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CHINA DAILY

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President's trip sends message of goodwill

Xi's visits to Peru and Brazil highlight multilateralism, shared development

By CAO DESHENG
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Traveling more than 40,000 kilometers, President Xi Jinping has leveraged his 11-day Latin American tour, which concluded on Saturday, to once again send out a message of "friendship, unity and cooperation" in order to build a community with a shared future for mankind, according to a senior diplomat.

The trip took Xi to Peru and Brazil, where he attended the 31st APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Peru's capital, Lima, and the 19th G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and made state visits to both countries.

From Lima to Rio, Xi sent a clear message of firmly upholding multilateralism at the crossroads of human history, illuminated the "Latin American moment" of global governance with Chinese wisdom, and demonstrated China's image as a responsible major country with fairness, justice, courage, openness and inclusiveness, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said to Chinese media upon the conclusion of Xi's diplomatic tour.

During an intensive series of diplomatic engagements, Xi attended nearly 40 bilateral and multilateral events, during which China signed more than 60 cooperation documents, said Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

The trip has contributed to promoting strategic communication, deepening practical cooperation and bolstering the healthy development of major-country relations, while also leading the Global South in unity and self-strengthening for shared development, Wang added.

The key highlight of Xi's visit to Peru was the joint participation by the Chinese president and Peruvian President Dina Ercilia Boluarte Zegarra via video link in the opening ceremony of Chancay Port, which is the first smart and green deep-water port in South America. The landmark Belt and Road project has enabled the phrase "from Chancay to Shanghai" to become a reality, promising significant benefits for Peru and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

Boluarte excitedly described the opening of Chancay Port as a historic moment of pride for all Peruvian people, saying that the magnificent project will significantly promote Latin American integration and usher in a new chapter of economic development for Peru, according to Wang.

In Brazil, Xi reiterated the importance of development in global governance, calling for building a just world of shared growth.

At the 11th G20 Summit in 2016 in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China placed development at the center of the G20's macroeconomic policy coordination for the first time, and the Rio summit this year decided to establish a Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty. As Xi noted at the Rio summit, from Hangzhou to Rio, G20 leaders have been working toward one and the same goal — to build a just world of common development.

Wang said that Xi's proposals for global governance at the Rio summit responded to the strong aspirations of the Global South for equality and reform, made clear the correct direction for improving global governance, and provided reassurance to a world amid uncertainty.

During Xi's stay in Peru and Brazil, leaders of various countries expressed their sincere admiration for Xi's experience in governance and his demeanor as a great leader, Wang said, adding that Chilean President Gabriel Boric carried with him a Spanish edition of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)*, and personally asked Xi to sign it as a keepsake.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva commended Xi, saying that the Chinese president works for the well-being of the people, upholds social fairness and justice, and advocates peace rather than war, cooperation rather than confrontation, and creation rather than destruction, which has set an example for the world, according to Wang.

Wang also cited Peruvian President Boluarte's comment about Xi during a media interview, in which she said that Xi has demonstrated how a country can get out of extreme poverty and become a strong nation. "From China, we have learned that nothing is impossible," Wang quoted her as saying.

During his trip, Xi also elaborated on China's important measures to promote high-quality development and high-level opening-up through talks and meetings, public addresses, written speeches and signed articles, Wang said.

The foreign minister added that Xi welcomed all parties to grow together with the Chinese economy and work together for the modernization of all countries featuring peaceful development, mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity.

Reduced to ashes



A man watches as houses burn in a densely populated slum in Manila, capital of the Philippines, on Sunday. Manila Fire District said around 1,000 houses were gutted in the blaze. There were no immediate reports of casualties. JAM STA ROSA / AFP

Fiscal revenue growth seen as sign of economic recovery gaining traction

By WANG KEJU
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

China's tax revenue growth returned to positive territory in October for the first time this year, suggesting that the country's economic activity is picking up pace and gaining stronger momentum, analysts said.

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The incremental policy package introduced recently by the world's second-largest economy, which includes measures to revitalize the capital market and stabilize the real estate sector, has played a pivotal role in driving positive changes in the country's tax revenue, they added.

According to the latest data released by the Ministry of Finance, China's general public

budget revenue, which is the sum total of tax and nontax revenues, grew 5.5 percent year-on-year in October, marking a continued rebound in growth momentum.

In particular, the data showed that tax revenue recorded a year-on-year increase of 1.8 percent in October, the first positive growth so far this year, pointing to encouraging signs of improvement.

Yang Zhiyong, president of the Chinese Academy of Fiscal Sciences, said the return to positive territory in terms of tax revenue is a clear indication that economic recovery is gaining traction. This provides a solid basis for the continuation of the current growth trajectory in the coming period, Yang said.

Meanwhile, the recent policy package, which has introduced wide-ranging fiscal and capital market measures, has been crucial

in bolstering business confidence and economic activity, ultimately translating into increased tax collection, he added.

According to the Ministry of Finance, one key development was the significant increase in revenue from securities transaction stamp duty, which was 2.53 times the figure of October last year, driven by a notable improvement in market sentiment and a substantial expansion in stock trading volume.

The year-on-year decline in value-added tax revenue narrowed to 1.2 percent in October, a significant improvement over the minus 5.6 percent recorded in the first nine months of the year. The ministry added that personal income tax collection registered a 5.5 percent year-on-year growth, marking the first positive increase since April.

An analysis by Galaxy Securities

shows that the changes observed in last month's tax revenue data are broadly consistent with the optimizing supply-demand structure of the economy.

The increase in consumption tax and real estate tax revenues indicates that the demand side of the economy is steadily improving. Moreover, the moderation in the decline of corporate income tax and personal income tax revenues is primarily attributed to the improvement in corporate profitability and cash flow, the institution said.

In addition to the developments in the tax revenue performance, the country's nontax revenue has also exhibited a strong surge.

Nontax revenue includes a wide range of sources such as administrative fees, fines and confiscations, income from the use of State-owned assets, and returns on State-owned capital.

The market is closely monitoring the growth in nontax revenue, because of the potential risks it poses to the business climate and market sentiment.

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Expo mirrors vision of openness, trade partnerships

The recently concluded seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai was a reflection of the ethos of the ancient Silk Road route that connected people, ideas, economies, cultures, civilizations and products, brightening the chances of greater connectivity, prosperity and openness, while promoting equitable, fair and free economic globalization and international cooperation.

The latest trade fair further highlighted China's strong commitment to opening-up, moderni-

WORLD WATCH
By Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan

zation and global cooperation.

The expo represented a gateway for translating China's vast market into great opportunities for the world, in line with President Xi Jinping's vision of shared global prosperity, trans-regional connectivity, and greater opening-up and cooperation.

Foreign leaders and heads of international organizations have termed the CIIE an important international platform for promoting trade and investment. This highlights their confidence in the Chinese economy and its prospects, as well as the willingness to advance partnerships with China in multiple spheres, including the economy, investment, trade, connectivity and green development.

Critical analysis and comparative studies show that the CIIE has

become an effective platform in promoting the accessibility of international trade for all and in connecting the hubs of global development, security and civilizational initiatives.

Over its first six editions, the CIIE facilitated deals worth a combined \$420 billion, helping over 1,130 foreign enterprises and investment promotion organizations to forge connections across China.

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Fusion fashion



Visitors admire a traditional *hanfu* attire featuring elements of the art of paper-cutting and Chinese opera in Lanzhou, Gansu province, on Saturday. LI YALONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

BITTERSWEET WARNING ON DRINKING TOO MUCH MILK TEA

Study finds overconsumption can lead to depression, anxiety, but young fans of the beverage unperturbed

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

On a recent Sunday, Li Mingchun had dinner with two of his friends, and one of them bought him two bottles of milk tea because "nothing is more compatible with a nice meal than sweet milk tea".

Li drank them both, followed by

In-depth

a Coca-Cola. "It is common for young people to buy each other milk tea. For me, the more, the merrier," the 28-year-old said.

Li drinks four to six cups of milk tea every week because he prefers

sweet drinks and does not like water.

He buys and drinks a cup of milk tea whenever he sees one of the popular brands, he said. "It is especially satisfying to drink iced milk tea after working out, and drinking sweet milk tea with a loved one brings double the amount of joy."

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Milk tea: Health risks won't stop craze

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Li doesn't think about the negative aspects of the sweet drink, although he is aware of the health impacts of consuming too much sugar.

"I only think about the happiness it brings. If I want to burn off the calories, I just work out every day," he said.

Sweet addiction

However, a recent research paper has shown that frequent consumption of the beverage might lead to addiction, which is associated with depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

The "New Form of Addiction: An Emerging Hazardous Addiction Problem of Milk Tea Among Youths" report, was published in the Journal of Affective Disorders and written by researchers from Tsinghua University and the Central University of Finance and Economics.

The research was based on a study of 5,281 college students in Beijing in 2022. The study found that nearly 77 percent of the survey participants drank at least six to 11 cups of milk tea in 2021. Among them, 2.6 percent of students drank four to six cups of milk tea each week, while 20.6 percent drank two to three cups a week.

Milk tea addiction was measured by several parameters, such as frequent milk tea consumption, persistent craving, guilty feelings for drinking too much, and an inability to stop imbibing the beverage.

The study found that milk tea addiction was associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.

A plausible explanation is that milk tea, being a sweet beverage, contains a significant amount of sugar. Other research has demonstrated that a high-fructose diet can elevate cortisol levels leading to dysregulation, the ability to control or regulate emotional responses, of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. The axis is a communication system between three organs. It is responsible for helping manage stress and has profound effects on emotions and behaviors, according to the paper.

The results of the study have crucial implications for policymakers, as milk tea addiction may pose a severe problem among youth, the paper said.

It advised policymakers to consider enacting regulations for the milk tea industry. Measures could include regulating milk tea advertisements, introducing educational programs on the detrimental effects of addiction on mental health, and introducing food hygiene standards for the drink's ingredients.

Milk tea, which has gained worldwide popularity in recent years, is an umbrella term encompassing all beverages sold in milk tea shops, such as milk tea, fruit tea, floral tea, bubble tea, and others, the report said. This inclusive definition is based on the emerging trend of combining milk tea and other tea drinks in the Chinese market, it added.

According to data by market consultancy iiMedia Research, the market size of China's "new style" tea drinks reached 333.4 billion yuan (\$46.4 billion) in 2023, and is expected to grow to 375 billion yuan in 2025.

By the end of August 2023, there were 515,000 new style tea shops in the country, up 36 percent from 2020, the consultancy said.

Health trend

More milk tea brands have started trying to produce "healthy" drinks, with many advertising that their beverages either have "zero sugar" or use a sugar substitute.



From top: A vlogger talks about milk tea for her vlog in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Aug 15.

JADE GAO / AFP
A Hong Kong-style milk tea intangible cultural heritage inheritor demonstrates the art of making milk tea to visitors at the 7th China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 9.

JADE GAO / AFP
A cup of bubble milk tea. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

tea is not healthy, but it has become a habit for many young people.

Students tend to avoid research on the negative impacts of milk tea, Hu said, adding she does not believe such studies deter most students from drinking it.

"Just as we know that it's not healthy to stay up late, eat junk food and sit for too long, we still keep doing it," she said. "It is a cheap and very accessible pursuit, and it's not like it's as dangerous as drinking alcohol or smoking."

Hu drinks milk tea about three to four times a week. She says she uses it to unwind after a bad day or as a reward at the end of a good day.

Milk tea has also become a "cheap currency" for social interactions among young people. It is also the go-to beverage to serve at some wedding ceremonies and banquets, replacing the once ubiquitous baijiu.

On the social media platform Xiaohongshu, there are more than 120,000 posts under the hashtag "milk tea wedding", that highlight young couples choosing to serve it to their guests.

"Who said people need to make a toast with alcohol at a wedding, I choose to make a toast with milk tea and it is super cool," said one post, which received more than 26,000 likes on the platform.

To cash in on the demand, tea brand Heytea launched a group discount in 2022 for weddings. Newlyweds get a five percent discount when they buy 99 cups and 10 percent if they buy 299 cups. Tea brand ChaPanda launched similar discounts, and Chagee, also this year.

Luo Jiali, a college student in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, said milk tea and fruit tea have become an important part of social life for college students.

When they have gatherings, most of them will have a tea beverage. Teachers also reward students by buying them the drink when they perform well.

Although Luo knows milk tea has lots of sugar, he seldom pays attention to the possible negative health impacts. He believes his fast metabolism ensures he does not gain weight from drinking the beverage in excess.

He drinks milk tea every day, and has tried almost all the brands. "Whenever I am under a lot of pressure, I tend to buy myself a tea beverage to relax and have a rest," he said.

Contrary to the researchers' findings that excessive milk tea consumption is linked to negative emotions, Luo said he likes imbibing the drink, which makes him happier.

When he is too busy to have a proper meal, he says he orders a heavy milk tea with lots of cream and sugar as a substitute.

He also buys merchandise from milk tea brands when they collaborate with popular movie or game franchises. He collects the merchandise bags and sometimes uses the more sturdy ones as backpacks, which is a common practice and considered cool among students.

His love for milk tea is shared by 22-year-old Zou Xihao, a postgraduate student at a Changsha university.

He drinks the beverage about three to four times a week because it tastes good and his parents used to forbid him from drinking it when he was little.

Whenever he sees there are not many people lining up to buy milk tea, he buys one for himself.

He also does not pay much attention to news of the negative impacts of excessive drinking of milk tea.

"Perhaps I am healthy enough for the time being and cannot feel the side effects," he said. "I do not think too much about it. I drink the beverage because it enriches my life."

According to a Xinhuanet survey of more than 3,700 people, 75 percent of respondents said they would pay closer attention to whether their milk tea is "sugar free" or "low sugar" when ordering a drink. Almost 80 percent of the respondents said milk tea brands should publish the ingredients and sources of their product.

In March, Shanghai started a pilot program involving four tea milk companies that requires them to list their products' nutritional content and sugar levels.

Each drink is graded from A to D based on the amount of sugar and fat it contains, with A being the most recommended and D the least.

Xu Hongtao, deputy head of the China Chain Store and Franchise Association, said more consumers are now paying attention to milk tea drinks' ingredients and whether they are healthy to consume.

While there are no national or industry standards imposed on milk tea drink companies, the trend is for them to provide healthier products to meet consumer demand, he said.

Xia Mu, 34, said he used to drink milk tea every day, but has stopped completely and only drinks coffee because of the health risks involved.

He used to work at a milk tea store in

Changsha, Hunan province. A standard 650-milliliter cup of milk tea usually contains 40 ml of sugar. For lemon tea, it usually has 70 to 80 ml of sugar for the same volume to counter the sour taste of lemon, he said.

Xia said he has learned a lot about the harm too much sugar has on people's health, so he decided to cut out the beverage completely. As a result, his complexion has improved, he said.

Yang Cheng, a media professional in Changsha also stopped drinking milk tea because he found himself quickly gaining weight after he started working and began overindulging in the drink.

He gained 10 kilograms in a year and the caffeine from tea also kept him awake until 3 am in the morning.

Yang also watched videos online of people evaluating how much sugar a cup of milk tea actually contains. He said he was surprised to learn it contained so much sugar.

So, he stopped drinking the beverage and turned to coffee. He also stopped eating other food products with a lot of sugar.

Can't stop, won't stop

Hu Dianhan, a college student in Changsha, said she knows drinking milk



Left: People stand in a long line in front of a milk tea store in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, on Sept 28. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Right: A woman prepares to enjoy her milk tea at a Mixue Bingcheng outlet in Huai'an, Jiangsu province, on Aug 3. ZHAO QIRUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



TOP NEWS

Shanghai confers Magnolia Silver Award on 50 expats

By LIN SHUJUAN and HE QI in Shanghai

The Shanghai Municipal Government conferred on Saturday the 2024 Magnolia Silver Award on Franka Gulin, director and chief representative of the Croatian National Tourist Board's Shanghai representative office, and 49 other expatriates, recognizing their contributions to the city's development and international exchanges.

The award ceremony took place at the Grand Halls, which offers stunning views of the city, including the historic Bund on the west bank of the Huangpu River and the modern Lujiazui financial area, home to landmarks such as the Oriental Pearl Tower and the Shanghai Tower.

Kong Fu'an, director-general of the Shanghai Municipal Foreign Affairs Office, presented the medals and certificates to the recipients, who hail from 18 countries.

In his speech, Kong emphasized Shanghai's status as an international, innovative and inclusive city that has taken the lead in achieving Chinese-style modernization.

He highlighted the pivotal roles that foreigners, foreign-invested enterprises and foreign institutions play in the city's development, noting that they have been "not only witnesses, but also active participants and contributors".

Kong said that Gulin has "worked tirelessly to share China's stories with the world, promote Shanghai's wonders and introduce the city's unique culture". Having spent the past seven years in Shanghai, Gulin has published numerous articles and books showcasing the city's culture, history and modernity to audiences in Croatia and across Europe.

This year's Magnolia awardees come from diverse fields such as trade, finance, technology, shipping, healthcare, education, culture, sports and agriculture.

The list includes Pietro Brambilla from Italy, who serves as North Asia chief financial officer at L'Oréal China, Dmitri Mokhov from Canada, an airframe model development expert at COMAC Shanghai Aircraft Customer Service Co, and Hong Shen from the United States, who is senior vice-president and head of Roche Innovation Center of China at Roche R&D Center (China) Ltd.

Kong said, "We sincerely hope that the award recipients will continue to be ambassadors of Sino-foreign friendship, storytellers of Shanghai, and representatives of Shanghai's image."

Francis Gurry from Australia, former director-general of the World Intellectual Property Organization, was commended for his support in developing intellectual property in Shanghai and promoting multifaceted cooperation between WIPO and the city.

Professor Marc Delpech from France, a representative of the awardees, shared his experiences on contributing to Sino-French medical cooperation over three decades.

As the national coordinator of the French-speaking section for medical students at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and currently vice-dean of the Sino-French Joint Medical College at the university's School of Medicine, Delpech emphasized the enduring and expanding friendship between China and France.

He noted that his predecessor, Professor Guy Vincendon, received the Magnolia award in 2003, highlighting the continuity and strength

of the bilateral medical and educational relationship.

Another awardee, Carlo D'Andrea, chief representative of Studio Legale D'Andrea, has helped many foreign companies settle in China, particularly in Shanghai. The Italian lawyer praised Shanghai as "the best location to do business in China". He highlighted Shanghai's commitment to deepening reform and opening-up, which he said gives the city "a lot of potential to unleash".

Gulin, from the Croatian National Tourist Board's Shanghai representative office, found herself overwhelmed by emotions as she spoke to reporters about her life in China.

After living in Beijing for six years, she moved to Shanghai in 2017 to become the first representative of the Croatian National Tourist Board in China. She instantly fell in love with Shanghai, a city she describes as "not only one of the major cities in China, but also one of the capitals of the world, because here we meet people from all over the world".

Praising Shanghai's continuous efforts to enhance services for foreigners, Gulin said she highly recommends that young people, especially those coming to China from smaller countries, should settle in the city.

Shanghai's recent initiatives to boost convenience for foreign nationals include optimizing payment methods, expanding accommodations choices to include boutique homestays in addition to star-rated hotels, and continuously improving the business environment.

