationwide hitting 878,000 units — accounting for 51.1 percent of total Chinese auto sales during the period.

To leverage NEV-related innovations achieved in China, including some of the highest levels of advancement seen anywhere in the world, Toyota has established one of its largest overseas testing and research and development centers in Changshu, Jiangsu province, and recently opened an advanced technology research center in Shanghai.

"Looking ahead, especially in the fields of electrification and smart technology, our focus is shifting toward R&D based in China," said Xu.

A few steps from the two Crown sedans was another eye-catching exhibit surrounded by visitors and professional buyers — a concept electric car in the form of a robotaxi, codelivered by Toyota and Chinese



A Sitrak hydrogen fuel-cell heavy truck is on display at the automobile exhibition area during the seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 7.

XIN YUEWEI / XINHUA

autonomous driving company Pony.ai.

Featuring a collision-avoidance system developed using data from 20 billion kilometers of assisted driving, the new vehicle is aimed at upscaling and commercializing fully autonomous solutions.

"We aim for the technologies developed in China to influence our R&D approach worldwide, enhancing products and technologies that can be applied across global markets," said Xu.

Besides world-renowned original equipment manufacturers, many auto parts suppliers are also eager to try their luck amid China's NEV drive.

Aptiv, a multinational developing automobile parts, made its debut appearance at the seventh CIIE, showcasing software and hardware products developed by local teams for the local market, with two themes in accordance with the market's trend — intelligence and electrification.

As a newcomer to the CIIE, Aptiv flexed its tech muscle via its unique strength involving both the "brain and the nervous system" of a vehicle, providing advanced solutions to software-defined and electrified vehicles.



An eVTOL is on display at the seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 7. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

Highlighting the opportunities they managed to sniff out in the Chinese market, Jiang Weihao, an engineer with the company, said Aptiv chose to base operations in China to stay closely aligned with the requirements of automakers in the world's largest auto market.

"China's manufacturing sector has matured significantly, providing a strong foundation for us to develop solutions that are cost-effective, reliable and tailored," Jiang said, adding that several exhibits and technolo-

gies were launched for the first time at this year's CIIE.

Despite rosy prospects, the Chinese NEV sector still faces headwinds due to trade protectionism. The United States and the European Union have this year both unveiled exorbitant additional tariffs on Chinese EVs.

At the 2024 CIIE, a major event based on openness, many industry insiders voiced concerns about such protectionist moves, while praising China's opening-up measures. Trade protectionism disrupts

international cooperation and technological progress in the automotive industry, impacting negatively on efforts in green transition and climate change collaboration, said Vice-Commerce Minister Ling Ji at a sub-forum held along with the CIIE.

"Development and technological progress of the NEV industry both rely on international cooperation. Regardless of external protectionist pressures, China will remain steadfast in its commitment to openness and collaboration," Ling said.

Taking the development of China's auto industry as an example, Yin Tongyue, chairman of Chinese automaker Chery, said that when global players Ford, Volkswagen and Toyota entered the Chinese market, they didn't push Chinese automakers out. Instead, they energized them.

"Now, as China advances in electrification and smart technologies, we may be leading in certain areas, and it's our turn to energize others, supporting their healthy growth and smooth transition to electrification," Yin added.

Notably, China caters to its domestic market and China's NEV exports constitute a small portion of its total production. While approxi-

mately 9.59 million NEVs were manufactured in the country last year, only about 12 percent of them were exported.

Adding to the discussion, Ralph Ossa, chief economist of the World Trade Organization, said trade tensions and conflicts have emerged, not only concerning trade, but also in areas like the green economy, environmental protection and energy conservation. Ossa also said that naturally, no one wants to see such tensions arise.

"International trade is an important part of the solution to climate change. The share of electric vehicles in total car imports was only about 5 percent in 2017. Now it is much higher," Ossa said. "And of course, China is an important part of the story."

Successful collaboration lies in finding synergy and sustainability, and cooperation and mutual benefit are advantageous for both China and the US, said Sam Wu, president and CEO of Ford China.

"From this perspective, global automakers are eager to see China's rapid progress in the NEV sector and are open to partnerships on a global scale," Wu said.

XINHUA

## Chinese electric heavy trucks expand overseas presence and cooperation

HEFEI — With the advent of electric trucks, the global landscape of heavy-duty trucks has changed and China has emerged as a competitive player, said Han Wen, founder and CEO of Windrose Technology, a Chinese electric long-haul truck start-up.

In the past, the core technology of traditional heavy-duty trucks — internal combustion engines — was predominantly controlled by Europe and the United States. As a result, European and US markets were less inclined to choose heavy-duty trucks made in China, said Han.

However, the landscape has changed with the advent of electric trucks. The essential components such as batteries, electric motors and electric drive systems — as well as intelligent driving — are areas where China excels, the CEO said, identifying his start-up as "the first Chinese truck company to have received orders from developed economies like Europe and the US, as well as the first Chinese truck company to test on four continents".

China has boasted a burgeoning new energy vehicle industry. According to official data, the NEV market share in China was just above 1 percent in 2015, but has since surged thanks to an expedited green transition of the economy.

The change of landscape in the global heavy-duty truck sector is illustrated by recent inroads made by Chinese heavy truck manufacturers in expanding their global presence and cooperation.

Han said Windrose Tech has established production facilities in the US and Belgium, and it has obtained world manufacturer identifier status in both locations. Deliveries in the US will begin in the first half of 2025, while deliveries in Europe will start in the second half.

Windrose Tech has so far received orders from European countries such as Denmark, Belgium and France, as well as the US and New Zealand. It is also planning to expand into the German market soon and set up a factory in France producing truck parts.

So far, Windrose trucks have completed cross-regional and multi-route road tests in 14 countries and regions, including China, Europe, the US and Australia.

In another development, Garrett Motion Inc and China National Heavy Duty Truck Group Co Ltd (Sinotruk) signed a letter of intent to enhance cooperation on advanced technologies for electric commercial vehicles, aiming to jointly develop a leading next-generation electric powertrain for application in Sinotruk's product portfolio. They also aim to join forces and start mass production of trucks equipped with this e-powertrain by 2027.

Sinotruk's heavy-duty trucks enjoy an extensive global market presence, particularly in Belt and Road partner economies. In 2023, it exported 130,100 heavy trucks, a 47 percent year-on-year surge. The company has made strides in the new-energy sector in recent years, developing pure electric, fuel-cell and hybrid heavy trucks.

Speaking of the reasons for

choosing Chinese electric heavy-duty trucks, Han said that when people purchase electric passenger vehicles, their personal preferences of brands, aesthetics and interior design weigh in their decisionmaking. However, when it comes to electric heavy-duty trucks, it is the sheer performance and functionality of the vehicles that matter more.

For that reason, Chinese electric heavy trucks and electric buses, targeted at the business-to-business market, boast rosier export prospects, he said.

Windrose's electric heavy trucks surpass their European and US competitors with a range of up to 670 kilometers and lower energy consumption. Furthermore, its vehicles offer approximately 50 percent more interior space than traditional fuel-power trucks.

"Not only are we providing a cleaner truck, we are also providing a really cheaper truck," Han said in a previous interview.

Promoting a green shift in the auto sector is the trend going



A Windrose all-electric truck undergoes a road test in Sydney, Australia, on Nov 1. XINHUA

forward. The quest for emission reductions in large global businesses has created market demand for electric heavy-duty trucks, which is a boon for Chinese electric truck front-runners.

"Our clients are large global enterprises, such as Nike and

Decathlon, who require the use of electric trucks for their global transportation operations. This provides us with the opportunity to deliver goods for them globally," Han told Xinhua News Agency.

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## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Elevation of China-Brazil ties embraces vision of a just and sustainable planet for humanity

Brazil, which was the first country to establish a strategic partnership with China, and the first Latin American country to establish a comprehensive strategic partnership with China, has reached a new strategic consensus with China on the future of their relationship.

In a joint statement issued on Wednesday after their talks at the Alvorada Palace in Brasilia, visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping, who was on a state visit to the South American country, and his host, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, announced they had agreed to elevate the bilateral relationship to a China-Brazil community with a shared future for a more just world and a more sustainable planet.

That speaks volumes about both countries' global vision for the future development of humanity and the sense of responsibility they share for world peace and development. Such a positioning of Sino-Brazilian relations is of particular importance to the cooperation of the two countries in international affairs at a time when the world situation is full of uncertainties and when military conflicts are raging in the Middle East and Ukraine, casting a pall on global peace.

As President Xi said, China stands ready to strengthen communication and coordination with Brazil in multilateral mechanisms such as the United Nations and BRICS. It will support Brazil's presidency of BRICS next year, promote high-quality development of greater BRICS cooperation, and work with Brazil to make the BRICS' voice louder on upholding multilateralism and improving global governance.

With unilateralism and protectionism increasingly becoming a stumbling block for globalization and con-

stantly disrupting global industry and supply chains, joint efforts between China and Brazil, two major developing countries, will undoubtedly add to the impetus for the development of a globalized world economy.

Xi said during his talks with his Brazilian counterpart that China and Brazil should take the lead in conducting consultations, promoting global solidarity, jointly addressing global challenges concerning the future of humankind, and strengthening cooperation in such fields as the green transformation, sustainable development, climate change, and the governance of artificial intelligence.

