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VISITS OF VISION

China-France bonds evolve in the new era

Pivotal moment in relationship signals next phase of cooperation between two countries

By WANG MINGJIE in London wangmingjie@mail.chinadaily.com

When President Xi Jinping arrived at the Elysee Palace for a state banquet during his visit to France in May, it was evident that the event was more than a mere diplomatic formality.

The grandeur and meticulous attention to detail were a reflection of the deep respect and long-standing ties between China and France, according to Wang Peiwen, president of the China-France Friendship Association in Montargis in central France, who was among the distinguished guests.

"I found it especially interesting when the Elysee Palace band performed Chinese songs," she said. *Jasmine Flower* and *The Moon Represents My Heart*, two Chinese household songs, were performed during the state banquet.

"It was clear that President (Emmanuel) Macron and the French government placed significant importance on welcoming the Chinese head of state," she said.

Xi's visit marked a pivotal moment in the evolving relationship between the two nations, signaling a new phase of cooperation that could shape not only Sino-French relations, but also China's broader engagement with Europe.

His discussions with President Macron spanned urgent global issues such as climate change, artificial intelligence governance, and strategic geopolitical challenges, particularly surrounding the Ukraine crisis and the Palestine-Israel conflict.

Xi emphasized the importance of building on the 60-year relationship between China and France, one that predates China's formal ties with many other Western countries.

Wang highlighted that one of the most significant outcomes of the visit was the commitment to increase the number of French students studying in China to over 10,000 and to double the scale of European youth exchanges within the next three years. Additionally, the visit facilitated visa-free travel to China for French citizens until the end of 2025.

"Local governments are actively preparing trips to China," Wang said, highlighting a noticeable uptick in interest from various sectors within France to deepen ties with China. This new chapter in diplomatic relations goes beyond symbolic gestures, with tangible impacts on education, business and local government engagement.

Sebastien Lion, vice-president of the French Institute for Tourism Development, highlighted the importance of extending the visa-free travel initiative following Xi's visit.

"To effectively work with China, you need to experience it firsthand," Lion said. "Understanding the culture and language can be beneficial, but the crucial first step is visiting China. Whether it's exploring provinces, big cities or rural areas, being there is essential. The ability to travel without needing a visa for a week or two is a significant advantage for business."

Lion organized a delegation to attend the China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November. It was important "to communicate to the brands participating in this mission that they won't need a visa, which is a fantastic solution. I've heard that sometimes the visa application process can be quite complicated due to the numerous criteria that need to be fulfilled," he said.

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Saying no to violence



People mourn victims of violence against women in Seoul, South Korea, on Monday, during an event to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The event featured 192 pairs of shoes symbolizing the 192 women killed in 2023 alone. Statistics from Korea Women's Hot Line, a women's group, show that at least 1,672 women were killed in attacks by male partners in South Korea in the past 15 years. YONHAP See more, page 4

Beijing, Brussels may meet halfway on EV tariff issue

By WANG KEJU wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

The prospect of China and the European Union nearing an alternative solution on the EU's imposition of extra tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles will provide a much-needed buffer to avoid the escalation of trade tensions between the two economic powerhouses, analysts said.

China and the EU meeting each other halfway on the tariff issue would not only benefit the EV industry on both sides, but also contribute to the broader bilateral economic relationship, they added.

Bernd Lange, chair of the Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament, told German broadcaster n-tv on Friday that Brussels and Beijing are close to reaching a deal that would see China commit to offering EVs in the EU at a minimum price, although he did not provide any further details on the specifics of the arrangement.

Amid simmering tensions for months over unfounded allegations of the so-called unfair subsidies in China's EV industry, the EU completed its probe on Oct 29, placing additional tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on Chinese EV imports for five years, on top of the standard 10 percent import duty. Despite the tariff imposition,

Chinese and EU technical teams engaged in five rounds of discussions in Beijing from Nov 2 to 7, as well as video talks in the following week, aiming to reach a potential price undertaking agreement.

Under this arrangement, China would agree to a mutually acceptable export price and volume for its EVs in exchange for the EU removing the tariff hikes.

A source familiar with the matter told China Daily earlier this month that China and the EU reached a "technical consensus" after the talks, particularly on the framework for the price undertaking agreement and its implementation mechanism.

Building on the progress, both parties expressed willingness to focus on negotiating issues related to their core interests and reach a mutually beneficial agreement, the source said.

Neither the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, nor China's Ministry of Commerce had commented on Lange's remarks as of press time on Monday.