Shanghai has launched a nine-language international service portal, designed to provide a one-stop, multilingual, user-friendly platform for foreign nationals. The portal offers comprehensive information and services for working, traveling, living, doing business and studying in the city. It includes policy interpretations, service guides and timely updates on events such as the China International Import Expo.

As a professional in the tourism industry, Gulin said she is particularly drawn to the measures that Shanghai has adopted to facilitate international travel.

The city has established three comprehensive service centers for foreign nationals at its airport terminals, she said. These centers, which became fully operational on Sept 27, offer a range of services including payment options, tourism information, communication and transportation assistance. They provide service manuals, tourist maps, SIM card sales, transportation card sales, currency exchange, mobile payment options and 24/7 customer service.

Gulin recently shared brochures from these centers with a visiting delegation, highlighting their usefulness. While she said she considers herself "very Chinese", having adapted to convenient digital options such as mobile payment and online shopping, she acknowledged the value of the brochures in helping foreign visitors integrate into local life.

As China's inbound tourism continues to gain momentum, Gulin said she sees great potential for Shanghai as a top destination.

"Shanghai is not only a big, futuristic city, it's also a city full of very interesting history — visible on every street, in every corner," she said, adding that Shanghai is a must-visit place in one's lifetime.

Contact the writers at linshujuan@chinadaily.com.cn

Campaign against waste



Climate activists gather on Saturday in Busan, South Korea, to demand stronger global commitments to fight plastic waste, ahead of the upcoming fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which will take place from Monday to Sunday. YONHAP



COP29 President Mukhtar Babayev (front, right) and Simon Stiell, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, embrace as they attend the closing plenary session of the COP29 climate change conference, in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Sunday. MAXIM SHEMETOV / REUTERS

COP29 concludes with contentious outcome

Renewed finance target of \$300 billion seen as a base for future actions

By HOU LIQIANG houlqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Following two weeks of wrangling between the delegations of developing and developed countries, the COP29 United Nations climate change conference finally concluded, more than 30 hours past its deadline, with the adoption of a climate finance target criticized by one Global South representative as "a joke".

Some observers, however, while expressing their regret over the \$300 billion per year commitment from developed nations to developing economies by 2035, said that the renewed target has at least provided a base on which parties can build.

A key task of COP29, officially known as the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which began on Nov 11 in Baku, Azerbaijan, was to establish a 2025-35 climate finance target to facilitate climate actions in the Global South, where countries have disproportionately suffered from the impact of climate change.

The target is officially known as the New Collective Quantified Goal. As the UN climate talks came to a

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contentious end early Sunday morning, developed countries finally pledged to contribute at least \$300 billion annually by 2035. Parties also agreed on the rules for a UN-backed global carbon market, which is expected to provide incentive to countries to reduce emissions and invest in climate-friendly projects by facilitating the cross-border trading of carbon credits.

However, the \$300 billion target is far short of meeting developing countries' needs — \$1.3 trillion per year — and has been harshly criticized by representatives of the Global South.

Meena Raman, a representative of the Third World Network, an independent, nonprofit international research and advocacy organization, said that as COP29 concluded, developed countries once again escaped their obligations to commit to the provision of significant public resources to developing countries.

Without commensurate ambition on finance, developed countries

expect developing countries to show greater ambition on climate mitigation and adaptation, Raman said.

"This is not just a joke, but a serious insult to developing countries, as they (developed nations) pretend with slogans to keep the 1.5 C alive, abdicating their responsibilities under the Paris Agreement and risking lives of the poor and wrecking the planet," she said.

The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change aims to keep the global temperature rise this century below a 2 C increase from preindustrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 C.

However, there is growing global consensus that countries should strive to limit the temperature increase to below 1.5 C to prevent humanity from suffering a series of catastrophic disasters.

Regarding the climate finance target, Rob Moore, associate director of the independent climate change think tank E3G, said, "The goal is undeniably lower than many hoped for."

The goal still leaves a big gap to fill, especially a drastic need to scale up public adaptation finance, he said. But it "provides a platform on which parties can build".

"Setting the goal (at) this COP was essential, and doing so shows that in challenging geopolitical circumstances, many countries retain the will to work together, even when it's challenging," he said.

"Now ambitious countries need to pave the way to Belem together, and show that today's outcome is the start and not the end of the story for reforming the financial system and driving more and better support into developing countries," Moore added.

Belem, a Brazilian metropolis near the mouth of the Amazon River, is preparing to host COP30 in November 2025.

Zhao Yingmin, head of China's COP29 delegation, also expressed regret over the climate finance target while addressing the closing session.

"We have noted that the climate finance commitment from developed countries, as outlined in the New Collective Quantified Goal outcome document, falls far short of meeting the needs of developing countries. The financial obligations of developed countries must be further clarified," he said.

Zhao called for intensified solidarity of the international community to cope with the global climate crisis, and also reiterated China's unwavering determination to safeguard climate multilateralism.

The journey of climate governance since the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change went into effect 30 years ago has been fraught with challenges, yet progress continues steadily, said Zhao.

He called for parties to stay true to their original aspirations and forge ahead with determination as they walk toward 2025, which will mark the 80th anniversary of the UN and the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement.

Regardless of the evolving international landscape, China, as a responsible developing major country, will make consistent efforts to promote the multilateral process of tackling climate change and international cooperation, he emphasized.

'Priority No 1'

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in his COP29 closing statement, stressed that climate finance is "priority No 1" against the backdrop of the Baku conference coming at the close of a brutal year seared by record temperatures and scarred by climate disaster, as emissions continue to rise.

Developing countries, which have been swamped by debt, pummeled by disasters and left behind in the renewables revolution, are in desperate need of funds, he said.

An agreement at COP29 was absolutely essential to keep alive the goal of limiting the temperature increase this century to below 1.5 C, Guterres added.

Fiscal: Nontax revenue growth exceeds annual target

From page 1

China's nontax revenue reached 3.42 trillion yuan (\$472 billion) in the first 10 months of this year, representing a 15.3 percent year-on-year increase and accounting for around 18.5 percent of the total public budget revenue during this period. This growth rate is higher than the 13.5 percent recorded in the first three quarters.

In October alone, the nontax revenue growth rate was 39.6 percent year-on-year, based on calculations made by GF Securities.

China's nontax revenue growth has accelerated significantly in the first 10 months of the year, substantially outpacing the initial 1.8 percent annual target set at the beginning of the year, according to the analysis by Galaxy Securities.

The analysis showed that current

nontax revenue has already exceeded the budgeted amount by around 400 billion yuan. Extrapolating from the total nontax revenue of 3.65 trillion yuan recorded last year, the full-year surplus in nontax revenue in 2024 could potentially reach close to 500 billion yuan.

At a news conference held in late October, the Ministry of Finance said the government has been proactive in utilizing various channels

to activate and maximize the value of State-owned resources and assets, which has been a key driver behind the robust growth in nontax revenue in the first three quarters.

The ministry also pledged to closely monitor the changes in nontax revenue and firmly refrain from imposing any excessive fees or charges, in order to further alleviate the burden on businesses and support economic growth.

Expo: Wealth of opportunities for all

From page 1

This showed the country's inbuilt economic innovation, expansion of consumer market and products, and attraction as an investment and business destination, not to mention its major role in the world economy.

Remarkably, the participation of a record-breaking 297 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry leaders at the seventh CIIE, with 186 companies and organizations joining for the seventh consecutive year, reflects China's economic prowess, supply chain strength, high-quality industrialization and, above all, its firm belief in openness and modernization.

Moreover, the participation of 39 government procurement delegations and four industry procurement delegations, a total of 780 trade subgroups, marked a historic high at the seventh CIIE, reaffirming China's role in the global economy, commerce, business, manufacturing, green technologies, hybrid agriculture and government-to-government, business-to-business and people-to-people connectivity.

The CIIE has become the ultimate showcase of international trade groups gathering at the world's first import-themed national-level expo, fostering global economic collaboration and tapping the potential of the Chinese market for opportunities.

It has also become an ideal hub for trans-regional integration of markets, ideas and innovations, successfully translating exhibited items into commercial opportunities and deals. It has become a gateway to China's vast market for international investors and businessmen, unleashing the dividends of openness and sharing China's new development opportunities with the rest of the world.

China's inclusiveness, openness and vision of shared prosperity has seen exhibitors from 37 least developed countries getting free exhibition booths at the latest CIIE, helping expand the African products zone.

Making the CIIE more interactive, productive and informative, events themed around "sustainable

development driven by new quality productive forces" were held for the first time. Augmented reality experiences, artificial intelligence-powered robots, an astronomical satellite model and other cutting-edge technologies were on display to explore pathways to green and sustainable development.

The CIIE epitomizes China's inclusive and innovative opening-up, with the nation's numerous policies helping spur international trade and investments.

It has multiple socioeconomic effects in terms of promoting international procurement, attracting foreign investment inflows, boosting exchanges of commercial ideas and people-to-people exchanges, and supporting China's wider opening-up to international goods.

China's safeguarding of the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core further supports developing countries in sharing more benefits of globalization.

The country's readiness to continue close coordination and

cooperation with all stakeholders in international economic organizations and its efforts to promote the implementation of the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement and advancement of the cause of an open world economy will help build bridges of mutual trust and boost economic cooperation, cross-border investments, joint ventures and globalization.

That stands in contrast to the protectionism and the sanctions/tariffs gameplan of the United States, moves that could gain more traction now following the US presidential election early this month.

The world has a chance for hope, betterment, welfare, stability and further integration because of the Chinese economy's resilience, diversification, innovation, openness and modernization, as it promotes steady economic growth and contributes to global development and the welfare of humanity.

The author is president of the Center of Pak-China Corridor of Knowledge and executive director of the Center for South Asia & International Studies in Islamabad, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Fengdu phoenix in Mexican sister city

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing

A golden phoenix sculpture was recently shipped thousands of miles from Fengdu, a county in Chongqing, to stand in the heart of its sister city Guanajuato, Mexico, as a gesture of their growing friendship.

Inspired by a divine bird in Chinese folklore, the sculpture symbolizes good fortune, peace and prosperity.

"This gift is not only a witness to the profound friendship between the two (cities), but also our expectation for future cooperation," Fengdu Mayor Tang Shouyuan said at the unveiling ceremony in Guanajuato.

Led by the mayor, the Fengdu delegation used its visit to promote the county's culture and enhance its ties with the Mexican city in tourism, trade and people-to-people exchanges.

This year marks the 52nd anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Mexico, as well as the 11th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Mexico comprehensive strategic partnership.

In November 2021, Fengdu and Guanajuato established a sister-city relationship.

"The magnificent sculpture embodies Fengdu culture and our friendship," said Samantha Smith Gutierrez, mayor of Guanajuato, during the unveiling ceremony.

"We both respect traditional culture and ancestors, which is the foundation of our relationship," Gutierrez said.

The sculpture will not only enrich the local cultural landscape, but also bring fortune and luck to the city, she added. Fengdu and Guanajuato are both internationally renowned tourist destinations and have significant cultural similarities.

Fengdu is famed for its captivating "Ghost City" culture, with the Fengdu Temple Fair designated as a national intangible cultural heritage.

Similarly, Guanajuato stands out as a prime Mexican city for its famed "Day of the Dead" festival, which is celebrated in Mexico on Nov 1 and 2. The Historic Town of Guanajuato and Adjacent Mines has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In recent years, the bond between Fengdu and Guanajuato has continued to strengthen, evolving from governmental to grassroots interactions.

In August last year, both sides signed a memorandum of cooperation to create a model of international sister-city exchanges, including reciprocal delegation exchanges during major festivals, the installation of sculptures in one another's downtown areas and the development of platforms to facilitate the sales of products.

At the latest event, the Guanajuato government and the Fengdu delegation reaffirmed their commitment to continuing cultural exchanges and artistic promotions.

Tang said Fengdu is promoting economic and trade collaborations between the sister cities in the creative and cultural sectors, including telecommunications, mask making and calabash painting production.

Fengdu is also famous for producing and exporting *zhacai*, a traditional Chinese pickle made from mustard cabbage stems. The condiment, which dates back at least 100 years, has become a delicacy on dinner tables outside China.

On Oct 27, the first batch of Fengdu *zhacai* was exported to Guanajuato, according to Xinhua News Agency.

Contact the writers at dengrui@chinadaily.com.cn

Rice work



A child who participated in a parent-child study group experiences threshing rice in the paddy fields of Dinghe village in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Sunday. Under the guidance of teachers and parents, the children enjoyed the rural scenery and took part in various farming activities. Besides growing rice, the village has introduced agricultural study programs and rural sightseeing tours to increase villagers' incomes. LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

China's parcel sector reaches new heights

Milestone indicative of industry's growing significance in economy

By LUO WANGSHU in Chongqing

At 10:40 am on Tuesday, a 32-year-old Chongqing resident surnamed Mu received a box of apples from Tianshui, Gansu province. This seemingly routine delivery was the 150 billionth parcel delivered in China this year, highlighting the immense scale of the country's logistics industry and its growing role in the economy.

"I order all kinds of things online — from clothes to food, and even fruit," Mu said as she unpacked the fresh apples. "It's incredible how quickly everything arrives. Just two days ago, I ordered these apples, and now they're here. It's so convenient, and the quality is guaranteed. I can't imagine life without this service."

The 150 billionth parcel is part of a larger trend showcasing explosive growth in China's delivery sector. To put the scale into perspective: if all parcels delivered this year were laid end to end, they would stretch between the Earth and the moon 50 times.

The milestone underscores the critical role of logistics in China's economy. Starting from this year, the average consumer in China is expected to receive more than 100 parcels annually, with the country's delivery network handling over 5,400 parcels every second.

The broader national trend is that as more people embrace online shopping, fast and reliable deliveries have become a cornerstone of daily life.

"Everything I buy is online, and the prices are always better than in the store," Mu said. "The speed of delivery is amazing. I can order something in the morning and have it delivered by the afternoon."

China's logistics industry has reached new heights this year, with daily parcel volumes peaking at 7.29 million. Beyond volume, affordable prices and reliable service have made online shopping more appealing, further fueling the sector's growth.

China's parcel delivery network is not limited to urban centers. Increasingly, services are being expanded to rural and underserved areas. Companies such as J&T Express and platforms like Pinduoduo have been instrumental in extending logistics infrastructure to central and western regions.

The apples Mu received came from Gansu, a province that has significantly improved its logistics capabilities. In the past, Gansu farmers struggled to sell their produce due to a lack of e-commerce channels.

Today, local entrepreneurs like Zhang Pengfei are bridging the gap, enabling farmers to sell thousands of apples daily through online platforms.

"The rapid growth of e-commerce and logistics here has been a game changer," Zhang said. "A few years ago, these apples wouldn't have made it out of the region. Now, we're shipping them nationwide, all thanks to the delivery network."

The expanding parcel network is also driving economic growth in rural areas. In Gansu, government investment in logistics infrastructure has led to new delivery stations and transportation hubs. From January to October, the province saw a 46.8 percent year-on-year increase in parcel volume, with logistics costs declining due to improved infrastructure, according to Gansu's postal bureau.

"The arrival of the 150 billionth parcel in Chongqing highlights the progress of the postal and delivery industry in central and western China," said Chen Denghua, an official from Chongqing's postal administration. "This milestone reflects not only the industry's expansion, but also the vibrant market potential in these regions."

National policies, including subsidies for county-level distribution centers and financial support for remote areas, have also contributed to the sector's success. China's logistics market, the largest in the world, accounted for over 60 percent of global parcel volume last year. The country processes more parcels than the next nine countries combined, according to Gui Ning, vice-president of J&T Express.

"China's logistics innovations are being applied overseas, improving delivery efficiency in other markets," Gui said.

Zhao Guojun, director of the postal development research center at the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, said "China's express delivery industry improves livelihoods while stimulating production and consumption. This virtuous cycle supports economic growth and strengthens China's global supply chain leadership."

As the sector evolves with cutting-edge technology, the implementation of more infrastructure and growing e-commerce demand, China is poised to maintain its global leadership in parcel delivery.

For consumers like Mu, the 150 billionth parcel isn't just a number, but a testament to how integral delivery services have become to daily life. As the industry continues to grow, so too will the opportunities it creates for consumers and the economy alike.

Month Uttabolyukol, assistant secretary to the attorney general of Thailand, said that advanced technologies such as big data, AI and blockchain can also be applied more in the fight against corruption to strengthen the monitoring of illicit proceeds and improve the transparency of the fight.

"It's necessary and important for both China and Thailand to jointly use the process of science and technology to fight corruption crimes," he added.

Liu Yanjun, a prosecutor from Chongqing, said that there are difficulties in evidence collection when tackling cross-border telecom fraud cases, suggesting China and ASEAN should detail legal rules to streamline the procedures and better use big data and AI in the handling of such cases.

To resolve the difficulties in evidence collection, criminal investigation and application of the law in cross-border cases, Yang Yonghua, deputy chief prosecutor of the Yunnan Provincial People's Procuratorate, said that China and ASEAN members should further intensify cooperation in risk warning, information exchanges and law education to build more consensus on combating cross-border crimes.

"We'll have more communication with prosecutors from South and Southeast Asian nations, with the endeavor to enhance international criminal judicial assistance," he said. Keokhunsy Kham Ouane, director of the international law department at the Laos Police Academy, praised the achievements made by China and Laos in fighting cross-border telecom fraud over the past few years, but said that some obstacles remain, including a technical gap, financial

supervision and monitoring. He called on the two countries to build a platform to exchange digital evidence, including those on finance and intellectual property, with the establishment of a special work team to monitor improper financial flows related to telecom fraud.

China can also continue to provide modern technological tools and training courses for law enforcement authorities in Laos to enhance their abilities to jointly fight crime, he suggested. In addition to the discussion on cross-border crime, legal professionals from China and ASEAN members shared their ideas and experiences on several other topics at the forum, including international commercial arbitration, building law schools and the cultivation of legal professionals.

Chinese EV brands spread to Azerbaijan

By HOU LIQIANG in Baku, Azerbaijan

Nestled at the intersection of East and West, Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, is a melting pot of architectural treasures, with many drawing inspiration from classical Greek and Roman designs as well as those incorporating Islamic and Asian influences.

Chinese architectural elements, however, are notably absent across the cityscape that dates back centuries. The same cannot be said for Chinese electric vehicles, with makers such as BYD and Nio recently announcing their intentions to enter the local market.

Before the start of the COP29 United Nations climate change conference in Baku on Nov 11, the two carmakers had no official dealerships in the city. This changed on Nov 15, when Nio and Azerbaijani company Green Car inked a partnership agreement at the Azerbaijan pavilion at COP29.

According to the agreement, Green Car will serve as Nio's distributor in Azerbaijan, with Nio expected to start delivering products in the second quarter next year.

Qin Lihong, co-founder and president of Nio, said he sees big market opportunities for new energy vehicles in Azerbaijan, as the country furthers its green transition.

He referred to the country that flanks the southern edge of the Caucasus Mountains as "a market of great symbolic significance".

The region has Russia to the north, the Middle East to the south, Europe to the west and Central Asia and China to the east. It's a crucial node in China's Belt and Road Initiative, Qin said.

Addressing the signing ceremony, Rustam Ibrahimov, chief operating officer of Green Car, said: "The global automotive industry is undergoing an exciting revolution. Nio, as a global smart EV company, is impressive in the innovation in core technologies and user experience."

Sharing Nio's vision of sustainability, Green Car looks forward to jointly promoting Azerbaijan and the Caucasus' transition to EVs, he said.