Xi also said China stands ready to work with Brazil to ensure the success of the China-CELAC Forum, the institutional mechanism for promoting cooperation between China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, better synergize the Belt and Road Initiative with the development strengths and needs of the LAC region, and strive for more achievements in building a China-LAC community with a shared future.

Both countries have their work cut out making it possible for the voice of the Global South to be heard in global governance and build a multipolar world, as Lula said.

But what President Xi said underscores that for China a community with a shared future is not mere rhetoric.

China's proactive foreign policy to further develop ties with developing countries and oppose a new Cold War, which has found its latest expression in the elevation of bilateral ties with Brazil, has demonstrated its resolve to be a responsible country for the well-being of all countries and its sincerity in working with other countries to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

## Call to revoke PNTR status will derail Sino-US trade

Despite trade being the ballast for China-US relations and concerning the well-being of people in both countries, some China hawks in Washington are threatening to derail this mutually beneficial relationship in the name of countering what they claim are the country's "unfair trade behaviors", targeting the permanent normal trade relations status it has with the United States.

In its annual report to Congress released on Tuesday, the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission recommended, for the first time, repealing permanent normal trade relations with China.

The PNTR status "allows China to benefit from the same trade terms as US allies, despite engaging in practices such as intellectual property theft and market manipulation", the bipartisan group said, adding that revoking the status "would signal a shift toward a more assertive trade policy aimed at protecting US industries and workers from economic coercion".

Such claims should come as no surprise given the composition of the commission, which has a distinctly prejudicial makeup, with its chair having worked for previous Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell in a variety of positions, and its vice-chair the former director of outreach and senior adviser to former speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Neither Pelosi nor McConnell is known for their friendliness toward China. The other members of the commission include Aaron Friedberg, author of *Getting China Wrong*, which argues that West's engagement with China has failed because

Beijing won't kowtow to Washington, and Cliff Sims, who boasts of playing an integral role in shifting the US intelligence community's funding and focus toward the threat of a "rising and adversarial China".

The other members share views and backgrounds that are similarly prejudicial toward China.

In fact, although the tariffs and restrictive policy measures, such as revoking the PNTR status for China, would come with huge costs in terms of lost US jobs and output, there is no one on the commission who might speak out against its inherently biased perspective. No one to point out that according to a report prepared for the US-China Business Council last year by Oxford Economics, a major independent economic advisory company, tariff hikes following a repeal of China's PNTR status would cost the US up to 744,000 jobs by 2025 and \$1.6 trillion in GDP by 2028.

Any attempts aimed at ending China's PNTR status would violate World Trade Organization rules as the PNTR status is an obligation of its members to guarantee normal, nondiscriminatory trade relations among them.

A stable and sound economic and trade relationship between China and the US serves the best interests of not only the world's top two economies, but also the rest of the world. Ending China's PNTR status would not only undermine the common interests of both China and the US, but also disrupt the world economy. The US should look at its practical cooperation with China in the trade and economic field objectively, rather than let it be hijacked by the anti-China brainwashed in Washington.

## Ukraine crisis can't be resolved by missiles but dialogue

Although the reopening of the United States' embassy in Kyiv on Wednesday, after it had been shut for the day, suggests a temporary easing of tensions that have built up over the past few days, Ukraine using US missiles for the first time to strike targets deep into Russian territory undoubtedly represents a further worrying escalation of the Ukraine conflict.

Moscow had already warned that those countries allowing Kyiv to fire missiles deep into Russia would be directly involving themselves in the conflict. As such, it has updated its nuclear doctrine to lower the threshold for a nuclear strike so that any attack by a nonnuclear power supported by a nuclear power would be considered a joint attack, and that any attack by one member of a military bloc would be considered an attack by the entire alliance.

While Russia has so far not changed its nuclear posture, it said on Tuesday that Ukraine had fired six US-made Army Tactical Missile System missiles, with the range of about 160 kilometers, at Russia's Bryansk region, days after the Joe Biden administration had given Kyiv the green light to do so.

It is understandable that Kyiv desperately wants to keep Russia on the back foot. However, Kyiv's tactical gains from its strikes on Tuesday have been quite limited. The longer-range missiles that Kyiv has pinned its hopes on to be a "game-changer" cannot alter the balance of power in the conflict, as Russia moved many key assets out of range long before Kyiv gained permission to use such missiles from the US, the United Kingdom and France.

Ukraine's weapons suppliers have been reluctant to enable it to strike targets in Russia, out of the fear of giving Moscow the excuse to deem them legitimate targets. Thus the number of longer-range weapons they have provided Ukraine has fallen far short of Kyiv's demands. Even those that have been provided are subject to Kyiv getting approval to use.

That's why although the US has supplied Ukraine with dozens of ballistic ATACMS missiles, known as "attack'ems", and they have been used to destroy military targets in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine such as Crimea, they had not been used to strike targets deep inside Russia before Tuesday.

While Biden's decision was reportedly in response to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea sending troops to support Russian forces, analysts deem the move to be aimed at making it more difficult for his successor to quickly end the conflict as he has pledged to do.

In light of these developments, it is crucial for all parties involved to remain calm and exercise restraint and work together through dialogue and negotiation to promote de-escalation and reduce strategic risks. China's position on the Ukraine crisis has been consistent, firm and clear. It has always been on the side of peace and on the side of dialogue, and that all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis should be supported.

Beijing thus stands ready to further strengthen communication with relevant parties and to play a constructive role in promoting an early political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Wuzhen conference aims to narrow global digital divide

The 2024 World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit kicked off in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday and will be on till Friday. The Wuzhen summit has been continuously fostering consensus on the development and governance of the internet.

Among them the first and foremost is improving global governance and working toward a shared future for mankind in cyberspace. Developed nations are rarely keen on sharing their expertise with developing countries. In fact, many developed countries even use the internet to interfere in the internal affairs of developing countries.

By respecting every country's sovereignty in cyberspace and adhering to multilateralism,

countries can promote the fair establishment of international rules so that all countries can independently determine their internet development strategies.

Strengthening collaborative innovation in research fields such as artificial intelligence, big data and blockchain, and promoting joint efforts in basic research and cutting-edge technologies are other ways. Most internet-based technologies are developed by a few, which makes it necessary for developed countries to cooperate with developing ones to unleash innovative achievements.

Another consensus is to enhance fairness and inclusiveness and promote the global sharing of internet development achievements. By the end of 2023, only about 37 percent of

the population in low-income countries had access to the internet. This underlines the necessity of assisting developing countries in advancing informatization, deepening cooperation in digital talent cultivation, and strengthening the application of information technology in key areas.

It is equally necessary to enhance the level of cybersecurity protection, strengthen the ethical use of technology, and properly address the rule conflicts, social risks, and ethical challenges brought about by AI.

By holding the WIC for 10 successive years, China insists on sharing the opportunities brought by Chinese modernization with all countries, injecting strong momentum into global modernization.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## Zero tolerance for wage defaults urged

The central departments have recently urged local governments to tackle unpaid wage issues for migrant workers.

The total number of migrant workers in China reached 300 million in 2023.

However, migrant workers suffer the most from wage defaults by employers. Improving the rights and interests of migrant workers has a bearing on the stability of the country's urban and rural labor market, its sustainable economic and social development, social fair-

ness and justice, and people's sense of gain, happiness and security.

The top authorities attach great importance to improving the long-term mechanism for eradicating wage defaults, and a series of special regulations have been formulated to protect the wage rights and interests of migrant workers. However, the phenomenon of unpaid wages always exists to varying degrees across the country.

A "campaign-style" law

enforcement endeavor from the top can help some migrant workers retrieve unpaid wages, but it cannot fundamentally solve the institutional barriers that led to the problem.

The country still needs to continuously refine the system design to minimize the space for employers to default on wages, and establish a transparent and simple channel so that migrant workers can use legal means to defend their rights and interests.

—WU YUXUE, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## History will condemn veto on ceasefire

**Editor's Note:** The following are excerpts of remarks by Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Fu Cong on the UN Security Council draft resolution on a Gaza ceasefire on Wednesday. The resolution was vetoed by the United States that day, with the rest 14 members of the UNSC voting in favor.

The US veto has pushed Gaza people further into darkness and desperation. We cannot imagine how the vote today, as well as the Council's failure to respond to the Gaza conflict over the past 13 months, can escape the harsh judgment of history.

When the US cast its first veto on October 18 last year, nearly 3,000 civilians had been killed in Gaza. By the time the US cast its second veto, 17,000 people had been killed as a result of Israeli bombardments. With the continued use of its veto, when the US cast its fifth veto on April 18 this year, the death toll in Gaza had surged to 34,000.

Now, nearly 44,000 people have been killed in Gaza, and the US still has not hesitated to use its veto. Forty-four thousand! This is not just a number. Behind it are children, nursing mothers, and the breadwinners for families. The loss of each and every one of them means eternal pain for the surviving relatives. People cannot help but ask: do Palestinian lives

mean nothing? Can the deaths of 44,000 people not win even a little bit of sympathy from the United States?

The UN Security Council is mandated under the UN Charter to shoulder the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It is incomprehensible that for the past year or so, the US has been so insistent in rendering the council incapable of playing its role, leading to its paralysis.