The deal, if finalized, could satisfy the EU's demands for shielding its local automotive sector, while preventing the levying of steep tariffs on Chinese EV imports, said Sang Baichuan, dean of the University of International Business and Economics' Institute of International Economy.

The price undertaking will ultimately revert to market-based pricing in the long run."

Sang Baichuan, dean of the University of International Business and Economics' Institute of International Economy

The price undertaking agreement could provide temporary relief for European carmakers, but Sang noted that building a local value chain that could truly support the sustainable growth of the EU's electric vehicle industry is a long-term endeavor.

Simply suppressing supply from China is not the way out, said Sang, who added that European companies should evaluate their competition and collaboration with Chinese companies in a more calm and rational manner.

According to a report published in April by the International Energy Agency, China currently dominates the battery supply chain, with nearly 85 percent of global battery cell production capacity.

"The price undertaking will ultimately revert to market-based

pricing in the long run," Sang said, adding that this is expected to prompt Chinese automakers to reevaluate their product positioning, cost structures and various aspects of their value chains.

Cui Hongjian, director of Beijing Foreign Studies University's Center for European Union and Regional Development Studies, said the EU official's statement indicates a push within the group for arriving at a consensus with China at an early date.

Given the economic challenges confronting Europe and the opposition from multiple member states, it is strategically prudent for the EU to steer clear of escalating trade tensions, which could potentially inflict more severe repercussions on its economy, Cui added.

The Chinese government, in line with regulations, is imposing temporary antidumping measures on selected brandy imports from the EU, as announced by the Ministry of Commerce in early October. This action coincides with the ongoing investigations into imports of pork, pork byproducts and dairy products from the EU.

Furthermore, Chinese officials are considering heightened tariffs on imported fuel-powered vehicles with large-displacement engines from the EU, according to the ministry.

After the storm



People waded through flood water on a street in Pontypridd in southern Wales, the United Kingdom, on Monday. Britain's roads and railways were hit by closures after Storm Bert battered the country over the weekend, causing widespread flooding and killing at least five people in England and Wales. MATTHEW HORWOOD / GETTY IMAGES

World needs to learn from nation's digital ecosystem

As a Finn, I have been fortunate enough to witness China's dynamic landscape up close. My journey began with a semester at Fudan University in Shanghai as part of a master's program of Aalto University in Finland. That experience left an indelible mark on me. The vibrant streets of Shanghai,

WORLD WATCH By Jesse Ketonen

the endlessly fascinating mix of tradition and innovation, and the warmth of the people all inspired me. Living in Shanghai as an

international student, traveling around China and experiencing its rich culture and cuisine — thanks to my local friends who introduced me to restaurants I'd never have discovered on my own — have been nothing short of eye-opening.

After my time at Fudan University, I cofounded Nordic

Friend, a strategic marketing and communications agency dedicated to bridging the gap between Chinese and international businesses, helping promote Finnish education, tourism, food and other industries in the Chinese market.

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CHILL, HAPPINESS — YOUNG COUPLES SAY 'I DO' TO CREATIVE NUPTIALS

Wedding traditions change as celebrants stamp individuality on ceremonies

By WANG XIAOYU wangxiaoyu@chinadaily.com.cn



the passengers were exuberant and dancing to loud music. It was just the kind of ride that Wu

was looking for on that Oct 2 morning — one to her own wedding.

Aiming for a unique and budget-friendly experience, Wu and her husband broke from the tradition of taking themselves and family members to the wedding venue in a fleet of luxury cars. Instead, they rented a

regular public bus adorned with balloons, cartoon stickers and auspicious ornaments, and invited their guests to join the ride.

The bus ride took Wu, her husband Song Jiacheng and about 20 guests past the city's landmark buildings and sights. "Our friends came from

different regions across China, and some flew more than 30 hours from South America to bless us in person. The route was specially selected by my husband, a local, to give them a glimpse of the city's charm," Wu said.

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INSIDE Innovative designs for better living China, page 5 www.chinadailyglobal.com A member of ANN China Daily Global ©2024 All Rights Reserved Newsstand prices: US \$1 Canada C\$1 UK 1.15 EU 1.6 Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling Asia Pacific: Thailand 120 thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat; Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee

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Weddings: Bound by love, not by conventions



From page 1

On the bus, the couple and their guests danced to a playlist of energetic nightclub songs. They waved at strangers passing by who initially looked stunned, but then smiled back at them when they understood what was going on.