Some 140 Nio vehicles were used to transport government representatives and officials, as well as other distinguished guests during COP29, Nio said.

Nio is not the only Chinese EV brand that was used to serve the UN gathering. Some BYD electric buses transported delegates between the COP29 venue and their hotels.

According to BYD, the company



A Chinese-made electric vehicle is used to transport attendees to the COP29 United Nations climate change conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Nov 11. CAO YANG / XINHUA

More data sharing called for in fight against transnational crime

By CAO YIN

Legal professionals from China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have called for the wider application of technologies and more information sharing in the joint fight against transnational crimes.

The experts, mainly focusing on safety, prosecution, criminal investigation and law research in their own countries, made the remarks while exchanging opinions on cross-border crime control at the sixth China-ASEAN Legal Cooperation Forum, which was held in Chongqing on Nov 12.

"China and ASEAN countries have cooperated more closely in combating transnational crimes and jointly witnessed some achievements in recent years. However, with ever-

changing and complex criminal methods, new problems and challenges have also emerged one after another, promoting us to further form joint efforts to face and solve traditional and non-traditional security threats," said Li Yan, vice-president of the Southwest University of Political Science and Law.

Li emphasized the importance of seeking a balance between development and security, suggesting new technologies, including artificial intelligence and big data, be applied in the fight against cross-border crimes.

Gu Wenxue, director of the international cooperation department with the Chongqing Public Security Bureau, agreed, saying "It's essential to widen the application of big data and other technologies in international law enforcement, with more AI research on the issue."

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won a bid in July to sell 160 electric buses to the Azerbaijani government. The buses were used to help Azerbaijan hold the conference in a green, low-carbon manner.

The Azerbaijani government will purchase 200 electric buses annually from BYD between 2025 and 2028, the company said, adding, the buses will be assembled in Azerbaijan.

A statement from the host nation's Ministry of Economy said, "Azerbaijan expects a multifaceted collaboration with China in the field of NEVs, focusing not only on the assembly of electric buses, but also on other types of vehicles within Azerbaijan."

It said the cooperation aims to achieve localization in the production of buses and other vehicles, the transfer of advanced technology and expertise, and the training of local specialists to support the industry.

"Azerbaijan seeks to position itself as a regional hub in the East-West transport corridors and integrate into the BYD supply chain, leveraging its strategic location to contribute to regional and global markets," it said.

In another development, at the COP29 China pavilion on Wednesday, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of China's State Council signed a memorandum of understanding with Azerbaijan Investment Holding.

The two sides aim to strengthen exchange and cooperation on green development and the social responsibility of State-owned enterprises, according to the memorandum.

Established in 2020, Azerbaijan Investment Holding aims to enhance corporate governance, attract private investments and improve the performance of the nation's SOEs.

As part of the Azerbaijan government, it is focusing on prioritizing environmental, social and governance considerations, related initiatives and carbon emissions reductions, according to Ruslan Ali-khanov, CEO of Azerbaijan Investment Holding.

Addressing the event, Ali-khanov stressed the importance of international cooperation in promoting climate action, and the role of China in driving global initiatives for a greener and more sustainable future.

"China is the world's largest investor in solar and wind energy, the largest by far," he emphasized.

Through its green Belt and Road Initiative, China also strives to promote sustainable infrastructure projects such as eco-friendly transportation systems and renewable energy initiatives in its partner countries, he added.

CHINA



Visitors admire a stone statue at the Yungang Grottoes in Datong, Shanxi province. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Shanxi's cultural heritage remains timeless



Tourists take photos of painted sculptures at Guanyin Temple in Changzhi, Shanxi.

Province's 28,000 ancient buildings attract 300 million visits in first three-quarters this year

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and CHEN LIANG

In the heart of northern China lies Shanxi province, one of the cradles of Chinese civilization. In recent years, Shanxi has been actively integrating its rich cultural heritage with tourism, driving high-quality development across various sectors.

The province boasts unparalleled cultural and tourism resources, with it being described by many as an open-air museum, home to nearly 28,000 ancient buildings. With 531 cultural heritage sites under State protection, Shanxi tops all other Chinese provinces.

In the first three quarters of this year, Shanxi received 318 million domestic visits, marking a 13.8 percent increase from the same period last year. Tourism revenue soared to 276 billion yuan (\$38.1 billion), up 25.9 percent. The weeklong National Day holiday also saw a significant surge in domestic tourists compared to the previous year.

On Aug 20, the Chinese video game *Black Myth: Wukong* was released, captivating gamers worldwide. Of the 36 setting locations in the game, 27 are in Shanxi, featuring elements from the province's grottoes, temples, ancient buildings, sculptures and murals.

Wang Aiqin, director of the Shanxi Department of Culture and Tourism, said that the game's dedication to traditional Chinese culture aligns perfectly with Shanxi's rich cultural resources. She said Shanxi has capitalized on the popularity of the game, with the province being widely discussed online, and an increase in tourist numbers and revenue.

According to Wang, Shanxi is focused on upgrading its three UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites: Pingyao Ancient City, Mount Wutai and the Yungang Grottoes.

The province is enhancing infrastructure, diversifying tourism offerings and improving services. It has also completed the longest tourism highway network in the country, spanning 13,000 kilometers and connecting 113 counties and 5,630 villages.

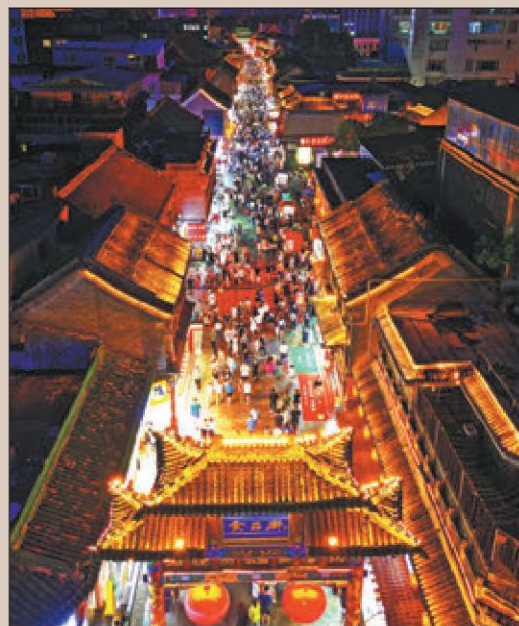
Shanxi is also a region with rich Red Tourism resources. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), it was the center of resistance in North China, home to the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army and its main divisions.

Shanxi is harnessing comprehensive reforms to stabilize its economic base and develop new productive forces tailored to local conditions, Wang said.

Contact the writers at zhuxingxin@chinadaily.com.cn



Tourists ride on a donkey in front of the Hukou Waterfall on the Yellow River in Jixian county.



A pedestrian street lined with eateries bustles at night in Taiyuan, Shanxi.



A visitor takes a selfie with an effigy of Wukong from the video game, *Black Myth: Wukong*, in Taiyuan.



Left: Tourists visit the Xuankong (Hanging) Temple in Hunyuan county, Shanxi.



Right: Visitors descend a stairway leading to the wall of Pingyao Ancient City.

Editor's note: China Daily is publishing a series illustrating the country's efforts to achieve its carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals.

CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

Efforts made to make supply chains greener

More work needed to create universal standards across sectors for assessing carbon emissions

By HOU LIQIANG
houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

As China progresses with its aim to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, the nation has adopted policies and initiatives to promote green supply chains in order to drive down emissions among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

Green supply chains integrate eco-friendly practices in sourcing, production and distribution to minimize environmental impact, enhance sustainability and promote resource efficiency throughout the entire supply process.

Despite notable advancements in this area, experts have highlighted that China still faces numerous challenges in establishing globally recognized standards and certification systems for green supply chains.

Stressing the importance of the disclosure of carbon emission information in fostering green supply chains, they maintain that China's extensive experience in its successful air pollution control initiatives, where information disclosure played a crucial role, offers valuable insights for the government on advancing in this direction.

Tang Dingding, former director general of the department of international cooperation of the now-defunct ministry of environmental protection, noted the great importance China's central authorities have attached to green supply chains, despite the concept only being recently introduced to China.

In 2013, the ministry of environmental protection became the Ministry of Ecology and Environment. The new ministry is responsible for the environment and six government bodies, including those tackling climate change," he said.

In 2010, Tang participated in the former ministry's first international cooperation on green supply chains, and recently shared the experience at an event focused on green supply chains in Beijing.

Led by him, a team consisting of members from home and abroad conducted a study program with the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, an international think tank that reports to the Chinese government, he shared.

He said that green supply chains have been explicitly incorporated into the guiding documents of both



Malaysian palm oil manufacturers promote sustainable production at Food Ingredients China 2023, an international exhibition for food ingredients and additives, in Shanghai in March last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, as demonstrated by a set of guidelines they jointly unveiled in August to ramp up the green transition in all areas of socioeconomic development.

According to the document, China will encourage businesses to engage in green procurement practices and establish eco-friendly supply chains, fostering a synergistic transformation throughout both upstream and downstream sectors, as it strives to establish a green, low-carbon and circular development economic system by 2035.

"The supply chain concept can act as a vital catalyst in propelling China's shift toward green, low-carbon practices and efforts to promote actions to cope with climate change," he said.

Mao Tao, an official from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Center for International Economic and Technological Cooperation, said the Chinese government's high regard for the construction of green supply chains was also reflected at the Central Economic Work Conference held late last year in Beijing.

A statement released after the conference said China will accelerate the development of a green and low-carbon supply chain as it actively and steadily advances its climate targets of peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and realizing carbon neutrality before 2060.

Currently in China, many environmental protection efforts are being driven by government action. The construction of green supply chains, however, represents voluntary environmental initiatives by businesses, Mao noted.

"Green supply chains emphasize synergy between upstream and downstream sectors, and serve as a valuable complement to government efforts in energy conservation and carbon reduction," he said.

He emphasized the role of green supply chains in pushing for contributions from micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, the number of which stands at more than 52 million, to reduce their carbon emissions.

These small and medium-sized enterprises have relatively low greenhouse gas emissions, however, they fall short of large enterprises in financial strength, technological expertise and management capabilities, and demonstrate a lesser degree of environmental awareness, he said.

"This underscores the need for collaborative initiatives from upstream enterprises to propel them toward emission reduction." Mao said there is an overall inadequate performance among Chinese companies in developing green supply chains, despite the pioneering efforts of industry heavyweights such as e-commerce company JD, telecoms provider Huawei, photo-

voltic manufacturer LONGi, and Lenovo, the world's largest personal computer maker by shipments.

There is a pressing requirement for the nation to enhance its tertiary policy and legal frameworks, he said, stressing the crucial necessity of establishing a foundational database to support the development of sustainable green supply chains.

He highlighted the notable challenges faced by the country's photovoltaic sector, which boasts manufacturing capacity and market size surpassing that of any other country worldwide.

Although China boasts strength in the field, it faces significant barriers when exporting its PV products due to the lack of recognition for the standards and certifications of these products by certain countries, Mao said.

He said the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology is actively promoting the development of a footprint database for industries that provide key raw materials used in PV manufacturing, as part of its efforts to lay the groundwork for addressing the issue.

It's also imperative to further enhance information disclosure in China, as the country progresses with the development of green supply chains, he said. While some policies are already in place to encourage information disclosure in large enterprises, there remains

significant room for improvement in the performance of small and medium-sized companies.

He proposed that alongside tailored policies, harnessing the power of industry front-runners to drive information disclosure among small and medium-sized enterprises in their upstream could be another effective strategy.

Yang Pingjian, a researcher at the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, said that information disclosure has played an indispensable role in the sweeping, historic and transformative changes witnessed in the realm of environmental protection in China, particularly in the domain of air pollution.

"Information disclosure enables the public to be informed and empowers people to better provide oversight. Its role as a long-lasting mechanism to drive actions along the entire chain has been fully demonstrated in China's experiences in pollution control over the past decade," he said.

Yang stressed that the government has sent a very clear signal that it expects enterprises to disclose carbon emission information as much as possible and in as much detail as possible.

Outlining efforts at national and regional levels for establishing green supply chains, Chai Qimin, director of the department of the strategy and planning at the Nation-

al Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation, expects promising outcomes from China's efforts in this regard in promoting low-carbon transition.

Quoting a report from the World Economic Forum, he said the supply chains of food, construction, fashion, fast-moving consumer goods, electronics, automotive, professional services and freight account for more than half of all global greenhouse gas emissions.

Globally, optimizing the entire industry chain and supply chain for comprehensive and systematic management to advance carbon reduction has become a significant focus, he said. In this context, over 20 countries and regions worldwide have implemented institutions aimed at managing industry chains and product footprints.

In China, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, in cooperation with 14 other national government bodies, announced a comprehensive plan on carbon footprint management in May, which aims to establish calculation rules and standards for approximately 100 key products by 2027, Chai said.

As part of a broader strategy outlined by the plan, the ministry published a standard with general principles for product carbon footprint calculation in September, which is expected to offer clear guidelines in the development of specific standards to calculate carbon emissions for different products.

Shandong and Guangdong provinces have been at the forefront of promoting such initiatives related to green supply chains, with each of them releasing plans for managing carbon footprints and implementing labeling practices, he said.

In other areas such as Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces and Shanghai, as well as in some industrial sectors, including electronics and electrical appliances and petrochemicals, there have also been efforts made to explore similar initiatives, he said.

Chai stressed the work is highly complicated, as there are a large number of emissions sources in the supply chains of some industrial sectors. The number of sources for PV products, for instance, may go beyond 1,000.

Despite the challenges, he said there has been a general trend toward comprehensive emissions disclosure for companies and products in China, underpinned by a transition from voluntary measures to mandatory ones.

"I believe that, driven by various incentives and regulatory policies, the green and low-carbon transformation of supply chains in China will achieve more substantial results," Chai said.

Renovated Beijing Workers' Stadium sets record for most photovoltaic panels

After its comprehensive renovation last year, the roof of Beijing Workers' Stadium set the record for having the most solar panels of any stadium in China.

This stadium's solar system, comprising 351 kilowatts of photovoltaic modules, was supplied by LONGi Green Energy Technology, a Chinese solar technology company.

Installed along the stadium's roof, the photovoltaic modules form a golden collar encircling the venue, spanning an area of 3,712 square meters.

This design not only enhances the stadium's appearance but also contributes to its sustainability by partially powering its operations and reducing carbon emissions, according to LONGi. The company estimates that over the next 25 years, the system will reduce carbon emissions by 4,930 metric tons.

LONGi said the installation of the photovoltaic modules was designed to accommodate both functional and aesthetic goals.

"The Workers' Stadium renovation differs from other photovoltaic projects we've undertaken for older buildings," said Guo Hua, vice-president of the photovoltaic systems unit at LONGi. "As the stadium holds cherished memories for Beijing residents, the project was conducted with a protective approach, preserving its original



internal and external structures." One of the primary challenges was the stadium's large curved roof, which required the use of custom-designed photovoltaic components, according to Guo. In total, the project utilized 129 unique component sizes to accommodate the roof's intricate geometry.

Originally built in 1959 and spanning over 80,000 sq m, the Workers' Stadium has hosted numerous international sports and entertainment events. The renovation project, launched in 2020 by the Beijing government, was designed to align with the city's urban development goals.

By integrating modern sustainability features with the original architectural design, the updated stadium underscores its cultural and social significance while showcasing the potential of green technology in building construction.

CHINA DAILY



Left: Beijing Workers' Stadium welcomes soccer fans at its reopening in April last year. Some 3,712 square meters of photovoltaic panels are installed inside a golden, illuminated collar along the roof. SHENG JIAPENG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Above: Builders work during the renovation project in 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Below: Photovoltaic modules ready to be installed on the stadium. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



WORLD

Japan asked to revise stand on US relations

Experts call for ending heavy reliance on Washington, boosting Global South ties

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Japan needs to reduce its heavy reliance on the United States, embrace a more independent diplomatic stance, and strengthen its ties with emerging countries in the Global South, experts said.

They expect Japan-US relations to witness some tensions and friction under the incoming Donald Trump administration in Washington, pointing to Trump's "America First" agenda, likely trade tariffs and security cooperation issues.

Trump's approach to diplomacy and defense appears focused on maximizing US interests. In dealings with Japan, he is expected to apply pressure to secure substantial advantages for the US. This could involve urging Japan to increase its purchase of US-made weapons to bolster deterrence and demanding a greater financial contribution toward hosting US forces in Japan, according to Kazuyuki Hamada, an international political economy scholar and Japan's former parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs.

Moreover, Trump may impose a blanket tariff of 10 to 20 percent on imports from allied nations, including Japan, and could target Japanese automobiles with higher tariffs. Such policies would place additional economic strains on Japan.

"The Japan-US relationship is undeniably vital, but one-sided demands from the United States are likely to provoke a backlash among the Japanese public. Should the Japanese government refuse to comply, such tensions could escalate into economic and security frictions within the bilateral relationship," said Hamada.

While former Japanese prime ministers have prioritized the Japan-US relationship as a cornerstone of their diplomatic agenda, the core challenge lies in the ongoing decline of the US political, economic, and military influence, he said.

"Japan must strengthen its ties with emerging countries in BRICS and the Global South, signaling a willingness to move beyond an era defined by US dominance," Hamada said.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party recently suffered a significant

defeat in the House of Representatives election, leaving it as a minority government.

"Unless Ishiba can find a 'deal-making' card to engage Trump, Japan-US relations are likely to be dominated by unilateral demands from Washington, leaving Japan at the mercy of American pressure," Hamada said.

Before becoming the leader of the LDP and taking office as prime minister, Ishiba had advocated for revising the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement, or SOFA, and proposed to establish an Asian version of NATO. However, after assuming his roles as LDP president and prime minister, he shelved these initiatives, describing them as "long-term issues" and adopting a more ambiguous stance.

Facing resistance

Ishiba's views on these matters have faced resistance from US officials, and ASEAN opposes the concept of an "Asian NATO".

It is likely that Ishiba recognized the potential negative consequences his positions could have on both US-Japan relations and broader Asian diplomacy. On the other hand, abandoning his push for SOFA revision risks alienating many residents of Okinawa, who live near US military bases and have long supported such changes, said Noriyuki Kawamura, emeritus professor at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies.

If Ishiba continues to leave calls for SOFA revision unaddressed, public support for his cabinet is likely to erode further, said Takakage Fujita, secretary-general of the Association for Inheriting and Propagating the Murayama Statement, a Japanese civic group.

Fujita also expressed concern that Ishiba may struggle to firmly resist the unreasonable demands expected from the US. Instead, he might reluctantly concede to them, which could further weaken his leadership and political standing.

"Japan's diplomacy must break away from excessive dependence on and subservience to the United States. For the sake of Japan's future, the key to protecting national interests lies in cultivating equal and balanced diplomatic relationships with the world's major powers," Fujita said.

Paddle protest



Climate activists in kayaks continue their attempt to block access to a coal port in Newcastle, Australia, on Sunday. They staged a protest in Newcastle Harbour, attempting to block the entry of a large bulk carrier into the world's largest coal port. RONI BINTANG / GETTY IMAGES

Support for Afghanistan sought at COP29

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
vivienxu@chinadaily.com

The 2024 UN Climate Change Conference, or COP29, in Baku, Azerbaijan, which concluded on Sunday — it was originally scheduled to come to a close on Friday — saw the presence of the Afghanistan delegation for the first time since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.