The US has claimed to be conducting parallel diplomatic efforts and has repeatedly promised that progress would be made soon in the negotiations. But to date, the so-called diplomatic negotiations have been going in circles. Why is Israel allowed to continue its military operations while constantly putting forth new conditions for negotiations? Israel has flagrantly breached every red line of international humanitarian law, with its actions causing an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. But even as a famine is

about to break out in Gaza, the US always seems to be able to find justification to defend Israel.

This represents a distortion and selective disregard of the application of international humanitarian law. People never knew before how low one could stoop in terms of a double standard. No wonder people feel angry. Their indignation also stems from the fact that the continued supply of weapons from the US has become a decisive factor for the war lasting so long, causing so many casualties and so much destruction.

All hostages must be released. An immediate and unconditional ceasefire must be established. Both are important. There should be no preconditions attached, and the two things should not be linked to each other. Israel's military operations in Gaza have long exceeded the scope of rescuing hostages. Insistence on setting preconditions for a ceasefire is tantamount to giving the green light to prolong the war and condone the continued killing.

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## COMMENT

Wang Zhengxu and Meng Jingwen

## China: A vision of inclusive development

The just-concluded G20 Summit marked a critical moment for global governance, and offered China a platform to share its vision of inclusive growth, equitable global governance and pragmatic cooperation. President Xi Jinping's proposals at the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, underscored China's commitment to upgrade its efforts with the Global South in order to address pressing global challenges.

President Xi's emphasis on the Global South was not just rhetoric but a genuine belief in making the global governance system fairer and more representative. By championing initiatives like the Initiative on International Cooperation in Open Science and pledging to increase imports from developing countries to \$8 trillion by 2030, China reinforced its role as a partner of developing countries. The approach highlights China's broader outlooks of global affairs: fostering South-South cooperation and amplifying the voices of emerging economies on the global stage.

Xi also outlined China's eight actions for global development, which include expanding the Belt and Road Initiative, safeguarding food security and promoting international cooperation in science and technology. This aligns with the developmental goals of the Global South — the Chancay Port inaugurated just a few days before in the region serves as a good example.

The China-proposed Global Development Initiative is the second most important of the eight actions for global development, preceded only by the Belt and Road Initiative. To promote the eight actions, China is pushing forward a Global South Research Center, which will help the Global South countries to

By prioritizing the needs of the Global South and championing inclusive development, China reaffirmed its commitment to building a fairer and more resilient world.

boost their science and technology capacity. China has also committed to allocating \$20 billion of development funds to help developing countries alleviate poverty, safeguard food security and promote the digital economy.

China has honored its promise of promoting high-standard opening-up and further opening up its economy to the least-developed countries (LDCs). Among China's eight actions is the decision to give all LDCs that have diplomatic relations with China zero-tariff treatment. China's support to the least-developed countries shows its commitment to economic equity and inclusive development.

China's support to Africa is another aspect of its commitment to the Global South. The China-Africa partnership has gained in strength over the past years, and its financial commitments to Africa — 360 billion yuan (\$49.7 billion) — further reflect Beijing's resolve to bridge the development gaps between countries and promote inclusive development.

The G20 declaration's focus on food security and poverty reduction, too, bore China's imprint. China's decision to join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, coupled with its leadership in organizing the G20's first Development

Ministerial Meeting, demonstrated its ability to drive meaningful cooperation. Additionally, the promotion of clean energy investment through the Belt and Road Initiative and digital governance initiatives reaffirmed China's role as a leader in sustainable development.

The Chinese side also used the summit to bolster bilateral relations, holding high-level talks with the leaders of the United Kingdom, Australia, Argentina, and Brazil. These diplomatic interactions showed its willingness to navigate complex relationships and pursue mutually beneficial partnerships despite the growing challenges.

While the G20 Summit achieved progress in several areas, it also highlighted the serious global challenges. Geopolitical tensions, climate change, food insecurity and poverty are pressing issues that require coordinated action. The fact that the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts in Eurasia and the Middle East cast a shadow over the summit underscored the difficulties of forging consensus on contentious issues.

The joint declaration's ambiguity on the conflicts, while necessary to promote unity, reflected the limits of multilateral diplomacy. Similarly, the push for United Nations Security Council reform, though widely supported, lacks a clear path due to diverging national interests.

Global economic inequality, too, remains a serious concern. The proposal to tax the ultra-rich, championed by Brazil, to create a more equal world gained traction but also faced resistance, particularly from Argentina. The mixed reaction to the proposal underscored the challenges of implementing transformative fiscal policies in a fragmented world.

China's role in tackling these challenges is pivotal. As a major economic power and an advocate for developing countries, China has the capacity to find inclusive global solutions. For example, China's leadership in green energy and its promotion of a "Green Silk Road" can help mitigate climate change while fostering sustainable development.

Moreover, Beijing's support for food security initiatives, evident in its decision to join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, makes it a critical partner in reducing global hunger and poverty. And its increasing investments in technology and digital cooperation frameworks, particularly those targeting the Global South, can help narrow the global digital divide and empower marginalized communities.

On the geopolitical front, China's emphasis on dialogue and diplomacy aligns with its broader vision of a multilateral world order. By promoting peaceful resolutions to global issues and balancing great power rivalries, China can help defuse global tensions and maintain global stability.

The G20 Summit was a testament to the complexity of global governance in an era of growing challenges. Amid these difficulties, China's practical initiatives offer a vision of hope to the world. By prioritizing the needs of the Global South and championing inclusive development, China reaffirmed its commitment to building a fairer and more resilient world.

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## US drastic decisions in Ukraine risk widening the conflict

On April 15, 2022, CNN reported that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had told Washington's European allies that the US believes the Russia-Ukraine conflict would last till the end of 2022. But there is still no end in sight even as the world marked the 1,000th day of the conflict on Tuesday.

People are increasingly worried that a severe escalation of the conflict could lead to a wider war or even a nuclear war after US President Joe Biden's decision this week to allow Ukraine to use US-made long-range missiles to strike deep into Russian territory and send anti-personnel landmines to Ukraine. Anti-personnel landmines are banned under an international treaty signed by 164 countries, including Ukraine.

Biden's drastic decision just two months before leaving the White House is seen as highly irresponsible and has been sharply criticized by president-elect Donald Trump's allies for risking "World War III".

Ukraine wasted no time in firing the ATACMS missiles on Tuesday at Russia's military facilities in Bryansk, prompting Russia to announce a strong response. This in turn prompted the United States administration to order the closure of its embassy in Kyiv on Wednesday in anticipation of potential Russian airstrikes. Italy, Spain and Greece have done the same.

Any future peace talks between Russia and Ukraine won't be easy given the sharp differences between the two parties, not to mention the interference of the US-led West.

Biden's decisions also came shortly after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called Russian President Vladimir Putin on the phone on Nov 15, a call that rekindled hopes of a much-needed resumption of diplomacy to help end the Ukraine crisis.

Back in spring 2022, the peace talks between Russia and Ukraine were proceeding well until they were blocked by the US and the United Kingdom.

While it's impossible to go back in time, the conflict might have been avoided in the first place if the US and NATO had not, in their respective replies to Putin in January 2022, ignored Russia's security concerns over NATO's eastward expansion and the West's intention to admit Ukraine into NATO.

If the past 1,000 days have proved anything, it is that no disputes can be resolved on the battlefield. Wars can only cause more deaths and destruction. That is not just true for Russia and Ukraine, both of which have suffered heavy casualties, but also for the rest of the world which has become "collateral damage" of the conflict.

The Western powers' "crippling" economic sanctions against Russia, including the closing of airspace to the other side's passenger planes, have failed to end the conflict because more than 140 countries refused to support such unilateral sanctions. Nevertheless, the sanctions have disrupted global economic development and recovery, which were badly needed after three years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fact that Scholz talked with Putin on the phone shows that some European leaders have realized the failed strategy of shunning diplomacy during the past two years. Germany and Italy have reiterated that they would not follow the US in lifting the missile ban on Ukraine while the leaders of Hungary and Slovakia have condemned Biden's decisions.

The public sentiment in Ukraine, too, has changed. A Gallup poll released this week showed that on average 52 percent of Ukrainians would like to see their country negotiate an end to the conflict as soon as possible. Only 38 percent believe their country should keep fighting till it emerges victorious, down from the 73 percent in a 2022 survey.

And a report by the European Council on Foreign Relations this summer shows that Europeans, in general, tend to believe that Ukraine will not be able to defeat Russia on the battlefield. Some argue that Biden's latest moves might create a more favorable situation for Ukraine. But Donald Trump promised during his presidential campaign that he would force a freeze in the conflict after assuming office. Anyway, Biden's decisions will jeopardize the lives of more people by risking a wider war.

Any future peace talks between Russia and Ukraine won't be easy given the sharp differences between the two parties, not to mention the interference of the US-led West. But by escalating the conflict through supplying more arms to Ukraine and allowing it to use US-made long-range missiles, the US is not only further hindering diplomacy from playing its peace-brokering role but also creating a situation in which more lives would be lost and more assets destroyed on both sides.

Xu Feng

## Beijing set to tap AI potential, reduce risks

The ongoing 2024 World Internet Conference in Wuzhen, Zhejiang province, themed "Embracing a People-Centered and AI-for-Good Digital Future — Building a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace", highlights the importance of artificial intelligence in today's world. With its rapid development, AI has emerged as both a promise and a challenge, pushing the boundaries of high-tech potential while raising profound ethical and social questions.