Experts said Afghanistan has been prone to all kinds of natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods and landslides, and is urgently in need of concerted international relief efforts to deal with extreme weather conditions, especially harsh winter.

Representatives from the Taliban took part in the conference, where they had only observer status. According to ToloNews, Matul Haq Khalis, the head of the Taliban delegation at COP29, held meetings on the sidelines of the conference with representatives from the United Nations Climate Technology Centre & Network, the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and delegations from Bangladesh and Qatar.

Khalis told Agence France-Presse that the delegation attended the meeting with the aim of conveying a

message to the world that climate change is a global issue.

Anjal Prakash, an associate professor and research director at the Bharti Institute of Public Policy, a think tank under the Indian School of Business, said, "Afghanistan's participation in COP29 marks a pivotal moment in our climate journey, highlighting the urgent need for global collaboration to address the severe environmental risks our nations face."

According to him, as one of the countries most affected by climate change, Afghanistan has endured devastating floods, droughts, and other natural disasters.

"Their presence at this summit underscores our commitment to environmental protection and the necessity for international support," he said. "It's crucial that Afghanistan turns this opportunity into action, fostering partnerships that prioritize sustainable solutions and resilience for Afghanistan and the broader Central Asian region."

Plato Yip Kwong-to, chairperson of the nonprofit Friends of the Earth (HK), who attended this year's climate change conference, said Afghanistan has experienced erratic rainfall, prolonged drought conditions, and devastating flash floods.

Recent assessments rank the country as the sixth most climate-vulnerable globally, underscoring the critical need for international support, he added.

"In my opinion, the people of Afghanistan are confronting severe climate challenges, and it is essential for developed countries to lend assistance in addressing these issues," said Yip. "Collaborative efforts are vital to provide necessary support for adaptation and resilience initiatives, particularly for those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change."

Zhao Yingmin, head of the Chinese delegation to COP29, told China Daily from Baku that climate change constitutes an issue that commonly confronts humankind, "a community with a shared future".

In the face of the forceful impact of climate change, none of the countries can stay free from it, and none of them can just sit back and do nothing, he said. "Although the world is not all at peace, and the influence of geopolitical problems has been relatively complicated, issues such as climate change can bring all closely together, and unity, solidarity, and win-win collaboration have become the only way forward to solving the common challenges of mankind."

Briefly

UNITED STATES

Trump taps Rollins as agriculture chief

President-elect Donald Trump said on Saturday that he will nominate former White House aide Brooke Rollins to be his agriculture secretary, the last of his picks to lead executive agencies and another choice from within his established circle of advisers and allies. The nomination must be confirmed by the Senate, which will be controlled by Republicans when Trump takes office on Jan 20. Rollins is a long-time Trump associate who served as White House domestic policy chief during his first presidency.

SRI LANKA

Pact reached on IMF's review of reform

The International Monetary Fund staff and the Sri Lankan government have reached a staff-level agreement on economic policies to conclude the third review of Sri Lanka's economic reform program supported by the IMF's Extended Fund Facility, the IMF said in a news release on Saturday. The IMF said once the review is approved by IMF management and completed by the IMF Executive Board, Sri Lanka will have access to about \$333 million in financing. This would bring the total IMF financial support disbursed under the arrangement to about \$1.33 billion, the IMF said.

CANADA

Govt apologizes for killing of sled dogs

The Canadian government officially apologized on Saturday to an Indigenous community for the killing of several hundred sled dogs by police more than half a century ago. Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Gary Anandangere delivered the apology in Nunavik, in Quebec Province. In addition to the apology, the Canadian government will pay 45 million Canadian dollars (\$32 million) in compensation. In 2019, the Canadian government apologized to the Nunavut Inuit for the police killings of sled dogs in an area further north in the province.

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CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

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WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900,
San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

471 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

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Lebanon says dozens killed in Israeli strikes

BEIRUT — Lebanon said Israeli airstrikes on Saturday killed dozens of people, many of them in central Beirut, as Israel's defense minister vowed action against Hezbollah.

On Israel's second front, the more than 13-month conflict with Hamas militants in Gaza, rescuers said pre-dawn Israeli airstrikes and tank fire killed 19 people and wounded more than 40, Agence France-Presse reported.

After nearly a year of limited cross-border exchanges of fire, in which Lebanon's Hezbollah said it was acting in support of Palestinians, Israel escalated airstrikes against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon on Sept 23. A week later, it sent ground troops to southern Lebanon.

One strike on Saturday in the heart of Beirut brought down a residential building and jolted residents across the city.

The strike on the working-class neighborhood killed at least 20 people and wounded 66, Lebanon's health ministry said.

The attack in the capital was followed by others in the city's south-

ern suburbs after calls by the Israeli military to evacuate.

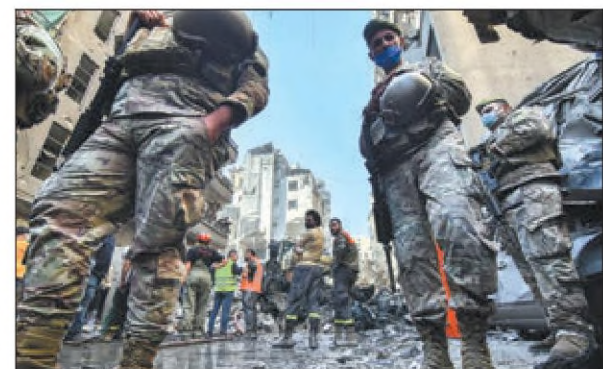
Israel has not commented on the strike in central Beirut but said it had again hit Hezbollah targets in the city's southern suburbs.

A Lebanese security source told AFP the central Beirut strike had "targeted a leading Hezbollah figure", but a Hezbollah lawmaker, Amin Sherri, while speaking to Lebanese media, denied any official was present at the time of the attack.

The health ministry said Israeli airstrikes also hit eastern Lebanon, killing 24 people, including 13 in the town of Shmohar overlooking the Bekaa Valley.

In Lebanon's south, at least 14 were killed, including five in the coastal city of Tyre, the ministry said. The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell warned on Sunday that Lebanon was "on the brink of collapse".

Four people were killed and 40 others injured in Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon on Sunday, according to the Lebanese army and a source in the Lebanese Red Cross.



Security forces stand guard as civil defense teams conduct search and rescue operations after an Israeli attack destroyed an eight-story building in Beirut, Lebanon, on Saturday. RAHIM RHEA VIA NEWSCOM

Air raid sirens were activated in several areas of central and northern Israel on Sunday, the army said, after projectiles were fired from Lebanon.

In a telephone call with Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz on Saturday, Washington's Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the United States sought a diplomatic resolution in Lebanon and urged Israel to improve the "dire" conditions in Gaza.

A spokesman for Katz said he underscored that Israel would "continue to act decisively in response to Hezbollah's attacks" in Israel.

In the pre-dawn darkness of Gaza on Saturday, one strike killed seven people, including children, at a house in the Zeitun area of Gaza City, civil defense agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP.

Abu Obeida, the spokesman for Hamas' armed wing, said on Saturday a female hostage had been killed in the north Gaza area but gave no further details.

Israel's military said it was examining the information.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Bulgaria, Romania closer to full status of Schengen

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Romania and Bulgaria are expected to become full members of the passport-free Schengen Area after Austria agreed to lift its long-held veto in a move applauded by EU leaders.

An agreement was reached on Friday afternoon after ministers from Austria, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary signed a joint declaration in Budapest in a meeting held under the Hungarian rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Romania and Bulgaria were granted partial Schengen status when passport checks to other Schengen countries were removed early this year at sea and air borders, but land border control had remained due to Vienna's opposition over the concern of excessive irregular migration.

"Bulgaria and Romania belong fully to the Schengen Area. Removing controls at land borders is the last hurdle," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in a statement, adding that a European Council formal decision is next.

European Council ministers are expected to meet next month to formalize the agreement.

"The citizens of Romania and Bulgaria belong to Schengen and deserve to fully benefit from Schengen freedoms," said European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson, who attended the Friday meeting of interior ministers in Budapest.

She was hopeful that the land border checks would be completely removed by Jan 1, 2025.

The joint declaration acknowledged the progress achieved in curb-

ing irregular migration and asylum claims across the three countries.

Comparing the first three quarters of 2023 and 2024, illegal entries have gone down by 47 percent in Bulgaria, 53 percent in Romania and 67 percent in Austria while asylum applications fell by 40 percent, 75 percent and 57 percent, respectively, in the three countries, according to the joint declaration.

The three countries pledged, in the declaration, to continue the common efforts to fight illegal and irregular migration to Europe and

their countries, do their utmost to prevent illegal onward transit of migrants through their countries and to smoothly conduct returns and transfers in accordance with the relevant agreements.

Austrian Interior Minister Gerhard Karner noted on Friday that there has been a massive drop in migrant arrival numbers, which are now "moving toward zero", but added that he would discuss the border measures with Chancellor Karl Nehammer before taking the final decision in December.

"Romanians have already felt the benefits of partial entry into the Schengen Area, but Romanian economic growth will be boosted with

full accession, including by land," Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu said in a statement on Friday.

The full membership for Romania and Bulgaria will expand the Schengen Area to 29 states, including 25 EU member states. Ireland and Cyprus will remain the only EU members who are not part of the passport-free area.

The latest breakthrough happened at a time when some 10 Schengen states such as Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and Norway introduced temporary internal border checks over concerns of illegal migration. The Netherlands will do so from December until June 2025.

BUSINESS

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Low-altitude industry gains strategic importance

There are now over 17,000 unmanned aerial vehicle firms in the country

By ZHU WENQIAN

zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

China plans to promote the formation of a trillion-yuan (\$138 billion) market for the low-altitude economy by 2030, fueling business growth opportunities of a large number of upstream and downstream industry players in this burgeoning sector.

A guideline proposed that China would establish more than 20 replicable and promotable low-altitude economy typical application demonstrations by 2027, according to the document jointly issued by four departments including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

Guangdong province-based eVTOL (electric vertical take-off and landing) maker EHang Holdings Ltd said that with increasing policy support, the low-altitude economy in the country is entering a phase of high-speed growth.

EHang, a Nasdaq-listed company, signed an agreement with A-share listed Zhejiang Sunriver Culture Tourism Co Ltd in mid-November, and the two sides will together explore the industrial model of integrating low-altitude economy with cultural tourism consumption scenarios in China.

Zhejiang Sunriver Culture will purchase 50 EH216-S or similar pilotless passenger-carrying aircraft from EHang for cultural and tourism projects such as sightseeing based on market demand.

"EHang will continue to promote the applications of eVTOL in different air traffic scenarios, as well as promote the building of an industrial ecology and the innovation of business models for the low-altitude sector," said He Tianxing, vice-president of EHang Holdings. "We will combine our own advantages and actively seize the strategic opportunities emerging in this golden period of growth for the low-altitude economy."

The year 2024 is considered the inaugural year of China's low-altitude economy, representing a new milestone for the booming sector. As a typical representative of the in-depth integration of new-generation information technology and aviation technology, developing the low-altitude industry has significant strategic importance, industry experts observed.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology recently held a meeting, which noted for the development of low-altitude industry. The meeting noted that the low-altitude sector is an important way of development for cultivating new quality productive forces and new economic growth points.

A batch of guidelines issued by the government has clearly proposed support for the research and development, product validation and exploration of commercial application scenarios for low-altitude aircraft.

So far, more than 30 provincial-level regions have included the low-altitude economy in their government work reports. A number of local governments have introduced policies to support the research and manufacturing of aircraft, the building of infrastructure, airspace management and



People take photos of the "Land Aircraft Carrier" modular flying car developed by Xpeng Aeroht, which is affiliated with automaker Xpeng, during the China International Aviation & Aerospace Exhibition in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, on Nov 10. YIN GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Workers showcase how to transport navel oranges using drones at an orchard in Yichang, Hubei province, on Nov 5. ZHENG JIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY



Visitors check out an electric vertical take-off and landing vehicle during the 26th China Hi-Tech Fair in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Nov 14. XUAN HUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

flight standards, thus forming a relatively complete support system for the industrial chain.

Several cities such as Chongqing; Suzhou, Jiangsu province; Guangzhou, Guangdong province; and Wuhan, Hubei province have launched low-altitude economic industry funds to drive the growth of the sector, with the largest scale of the fund coming in at 20 billion yuan.

As of now, there are over 17,000 unmanned aerial vehicle operating enterprises in China, and over 2 million UAVs have been registered with real names nationwide, according to China Air Transport Association.

"The next economic growth point will be the low-altitude sector, in my opinion. If the problem of traffic congestion is not solved, it would be difficult to develop the

real economy," Ni Mingxuan, principal of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou), said during a recent forum in Guangzhou. "The technologies related to the low-altitude sector have been gradually maturing, and the advantage of three-dimensional space is obvious."

A number of eye-catching eVTOL aircraft were on display at the just concluded 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, also known as Airshow China, in Zhuhai, Guangdong.

As a key player in the low-altitude economy sector, Chinese electric vehicle maker Xpeng Motors' flying car unit Xpeng Aeroht has taken a giant leap into the future of transportation.

The company unveiled the first public autopilot flight of its modular flying car, the "Land Aircraft

Carrier" during the airshow, and it is also the world's only car capable of storing an "aircraft" in its trunk.

During the airshow, Xpeng Aeroht received new orders for 2,008 units of its flying car, the largest of its kind globally, with customers coming from sectors such as transportation, tourism, real estate and technology.

"The orders mostly come from businesses, government institutes and public service departments, and such an achievement at least indicates that the low-altitude economy is encouraged and supported by the government," said Ye Liang, advanced manufacturing and mobility sector leading partner of accounting firm Ernst & Young. "The purpose of an aircraft is mainly for transportation and sightseeing. Based on current

introductions, in my opinion, the transportation scenarios may be very limited, but the sightseeing scenarios seem more feasible for flying cars."

He added that for long-distance travel, consumers could achieve a flying experience around the scenic spots by renting such flying cars.

Meanwhile, Liu Xufeng, a senior consultant at consultancy firm Frost & Sullivan, said Xpeng Aeroht's latest order has driven the commercialization process of flying cars, and helped lay the foundation for its multi-field applications.

"For tourism and sightseeing, flying cars are expected to create a new experience of high-altitude sightseeing. For real estate projects, they will help provide air connections for high-net-worth clients. Besides, flying cars could quickly

respond to emergency rescue demand in complex terrains and meet the demand for fast deliveries," Liu said.

During the airshow, Xpeng Aeroht's founder Zhao Deli showcased the fully automated separation and reconnection of the flying car between ground and air modules, demonstrating the country's innovation and potential in low-altitude economic growth.

"With just one touch on my smartphone, this 'transformer' releases the air module from the ground module," said Zhao.

The "Land Aircraft Carrier" offers manual and autonomous flight modes, including auto-route planning, autonomous cruising, one-touch return, 360-degree obstacle detection and descent vision assistance.

The air module is an eVTOL structure, built with carbon fiber for lightweight durability, the company said. Such an aircraft can also be called an air taxi, and it is expected to become a main tool for sightseeing and intercity transportation in the future.

Currently, the company's flying car manufacturing base is under construction in Guangzhou and it is expected to become the world's first mass-production facility for flying cars using a modern assembly line.

With a planned annual capacity of 10,000 units, the factory will focus on producing the air module for the "Land Aircraft Carrier" and is scheduled for completion in the third quarter of 2025, with deliveries expected to begin in 2026.

Fan Feifei contributed to this story.

Helicopter services taking off in China

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhu Wenqian

A few years ago, I had a chance to take a short helicopter trip for sightseeing above the ancient city of Datong in North China's Shanxi province, and I enjoyed looking down on the beautiful night views of the city that I was unable to

have by standing on the ground.

Low-altitude tourism, as an emerging industry, is attracting more tourists to take some unique experiences, with the rapid growth of the low-altitude economy in the country.

Now, tourists are able to take helicopter trips at the Great Wall in Mutianyu, thanks to a new service that was recently launched. The Robinson R44 helicopter takes off from an airport near the scenic spot, and flies for a 10- or 15-minute trip before returning to land. Each helicopter

can carry three passengers and a pilot, according to the operator.

"Chinese consumers have been paying more attention to the experience of trips. In the past few years, low-altitude tourism has become the new favorite of travelers with its unique perspective and stimulating feeling," said Fu Yang, an official at China General Aviation, a State-owned enterprise in Hainan province.

The company currently operates a helicopter sightseeing trip from the Atlantis Sanya Hotel on Hainan

island, and the trip has become popular with travelers.

Besides low-altitude tourism, air taxi services between neighboring cities have also been launched in China and the business is growing.

China's first cross-provincial designated low-altitude passenger transport route was launched in August, connecting Shanghai Pudong International Airport with the Kunshan City Terminal. The trip reduces a land journey of around 70 minutes to a flight time of just 28 minutes.

In the initial stage of operation, a fixed round-trip route will be operated twice a day during the morning and evening peak hours, with a one-

way flight priced at 1,600 yuan (\$221) per person or 1,800 yuan per person.

Operated by Shanghai Newsky Helicopter Co, the air taxi service includes "one-on-one" service after landing, with the whole process, including airport ground transportation, taking approximately an hour.

Shanghai is working to develop its low-altitude sector with the city aiming to establish itself as one of the first batches of low-altitude inter-provincial navigable cities in China. It is also accelerating the research on air taxi transportation in the Yangtze River Delta region.

By 2027, Shanghai aims to establish a complete industrial system

that includes the research and development, manufacturing, final assembly, airworthiness testing and commercial application of low-altitude aircraft. Sales of the core industries are expected to exceed 50 billion yuan, according to local government's plan.

China's low-altitude economy has entered a period with frequent introductions of favorable policies, and the development of the industry is expected to accelerate. This will significantly enhance the country's core competitiveness in the sector and China is foreseen to take the lead in forming a comprehensive low-altitude development system, said a research report of CITIC Securities.

BUSINESS



Engineers from China Mobile debug and optimize networks used for product delivery drones in Huangshan, Anhui province, in September. PAN CHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Aerial logistics enhance tourist experience in China

At the Great Wall, visitors can order products delivered by Meituan drones

By ZHU WENQIAN
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Fueled by rapidly developing technologies, scenic spots in China are getting increasingly digitalized, with visitors to a number of places of interest now being able to order food, drinks and other items that will be delivered by drones.

At the Badaling Great Wall in Beijing, tourists can order products through their mobile phones and get the chosen products such as food, water and perhaps even an umbrella or a jacket, delivered in a few minutes by drones operated by Meituan, one of China's major online service platforms, which recently launched the service.

Previously, such a delivery would have required a 50-minute walk, and this time has been dramatically shortened with the operation of drones, which can also take away garbage from tourists on the returning journeys, Meituan said.

Drone deliveries have also been in regular operations at

domestic sightseeing spots such as in Shenzhen, Guangdong province's theme parks Window of the World and Happy Valley.

At Happy Valley in Shenzhen, drones have made the delivery time significantly shorter and driven sales volumes of takeout orders such as Starbucks coffee and fast food meals.

The drone delivery route between Meituan and Shenzhen Happy Valley starts at a shopping center that is about 1 kilometer outside of the park, with the landing point inside the park. The service has allowed tourists to order takeout without leaving the park, Meituan said.

Meanwhile, Shenzhen-based drone manufacturer DJI said it started the pilot phase of drone transportation last year in the Huangshan Mountain scenic area, and has effectively alleviated the pressure of material transportation up and down the mountain.

Between April and November, a peak season for tourism at Huangshan Mountain, one of the

most famous and beautiful rugged landscapes in the country, there is the need to transport between 15 and 20 metric tons of goods per day on average, according to the scenic area.

Previously, the work could only be done manually and faced problems such as insufficient capacity, high labor intensity and difficulties in sustaining growth in transport capacity.

The domestic tourism market has gradually recovered after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the bottleneck of transport capacity has since become increasingly prominent.

Huangshan Mountain has launched a drone transport route that is 3.2 km away from the pedestrian walkway area and uses a single-lane dual-drone operation. In the period from May last year to January of this year, drones were operated 12,590 times and transported 253 tons of goods, DJI said.

Fresh materials such as meat, vegetables, mineral water and rice, as well as household waste and other materials required for the daily operation of the scenic area can be transported by drones, the company said.

The application of drones at

Huangshan Mountain has enabled those who have a demand to transport products in the mountainous areas to see a possibility to address the issue, DJI said.

"The industrial development of low-altitude economy relies more on technological and industrial innovation," said Zhang Xiaonan, senior corporate strategy director of DJI. "An increasing number of new applications and life service scenarios are expected to emerge one after another, and the application of drones in those scenarios will have a long-term impact on the life of consumers."

In the past few years, Huangshan in Anhui province has launched a variety of new activities such as low-altitude tourism and carnivals for *hanfu*, traditional Chinese clothing of the Han ethnic group.

In the first 10 months of this year, Huangshan welcomed 82.93 million tourists, up 10.56 percent year-on-year. Over the period, it netted tourism revenue of 74.7 billion yuan (\$10.31 billion), up 12.55 percent on a yearly basis, according to the local government.

Fan Feifei contributed to this story.

State builders speed up undersea tunnel work

By HAN JINGYAN
hanjingyan@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese State builders participating in the building of the world's largest undersea tunnel in Qingdao, Shandong province, have boosted their construction abilities through technical innovations.

With technical enhancement, China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd, which is building the Jiaozhou Bay Second Tunnel, made new headway on Saturday when they fully connected the northern line of the Huangdao-end land section ahead of schedule.

The tunnel will be 17.48 kilometers long, marking a new milestone in China's construction prowess, said Liu Aiwu, CREC4 project manager of the No 2 Bid of the tunnel.

It will link Qingdao's main urban areas with its West Coast New District and is being constructed through drilling and blasting, Liu said.

The world's largest undersea tunnel is also witnessing the highest water pressure for tunnel shields and deepest burial depth for blasts, he said.

Liu said, "In order to speed up the high-quality progress of the project, we have optimized a multifaceted construction plan, and realized simultaneous progress in the open excavation, the tunnel's main line as well as its ramp, largely elevating our work efficiency."

He said the total length of the main line of CREC4's No 2 Bid is 3.44 km, including 500 meters of open-cut tunnel and 2.9 kilometers of underground tunnel dug through drilling and blasting.

"While building this world-class benchmark project, our technical team has adopted modern methods such as three-dimensional laser scanning, seismic prospecting, high-precision geological radar, advanced horizontal drilling and in-hole imaging, accurately predicting the geological conditions of the tunnel from all directions," Liu said.

The Second Tunnel, as a key project in Qingdao during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25) and a major artery in its "six horizontal and nine vertical" transport corri-

dors in the city proper, will help boost traffic on both banks of Jiaozhou Bay, bolster integration and enhance the high-standard opening-up of Qingdao.

As a semi-provincial city, Qingdao now administers seven districts — including the West Coast New District — and manages three county-level cities, as an international port city.

Liu added, "We have made innovations on our computer programming technology, three-dimensional visualization technology, and developed an intelligent blasting design system for tunnel drilling and blasting excavation."

This, he said, has helped to automatically generate the blast hole layout, charging structure, a network diagram and blasting parameter table, thus enabling rapid calculation, quick generation and dynamic adjustment of the blasting parameters.

Xu Shengbin, Party branch secretary of the CREC4 project, said, "With our innovative work and through the joint efforts of over 400 on-site staff members, our project has won the honorary titles of Standardized Demonstration Site of Shandong Province and Standardized Demonstration Site of Qingdao Municipal Public Works."

By joining in the construction of this world-class project, CREC4 aims to bolster the country's construction strength in the new era, said Lu Ying, an employee from the CREC4 Seventh Engineering.

With an investment by State-owned Qingdao Conson Development (Group) Co Ltd, the Jiaozhou Bay Second Tunnel extends for a total length of 17.48 km, including a main tunnel length of 14.37 km, with 9.95 km being under the sea.

The Huangdao-end land section includes a main tunnel on the main line, a north shaft and a south shaft, she said, adding that the south shaft is 70.3 meters deep while the north shaft is 77.5 meters deep. Upon completion, they will serve as a "respiratory system" for the main tunnel.

She noted that the Second Tunnel started construction on Oct 29, 2020, and is expected to be completed and put into operation in December 2027.



Staffers from CREC4 Seventh Engineering work on the Jiaozhou Bay Second Tunnel in Qingdao, Shandong province. LI PINGHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



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

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Debt swaps to rejuvenate local governments

EAGLE EYE

By Luo Zhiheng

On Nov 8, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress approved an increase of 6 trillion yuan (\$828 billion) in the local government special bond ceiling to replace outstanding hidden debt — or liabilities of local governments that are not officially recorded.

The increase is designated for swapping outstanding implicit debts, providing local governments with more room to better develop the economy and ensure people's livelihoods.

Local governments will be eligible for local government special bonds worth another 4 trillion yuan over the coming five years starting this year to finance debt swaps, or 800 billion yuan each year, said Minister of Finance Lan Fo'an.

The new measures will add a combined 10 trillion yuan to China's debt relief resources. Meanwhile, the 2 trillion yuan of hidden debts resulting from housing improvement projects in rundown areas due by 2029 and beyond will be paid in accordance with the original contracts.

As a result, the amount of hidden debt that China's local governments need to deal with is expected to drop from 14.3 trillion yuan to 2.3 trillion yuan, significantly alleviating debt resolution pressure.

In summary, 10 trillion yuan in direct funding plus 2 trillion yuan in naturally maturing debts will resolve 12 trillion yuan of implicit debts within five years. The significance of debt swaps lies not only in its "largest scale in recent years", but also in the substantial optimization of fiscal debt resolution strategies and its incentive effect on local government behavior.

First, the direct funding scale of 10 trillion yuan and the move to resolve 12 trillion yuan of debt mark the largest such efforts in history, demonstrating the central government's resolve to prevent and mitigate risks, standardize debt management, and promote economic growth, thereby boosting confidence and expectations.

Second, this reflects a significant optimization in debt resolution strategy, shifting from a focus on risk prevention to a better balance between stabilizing growth and managing risks.

Third, it reduces the fiscal pressure of current debt resolution and interest payments for local governments, freeing up more fiscal resources and efforts to develop the economy, provide public services, better implement tax and fee reductions, and improve the business environment, thereby enhancing the incentive effects on local government behavior.

It is reasonable to believe that, under this comprehensive set of measures, Chinese local governments will shift from an emergency response mode back to focusing on normal development, regaining their capacity and enthusiasm for economic growth.

This shift has been a critical factor in China's economic growth over the past 46 years of reform and opening-up. Of course, resolving debts and mitigating risks cannot be expected to be accomplished overnight, a long-term effort to establish systems is more crucial.

In the next phase, it is necessary to strengthen the monitoring of the standardized use of local debt resolution funds and address fundamental issues in debt risk prevention by stabilizing macro tax burdens, clarifying the boundaries between government and market, ensuring that the central



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

government holds more fiscal powers and raising the proportion of central government expenditure accordingly, establishing capital and debt budgets, and promoting the transformation of local government financing vehicles.

The new round of large-scale debt swaps is significant in extending the local debt maturity cycle, reducing interest payment pressure, and steering local governments from debt resolution to economic development and public service provision, thereby transitioning from emergency response to focusing on economic development.

The importance of debt swaps lies also in the substantial optimization of fiscal policy measures for debt resolution and their incentive effects on local government behavior.

First, overall, the debt resolution effort has exceeded expectations and is the largest such in recent years. With 10 trillion yuan in direct funding plus 2 trillion yuan in naturally maturing debts, 12 trillion yuan of implicit debts will be resolved within five years. This reflects the central government's resolve to prevent and mitigate risks, standardize debt management, and promote economic growth, boosting confidence and expectations.

Lan disclosed that as of the end of 2023, China's implicit debt totaled 14.3 trillion yuan. Through an increase of 6 trillion yuan in the local government special bond ceiling

and the annual allocation of 800 billion yuan from each year's newly issued local government special-purpose bonds for five consecutive years, combined with 2 trillion yuan of hidden debts resulting from housing improvement projects in rundown areas due by 2029 and beyond, the local governments' debt burden will drop to 2.3 trillion yuan by 2028, with annual average debt resolution dropping from 2.86 trillion yuan to 460 billion yuan, less than one-sixth of the original level, greatly easing debt resolution pressure.

Second, this reflects a major optimization in debt resolution strategy, transitioning from a primary focus on risk prevention to better balancing growth stabilization and risk prevention. This strategic shift signifies that in the next phase, stabilizing growth and development will be prioritized, enhancing the fiscal policy's support for high-quality development and countercyclical adjustments.

Currently, there is a broad consensus that fiscal policy can play a greater role during economic downturns, with monetary policy mainly serving a supporting role. Of course, the specific intensity needs to consider future uncertainties, external shocks, and fiscal sustainability.

Third, the debt swaps reduce the fiscal pressure on current local government debt resolution and interest payments, enabling

local governments to allocate more fiscal resources and efforts to economic development and public services, such as increasing investments in education, healthcare, and environmental protection, thereby enhancing local economic endogenous growth and societal well-being. It is estimated that this could save approximately 600 billion yuan over five years. Moreover, debt swaps help local governments better implement tax and fee reductions, alleviating and even eliminating issues such as arbitrary fines and fees in some regions, thus improving the business environment.

Fourth, for LGFVs, debt swaps assist in shedding historical debt burdens and preparing for transformation and development. Through debt swaps, LGFVs can systematically divest implicit debts, clarify debt responsibilities, reduce debt burdens, and enhance financial stability. This allows them to focus more on developing operational businesses, improving operational efficiency and profitability, and laying a solid foundation for successful transformation.

In the long term, resolving local debt issues fundamentally requires addressing them from three dimensions: fiscal system reform, debt budget management, and transformation of LGFVs.

When it comes to fiscal system reform, it is necessary to stabilize macro tax burdens, clarify the boundaries between government

and market, centralize fiscal powers and expenditure responsibilities, and consolidate institutions in depopulating districts and counties.

On the debt budget system front, we need to strengthen local government debt management by establishing debt and capital budgets. This includes comprehensive debt risk warning and prevention mechanisms, strict control over new debt, and ensuring debt levels align with economic development. The current debt management primarily focuses on balance and quota management, but lacks detailed debt budgets, covering size, structure, repayment schedules, and investment directions. It is necessary to establish detailed debt and capital budgets.

For LGFVs, we should accelerate the market-oriented transformation, steering them toward more market-oriented, professional, and standardized operations. By introducing social capital, optimizing governance structures, and improving operational efficiency, these companies can enhance their self-sustaining capabilities and market competitiveness, reducing reliance on local governments.

The writer is chief economist at Yuekai Securities.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Robust growth dispels myths about China's consumption

MAIN STREET

By Daniel Zipser

Over the past few months, China's economic indicators have shown steady, albeit modest, growth.

In the first half, GDP grew at a rate of 5 percent year-on-year, while retail sales rose 3.7 percent. Despite this, the outlook for Chinese consumption remains mixed, with some warning that the situation could worsen before it improves due to low consumer sentiment and a property slump.

However, focusing solely on these aggregate measures can be misleading. A closer, more granular look reveals a more complex reality, as highlighted in the 2024 McKinsey China Consumer Report. Here, I debunk three common myths about Chinese consumption that often surface among senior executives in the country.

One of the most prevalent misconceptions is that the Chinese economy is in crisis. While consumer sentiment remains low and

the anticipated post-pandemic recovery has been slow, the overall economic picture is far from bleak. China continues to post GDP growth figures of around 5 percent, a significant number given the scale of its economy. However, this macro growth does not necessarily translate to micro-level growth, which might not be felt equally across all sectors.

Despite existing challenges, China contributed one-third of global GDP growth in 2023 and continues to show resilience in 2024. Domestic consumption, although modest, is growing. Certain sectors — like services and tourism — are experiencing robust growth, indicating that the economy is not in uniform decline, but exhibits varied performance across different sectors and regions.

Moreover, while overall product consumption might appear flat, sectors such as sportswear, urban outdoor apparel, and health and wellness have seen double-digit growth, reflecting the continued strength of these areas. It's crucial to look beyond aggregate measures and recognize the pockets of higher consumer confidence and positive growth within the market. For instance, confidence levels vary widely between millennials in larger cities and those in smaller urban areas, with some lower-tier cities showing

confidence levels exceeding 80 percent.

Placing China in a global context also helps dispel the crisis myth. According to McKinsey's ConsumerWise survey, Chinese consumers are among the most confident globally. In the latest survey, 59 percent of Chinese consumers believe the economy will rebound within the next two to three months, compared to just 41 percent of US consumers, 30 percent of UK consumers, and 13 percent of Japanese consumers.

A common question arises from the luxury sector's Q2 results — why are luxury brands seeing sales decline on the Chinese mainland? It's important to remember that before the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese consumers made 60 percent of their luxury purchases outside of the Chinese mainland. This trend is now returning, with overseas spending on luxury goods in the first half already exceeding 2019 levels, despite outbound travel activity still lagging behind.

In May, total overseas luxury spending was 32 percent higher than in 2019, followed by 22 percent growth in June. The depreciation of the Japanese yen has driven substantial increases in spending in Japan, but spending in Italy and France has also risen. This trend indicates that Chinese consumers

have not lost their desire for luxury goods. They are simply choosing to make these purchases outside of the Chinese mainland. Factors such as price differentials, the experience of shopping abroad, and the allure of exclusive items not readily available domestically contribute to this behavior.

Luxury brands are responding by shifting their investments from opening new stores to increasing marketing budgets. Expansion projects have been put on hold, with fewer new stores opening in the first half compared with the same period in 2023. Concurrently, marketing activities, including offline events and art installations, have increased.

The narrative that foreign companies are rapidly pulling out of China due to a perceived decline in market opportunities is overly simplistic. While some companies have reduced their investments or exited the market, the reality is more nuanced. Some lower-performing companies have scaled back, but others, particularly from Europe, are increasing their investments in China. Germany, driven largely by the automotive industry, invested 7.3 billion euros (\$7.7 billion) in China in the first half, surpassing the 6.4 billion euros invested in all of 2023.

Foreign brands continue to hold signifi-

cant appeal among Chinese consumers, especially in the premium and luxury segments. The sportswear sector, for example, has seen foreign brands, including those operated by local Chinese partners, gain substantial market share post-pandemic. Amer Sports, a sportswear holding company partly owned by China's ANTA Group, recorded a 52.3 percent increase in revenue in China in the first half. Some wholly foreign-owned premium brands, such as Lululemon, have also experienced exceptional growth.

The myths of a Chinese consumption crisis, a waning appetite for luxury, and a mass exodus of foreign companies do not hold up under closer scrutiny. Instead, the reality is more complex, characterized by selective growth, continued enthusiasm for luxury goods (increasingly purchased overseas), and a mixed but still significant presence of foreign brands. Understanding these nuances is crucial for navigating or investing in the Chinese market. As the global economic landscape evolves, maintaining a balanced perspective will be key to recognizing the opportunities that still exist within China's vast and dynamic economy.

The writer is a senior partner in McKinsey's Shenzhen office and leader of McKinsey's Asia consumer and retail practice.

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COMMENT

Editorials

COP29 ends with ray of hope by putting meat on the bone of global climate finance

In one way or another, everyone everywhere on planet Earth, the most mulish climate change deniers included, is aware of the devastating effects of global warming. Among which more frequent disasters caused by severe weather events are only some of the most keenly felt and reported. For all the talk of urgency, however, the sad truth about the global discourse on climate change response is there has been more talk than walk.

The just concluded 2024 UN Climate Change Conference, or COP29, in Baku, Azerbaijan, may go down in the history of global climate response as a significant landmark, from where humanity may finally begin to walk that long, overdue walk.

Since its very inception, the UN climate meeting has worked strenuously to raise global awareness of climate change, the urgency of joint response, build transnational consensus on the matter, and mobilize and coordinate corresponding actions.

Those unremitting endeavors crystallized in the form of the Paris Agreement, humanity's first-ever consensus on the severity of climate change, the pressing need to act on it, and a subsequent course of action. Disappointingly, over the following years countries have dragged their feet on the matter. Developed nations have generally failed to honor their promises of financial and technological assistance for the developing ones; the latter, the least developed in particular, have struggled to catch up without the due resources and know-how. And, at the end of the day, the lack of progress on climate response could in a large part be attributed to rich countries committing to substantially more financing than what they have actually contributed, or are willing to.

COP29 is being widely praised as a milestone as it has maneuvered a breakthrough in climate financing by producing the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, of which every word was agreed on by all participating nations. It did not come easy. Behind it was years of preparatory work and weeks of intensive negotiations. But it will prove worthy of everything it has taken.

For breaking the long-standing multilateral negotiations stalemate over climate financing alone, the Baku meeting stands out as an unusual climate diplomacy success. Based on the costed needs reported in the nationally determined contributions of developing countries, it sets the goal of the developed countries contributing at least \$300 billion per year by 2035 for developing countries' climate actions. In doing so, it also made Article 6 of the Paris Agreement actionable with agreement finally reached on a mechanism for the use of internationally transferred mitigation outcomes.

The progress made on carbon markets was thus lauded as another breakthrough in Baku, as it was another aspect of the Paris Agreement where substantive agreement on the implementation had been difficult at previous climate change conferences. Countries have now agreed on the final building blocks that set out how carbon markets will work under the Paris Agreement, making country-to-country trading and a carbon crediting mechanism "fully operational".

Considering the lack of actions along the way, the COP29's focus on and breakthrough in operationalization marked a tremendous stride forward for humanity's joint efforts to redress one of the most damaging consequences of ways of life and production. This was highlighted by the decision to ensure the full operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund, which was agreed at COP27 but had remained unactable. Within the framework of COP29, several important agreements related to the fund were signed and these achievements mean the fund will be able to start financing projects beginning in 2025, with the total pledged financial support for the fund exceeding \$730 million so far.

UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell, who described the Paris Agreement as humanity's sole "life raft," was correct in likening COP29's financing agreements to "an insurance policy for humanity." Not only because they have the potential to help stave off some of climate change's worst impacts. But perhaps more importantly because they rest on corresponding commitments made being honored, which was precisely where much of the previous climate initiatives failed.

"...like any insurance policy — it only works — if premiums are paid in full, and on time," Stiell said. That means, as he stressed, that promises must be kept. Millions of lives depend on that.

The developed countries must deliver on their commitment to provide finance to help developing countries.