At the heart of this year's conference, which began on Tuesday and will conclude on Friday, is the notion of "People-Centered and AI-for-Good" — a call for using AI to serve humankind's best interests and fulfill social responsibilities. China realized this fact early, and issued the "Governance Principles for the New Generation Artificial Intelligence — Developing Responsible Artificial Intelligence" in 2019, which emphasizes AI's role in advancing human welfare and safeguarding against risks. The subsequent release of the "Ethical Norms for the New Generation of Artificial Intelligence" by China in 2021 further highlighted the necessity of balancing technological innovation with ethical considerations in the development of AI.

While AI's potential to drive social progress is immense, its application must be guided by careful thought and ethical principles. In this regard, the "People-Centered and AI-for-Good" principle goes beyond theoretical ethics, finding expression in real-world applications.

In the field of education, China is using AI to help students in remote areas access learning tools, bridging the educational gap. In eldercare, humanoid robots are helping elderly people overcome numerous challenges. In healthcare, AI applications played a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic, enhancing diagnostic efficiency and accelerating vaccine development. In disaster relief, AI-powered drones and robots are being used to deal with crisis situations. And in rural revitalization, AI is used to find targeted solutions to resource distribution problems, transforming traditional sectors and stimulating social development.

But AI has also created a range of problems, including structural unemployment, ethical dilemma and safety concerns. The proliferation of large AI models and reduced technical barriers could lead to the misuse or abuse of AI technology, such as the creation of malicious software or the spread of misinformation, which pose significant security risks.

AI's increasing autonomy, combined



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

with issues such as poor explanations and opacity in large models, introduces uncertainty into the decision-making process, creating new challenges of accountability and control. And the application of AI, such as humanoid robots, raises ethical questions.

To address these risks, government measures must align with the rapid pace of technological development, which can be ensured by adopting an agile approach to regulation — anticipating potential risks while avoiding overregulation that could stifle innovation.

To begin with, by strengthening the social security system, particularly unemployment benefits, the authorities can help mitigate the impact of technology-induced disruptions in the job market. And by organizing training programs for workers, the authorities can help workers fulfill the requirements for the new job opportunities created by AI technology.

As large AI models gain traction, the issue of security becomes paramount. In such a situation, it is necessary to establish unified evaluation systems and technical standards that guide AI's application, ensuring safety, promoting innovation and fostering healthy development.

China has set out to expand its AI capability in fields such as the digital economy and industrial automation. Accordingly, the Chinese government issued the "Guiding Opinions on Accelerating Scenario Innovation and Promoting High-quality Economic Development with High-level Application of Artificial Intelligence" in 2022, which highlights the importance of AI-driven innovation in various industries.

However, China faces some challenges because of the different levels of digital infrastructure across industries. While sectors such as finance have robust data systems, manufacturing lags behind. Thus, integrating data resources across industries is crucial for accelerating China's digital transformation.

As China progresses on its AI journey, it has to shift its development path from automation and information technology to intelligent systems. To support this, it needs to build a solid data foundation and promote data sharing.

In today's world of fierce global competition, China must continue to improve its theoretical and technical foundations in AI. While China boasts a large AI talent pool and has taken big strides in AI education, particularly the

release of the "Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan" in 2017, it still faces a shortage of high-end AI professionals.

Therefore, it should take measures to expedite the development of domestic talents in AI, as well as attract more top-tier international talents. To develop high-end AI talents and meet the evolving demands of the AI-driven economy, China should focus on interdisciplinary education and industry-academia collaboration.

AI's potential to address global challenges, particularly in areas such as climate change and public health, is becoming increasingly evident. In fact, AI is already playing a critical role in solving serious global problems, from developing precision medicines to advancing R&D efforts in environmental protection worldwide.

However, while advancing AI development, it is equally important to ensure robust global governance. Countries should work together to mitigate potential risks and ensure AI technologies are developed and deployed responsibly for the benefit of all. Effective communication and coordination are essential to advancing a global governance framework, setting global standards and ensuring that AI develops in a healthy way. As a major player in the global AI landscape, China has consistently advocated for the inclusion of AI governance under the UN framework.

The development of AI across countries is not uniform, as a result, developed countries dominate AI technology, creating an "AI divide". In response, China has adopted an inclusive approach to global AI governance. At the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in 2023, China introduced a resolution to enhance global cooperation on AI capacity building, in a bid to help developing countries boost their AI capability, promote development for all and narrow the "AI divide".

As AI continues to reshape the world, its trajectory will depend on how we choose to seize the opportunities it offers and navigate its pitfalls. So, while embracing AI's potential, we must remain vigilant and not shirk our responsibility. The development of AI should be aimed at creating a future where AI is aligned with human values, ethical principles and the spirit of global cooperation. Only by doing so can we ensure AI becomes a force for good.

The author is the Director of the Policy and Strategy Research Center, Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## WORLD

# Forum fosters ties between China, Africa

Experts laud FOCAC's role in promoting resilience, sustainable development

By EDITH MUTETHYA  
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The China-Africa relationship is poised to grow to new heights under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation framework, affecting not only the two parties but also the global arena, experts say.

They also describe the framework as key in realizing the modernization of both China and Africa, which is expected to reshape the world. Wang Wen, dean of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, said FOCAC is "a great platform" that strengthens existing cooperation while fostering future growth and shared aspirations.

Speaking at a recent webinar, Wang said that over the past 24 years since its establishment, FOCAC has seen spillover effects of China's development model.

During this period, Chinese enterprises have constructed and renovated more than 10,000 kilometers of railways in Africa, as well as nearly 100,000 km of highways and almost 1,000 bridges, he said.

This is in addition to 1,000 ports, 66,000 km of power transmission lines, and 150,000 km of communication networks in various African countries.

The framework has also seen China establish multiple agricultural technology demonstration centers in Africa, promoted more than 300 advanced and applicable agricultural technologies and achieved an increased amount of agriculture products imported from Africa for seven consecutive years, Wang said.

With a huge market of nearly 3 billion people, China and Africa have inexhaustible potential in infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, internet, transportation, tourism, among others, Wang added.

Going forward, he pointed out that China-Africa cooperation will face some challenges, such as interference from the West, but urged both parties to have confidence and remain focused on their agenda.

Mushahid Hussain, chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute and president of the Pakistan-Africa Institute for Development and Research, applauded China's consistent assistance to many developing countries over the past decades.

Soon after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, it was one of the first countries to lend a helping hand to its third-world brothers in Asia, including Pakistan, Hussain said.

In Africa, China built the Tazara Railway in the 1970s, linking Tanzania with Zambia, and supported liberation movements in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, he

said. It was also at the forefront of the freedom struggle, as well as the struggle against racism, racial discrimination and Western hegemony in Africa.

China's relationship with Africa is not transactional, temporary, or based on conditionality; it is based on peaceful development, win-win cooperation and inclusivity through the Belt and Road Initiative, Hussain said.

On the contrary, the United States and other Western powers still view Africa in a Cold War context, where they try to intervene ostensibly on counterterrorism, but are promoting their own interests, he added.

"Chinese modernization is an example of the peaceful development of socialist modernization of harmony between nature and humanity, as opposed to the militarization promoted by the West, where they talk of control coercion, use of force and extraction," he said.

## Assessing threats

Charles Onunaju, director of the Center for China Studies in Abuja, Nigeria, said it is time for Africa and China to reflect on issues relating to strategic resilience and on how to maintain cooperation, as well as objectively assess strategic vulnerabilities and threats of the evolving China-Africa cooperation.

"This means reflecting on the wonderful trends that have occurred between China and Africa in the past 24 years and the outcome of the recent FOCAC summit (in Beijing)," Onunaju said.

He highlighted the need to further develop capacity, which is key for sustainability, through interrogating the nature of the state, the social system and the processes in which the two partners have embarked on.

"We should see China-Africa cooperation as an important contribution for us to (address) the challenges Africa (faces) in terms of strategic resilience and our obvious weaknesses and strategic vulnerabilities," he said.

Mahdi Gulaid, a member of Somalia's Parliament and former deputy prime minister of Somalia, said that with aligned goals, mutual respect and a shared vision, China and Africa stand as a powerful example of what global partnership can accomplish.

The China-Africa partnership is not just economic, but also deeply rooted in mutual respect and the pursuit of common goals, Gulaid said, adding that FOCAC has brought infrastructure development, healthcare and digital progress across the continent.

The three initiatives of Global Security, Global Civilization and Global Development proposed by China align closely with Africa's development agenda, he said.

## Celebrating historic day



People in vibrant costumes perform during celebrations marking the 114th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution in Mexico City on Wednesday. The revolution, which began on Nov 20, 1910, was a pivotal struggle for land reforms and social justice. Its legacy inspired later anti-imperialist movements in Latin America. RAQUEL CUNHA / REUTERS

# Chinese scientist's research on water wins worldwide acclaim

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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As the world grapples with an escalating water crisis, a Chinese scientist's innovative solution to water pollution is receiving international acclaim for its potential to benefit more people worldwide, particularly in developing nations.

Qu Jiuhui, a scientist at the Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, has been awarded the 2024 Nobel Sustainability Award for "Outstanding Research and Development in the Field of Water".