Arrest warrants highlight nature of Gaza crisis

While diplomats scrambled to broker a ceasefire, the Israeli air strikes on central Beirut, which killed at least 20 people, on Saturday, the fourth Israeli attack on the Lebanese capital in less than a week, were widely seen as a response by Tel Aviv to the International Criminal Court in Hague issuing arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant on Thursday.

The warrants accuse the two of "crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least Oct 8, 2023, until at least May 20, 2024," the day the prosecution filed the applications for the warrants.

But the world has clearly seen that Israel has not only kept carrying out relentless military attacks on the Gaza Strip and weaponizing its control of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian refugees there after May 20, but also taken the initiative to expand the crisis to Lebanon citing the threat from Hezbollah.

Israeli attacks have killed more than 3,500 people in Lebanon since Oct 8 last year, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. The fighting has also displaced about 1.2 million people, or a quarter of Lebanon's population. Notably, the escalation marked by Israel's continuous attacks on what it claims to be Hezbollah targets in central Beirut came after US envoy Amos Hochstein traveled to the region in pursuit of a deal to end months of fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group.

All the signs show that after the Democratic Party lost the US presidential election on Nov 5, the wheeler-dealer Netanyahu Cabinet has become more hell-bent on ignoring the instructions of the Joe Biden administration and resisting international and domestic pressure to end its military operations. Israel's War Cabinet is taking its own course to steer the development of the Middle East crisis in a direction of its design, at least until the incoming Republican administration is sworn in on Jan 20.

That the Netanyahu office said that the arrest warrants are in essence an attack on Israel's right to self-defense is simply a further effort to blur the line between war crimes and a country's self-defense rights. That's also in line with the Israeli leader's long-term scheme of hiding his personal agenda under the national cause of Israel.

Although Israel is not a party to the ICC and Tel Aviv has vehemently condemned it and the probe it has initiated into Israel's "war crimes," calling it a "political tool at the service of the most extremist elements that seek to undermine peace, security and stability in the Middle East," the Israeli side does care about the ICC's decisions that have already forced the Israeli leader to carefully plan the routes of his overseas visits to avoid being arrested. Not to mention the moral pressure that has been brought to bear on Israel for its ruthless actions against the Palestinian people.

As a country that claims it "abides by international law," Israel should stop its brutality that goes beyond the legal right to self-defense in international law.

On the issue of Palestine, China has always stood on the side of fairness and justice, as well as on the side of international law. China opposes all actions that violate international law, including international humanitarian law, and condemns any practices that harm civilians or attack civilian facilities.

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. China supports any efforts by the international community that contribute to achieving fairness and justice and upholding the authority of international law regarding the Palestine issue.

As a spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, Beijing hopes the ICC will maintain an objective and fair stance, exercise its power in accordance with the law, and interpret and apply the Rome Statute and general international law comprehensively and in good faith according to uniform standards, so as to do its part to help resolve the Middle East crisis at an early date.

The ICC's issuing of the arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant is not "antisemitic" as Netanyahu claimed. The court also issued an arrest warrant for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, head of Hamas' armed wing, for actions related to the Oct 7 attacks on Israel that amounted to war crimes. The court's decision is a damning indictment of Israel's lawless bloodlust let loose by Washington.

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Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Fuxin Dongjie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wa Centre, 7 Tin Wan
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

A balanced EV deal can help steady Sino-EU economic ties

Brussels and Beijing are nearing a solution over their dispute on Chinese-made electric vehicle imports into the European Union, the chair of the trade committee of the European Parliament told a German broadcaster.

"We are close to an agreement: China could commit to offering e-cars in the EU at a minimum price," Bernd Lange told n-tv, without elaborating. "This would eliminate the distortion of competition through unfair subsidies, which is why the tariffs were originally introduced."

The EU last month decided to increase "anti-subsidy" tariffs on Chinese-made EVs to as much as 45.3 percent, a move that has divided the bloc and triggered retaliation from Beijing.

Despite the tariffs coming into force last month, it is good to see

both sides have continued negotiations to find a solution, with the focus on a price commitment, following the strong calls and high expectations from various sectors in China and the EU for the proper handling of the case.

Regarding the price commitment negotiations, consultations should be conducted based on mutual consideration of core concerns, on the basis of mutual trust, and in accordance with the principles of pragmatism and balance. Particularly, both the effectiveness of the agreement and the core interests of enterprises should be taken into account so that a balanced and sustainable deal can be reached at an early date that can serve the common interests of both sides.

China will unswervingly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of

its enterprises, while it doesn't want to see the EU's politically motivated duties pull the otherwise stable China-EU economic and trade relations into a tariff war, although that is what some parties within and outside the EU want to see.

The EU should realize that a souring trade relationship with China will seriously harm its own interests, and thus it should maintain its strategic autonomy in dealing with its major trading partner and the world's second-largest economy.

The bloc should also respect the basic rules of the market and, especially, listen to the appeals of those member states that are not in support of the tariffs, as well as industry players including those within the region.

— XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

Financial institutions can lend support to trade

The State Council, China's Cabinet, has recently urged relevant departments to promote the stable growth of foreign trade by expanding the scale of export credit insurance, ensuring that small and micro foreign trade enterprises can obtain policy loans, continuously improving the financial services for foreign trade enterprises in terms of credit, loan issuance and repayment, and optimizing cross-border trade settlement.

The financial sector's support for foreign trade not only involves traditional credit business, but also covers cross-border investment and financing, payment settlement, renminbi global clearing, supply chain finance and exchange rate risk management. So financial institutions should focus on channel construction and offer comprehensive services, and help enterprises improve their exchange rate risk management.

To make cross-border payments safe, efficient and convenient, financial institutions should promote the internationalization of the renminbi, promote the expansion of the use of the currency in countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative projects, and expedite the construction of the RMB offshore market.

Meanwhile, they should give full play to their own technological advantages and RMB global clearing network to innovate infrastructure services, and improve the efficiency of global payments and settlements. In the process, they can use digital means to provide one-stop services in payment settlement and financial planning to help enterprises enhance their global resource allocation capabilities.

In the first half of this year, China's cross-border e-commerce hit 1.25 trillion yuan (\$182.53 billion), a year-on-

year increase of 13 percent, accounting for 5.9 percent of China's foreign trade. Financial institutions can therefore explore direct connections with cross-border e-commerce, optimize settlement services, provide differentiated financial services for overseas warehouse construction, leasing, operation and other scenarios, and increase financial support for key trade sectors.

An important means of exchange rate hedging is to use foreign exchange derivatives. China's foreign exchange market has a mature international foreign exchange derivative system. More than 120 Chinese and foreign-funded banks can operate foreign exchange derivatives business in the country. It is thus necessary for enterprises to use these tools, establish the concept of exchange rate risk neutrality and refrain from exchange rate speculation to reduce the cost of foreign exchange hedging.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

What They Say

Keeping abreast of the times best way to de-risk

At an event of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington on Friday, US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell warned that the ties between China and Russia are growing and threatening the interests of Washington and its allies.

"In many ways, China and Russia have chosen each other, believing that they can offer each other a lot," Campbell said. He said that the Sino-Russian partnership "is largely hidden, rarely fully public, but is now active." He said this is "deeply concerning."

"I'm not sure that we could have averted or dented or disrupted this growing alliance, but I will also say we tried, and at the ultimate level China and Russia have chosen this path together in ways that will animate global politics that are only now coming into view."

Campbell's remarks reflect an ingrained zero-sum game mentality of some in the core policymaking circle of the Joe Biden administration

that not only leads to its attempt to usher in an era of bloc confrontation for the world, but also its failure in addressing such burning issues as the Ukraine and the Middle East crises.

In the illusion of these Cold War minds, there always exists an "axis of evil" against the "civilized world" led by the United States. This illusion will continue to guide the US to defeat its present challenge, which they consider to be China.

They choose to ignore the fact that China is different from the Soviet Union in every way, but also the overall situations of the world today is different from those of the Cold War era, as the economic globalization over the past decades have closely bonded countries together.

That being said, the US administration should realize that cooperation and development, mutual learning, equality and mutual respect should replace bloc confrontation, cliques and unilateralism as the prevailing principles for handling

modern international relations.

If the US pundits can really move in line with the times, they would be able to view the ties between other countries rationally, and also reflect on the nature of the US' global alliance network objectively.

Like any other normal bilateral relations, China-Russia cooperation does not target any third party. It is the alliance network established by the US around the world that targets others, which is a highly exclusive, unilateral system based on US "values", rather than a multilateral and inclusive system centered on the United Nations.

As long as the US recognizes the necessity of Sino-US cooperation in dealing with common global challenges, including some of the US' own making, it should not divide China into three parts — a part it can work with, a part it should compete with, and a part it has to confront — and act accordingly.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | China Economic Prospects

Editor's note: In recent years, China has made significant strides in pursuit of high-quality economic and cultural development. And it has also demonstrated its commitment to build a prosperous society and promote Chinese modernization through innovation and reforms. Four experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

John Milligan-Whyte

Trump can do a business deal with China

How can China achieve a breakthrough deal with the next US administration after Donald Trump assumes office on Jan 20 despite the wide expectation he would implement highly disruptive domestic and foreign policies? The best-case scenario would be the two countries holding discussions to negotiate and sign a concise but comprehensive "package deal" that better aligns with their economic needs and goals and is conducive to the peaceful coexistence of China and the United States. Such a breakthrough deal will be necessary to end the worldwide financial crisis that will be triggered by an escalating trade war, destabilizing the two largest economies which account for 41 percent of the global GDP.

Unlike any other US president, Trump is an excellent business deal-maker who could happily sign a two-page agreement creating a new, mutually beneficial framework for Sino-US relations, if the agreement dramatically stimulates the US economy and creates millions of jobs in the US.

The worst-case scenario is the US intensifying the tariff and trade wars, and triggering confrontation in the high-tech sector, in a bid to prevent the "Made in China 2025" plan from



The author is chairman of the America-China Partnership Foundation.

his last interviews, Kissinger sadly said a war between the US and China was "probable".

Trump's reelection as US president has now made a catastrophic breakdown in US-China relations "probable". But it has also made a constructive breakthrough possible either through an early agreement between the two countries or later through a sudden breakthrough deal essential for the benefit of the US economy and people.

US trade wars can trigger a financial crisis and stop the functioning of the global credit and capital market. In such a situation, only a breakthrough agreement between the two countries will be able to restore business confi-

achieving success.

The worst-case scenario was summarized by former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger: "Unless there is some basis for cooperative action the world will slide into a catastrophe comparable to World War I. Military technologies available today make such a crisis even more difficult to control." In one of

dence and reinvestigate the capital and credit markets quickly enough to stop the collapse of the global financial, economic and trading systems.

Trump's reelection has created a unique opportunity for achieving a breakthrough in US-China relations, because only Trump can ignore the entrenched hostile views of China in the US' traditional policy-making establishment, think tanks and bureaucracy.

Trump realizes that traditional Sino-US economic relations can no longer meet the US' growth and national security needs. That is why he is likely to make major changes in the US' domestic and foreign policy. The Republican Party's control of both the House of Representatives and Senate can make many of Trump's radical policies clear and present dangers.

However, Trump is a presidential deal maker who can overcome the key problems economist Larry Summers warned of in US policymaking. "Can the United States imagine a viable global economic system in 2050 in which its economy is half the size of the world's largest? Could a political leader acknowledge that reality in a way that permits negotiation over what such a world would look like? While it might be unacceptable to the United States to be so greatly

surpassed in economic scale, does it have the means to stop it? Can China be held down without inviting conflict?"

Trump won a clear mandate because many American voters liked the economic policies he claimed he would implement as US president. The voters elected him to force change.

Since his tariff war and trade policies that demanded unrealizable concessions from China failed during his first term, he has indicated to impose 60-100 percent tariffs on Chinese goods, which he unrealistically believes will force China to accept his demands. The failure of his first term's tariff policies foreshadows the failure of his second term's even more extreme trade war.

The reality that will eventually prevent Trump from achieving his unrealistic demands is that neither the US nor China can win relentless zero-sum game competitions. Given that leaving behind a widely appreciated, successful breakthrough economic deal with China is better than causing a catastrophic economic confrontation, Trump's legacy could be either achieving a breakthrough deal with China or causing the global financial system's collapse.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Benoit Vermander

Learning Chinese is to promote humanism

The World Chinese Language Conference, held in Beijing from Nov 15 to 17, chose four "I's" — Interconnection, Integration, Inheritance and Innovation — as its motto. The four I's aptly reflect the hopes language educators throughout the world have and the challenges they face: when teaching a foreign language to the youth, you help them to connect with people from a different sociocultural background, merge linguistic skills with cultural awareness, and strive to strike a balance between the stress on the value of tradition and innovation and boldness in teaching methods.

However, a fifth "I" seemed to have found its way into the corridors of the conference venue: Intelligence, artificial intelligence, to be precise. AI is the biggest challenge people teaching foreign languages face. For sure, AI also offers advantages. For example, thanks to AI, we can now easily decipher documents written in languages that we don't know or ignore, and understand many words pronounced in speeches which earlier we couldn't.

Besides, the tools for doing so are becoming increasingly reliable, even if much is lost in (AI) translation. However, these advantages are starting to trigger a crisis in the foreign language-teaching sector. Why bother to learn another language — a long and painful endeavor — if machines can master the work entrusted in the past to interpreters and translators?

The stress on cultural transmission which the World Chinese Language Conference took care to maintain partly answers the question. Learning a new language goes far beyond mastering syntactic and lexical knowledge. It is about entering a new world. It means to escape from our native tongue and comprehend the most basic realities through a new prism.

For example, the division among colors differs slightly from one group of languages to another, which means that language learning affects even our sense of vision. Or grammatical systems do not divide time among past, future and present through the same categories. They also distinguish in different fashions between what is real and what remains hypothetical.

Each time I learn a new language I acquire a novel understanding of the world — and exchange my cognitive software for a new one. These reasons may not suffice to convince reluctant youngsters to spend time on learning something which AI is now supposed to take care of.

In terms of job opportunities, another advantage of continuing to invest in language learning is that the shift toward AI does not suppress but rather increases the tasks to be performed by translators and interpreters. Freed from the mechanical efforts attached to translating, language experts can spend more time working on both accuracy and nuances, which is vital for understanding of culture, bridging the gap between interlocutors by providing background explanations and making different aspects of a given civilization known to the global community, notably through the translation of books. These tasks are not limited to professional interpreters. At different levels and with different levels of depth, these tasks can be performed by people who have invested time, energy and money to learn and appreciate a foreign language.

Although it is still thriving, the learning of Chinese as a global language is threatened not only by the AI phenomenon but also, at least in some regions of the world, by the fast-changing international landscape and rising geopolitical tensions. Suppose an entire generation in the West were to relinquish the study of Chinese, the lack of experts in intercultural communication will very soon be acutely felt, and we will eventually be back to the dire situation experienced 50-60 years ago. Linguistic skills and cultural understanding are quick to dissolve and easy to undermine. They take much time to rebuild.

This is the reason why the stress put by the World Chinese Language Conference on tradition and cultural skills is welcome. Learning Chinese means familiarizing oneself with stories passed down from one generation to another, with poems, proverbs and songs, with wisdom lessons strikingly expressed in the Four Classics.

You can translate an engineering textbook through AI (though beware of the automated errors that could be introduced in the text) but you cannot understand the teaching of Confucius or Laozi through software. You need to appreciate the Chinese language and life lessons by following the tempo of a hiker going through a stunning mountainous landscape. The variegated splendors shaped by cultures, particularly by Chinese culture, will then shine in your eyes.

As a sinologist, I acquainted myself with the Chinese language and tradition first through the study of ancient texts and their lexicons. What I discovered in these materials was both challenged and made vivid by long-term immersion into Chinese communities, in far-away mountains as well as in megalopolises.

Teaching comparative philosophy, I am convinced that to ensure Chinese thought is considered in all settings as an essential component of world philosophy, linguistic skills need to be further nurtured and developed. The process is reciprocal: Chinese students should be encouraged to appreciate the variety and richness of the languages that together compose the choir of our shared humanity, while all the regions of the world need to welcome the teaching of the Chinese language and culture for fostering global humanism — global humanism being the cultural resource of which the world today is most in need.

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Signs of consolidated recovery

Editor's note: China's economy is shifting to high-quality development amid structural adjustments and external uncertainties. While growth has faced challenges from weak consumption, exports, and the property market, recent policy measures are starting to show positive effects. Two economists share their insights on China's economic outlook for the fourth quarter with China Daily. Excerpts follow:

Strong start to Q4



Xiong Yi, Deutsche Bank's chief China economist.

We estimate China's growth increased by 0.4 percentage point to 5.3 percent year-on-year in October, based on China's official monthly data release. It was largely driven by an improvement in

domestic demand on the back of recent policy stimulus measures. Retail sales growth rebounded to 4.8 percent year-on-year, up 1.6 percentage points, thanks to a surge in home appliances, furniture and car sales with help from the government's cash subsidies. Service sector growth also improved to 6.3 percent year-on-year, up 1.1 percentage points; property sales have recovered despite further price drops, and financial services activity has been boosted by monetary and capital market easing measures. Meanwhile, industrial production and fixed asset investment growth were both flat from last month, suggesting the government is prioritizing domestic consumer demand, an approach different from in the past.

Our expectation is for 5 percent growth in the fourth quarter and 4.9 percent annually in 2024, and we see upside risks if the upward momentum is sustained through year-end. Although the government's recent fiscal announcement fell short of market expectations, we think it has sufficient room to keep fiscal spending expansionary through the fourth quarter. Meanwhile, it has room for further property policy, including cutting property transaction taxes and expanding the scope of urban renewal projects to 300 cities, to sustain the property sector recovery.

October's economic activity showed further improvement, particularly in retail sales, services, and housing, boosted by recently implemented stimulus measures.

Industrial production decelerated slightly by 0.1 percentage point to 5.3 percent year-on-year. Production slowed in mid-stream industries, such as machinery and metal manufacturing, where growth fell by 1-2 percentage points year-on-year. In contrast, auto



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manufacturing output improved by 1.6 percentage points, likely fueled by the trade-in program. Export delivery values rebounded slightly by 0.3 percentage point to 3.7 percent year-on-year, as exports activities recovered from typhoon disruptions.

Services output improved by 1.2 percentage points to 6.3 percent year-on-year, marking the highest level this year. The largest improvement was the financial services industry, whose output increased by 3.7 percentage points to 10.2 percent year-on-year thanks to the central bank's monetary easing and increased capital market activity since late September. Services related to the property market also seem to have rebounded considerably, thanks to improved market sentiment and sales.

Retail sales rose by 1.6 percentage points to 4.8 percent year-on-year, primarily driven by the front-loaded online sales events and further utilization of the consumer goods trade-in program. Major online platforms started sales/pre-sales 8-13 days earlier than last year for this year's Double 11 online sales event, and the contribution of online sales to overall retail sales growth rose by 3.3 percentage points. Non-online sales also improved and contributed 1.5 percentage points to overall sales. Sales of home appliances, sports and recreational goods, cultural and office supplies, and communication devices all recorded high double-digit year-on-year growth: 39 percent,

27 percent, 18 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Automobile sales also improved by 3.3 percentage points to 3.7 percent year-on-year.

Fixed asset investment held steady at 3.4 percent year-on-year. Infrastructure investment improved by 3.6 percentage points to 5.8 percent year-on-year, the highest level since April. Manufacturing investment also saw a mild improvement of 0.3 percentage point to 10 percent year-on-year.

China's Q4 GDP growth expected to rise

Supported by China's ultra-long special government bonds funding the "cash for clunkers" automobile trade-in program, improved new home sales, triggered a rebound in exports, and increased stock market activity, we have raised our Q4-GDP growth forecast from 4.4 percent to 4.9 percent year-on-year.

Additionally, reflecting the delayed effects of earlier stimulus measures and policy adjustments since Sept 24, we now project full-year GDP growth for 2024 at 4.8 percent, up from 4.7 percent.

However, this recovery may prove brief. Despite the September policy

shift, Beijing has yet to implement concrete fiscal stimulus measures beyond the debt swap program. Moreover, risks loom, including potential 60 percent tariffs on Chinese goods proposed by the incoming administration in the United States.

We maintain our 2025 GDP growth forecast at 4.0 percent, anticipating sequential growth to dip again in the first quarter. This could prompt stronger fiscal measures after the National People's Congress in March 2025.

The "cash for clunkers" initiative and subsidies for home appliances have significantly lifted sales. Growth of retail sales jumped to 4.8 percent year-on-year in October from 3.2 percent in September, beating market expectations at 3.8 percent.

Given the program's sustained impact and favorable base effects in November and December, we expect retail sales growth in Q4 to rebound further from Q3.

In response to persistently weak consumption, the central government pledged a new round of large-scale equipment renewal and consumer goods trade-in programs. These measures, which gained traction in October, reflect Beijing's shift from investment-driven to consumption-driven stimulus. The trade-in program is poised to remain a key driver of consumption in the coming months.

New home sales turned positive in June 2023, and pent-up demand appears to have extended into November.

We forecast a strong rebound in Q4 new home sales compared to Q3. However, we remain cautious about the sector's outlook. While Beijing has introduced easing policies and pledged to stabilize the property market, progress on concrete fiscal measures has been slow.

Severe delays in container shipments from Shanghai and Ningbo Beilun ports in September, caused by Typhoon Bebinca, pushed significant export volumes into October. While this shift has minimal impact on total exports for the two months combined, it necessitates adjustments between Q3 and Q4 growth figures.

Additionally, with the next US administration proposing 60 percent tariff on Chinese goods, substantial front-loading of exports to the US is expected starting in December.

Considering stronger-than-expected October export data and anticipated front-loading, we have revised our Q4 export growth forecast from 6.0 percent to 8.5 percent year-on-year.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

FAJAR HIRAWAN

Task laid out after Rio

Indonesia and China, as key players of the G20, must work together with other member countries to build a more interconnected and equitable world

The G20 summit in Brazil, from Nov 18-19, once again shone a light on the responsibilities of major economies in promoting global governance and cooperation. The G20, representing about 85 percent of the world's GDP, two-thirds of the global population, and three-fourths of international



trade, stands as a pivotal platform for addressing some critical global challenges. Based on this situation, the deepening cooperation among G20 member countries, including

Indonesia and China, holds profound implications for regional economic development and the evolving landscape of global governance. We are all aware that the G20 has evolved from a crisis management forum during the 2008 global financial crisis to a more comprehensive platform addressing a spectrum of issues, from economic recovery and climate change to sustainable development and digital transformation. Its unique composition of developed and emerging economies enables it to facilitate diverse perspectives, making the G20 an essential forum in fostering policy coordination and multilateralism.

The 19th G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro came at a time when the global economic recovery remains uneven, exacerbated by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, climate change threats and inflationary pressures. Developing countries, particularly in regions such as Southeast Asia, require equitable access to financing, technology and strategic partnerships to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth. In this case, the G20 should prioritize any efforts to implement structural reforms that enhance inclusivity and address pressing challenges, such as digital inequality, climate change, and debt sustainability.

As the largest economy in Southeast Asia and a member of the G20, Indonesia is projected to grow by 5 percent in 2024, driven by

robust domestic consumption, infrastructure investment and a growing digital economy. During the G20 summit in Indonesia in 2022, the leaders of G20 countries emphasized resilience, inclusivity and sustainability, with key achievements including the establishment of the Financial Intermediary Fund for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and the launch of the Just Energy Transition Partnership.

Indonesia's ongoing collaboration with China is a testament to its proactive approach to leveraging partnerships for economic transformation. The cooperation not only strengthens Indonesia's role in the G20 but also positions it as a bridge between developing and developed nations. Meanwhile, Indonesia-China economic cooperation has deepened under the Belt and Road Initiative as a catalyst for regional growth. Projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, in commercial operation since the fourth quarter of 2023, highlight how investments in infrastructure can drive economic growth and green development. This railway is the first high-speed railway in the Southeast Asia region and it has already

created about 51,000 job opportunities in Indonesia and is expected to boost regional connectivity, reduce carbon emissions and promote tourism and trade.

China stands as Indonesia's foremost trading partner.

From January to August, the bilateral trade volume reached \$92.79 billion, up 1.5 percent year-on-year.

Indonesia's exports to China, primarily consisting of key commodities such as coal, palm oil, and nickel, play a vital role in meeting China's industrial demand for raw materials. Simultaneously, Chinese investments in Indonesia's smelting sector are driving the processing of raw materials such as nickel and aluminum, thereby strengthening local industries and creating employment opportunities.

In addition to traditional trade, the two nations have deepened their collaboration in emerging fields such as digital technology and renewable energy. Chinese companies' involvement in developing Indonesia's electric vehicle ecosystem supports the country's vision of becoming a regional hub for EV battery production. This partnership also plays a significant role in advancing Indonesia's energy transition efforts, with Chinese firms making notable contributions to solar and wind

energy development.

Indonesia-China economic cooperation offers an opportunity to rejuvenate the essence of global cooperation. In the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, by improving infrastructure, enhancing trade, and fostering technological transfer, these collaborations could contribute to ASEAN's vision of building a competitive, inclusive, and sustainable economic community. China's active engagement in ASEAN through platforms such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership complements Indonesia's G20 agenda, emphasizing shared prosperity and economic resilience.

While the benefits of Indonesia-China cooperation are evident, the G20 community can address critical challenges to ensure balanced and equitable growth. Major economies bear a responsibility to lead by example in areas such as climate financing, debt relief, and technological equity.

Indonesia and China, as key players in the G20, have demonstrated their commitment to being actively involved in shaping global governance and promoting the essence of global cooperation. By leveraging their strategic partnership, both countries can continue to shape the G20 agenda and inspire collective action to realize global prosperity and economic resilience. The G20 has an opportunity to reinforce its relevance and credibility by addressing the most pressing challenges of our time, ensuring that no nation is left behind in pursuit of global prosperity. By working together, the G20 and its member countries can build a more interconnected and equitable world.

The author is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Indonesian International Islamic University, and a member of the advisory board at The Reform Initiatives, Indonesia. 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.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

By working together, the G20 and its member countries can build a more interconnected and equitable world.

LU JIAJUN

Driving decarbonization forward

By leveraging their partnership, China and Brazil can accelerate the global transition to a low-carbon economy

The 2024 G20 summit in Brazil marks a critical juncture for global efforts to combat climate change. As the largest developing economies in Asia and South America, respectively, China and Brazil are uniquely positioned to lead the global decarbonization drive. Their shared commitment to sustainable development, coupled with complementary strengths, provides a strong foundation for cooperation.



China and Brazil have long acknowledged the urgent need for climate action. Both countries are signatories to the Paris Agreement and have submitted ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. China has pledged to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. In 2023, China became the global leader in renewable energy investment, allocating over \$100 billion annually to expand its wind, solar and hydropower capacities. The International Renewable Energy Agency reports that China now accounts for more than 30 percent of the world's installed renewable energy capacity, a remarkable achievement that underscores its global leadership in the sector. Meanwhile, Brazil, home to the world's largest rainforest and with significant renewable energy potential, is equally committed to decarbonization. The Amazon rainforest acts as a crucial carbon sink, absorbing millions of tons of carbon dioxide annually. However, illegal deforestation, primarily driven by agriculture and logging, threatens this critical resource. Brazil's NDCs include halting illegal deforestation by 2030 and increasing the share of renewables in its energy matrix, which already accounts for 83 percent of its electricity generation. Despite their unique challenges, China and Brazil share a mutual interest in advancing global decarbonization. Their collaboration offers a compelling model of South-South partnership, combining China's technological



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pro prowess and financial capacity with Brazil's natural resource endowments and biodiversity expertise.

China's leadership in renewable energy technologies aligns with Brazil's abundant natural resources, particularly in solar and wind energy. For instance, the semi-arid northeast of Brazil is ideal for large-scale solar farms, while its coastal areas offer

immense wind power potential. By transferring advanced technologies, such as high-efficiency solar panels and offshore wind turbines, Chinese firms can help Brazil unlock this potential. Joint ventures between Chinese and Brazilian companies could also focus on energy storage solutions, addressing the intermittency issues associated with renewables. Additionally,

China's expertise in smart grid technologies can help modernize Brazil's energy infrastructure, improving efficiency and reducing transmission losses.

Although Brazil is a global agricultural powerhouse, its farming practices are a major source of emissions. Adopting sustainable agricultural technologies developed in China, such as precision farming and methane-reducing feed for livestock, can help Brazil lower its agricultural emissions. Moreover, both countries could collaborate on large-scale afforestation and reforestation projects. China's experience with the "Green Great Wall" initiative — a reforestation project aimed at combating desertification — can inform similar efforts in Brazil to restore degraded Amazonian lands. Such initiatives not only enhance carbon sequestration but also promote biodiversity conservation. China's dominance in electric vehicle technology presents significant opportunities for collaboration with Brazil. With urban centers such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro grappling with severe traffic congestion and air pollution, transitioning to electric public transport is a natural solution. China can export electric buses and charging infrastructure to Brazil, while offering technical training and financial incentives. These efforts would not only reduce transportation emissions but also create economic opportunities in Brazil's EV manufacturing sector, fostering local job creation.

At the heart of the G20 summit is the critical challenge of balancing ambitious decarbonization targets with the realities of global energy security and economic growth. For China and Brazil, the summit provides a platform to amplify their partnership in driving global decarbonization while addressing systemic barriers the Global South is facing. Achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, as outlined by the International Energy Agency, requires over \$4 trillion annually in global clean energy investments, with a significant share needed in developing economies. However, these regions face critical financing gaps and structural challenges. China and Brazil

can take the lead in advocating for reforms in multilateral development banks to prioritize climate resilience and renewable energy projects. By aligning their bilateral initiatives with G20 goals, they can pioneer innovative financing solutions, such as green securitization, that attract private capital to sustainable projects in emerging economies.

Another challenge dominating G20 discussions is the global governance of carbon markets. While mechanisms such as carbon credit are increasingly viewed as tools to reduce emissions, they require robust regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency and prevent greenwashing. Brazil, as a leader in the bioeconomy and carbon credit trading, and China, with its experience in operating the world's largest carbon market, are uniquely positioned to contribute to these debates. Their joint efforts to propose standardized methodologies for carbon trading and monitoring can establish credibility for these markets and accelerate global decarbonization efforts.

The broader geopolitical context of the summit also shapes the discourse on decarbonization. Many emerging economies are voicing concerns that climate targets risk being weaponized to restrict development opportunities in the Global South. The collaboration between China and Brazil offers a counter-narrative: Green development can coexist with industrial growth and poverty alleviation. By highlighting their successes in advancing renewable energy, reforestation, and sustainable agriculture, the two countries can inspire other nations to pursue inclusive decarbonization pathways. Their partnership at the G20 is not just about bilateral gains; it is a call to action for the world to adopt a cooperative and equitable approach to combating climate change.

The author is a researcher at the Academy of Financial Research and an assistant professor at Zhejiang University International Business School. 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.

CULTURE



Scenes from *Rebecca*, which was staged in Beijing last week. The musical is a Gothic romance filled with suspense, intrigue and psychological drama, based on a novel of the same name by English novelist and playwright Daphne du Maurier. PHOTOS BY WANG XIAOJING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Making a song and dance of it

China's appetite for both domestic and international musical theater productions undergoes a rapid rise, **Chen Nan** reports.



The German musical *Rebecca*, which was staged at the Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center from Friday to Sunday. WANG XIAOJING / FOR CHINA DAILY

In recent years, musical theater has developed a burgeoning following in China with both domestic and international productions, attracting growing interest. This surge in popularity was a key topic at a recent forum about musical theater at the Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center on Wednesday and Thursday.

Co-initiated by the Tianqiao performing arts center and the Central Academy of Drama, the forum gathered industry leaders, musical producers, directors and performers to discuss the changing dynamics of the Chinese musical theater landscape. It not only celebrated the domestic growth of musicals but also offered key insights into what is driving this cultural shift.

Once a niche art form, musical theater has become a mainstream cultural phenomenon, according to Hao Rong, president of the Central Academy of Drama, a top university based in Beijing.

"The school opened its musical department in 1992, one of the earliest art schools in the country to do so. Over the past 30 years, we've trained musical directors, scriptwriters and performers, as well as witnessed dramatic changes to the musical theater scene in the country," Hao says.

"Musicals in China are no longer just a curiosity for niche theater lovers. The genre has crossed over into the cultural mainstream and we're seeing an audience that is more diverse, enthusiastic and

knowledgeable than ever," he adds.

During the forum on Wednesday, the China Association of Performing Arts published a report on the 2024 musical market. It says that from January to October, there were 13,600 musical performances across the country, up 5.5 percent compared to the same period in 2023. Receipts reached around 1.4 billion yuan (\$193.42 million), a year-over-year increase of 26.7 percent. Audience attendance increased to more than 5.8 million, up 4.6 percent.

By the end of 2024, the number of musical performances is expected to reach 17,000, with revenues surpassing 1.6 billion yuan and the number of spectators exceeding 7 million.

"Musicals play an increasingly important role as a dynamic part of the commercial performance market," says Pan Yan, vice-president and secretary-general of the China Association of Performing Arts.

"There are plenty of musicals and the audience for them continues to grow. The Chinese musical theater market holds significant potential for future growth."

An important factor driving the genre's popularity is the growing influx of high-profile international productions. From English composer and producer Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* to the popular French musical *Les Misérables*, beloved shows have captivated audiences to bring world-class experiences to Chinese cities.

From Wednesday to Sunday, the concert version of the German



From left: Franz Patay, Vereinigte Bühnen Wien's general manager; Pan Yan, vice-president of the China Association of Performing Arts; and Yang Shucong, deputy general manager of the Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



musical *Rebecca* was staged at the Tianqiao performing arts center with seven performances, after 16 performances in Shanghai earlier this month.

Based on the 1938 novel of the same name by English novelist and playwright Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* is a Gothic romance filled with suspense, intrigue and psychological drama. The musical adaptation by German librettist Michael Kunze and Sylvester Levay, a Serbian-born Hungarian recording artist and composer, premiered in Vienna, Austria, in 2006.

According to Franz Patay, the Austrian general manager of Vereinigte Bühnen Wien, the Viennese production company behind *Rebecca*, the musical has been performed in 13 countries, including Germany, the Netherlands and Japan, and translated into 10 different languages. It enjoyed a fair

amount of success in Europe but had a mixed reception in some places.

The latest concert version of *Rebecca*, based on songs from the musical, brought 30 performers, including Antonia Kalinowski and Arvid Assarsson, who sing and act, to China. This August and September, the company's other hit musical production *Elisabeth*, which debuted in China in 2014, returned to the mainland with shows in Shanghai, Patay adds.

"I watched *Rebecca* in South Korea in 2014 and dreamed about introducing it to the Chinese audience," Yang Shucong, deputy general manager of the Tianqiao performing arts center, said during the forum on Wednesday. "A year after I watched it, the Tianqiao performing arts center, one of the first venues to focus on musicals in China, opened in Beijing in

ing arts center has staged 10 international musicals in different languages, including new and returning productions.

While international musicals have made a major impact, there has been an equally impressive rise in Chinese-language musicals, according to the report. The forum highlighted that homegrown productions are resonating with audiences, offering fresh perspectives that reflect the country's culture and societal themes.

"One of the most significant trends is the rise of Chinese musicals, which have achieved critical and commercial success. These productions, often featuring local talent and stories, have brought a new level of creativity and cultural relevance to the stage," Pan says. "Chinese-language musicals are starting to connect with audiences on a deeper level. We are telling our own stories in our own voices."

With the domestic market for musicals continuing to grow, experts predict even greater expansion in the coming years. Factors such as increasing disposable incomes, rising cultural awareness and growing media coverage are all contributing to the continued success of the genre in China. Additionally, with the increasing number of Chinese musicals and a rising interest in musical education, there is significant potential for China to become a global hub for musical theater.

Contact the writer at chenan@chinadaily.com.cn

US director resurrects work based on countryman's childhood dreams

By CHEN NAN

Ten years ago, Joey McKneely, two-time Tony-nominated Broadway choreographer and international director, came to China to work with a Chinese team on the musical, *Ah! Kuliang*, which is based on a real story set in Guling (Kuliang), an ancient town nestled in the mountainous area in Fuzhou, Fujian province.

The musical, which is set against the backdrop of the tranquil and beautiful town nicknamed the "village in the clouds", intrigued McKneely because it is about Milton Gardner (1901-86), an American professor of physics at the University of California, who was born in Guling and spent 10 years there before moving back to the United

States in 1911. Gardner dreamed of returning and revisiting childhood friends but between wars and poor health, he died before being able to make the trip.

McKneely recently revived the musical, which was performed at Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center on Nov 16 and 17. Now a faculty member in the musical department at the Beijing Dance Academy, McKneely was director and the show featured his students from the academy.

"It's a wonderful, heartfelt story about the relationship of three friends — one is an American and two are Chinese. It's a lifelong friendship. What is wonderful about the show is that it artistically portrays the relationship between

China and the US, and how long a history we have together, and how much we care about and support each other," McKneely said in an interview on Nov 16.

He also says that the musical is important to him because of his own relationship with China.

"Now I have a closer relationship with China. I understand what living here means and the value of it. I am able to present that in the show. There is really a wonderful balance. Now I can introduce Chinese art to what I know about musicals," he adds.

Twenty-nine students he has been training for the past three years took part in the performances. McKneely says that he has been working with them, training them in techniques

and international performance skills. Rehearsals lasted six weeks and the students were put through the same regimen as professional actors.

According to Huang Kai, director of the musical department at the Beijing Dance Academy, the school is keen to train students not only in performance skills, but also to help them overcome stage fright. In addition to shows at the school, students are also provided with opportunities to perform onstage in front of real audiences.

"Their career-related thoughts and confidence are crucial to their futures. We want to prepare them for careers after graduation with more opportunities to appear onstage," Huang says.



Students from the Beijing Dance Academy perform in the musical, *Ah! Kuliang*, directed by their US teacher, Joey McKneely, a Broadway choreographer, in Beijing this month. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE

Chinese cinephiles can take a time-erasing trip down memory lane as 30 years after *Forrest Gump*, Tom Hanks and Robin Wright reunite with director Robert Zemeckis in his new movie made using technology that allows them to "magically" appear as their younger selves on-screen.

The director debuted the film *Here* in the coastal city of Xiamen, Fujian province, on Nov 15. While it is not a sequel to the Oscar-winning *Forrest Gump*, it tells a touching tale of love, loss, laughter and life.