"Today, we are facing a serious water crisis, because this marvelous and pure substance has been polluted and overexploited by humans. Deeply rethinking what we have done wrong is urgently needed, as well as correcting the mistakes and making the polluted water clean again," Qu said at the awards ceremony Wednesday at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Nobel Sustainability Trust praised Qu's development of a "from source to tap" technical system that ensures safe drinking water across urban and rural areas. His innovations include breakthrough low-cost technologies for removing arsenic and fluoride from groundwater, with the potential to positively affect more than 200 million people globally.

For more than two decades, Qu has led China's Water Science and Technology Innovation Plans, making significant contributions to ecological and environmental restoration projects, including Yangtze River protection and the Baiyangdian wetland remediation, according to the Nobel foundation's news release.

His achievements also include developing large-scale infrastructure projects with industry partners and leading the development of China's first wastewater-resource factory in Yixing, Jiangsu province.

In his laudation for Qu at the ceremony, Slawomir Hermanowicz, a professor at UC Berkeley's Department of Civil and Environmental



Qu Jiuhui (left), a scientist at the Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences receives the 2024 Nobel Sustainability Award for "Outstanding Research and Development in the Field of Water" from Peter Nobel, chairman of the Nobel Sustainability Trust, on Wednesday at the University of California, Berkeley. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY

Engineering, lauded Qu's work as "a shining example of the transformative power of science innovation".

Hermanowicz particularly emphasized the significance of Qu's active zone-purification technology, which has been "instrumental" in major water-source restoration projects throughout China.

"While we are disinfecting water to get rid of pathogens, we are introducing other carcinogenic materials. So, his contribution was to reduce this problem at over 20 large-scale water treatment plants," Hermanowicz explained.

The impact of Qu's work extends beyond technical innovations. His leadership in fostering public-private partnerships has been crucial in translating scientific research into practical applications, ensuring that cutting-edge technologies

benefit both urban and rural populations, said Hermanowicz.

"As an adviser to the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), Qu has actively promoted international collaboration, sharing water-treatment technologies with developing nations such as Sri Lanka and Nepal," he continued.

"Driven by the combined challenges of population, pollution and climate change, the world is facing a serious water crisis now — water pollution, water shortage and hydrological hazards," Qu told China Daily. "The situation is particularly dire in poverty-stricken areas where access to clean water remains a significant challenge."

Over the past two decades, his team has developed user-friendly, cost-effective and low-maintenance water-treatment technologies specifically designed for rural areas. Those technologies have been used in villages in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh.

"International collaboration is very important. We can share knowledge and best practices with each other and push the deployment of the technologies to benefit more people," Qu noted. His team has signed a memorandum of understanding with UNEP to facilitate technology transfer to other countries through the platform.

"I think this is the core of the Nobel Sustainability Awards that science and technology should benefit everyone everywhere," he said.

Looking ahead, Qu said his team remains committed to international collaboration in water-environment research, an area that he said can transcend geopolitical tensions.

As an international member of the US National Academy of Engineering, Qu highlighted existing partnerships with American institutions and exchanges of knowledge through student programs, summits and workshops between China and the United States.

The Nobel Sustainability Trust Foundation, established in 2007 by four Nobel Family members, awards individuals who contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

# Chinese firms power Indonesia's EV sector

By LEONARDUS JEGHO in Jakarta and PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong

Chinese electric vehicles are powering Indonesia's EV industry and gaining ground among local consumers, industry executives say.

Highlighting the growing interest in the sector, the Indonesian Electric Vehicle Industry Association, or Periklindo, announced on Tuesday the dates for the fourth edition of the country's biggest annual EV expo. The Periklindo Electric Vehicle Show 2025, known as PEVS 2025, will be held from April 29 to May 4.

The event will showcase 135 EVs from Indonesian and international manufacturers, including major Chinese carmakers.

Adrianto Gani, vice-chairman of promotion and marketing at Periklindo, said EV makers "can learn much from China", especially in EV and battery development.

Rubby Lie, branch head of Prima Wahana Auto Mobil, Wuling Motor's largest authorized dealer in Indonesia, shared optimism about rising local demand for Wuling and other EVs, citing government emission goals and an improved EV ecosystem.

He attributed Wuling's popularity to its competitive price, diverse models and good after-sales service.

Wuling Motors, the first Chinese carmaker to build a plant in Indonesia, has been operational since 2017 in West Java Province, producing more than 100,000 units annually for both domestic and export markets.

It plans to begin EV battery production at the facility by year-end.

Last year, EVs on Indonesia's roads reached 116,438 units, according to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. While this is a small fraction of the country's total car market — which saw more than 1 million units sold last year — it marks a significant rise from 41,743 EVs in 2022 and 15,883 in 2021.

## Best-selling brands

In August, Chinese car brands were the best-selling in Indonesia's EV market, according to the Association of Indonesia Automotive Industries. BYD led with 2,971 units sold, while Chery and Wuling each recorded sales exceeding 400 units.

Asset management firm Eastspring Investments said in its July report that Indonesia's EV market penetration, currently below 1 percent, will rise to 6 percent for two-wheelers and 2 percent for four-wheelers by 2030.

It said the "electrification" of the transport sector is in line with Indonesia's climate targets, supported by government incentives and the country's vast nickel reserves, which position it as a future global leader in battery production and exports.

Moeldoko, head of Periklindo, said "the most important thing" is how to make EVs more acceptable to consumers, noting efforts to promote them even in rural areas.

Daswar Marpaung, president director of event management firm Dyantra Promosindo, said PEVS 2025 focuses on business-to-business, business-to-government and business-to-customer interactions to accelerate Indonesia's EV industry growth and market expansion.

Leonardus Jegho is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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## Tradition meets tech



An owner holds her Sony robotic dog named Cham as her daughter looks on during a Shichi-Go-San ritual on Wednesday at the Kanda Myojin Shrine in Tokyo. Traditionally held for children aged 7, 5 and 3, Shichi-Go-San, meaning Seven-Five-Three, is a ceremony to pray for their healthy growth and well-being. ISSEI KATO / REUTERS

# Dermatologists bring relief to South Sudan patients

NAIROBI — Patients with fungal skin infections in South Sudan are increasingly flocking to the Juba Teaching Hospital, drawn by the expertise of Zheng Jianfeng, a Chinese dermatologist from the 12th batch of the Chinese medical team stationed in the country.

Benson Kocho, a 32-year-old teacher in the capital Juba, is among the patients seeking treatment from Zheng.

With a tumor on his upper lip, Kocho came to the hospital on Nov 8 after local doctors were at a loss regarding his medical condition.

"The tumor started small, but it kept on developing in late Septem-

ber," he told Xinhua News Agency on Tuesday. "It grew so big that I could not close my mouth. It gave me a stigma because everybody was asking me what this was."

Kocho said he was lucky to meet Zheng because the Chinese doctor, with "a true spirit of humanity", sympathized with his condition and performed an operation the same day.

Following the successful operation with the laser machine introduced last year by the Chinese medical team, Kocho is now relieved and no longer bothered by the concerns of his students and onlookers.

"The wound is recovering well, and I have come to see the doctor to

receive my routine medicine," he said.

Zheng treats about 60 patients daily, and with such a packed schedule, he sometimes has to sacrifice his breaks.

Madaya Hassan, a Sudanese national who fled the current conflict and arrived in Juba a year ago with her family, said the team of Chinese dermatologists has been kind enough to treat her son Sadiq Al-Amin, who has been suffering from chronic eczema for about eight years.

"I tried to seek medication but could not find it," she said. "Some people advised me to bring my child to the Chinese doctors. When we came here for the first time in July,

my son was given medicine and the child recovered."

Joseph Kenyi Okumu, an assistant dermatologist who works with Zheng, said Chinese doctors are very dedicated and professional, adding that they have treated patients with common fungal skin diseases such as scabies, tinea, eczema and chronic dermatitis, as well as diseases such as cutaneous larva migrans that occur mostly during the rainy season.

"We are giving free medication because the patients coming to us cannot afford medication outside this hospital," Kenyi said.

XINHUA

## LIFE



Clockwise from above left: Bark art by Li Yanhong and her fellow artisans feature distinctive elements of Bailang town in Arxan, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, including a train station, a wolf and a local home, and a river, as well as a peacock and an imaginative rendering of a fish with a long tail. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Bark pictures add layer of good fortune

Woody material permanently retains color as art form helps villagers forge new lives, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Under Li Yanhong's expert touch, rough birch bark is meticulously peeled off before being separated into up to 40 layers, each of a different tint. Switching between a pair of scissors and a carving knife, the artisan from Bailang town, Arxan in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, adeptly cuts, folds, pastes, twists and carves the paper-thin layers into different shapes and sizes.

She then mounts them to create a simple, yet elegant bark picture.

Because of the differences in pigmentation between its outer and inner layers, birch bark produces dozens of hues, from silver gray, ash white and off-white, to brownish yellow, pink gold, gray-green, gray orange, and earthy yellow.

"At the same time, it has dense fibers, and a seamless texture, and layers as delicate as paper, which makes it an ideal material for art," Li says, adding that the bark is also waterproof as a result of its oil content, which makes her creations durable. "The best-selling part of my art is that its rich natural colors won't fade away."

With the arrival of winter, Li and her team have been busy producing the distinctive local art for tourists. "They are wildly popular with travelers, especially young people," Li says excitedly.