The premiere was part of the recently concluded 2024 China Golden Rooster and Hundred Flowers Film Festival, and provided the audience with a nostalgic mix of the past with cutting-edge technology, while also highlighting the long-standing tradition of cinematic exchange between China and the United States.

Masterful conversation

"We will always remember that line, 'Run, Forrest, run,' in *Forrest Gump*. I think it's fair to say the director created an epic of the era," said acclaimed filmmaker Chen Kaige, who won this year's Golden Rooster Best Director award. Chen made the remarks as part of a conversation with Zemeckis during a film festival seminar.

Both films share stories with universal themes that transcend time and location. After attending the premiere on Nov 15, 27-year-old Wang Yanglin, an avid fan of Zemeckis, said, "Forrest's optimism has always inspired me through the tough times in my life, and today's new film touches on a similar theme — chasing dreams fearlessly because time truly flies."

At the seminar, Zemeckis said that one of the most anticipated features of *Here* is its groundbreaking 'digital makeup', a technique that wasn't possible just five years ago, let alone executed as flawlessly and seamlessly as it is in this film. "We were truly at the perfect place and the perfect time to make this film," he added.

In recent decades, technological advancements have dramatically transformed the film industries in both China and the US, with AI-powered visual effects now a staple of many productions. This evolution has sparked significant discussions and sharing between filmmakers from both countries.

"At the end of the day, all artistic activities revolve around humanity. It is especially the case for filmmaking, as the kind of authenticity that comes from real life and existence is truly invaluable," Chen said, while emphasizing the significant challenge of balancing artistic vision with technological advancements, stressing that the latter should support, not suppress, the former.

Fully recognizing this challenge, Zemeckis believes that cinema has always been a blend of technology and artistry. As the industry transitions into the digital age, he remarked that "everything is going to come back to the basics, which is story and character."

Challenges and chances

Other challenges are also emerging in the global film market as traditional cinema, a real-time cultural experience, is now confronted with fierce competition

Transcending barriers at film festival

Directors discuss developments and enduring legacy of cinematic exchange between two countries



Clockwise from top: Directors Chen Kaige (right) and Robert Zemeckis (center) during a dialogue session held as part of the 2024 China Golden Rooster and Hundred Flowers Film Festival in Xiamen, Fujian province, on Nov 16. ZHANG JIXUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY Zemeckis and his wife Leslie Zemeckis at the closing ceremony of the film festival. A poster for the film *Oppenheimer*, which won the Best Foreign Language Film award at the event. A scene from Zemeckis' new film *Here*, featuring Tom Hanks (left) and Robin Wright. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

from the fast-growing popularity of short videos and online entertainment, which have become ever more ubiquitous and tend to dominate leisure time.

The 2024 summer box office in China fell short of expectations, with a 44 percent decline from the previous year — sending ripples through the world's second-largest film market.

On the other side of the ocean, US box-office revenue in 2024 is projected to be 10 percent lower than last year, according to Boxoffice Pro, a global cinema industry publication, and it will struggle to reach the pre-pandemic yearly sales level.

"A common challenge faced by

the Chinese and American film industries is that during the pandemic, people gradually developed a dependency on online streaming content. After the pandemic, this shift in consumption habits has posed challenges for the film industries in both countries," says Liang Junjian, associate professor at Tsinghua University.

As they navigate similar challenges, the two film industries are paying closer attention to each other — drawing on each other's insights, and exploring collaborative opportunities.

At the 45th American Film Market earlier this month in Las Vegas, the China Film Joint Pavilion host-

ed by the China Film Group garnered considerable interest.

Fu Ruoqing, chairman of the China Film Group, says that Hollywood studios, including Warner Bros, Universal, Sony and Disney, have shown interest in distributing Chinese films, and in forming partnerships.

At this year's China Film Golden Rooster Awards ceremony, *Oppenheimer*, a biopic written and directed by British American filmmaker Christopher Nolan, won the Best Foreign Language Film award. The award was established in 2021 to align with international standards and attract outstanding films from abroad. It chronicles the life of

American scientist, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and his pivotal role in the development of the atomic bomb.

"Film festivals and awards represent a real opportunity for cultural exchange and development," Richard Allen, chair professor of the School of Creative Media at the City University of Hong Kong, said while attending a forum on film education and industry at Xiamen University during the festival.

"In principle, both China and the US should be interested in marketing their films in each other's markets, because the profits to be made are potentially much larger if they collaborate, rather than compete against each other," he said.

Inspiration and influence

Since *The Fugitive* became the first Hollywood film introduced to China on a revenue-sharing basis, followed by *Forrest Gump* a year later, the exchange of movies between the two countries has flourished.

Many film experts agree that while Hollywood films are not as popular in the Chinese market as they were a decade ago, some films still attract a significant audience. At the same time, the Chinese film market remains open to introducing a broader range of international films from diverse cultures and genres.

Chinese films, meanwhile, have been trying to expand overseas. In the early 2000s, Zhang Yimou's *Hero* found box-office success in North America. In recent years, the film adaptation of sci-fi author Liu Cixin's novel *The Wandering Earth* penetrated the North American market and caught the attention of mainstream American media.

Cinema continues to serve as a potent medium for cultural exchange between China and the US, fostering mutual understanding and deepening each nation's appreciation of the other.

"Film plays an indispensable role in facilitating China-US cultural and people-to-people exchange," says Raymond Zhou, a seasoned film critic. "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* remains the highest-grossing non-English language film in North America, and its martial arts director Yuen Woo-ping was also invited to contribute to the action sequences in the American film *The Matrix*."

At the film festival in Xiamen, many young filmmakers demonstrated an extensive understanding of the film histories of both China and the US. Through dialogue and the exchange of ideas, they gained valuable insight that is likely to influence their future creative endeavors.

Attending the festival for the first time, Edward Drake, a young American director, says that he gained a lot of inspiration from the conversation between Chen and Zemeckis.

"It's fascinating to see two incredibly different filmmakers united by their shared commitment to telling great stories about the human condition. They approach their craft from distinct Asian and American perspectives. That's the beauty of film — it can transcend cultural boundaries, bring people together, and is all rooted in our shared humanity," he says.

XINHUA

Spreading farming expertise clip by clip

Chinese agricultural technicians are using short video platforms as a way to share valuable insight on crop diseases and yields. The practice has proved to be very popular with farmers.

"Has the rice been sprayed with pesticides?" Zhao Ya asked as he squatted down to talk to a group of farmers in a short clip he posted on the video-sharing platform Douyin.

Zhao is the head of an agricultural technology station and a sci-tech commissioner at Fengtai county in Anhui province. He registered his video account in 2018 and has used it to promote agricultural technology ever since, focusing on pest and disease prevention, wheat and rice cultivation, and high-yield techniques.

To date, he has posted more than 600 short videos lasting from one to three minutes, which include giving directions on the best pesticide application period, and reminding the farmers to observe the growth of rice in fields to ensure prompt disease control.

He now has over 9,600 followers, with one of his most popular videos amassing 100,000 views.

These clips, produced to promote the topics rather than to generate profit, are favored by farmers as a new digital farming tool. They are an engaging and accessible way to share knowledge and expertise with a wider audience, transforming the way farming information is disseminated.

Zuo Zhongjun, a grain farmer in Yingshang county, Anhui, is among the beneficiaries. In February this year, the wheat greening period, Zuo used some of the tips shared by Zhao in his videos to reduce waterlogging.

Many agricultural technology workers like Zhao are using short video platforms to give agricultural technology more exposure. In 2023, approximately 27.8 million agricultural technology videos were posted on Douyin, clocking up 120.6 billion views.

The China Rural Distance Education Network even runs an event with Douyin to promote advanced agricultural technology. Since it was launched in 2022, it has engaged 1,840 agricultural technicians and 10 scientists, and released more than 40,000 videos.

"The short videos are concise and interactive, and farmers can watch and learn on demand," says Chen Yangfen, a researcher at the Institute of Agricultural Economics and Development of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

"The platform's intelligent recommendation mechanism can help improve the allocation efficiency of agricultural technology supply and demand," says Chen.

Working to promote agricultural technology for 27 years, Zhao finds it rewarding that his videos are viewed and liked.

Xu Mingju is an associate professor at the modern agriculture department of Linyi Vocational University of Science and Technology in Shandong province. He began giving agriculture lectures online more than 10 years ago.

In January, Xu won an agricultural technology short video competition. With more than 2,300 short videos across his online accounts, he has 357,000 followers.

At the very beginning, he produced the videos by himself. As more followers joined his channel, he expanded his outfit and now employs a team of 10 people, including teachers and students.

Team members value the combination of theory with practice, and are driven by a desire to provide practical and reliable solutions. Their videos have helped farmers solve problems with fruit tree planting, pruning, pest control, and fruit marketing.

"The videos can introduce the latest agricultural technology and ideas to farmers," Xu says.

The Linyi Vocational University of Science and Technology has trained 800 students in modern agricultural technology since the major was launched in 2020.

XINHUA

Movie fest in Australia opens doors to China cooperation

ADELAIDE, Australia — Chinese and Australian filmmakers deepened cooperation during the Australia China International Film Festival, which closed on Thursday in Adelaide, by saying they will seek to entwine their storytelling better.

"To be even stronger, we have the potential to grow our industry enormously by working with China," said Tony Coombs, CEO of Australia's Harvest Pictures Group, who has been engaged in film and television exchange between the two countries for more than 10 years.

At the opening ceremony on Nov 14, Chinese Consul-General in Adelaide Li Dong said that it was gratifying to see the strengthening of people-to-people exchange and cooperation between China and Australia, and that the festival was a useful means of promoting mutual understanding.

A number of the films screened focused on the social and human landscape of contemporary China and the beauty of Chinese culture, giving Australian audiences a better

understanding and greater appreciation of the real, concrete China, Li said.

"Chinese storytelling and script writing are strong, and the production quality gets better all the time," Coombs said, adding that Australia and China need more coproductions.

"China has thousands of years of storytelling, so if you want good stories, and you dig deep into Chinese culture, they are all there. ... We have similar values at a basic level, so the only connection we need is to just intertwine the storytelling better," Coombs said.

Citing *Monkey King* as an example, Coombs said it is a brilliant story, but in order to take the film overseas, the full story needs to be told and produced in a slightly more international way.

Coombs highlighted the importance of the film festival in fostering cultural ties between his country and China, which is crucial to international collaboration in the screen industry, and which provides a rare opportunity to meet talented indi-



Australian students perform at the closing ceremony of the Australia China International Film Festival in Adelaide on Thursday. XINHUA

viduals and understand market trends, storytelling, production, and distribution dynamics.

Former Australian minister for trade, investment and tourism Andrew Robb said he supported legislation to provide incentives for

the film industry, and for other countries, including China, to come to Australia and make movies.

"The film festival has transcended cinema. It has served as a dynamic platform for cultural exchange and collaboration

between Australia and China," said Robb, who is also the festival's honorary chairman.

Chinese movies have been exploring effective ways to go international in recent years, said Zhou Jiandong, vice-chairman of the China Film Producers' Association, adding that the film festival is of great significance to bilateral cooperation.

Yu Lu, the film festival's chairperson, said at the closing ceremony on Thursday, that it provides a platform for Australian and Chinese filmmakers to demonstrate their creativity, and is particularly supportive of emerging filmmakers, offering them the opportunity to shine on the international stage, and gain inspiration from industry veterans.

The festival is not just a celebration of films, but also a symbol of friendship and cooperation between the two countries, and a commitment to nurturing young talent, Yu said.

XINHUA

CULTURE



From left: Embroidery and folding fans adorned with *nyushu* letters are displayed in Jiangyong, Central China's Hunan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

One evening in 2021, 22-year-old Rosie was scrolling through short videos to seek inspiration for her art designs.

Suddenly, a song in an unfamiliar language played through her headphones. She could not understand the lyrics but found herself moved to tears.

Back in 1993, Feng Jingsan, who collects cultural items, stumbled upon a bronze coin dating to the 19th century in an antique market. The coin was engraved with eight unusual, willow leaf-shaped characters, whose meaning he could not make out.

Their shared curiosity led both Rosie and Feng to discover an extraordinary language — *nyushu*, the world's only gender-specific script of its kind, created by and for women. The unique writing system can be traced to Puwei island of Jiangyong county, Central China's Hunan province.

Rosie, who goes by her artistic name, eventually learned that the song she heard was about a woman confiding in friends about the struggles of marriage and family life.

Feng, meanwhile, deciphered the coin's inscription as: "All women under the sun are sisters".

Though the exact origins of *nyushu* are unclear, several villages in Jiangyong, among the Han and Yao ethnic communities, are recognized as being crucial to its preservation and development.

Historically, literacy in China was largely reserved for men and women were often denied access to formal education. Women who were formally educated typically came from the urban elite.

The content of *nyushu* works are mainly drawn from women's everyday lives — marriage, family, social interactions, anecdotes, songs and riddles. Through a set of codes that were incomprehensible to men, the special language allowed many women to communicate freely, sharing their innermost feelings through songs, poetry and secret letters to one another.

As modernization swept across China and more women were able to access education, the relevance of *nyushu* dwindled.

When *nyushu* began to garner more attention in the early 1980s, with only two elderly women could be found to write it proficiently, the script teetered on the brink of obscurity.

The death of centenarian Yang Huanyi in 2004 marked the start of a post-*nyushu* era. Yang was considered the last of the *nyushu* users raised amid its cultural backdrop, practicing it in daily life.

But the script's decline also drew attention across various fields. *Nyushu* workshops in Jiangyong sparked renewed interest, introducing more people to the cultural treasure. In 2006, the State Council listed *nyushu* as national intangible cultural heritage. A *nyushu* museum was established on Puwei island in May 2002, further preserving it for future generations.

Nyushu is now finding new resonance among a generation of young women. Through exhibitions, field trips and community building, they are breathing new life into the unique language and transforming it from a cultural relic into a vibrant symbol of modern female expression.

Reviving language

Two years ago, Rosie met Hu Xin, now 36, who helped promote *nyushu* at the museum in Puwei. Hu is the youngest designated inheritor of the script, following support from the authorities to help preserve it. In 2000, Hu, her mother and her sisters attended evening classes

Quiet communication

Secret language shared by women enjoys renaissance,
Hou Chenchen reports.



For me, *nyushu* isn't just a way of writing; it's a bridge connecting women's emotions and friendships."

Ma Bingyu, a 17-year-old from Shenzhen

Clockwise from top left: Students learn about handicrafts at a local resident's home in Jiangyong, Hunan province; Rosie, Wang Zilu and a group of students experience *nyushu* culture in a place where settings were rearranged in collaboration with local residents, in Jiangyong in July; A visitor uses a kerosene lamp to view paintings at a *nyushu* exhibition in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in October; Research group members design cultural products in October; A corner of the *nyushu* exhibition in Guangzhou in October; Rosie's art featuring *nyushu* letters that convey meanings of love, freedom, and family is displayed in Cambridge, England in 2022; Visitors check out Rosie's *nyushu* exhibition titled *Girlism-inner World* in Cambridge, England in 2022.

to learn *nyushu*. Hu subsequently became a guide at the museum.

"When I started working at the museum 15 years ago, *nyushu* was so niche that even many local women didn't know about it," Hu recalled, noting how challenging it was to learn the language from scratch.

She had to memorize two to three characters each day from a dictionary compiled by researchers before the last native users died.

Hu's favorite line in *nyushu* poetry is, "Men are said to have great ambition, but women are

just as excellent."

She said she believes the revival of *nyushu* is deeply tied to the idea of "women's empowerment", championed by young women like Rosie.

When Rosie was preparing for her degree exhibition at the Cambridge School of Art under the UK's Anglia Ruskin University, her desire to delve deeper into *nyushu* and bring it into contemporary art led her to Puwei island for field research.

"Setting foot on the rich land of Jiangyong, I finally understood why so many *nyushu* songs celebrate

nature," Rosie said.

Growing up in a small town between cities and rural areas, she described herself as "a bridge between the broader modern world and rural traditions".

"Women's inner worlds are incredibly powerful; when others connect with their hearts, there's a brightening effect," she said.

"*Nyushu* isn't about external confrontation. Instead, it celebrates the beauty of quiet communication among women."

For her exhibition, Rosie designed an installation where letters glim-

mer gently in a dark, quiet space, visible only as viewers draw near.

"Her work is both intensely personal to the quiet viewer and so universal that you could not detect the artist's nationality. ... Her work is confined neither to her time nor place but is eternal in its wisdom and beauty," said Philip Ward, fellow of the Royal Society of Art, reviewing Rosie's work.

From a confidential women's space, *nyushu* is certainly becoming a "global culture that belongs to the world", leading composer Tan Dun said in a UNESCO interview.

Bonding together

Through her research, Zhang Luli, an associate professor at South-Central Minzu University in Wuhan, capital of Central China's Hubei province, has also discovered a rise in the popularity of *nyushu* culture on social media since March 2023, encompassing a community of young female artists and enthusiasts.

Women aged 18 to 30 form a closely-knit *nyushu* community, connected through social media, Zhang said.

"Their work captures the vitality and independence of modern women," she said.

"They are bringing contemporary life into this intangible cultural heritage, revitalizing and transforming *nyushu*."

In Jiangyong, 17-year-old Ma Bingyu from Shenzhen celebrated a unique coming-of-age ceremony. Dressed in traditional attire, she marked the milestone with the melodies of *nyushu* songs.

This summer, Rosie and Wang Zilu, a graduate of the Chelsea College of Arts at the University of the Arts London, connected online and set out together on a field trip to Jiangyong to immerse themselves in *nyushu* culture.

In recent months, they have been part of a group of *nyushu* explorers looking at the theory and case studies of the script, including those involving aesthetics and community art. With shared interests and unique perspectives, they journeyed to Jiangyong to engage directly with *nyushu* inheritors in their home environment.

Reflecting on the experience, Ma said: "For me, *nyushu* isn't just a way of writing; it's a bridge connecting women's emotions and friendships. The girls and I curated an exhibition centered on *nyushu*'s charm, an important way to share and preserve this culture."

Ju Haibo, 24, a master's student at Dublin City University, said: "*Nyushu* has opened a narrow but promising path. As we connect with each other, we heal together and feel seen and understood. I experienced a sense of inclusivity and happiness that I hadn't felt in a long time."

"I met wonderful people and felt a belonging I had long been seeking," said Tian Shuyu, a 20-year-old student at St. John's College in the US.

After years of traveling in search of connection, both Tian and Ju often felt a sense of loneliness and found it difficult to build deep relationships. But on their trip to Jiangyong, they discovered how naturally emotional connections can arise.

For Man Wenqian, 20, a student at South China University of Technology in Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong province, learning *nyushu* became a journey of discovering other women's experiences as well as her own identity.

"Women's souls across generations and identities are converging, growing into a shared spiritual space where we can express ourselves freely," Man said.

"It's in this space that my design work comes to life."

Wang Zilu from the Chelsea College of Arts reflected on how *nyushu* inheritors weave vibrant threads into bands and garments that enrich their daily lives, threading in the joys, sorrows, passions and hopes of life.

"We honor their wishes, once whispered, with art that breathes in the present, alive in its making," she said.

Sang Yihan and Gao Yuxi contributed to this story.

Contact the writer at houchenchen@chinadaily.com.cn.