Her pictures primarily use bark from birch trees; its natural colors and textures are the foundation of her designs.

The art form was devised a long time ago by Arxan's forestry workers and has since evolved to draw on the principles of traditional Chinese composition.

"The unwanted bark from trees is transformed into something valuable in our hands. It's eco-friendly, green, and never fades," says Li, in her 40s.

Li usually starts collecting bark in the summer, when the temperature is just right for exploring the forest. "It would be too cold in spring or winter, while fallen leaves would get in the way in autumn," Li explains, adding that she chooses smooth bark with light texturing, with which it is easier to work.

Turning bark into fine art requires a deep understanding of its properties. "You need to control your strength when peeling away the layers, one by one, without breaking any of them," Li says.

In order to bring the local elements that feature in these pictures to life, such as sika deer, artisans need to observe closely to breathe the soul into their work. "Everything requires time and patience," Li says.

It usually takes a beginner at least six months before they can make a simple picture.

"The colors in bark are like human fingerprints, and no two pieces are the same. The distinctions grow as the bark oxidizes, a process that varies with the time it takes to make a piece," Li explains.

Born into a forestry worker's family, Li developed a connection with bark art as a child. Surrounded by dense forest, she would go out with other residents to collect fallen bark to make everyday items like cigarette cases and containers.

She often watched women making bark pictures to decorate their homes, or to make as gifts for friends and family. "I was especially attracted to the layered texture and gradating colors of birch bark," Li recalls.

Whenever her grandmother and aunts



Left: Li teaches students how to make bark pictures in Bailang town. Right: She engages in livestreaming sales of bark art.



were working on a piece, the young girl would help, working her way up to creating her own first designs, images of court ladies or cartoon characters.

After finishing a course in tailoring at a vocational school in Ulanhot, Inner Mongolia, about a four-hour drive from her home, Li began working at a clothing factory, where she earned just enough to make ends meet.

Whenever she had the time, she would

return to her childhood hobby and make bark art, which to her surprise has been growing in popularity as a souvenir since the 2000s, as increased forest protection efforts have given rise to flourishing tourism.

"Initially, I earned just a few thousand yuan a year, but over time that grew to 7,000 (\$967) or 8,000 yuan, which made a big difference to my family income," she says.

In 2017, Xie Caiyun, who runs a bark-picture production business in Bailang town,

approached Li and persuaded her to return to the town and help residents upgrade their art as a means of alleviating poverty.

Li accepted Xie's offer to work at the company, which she says was one of the best decisions she ever made.

At the end of 2018, bark art craftsmanship was named a form of regional intangible cultural heritage in Inner Mongolia, and support for its development began to flow.

Li still remembers that there were only a few makers when she first returned to the town and that experts from the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology were invited to give her and other artisans art training in 2019.

"From technique innovations to color matching, from integrating art styles to the use of materials, the training gave us the confidence to experiment, broadened our thinking, and expanded our horizons," Li says.

Li was inspired to incorporate other crafts, such as cloisonne and filigree work, in her pictures. For instance, she has used cloisonne to create headdress for figures, and has made earrings and fridge magnets with bark.

"In the past, the work ended with the picture itself, but we have found we can present pretty much anything through bark to cater to modern needs, such as items of home decor," Li says.

Li's forest folk culture business has continued to develop, for example, making Peking Opera facial masks and Chinese zodiac series, which are among the most popular.

The increased diversity of bark pictures has boosted sales and encouraged more people to take up the art.

Li even talked Zhao Guihua, now one of her colleagues, into picking up her childhood art again two years ago.

Under Li's guidance, Zhao's skills have improved significantly. The woman's initially somewhat rough creations have now become refined works of art, earning her the title of first-tier master at the company.

"I used to work at a water plant, earning at most 20,000 yuan a year," says Zhao, who is in her 50s.

"Making bark art pays more, and I also have flexible working hours, which is much better than before," Zhao adds.

So far, Li has helped change the lives of 20 formerly impoverished women.

"We rank artisans by their skill levels, from first-tier master to second-tier master, down to junior instructors," Li says.

Orders are completed on a piecework basis, with production times ranging from several days to several months, depending on the complexity. High earners make an average of 4,000 to 5,000 yuan a month.

At the eighth China Intangible Cultural Heritage Expo in Jinan, Shandong province, in October, Li and her co-workers' pictures were a big draw.

"Many museums have shown interest in buying our work or in selling it for us," says Jia Zhiling, a manager at the Bailang forest culture company.

Earlier this year, bark pictures made their way to the United Kingdom and Ireland for the Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations, Jia says.

Li has also come up with kits for amateurs to enjoy a taste of the art form's beauty.

"It has been a hit with travelers, especially those on learning tours," Li says.

Looking back, she says that she is delighted that bark art has evolved from a record of life and work in the forests into one of the most popular local tourist souvenirs.

"It is a gift from nature. I will continue to infuse a touch of modern style into its authenticity," she says.

Contact the writer at [yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn)

## What's on

### Mixed-media

The Fifth China Comprehensive Material Painting Biennale is on at Ningbo Museum of Art located in Ningbo in Zhejiang province, showing the latest developments in mixed-media painting. The first exhibition was held in 2015 to explore new approaches to painting, addressing aesthetic demand for two-dimensional artworks.

Different methods of creation and materials, such as collage, printmaking, lacquer art and frescoes, have been used to introduce a cross-disciplinary approach.

More than 200 works are on display until



Dec 8, depicting various social themes such as scientific innovation, poverty elimination, national defense, rural construction, and environmental restoration.

9 am-5 pm, Tuesdays to Fridays, and Sundays; 9 am-8 pm on Saturdays, closed on Mondays. 122 Renmin Lu, Jiangbei district, Ningbo, Zhejiang province. 0574-8764-3222.

### Dramatic era

After seeing the photographic images his German contemporary Heinrich Heidersberger created with experimental techniques, French artist Jean Cocteau wrote a letter to him in 1962 in which he said, "Let us admire, even if we don't understand." These words summarize the collective feelings of the audience at *Creative Machine*, a newly opened exhibition at the Taikang Art Museum in Beijing running until Feb 28.

The show gathers the work of major fig-



ures worldwide whose creations show how computer science, digital technology and artificial intelligence have influenced creativity over the past decades. Many are mathematicians and computer scientists who actively engage in art-making.

The exhibition traces the early days of computer-generated images to dazzling digital works by artists today — a mirror of

the dramatic changes in science, art and society.

10 am-5:30 pm, closed on Mondays. Building 1, No 16 Yard, Jinghui Jie, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-6104-5886.

### Relaxing lifestyles

*Beyond the Soil*, now running at Hanshan Art Museum in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, is an exhibition that exudes the nostalgic feeling of a slow-paced, relaxed lifestyle and, more importantly, examines the changing relations between people and land. Specifically, how much society has gained from soil for development and in what ways we have paid it back, or, in contrast, damaged it.

More than 120 works by 50 artists are on show until Dec 15 to celebrate the vigor of the land and invite discussions on the future of the ecosystem.

Artists collaborated with scientists at the Institute of Soil Science, Chinese Academy of Sciences, based in Nanjing, Jiangsu. Together, they present ways to help the public understand the plight of the land and agriculture.

10 am-6 pm, closed on Mondays. 999 Taihu Dadao, Suzhou New District, Suzhou, Jiangsu province. 0512-6958-0894.

CHINA DAILY



## LIFESHANGHAI

## Chinese culture sparkles in French jewelry

Exhibition opens dialogue highlighting the two countries' nourishing artistic exchanges, Zhang Kun reports.

A dialogue between fine jewelry and ancient Chinese culture is taking place at the exhibition *Cartier, the Power of Magic* at Shanghai Museum East from Nov 6 to Feb 17. The exhibition features 202 exquisite pieces from the Cartier Collection including jewelry, watches and 96 archival documents along with 34 Chinese cultural relics selected from the Shanghai Museum collection, and borrowed from nine other institutions around China to create a profound dialogue that spans six sections.

This is also the first time the Shanghai Museum has involved artificial intelligence in the scenography design of an exhibition, which was created by the AI team led by contemporary Chinese artist Cai Guoqiang.

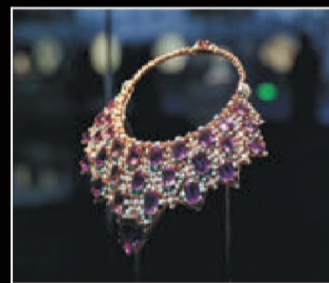
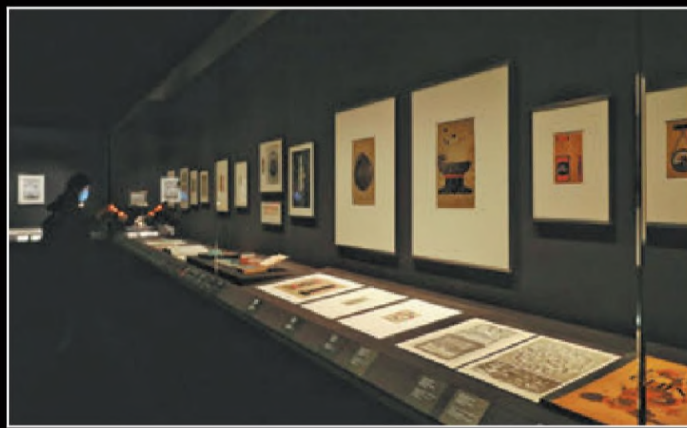
Twenty years ago, the French brand and the Shanghai Museum first collaborated to present the exhibition *Cartier* at its venue in the People's Square.

"That exhibition is still widely remembered and praised by the public because it was among the earliest of its type on the Chinese mainland that audiences could appreciate a lot of fine jewelry from abroad. It made Cartier a household name in China," says Chu Xiaobo, director of the Shanghai Museum.

The ongoing exhibition has "gone beyond just a regular jewelry show," Chu says, "because, in the curatorial work, we are more aware of our cultural heritage and manage to reflect its influence."

"I believe many visitors will find that Chinese culture has somehow nourished Cartier, or maybe Cartier's philosophy of transcending jewelry artistry to create timeless works of art closely mirrors the enduring values of ancient Chinese art with subtlety and profound harmony," he says.

Thirty-four sets of Chinese artworks are on display at this exhibition along with jewelry pieces. Visitors will find Cartier tiaras made in the early 1900s on display alongside a Chinese gold crown with gems dating from the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), and the brand's signature panther brooch sitting by a pair of gold and silver inlaid bronze panther weights also from the Han Dynasty.



**Clockwise from top left:** Ninety-six archival documents are on display on *Cartier, the Power of Magic*, at Shanghai Museum East until Feb 17. The Academician's Sword made for Jean Cocteau in 1955. Bib Necklace, special order of the Duke and the Duchess of Windsor in 1947. Sanxingdui bronze head, late Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC), loaned from the Sichuan provincial institute of archaeology. **Bottom:** The exhibition marks artificial intelligence's involvement in the scenography design, by an AI team led by contemporary artist Cai Guoqiang. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

## If you go

*Cartier, the Power of Magic*  
Nov 6-Feb 17, 2025, 10 am-6 pm (last entry by 5 pm), closed on Tuesday.  
Reservation required.  
Shanghai Museum East, Bright Dairy & Food Exhibition Gallery 1, 1952 Century Avenue, Pudong New Area, Shanghai.  
[www.shanghaimuseum.net](http://www.shanghaimuseum.net)

They will also find Chinese patterns, materials and decorative methods, such as mother-of-pearl-inlaid lacquers, utilized by the brand to create a variety of art pieces.

The AI team led by Cai reconstructed a landscape painting by Ni Zan (1301-74) and combined it with Chinese garden line drawings to create the scenography. The design has "taken Chinese aesthetics to the extreme," Chu says.

Ni is one of the four great master painters of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). He

was from today's Wuxi in Jiangsu province and lived a reclusive life by Taihu Lake. His landscape paintings often featured minimal compositions, leaving large blank areas on the paper that usually depict a few slim trees, mountains from afar, or a rustic hut with no human presence.

At the opening ceremony on Nov 4, Cai recalled his college years studying stage design at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, when he used to go to the Shanghai Museum and see the paintings. "I especially

admired the spirit of Ni Zan and considered him my soul mate," he says.

The 67-year-old artist from Quanzhou in Fujian province has worked with a broad range of mediums and is best known internationally for his works involving fireworks and gunpowder, as "its unpredictability and uncontrollability have kept me from ever growing tired of it," says the artist. It is his fascination with the unforeseeable that led to his research in artificial intelligence in 2017.

He proposed to have his AI "doppelganger" participate in the design of the exhibition, to "convey a sense of contemporaneity, romance and liberty through new AI technology."

"I think the result is outstanding, very promising, and will be a subject of interest for the entire world," says Pierre Rainero, director of the French company's Image, Style and Heritage.

As part of the celebration for the 60 years of diplomatic relations between China and France, the exhibition also highlights the cultural bond between the two countries through the eyes of the brand, Rainero says.

The exhibition reflects how Chinese culture is one of the influences in the creation of new shapes and new forms of beauty, and how materials used in Chinese jewelry were used by a French jeweler, and offered to Western consumers.

Chu Xin, deputy director of the exhibition department of the Shanghai Museum, cites the lines of French poet and artist Jean Cocteau who praised Cartier as "that subtle magician who captures fragments of the moon on a thread of sun," and introduces the first piece featured at the exhibition, the Academician's Sword, which Cocteau participated in designing.

Louis-Francois Cartier founded the family company in 1847 and by the dedication and artistic innovation of several generations, it developed a distinctive, bold style rooted in the belief that inspiration for jewelry design should come from everything beyond jewelry itself, Chu Xin says.

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## AI language model hopes to preserve metropolis' local dialect

By ZHENG ZHENG

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A team of researchers at Shanghai University has unveiled an artificial intelligence language model designed to help preserve and promote the native Shanghai dialect. Named Xiao Hu, the model is capable of speech recognition, text-to-speech conversion, and dialogue between the Shanghai dialect and Mandarin Chinese.

"Our goal extends far beyond merely teaching AI to speak Shanghaiese," says Zeng Jun, director of Shanghai University's publicity department. "Our true objective is to leverage this language model as a means to preserve and innovate the development of the Shanghai dialect, enabling more people, especially Shanghai, to become familiar with and use it."

The impetus behind the project stems from the university's deep-rooted excellence in Chinese language studies and its vision of empowering Chinese through AI technology. Renowned scholars, such as Professor Qian Nairong, a leading authority on the research of the Shanghai dialect, and Associate Professor Ding Dimeng, a Shanghai dialect expert, have laid the foundation for this project.

Ding underscored the cultural significance of the Shanghai dialect, describing it as the root of the city's identity, which contains ancient pronunciations and modern



**Left:** The language model's development team discussing the project. **Right:** Shanghai University has unveiled an artificial intelligence language model designed to help preserve and promote the city's native dialect. PHOTOS BY ZHENG ZHENG / CHINA DAILY

loanwords. "The Shanghai dialect is indispensable in this metropolis," Ding says. "I believe this language model can play an important role in language and dialect preservation efforts, accomplishing tasks that individuals cannot."

The urgency of the project cannot be overstated.

According to doctorate candidate Fan Tianyu, a key member of the development team, a recent statistic shows that only 22

percent of Shanghai residents aged 6 to 20 still use the dialect. The dialect's precarious state highlights the challenge of creating and purifying high-quality language data sets.

The development process was an interdisciplinary effort, according to Fan. While linguists like Qian and Ding provided crucial resources, the Chinese Language Department of the university spearheaded the model training and integration. The univer-

sity's art academy handled 3D modeling and visual design, and the Ziqiang 5000 supercomputing system furnished the necessary computational muscle.

"The creation of Xiao Hu represents the collective efforts of multiple generations of scholars at Shanghai University," Fan remarked. *Hu* is a short form of "Shanghai" in Mandarin. "The project is advancing thanks to the pioneering work of professors Qian and Ding and contributions from our

data processing experts, computational linguists and design team."

Looking ahead, the team plans to expand Xiao Hu's capabilities with features like additional voice models for different genders and ages, enabling functions like singing in the Shanghai dialect. Enhancements to language understanding and generation are also planned.

Zeng highlights the model's vast potential, with applications ranging from elderly voice services and language-learning platforms to livestreams hosted entirely in the distinctive local vernacular.

Perhaps most promising, Xiao Hu could serve as a translation tool and emotional companion for the city's aging Shanghaiese speakers. Official data shows Shanghai had over 5.6 million residents aged 60 and above as of late 2023, accounting for more than a third of the total registered population in the city.

"By enabling seamless communication in the Shanghai dialect, Xiao Hu could provide companionship, translation services and emotional support for the elderly, many of whom are more comfortable conversing in their native dialect," Zeng adds.

Other applications include integrating the model into schools to facilitate Shanghaiese learning through interactive products and courses and utilizing it as an AI host for engaging audiences in livestreams and broadcasts in the Shanghai dialect, he adds.

## LIFE

Buyi is constantly on the road. Every spring and autumn, the rock band goes on tour covering around 50 cities at a time. They perform an average of four gigs a week with back-to-back shows from Fridays to Sundays in addition to appearances at music festivals and multi-band concerts.

But for its members, this intense lifestyle is a joy and isn't hard to maintain, even after more than a decade. They relish traveling to any live venue to perform for fans and savor a local beer afterward.

This November, Buyi went a bit farther and embarked on a tour in Japan. Within 20 days, they performed 17 gigs in a dozen Japanese cities, the majority of which they headlined alongside Japanese bands or musicians.

The theme was a continuation of the band's 2024 China tour — *Back to the Future* — which seeks to take the audience on a journey through the band's 29-year history, re-creating the raw energy of Chinese rock music in the 1990s.

"We don't bring lighting or visuals. We simply turn up the lights, so the audience can see the four of us performing. The lyrics display and visuals only dilute the energy onstage," says Wu Ningyue, Buyi's lead singer and guitarist.

"We are returning to the band itself and drawing all audience attention to our performances and music, without distraction."

Buyi was formed in 1995 in Yinchuan in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region when Wu was just 21. The band's name, which means "cotton clothes", is a reference to ordinary people or a modest lifestyle, reflecting the sense of genuineness and simplicity valued by the band.

It merges rock 'n' roll with the authentic, visceral folk music of Northwest China and consciously uses traditional instruments in their arrangements.

Since it was formed, Buyi has performed over 1,500 concerts and the band aims to take its music to every corner of the country. The band members have also made appearances at Chinese and international music festivals, including this year at The Great Escape music festival in the United Kingdom.

"Every member of our band has had our fates changed by rock 'n' roll. We want to share our experiences with more people and let everyone know that life has limitless potential," Wu says.

"We visit more cities to share our music in the hope that more people will resonate with our songs and become healthier, happier and more empowered. Live music is a form of catharsis, finding happiness and connecting with kindred spirits. It creates an extraordinary energy and we like to spread this energy through the crowd."

The band had one of its most meaningful moments in 2005 when Japanese drummer Satoru Sueyoshi, who is also known as Funky, met its members by chance.

Before his first visit to China, the now 65-year-old Funky was already established in Japan's



Rock band Buyi touring Japan in November with a series of concerts in collaboration with Japanese musicians, including guitarist and singer-songwriter Kyoji Yamamoto (second from right) on Nov 12. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Buyi becomes big in Japan

Veterans of China's rock scene add a Japanese leg to their ongoing tour route, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.



Left: The band was founded in 1995 in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, the home city of lead singer Wu Ningyue (second from right). Right: Drummer Satoru Sueyoshi, former member of Japanese rock band Bakufu-Slump, started working with Buyi in 2005 and officially joined the band as a drummer in 2018.



music scene as drummer for the rock band Bakufu-Slump.

During Bakufu-Slump's peak in the 1980s, the band had to record TV programs five days a week, a lifestyle Funky disliked as he prefers performing live. When he first visited China in 1990, he chanced upon local musicians like Zhang Chu and the band Black Panther, igniting his passion for Chinese rock 'n' roll.

Funky later settled in China where he's worked with many musicians, contributing to the development of Chinese rock 'n' roll. However, this lifestyle was growing increasingly hectic, coming to resemble the life he led in Japan, until someone suggested he produce a song for Buyi in 2005.



A Japanese fan (third from right) gives the band a banner celebrating the friendship between China and Japan.

When the band invited him to their courtyard in Beijing, Funky assumed that it was another well-off group. This impression quickly evaporated when Wu picked him up in a beat-up and barely functioning Jeep.

The rented courtyard where the band lived and rehearsed was equally modest, but to Funky, he'd found his dream place to play rock 'n' roll.

"When I was young, I moved to Tokyo, working odd jobs while rehearsing in a band. Eventually, we made it big and became rock stars. But looking back now, I realize my happiest days were those early days of rehearsing and working," Funky says.

"I'd forgotten about that life, but meeting Buyi brought it all back. I

remembered how happy I used to be, having a dream to pursue."

Funky immediately decided to move into the courtyard, invited a recording engineer to set up a professional recording studio and helped Buyi produce albums. He officially became its drummer in 2018.

Wu says that after meeting Funky, Buyi has been taken to a whole new level. "Before, we'd never even considered releasing an album. The cost was simply too high. Funky was our producer and recorded drums for many of our tracks. Almost all our albums feature his drumming. So really, Funky lifted us up several levels."

Funky also arranged this Japan tour. Apart from appearing as featured artists at the 40th anniversary reunion concerts of Bakufu-Slump, the band members also performed on the same stage and jammed with a number of well-known Japanese musicians.

"The session with the Chinese band Buyi was incredibly exciting. After this song, we played one of their songs, which I didn't know at all, in response to the encore. It turned out to be very moving." Japanese guitarist and singer-songwriter Kyoji Yamamoto wrote in a post on the social media platform X after his Nov 12 concert with Buyi.

"It became a wonderful moment of friendship between China and Japan. Music truly has no borders."

Wu says that they embarked on the Japan tour with a humble heart, simply hoping to make their music heard, not caring about the size of the audience that showed up and wanting to learn from other veteran musicians.

The tour turned out to be an enlightening experience. Performing with Japanese musicians to predominantly Japanese audiences proved an in-depth, cross-cultural exchange.

Wu says that he was impressed by the strong, multigenerational rock music fan base in Japan, the virtuosity of Japanese musicians and Japan's well-developed music industry.

But Buyi was not daunted by appearing with high-level acts. Instead, Wu believes that they were able to bring their own style to the stage, and discovered the edge Chinese bands enjoy — a vigor unpolished by the music industry.

"Many of our songs have a powerful energy distinctive of Northwest China. We lived in a place with deserts, and our music shares that raw and rugged quality. The Japanese musicians often mentioned our 'energy', saying that, although they couldn't understand our lyrics, they felt our unique energy," Wu says.

"I consider these exchanges especially meaningful. We were respected for our style. Though we might not be as technically proficient, we performed and expressed what we wanted to convey and the audience and musicians received our message. The beauty of live music is truly irreplaceable."

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By YANG YANG

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Last month, major online Chinese shopping platform JD.com announced on its official social media account that it would discontinue its collaboration with controversial female stand-up comedian Yang Li for its Singles Day shopping carnival that fell on Nov 11. The move came in response to protests lodged by shoppers in social media posts in which many asked for a refund or said they would uninstall the JD app and never use it again.

This is not the first time consumers have protested against 32-year-old Yang's participation in promotions for brands such as Shede Spirits, a white liquor brand, Intel, the computing giant, and car brands like Mercedes-Benz and Xiaopeng.

It all dates back to the summer of 2020, when Yang's gag about men who look mediocre but are self-absorbed on the popular stand-up comedy program *Rock & Roast Season 3* provoked fierce discussions online, leading to the coining of the term *puxinnan* (mediocre but self-absorbed guy).

Although it was a joke, the term apparently offended a lot of people, especially men, who according to market consultancy QuestMobile,

account for 58.3 percent of JD's 300 million active users.

Soon after the show was broadcast, the topic "Has Yang Li gone too far in the fifth episode of *Rock & Roast Season 3*?" was viewed more than 2 million times with nearly 1,500 users posting replies on Zhihu.com, a Quora-like knowledge-sharing platform.

Many Zhihu users, men and women, said they found Yang's jokes funny, especially within the overall context of her performance.

"I'm a man and I can totally accept it. That part about a woman turning to a male friend after breaking up with her boyfriend in particular. After the male friend says: 'But nothing can be done', I laughed out loud, because it's a typical male answer," wrote a user called Liuchuanfeng, whose post received thumbs-up from nearly 5,000 others.

Another "mediocre man" nicknamed Skald also applauded Yang's performance, saying that male stand-up comedians on the program also made a lot of jokes that could be considered offensive to women, but they weren't bombarded by men complaining.

"What is the biggest barrier for woman comedians in the industry? These men with double standards," he wrote in the post.

Analyzing the skill of Yang's performance, Skald said that it was carefully structured — step by step she pushed the performance to its emotional and sarcastic climax.

"What she talked about is social reality, that women are told not to be too sharp-tongued, because what they say is 'not important', so a lot of women tend not to express their thoughts, which is what needs to be changed," he writes in the post.

He continues that the point of Yang's sarcasm is that because men dismiss women, they don't care if they get criticized by them until, as in this case, they get a slap in the face at the end of a performance and realize they have just been scolded but, he writes, it is "those who take jests seriously that are problematic."

So far, more than 3,600 users approved of his post.

Still, many people feel that the term *puxinnan* has aggravated the antagonism between the sexes in

China, especially after it was taken out of context.

One 41-year-old doctor in Beijing, who requested anonymity, says he was offended when he was labeled a *puxinnan* by women online.

Having graduated from a top medical university, and working at a first-class hospital in Beijing, he says he is confused by the definition of the term.

"I have no idea what kind of men do not get called *puxinnan*. Just those who are rich, handsome and powerful?" he asks.

He says he was called a *puxinnan* during quarrels online several years ago, before he knew what that term meant, and had not known about Yang until JD's recent publicity crisis.

He says that by offending some men, Yang wins more support from women, who are willing to spend money on products she endorses.

"This is what they mean by 'being unafraid to offend people'. The more you offend, the more returns you get," he says.

Even worse, he says, is that marketing teams in search of profit

Some people say not to take things so seriously, stand-up comedy is the art of offending, but the audience should be the ones to determine whether something offends or not."

A doctor in Beijing commenting on Yang Li's gag

stoke argument between the sexes, adding to the bitterness, which had already been there when he was younger and has only become worse since, especially online.

"Because, when you argue with people online, you can attack each other using awful language and blacklist people once the conversation ends, which is impossible in real life," he says.

"It's common for women and men to attack each other online,

especially in the comments posted on short videos."

Although "mediocre but self-absorbed guy" was originally a joke on a stand-up show, after spreading online, it has developed a much broader meaning, so that when a woman now uses it to describe a man, it becomes a real offense, he says.

"Some people say not to take things so seriously, stand-up comedy is the art of offending, but the audience should be the ones to determine whether something offends or not. If we think it's an offense and feel uncomfortable, then it is offensive," he says.

Zhu Chuchu, a 31-year-old freelancer in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, agrees that the term aggravates the divide between the sexes.

"No matter what we talk about online, one casual tag terminates the desire to understand each other because the tagged person reacts defensively," she says. "It's impossible to summarize a complex person with a simple tag."

"The fragmentary information and anonymity online exacerbate the divide between the sexes, even though I know that's not the intention," she continues.

To solve this argument, it might be better to find a way for the two sexes to talk peacefully and friendly, says Zhu.