"We reveled in the beautiful scenery along the way while singing and shouting. I felt a blast of youthful energy," Wu said. "I could tell that my friends had a lot of fun, and even the older people who initially doubted the idea ended up applauding our choice."

The total cost of renting and decorating the bus was less than half the price of a wedding car fleet rental, she added.

Personal touches

Wu and her husband are not alone in rebelling against traditional wedding customs. Many of the usual trappings — such as convoys of fancy cars, lavish banquets and flamboyant emcees — have been ditched or pared down as a growing number of young couples opt for personalized touches, streamlined procedures, and a laid-back approach that prioritizes individuality over rituals.

A video that went viral online following this year's National Day holiday in early October — a peak time for tying the knot — showed a wedding at a McDonald's restaurant in Guangdong province.

The newlyweds were seen taking pictures holding auspicious paper-cuts and french fries at the fast-food eatery. On the table were hamburgers, fries, sodas and other typical McDonald's food items, a far cry from a conventional banquet featuring an extensive menu and multiple meat dishes.

The video sparked a competition among netizens, who shared their ideal wedding venues ranging from the hotpot chain Haidilao to karaoke bars.

A fashion blogger called Tracy said that no Chinese wedding is complete without an alcoholic drink, however, she instead opted to toast her nuptials with milk tea. "Complete relaxation at my wedding and let's toast with a cup of milk tea," said the woman, who shared her wedding photos on lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu.

"The signature red package, coupled with my favorite flavor of oolong tea, with a hint of flowers, is a perfect match for my wedding. All I want for the occasion is chill and happiness," she added.

For some young people who are socially shy, or who already feel overwhelmed by work and household chores, a lot of wedding banquet customs — such as kneeling



before parents and saying vows, exchanging rings and sharing a glass of wine — seem redundant. They believe the ceremony should be reduced to its barest form — a celebration with food.

Less is more

Yu Kang, a social media influencer in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, wonders how many working people in their 20s and 30s have the luxury of enough time, energy and money to hold a traditional wedding.

For his nuptials in April, the 28-year-old did not arrange bridesmaids, groomsmen or hire a wedding planner. The couple held separate dinner banquets in each other's hometown. They hosted the ceremonies themselves and skipped as many traditions as possible.

"As a vlogger, I nearly have no breaks all year and my wife goes on business trips regularly," he said. "Neither of us are fans of complicated 'tear-jerking' procedures."

Despite the couple's insistence on a simple wedding, Yu said their relatives decided to take matters into their own hands. They hazed the couple, played games when the groom picked up the bride, and insisted on multiple lengthy toasts to the newlyweds.

"My ideal wedding would be kept on a small scale. I would only

Top left: Wu Yuncheng and Song Jiacheng take pictures with their wedding guests on a fitted out public bus in Linyi, Shandong province, on Oct 2. Top right: Wu Yuncheng and Song adorn their wedding bus with a variety of decorations.

Above: A social media user on lifestyle-sharing app Xiaohongshu holds her wedding at a quadrangle courtyard.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

invite our close friends and our parents, or maybe even commence a marriage by traveling abroad," Yu said.

Ming Jie, a 33-year-old who lives in Jiangsu province, has emceed weddings for about a decade. He said a typical reception usually culminates in a 30-minute session during which the couple makes a grand entrance, performs a series of rituals, and ends with them paying respect to both sets of parents.

Some fads have come and gone, he said.

"From 2012 to 2015, it was trendy to splash holy water or splurge on fluorescent neon deco-

decorations, but now such trends have fizzled out," he said.

Ming has handled some unusual requests over the years, such as the groom riding a shared bicycle to pick up the bride or throwing a bunch of lettuce (in Mandarin, lettuce, or *sheng cai*, sounds like making a fortune) rather than flowers for the traditional bouquet toss.

Decorum still valued

The majority of couples, however, still follow a conventional wedding format, while unorthodox ones will add a special touch or twist to suit their taste.

"Sometimes, we reject ideas that

go overboard. In Chinese culture, a wedding ceremony is also a precious opportunity for a family reunion, so it is necessary to take the feelings of elderly family members who might cringe at such oddities into consideration," Ming said.

Alternative wedding presentations aside, Ming said newlyweds these days seem to share an emphasis on freedom, self-expression and genuine displays of love.

"They do not want their occasion to be overly sentimental and enveloped in poignancy, or a sense of separation. They are looking for an outlet to express their love for each other and want attendees to truly have a good time."

A survey carried out in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in recent years found that most newlyweds still hire emcees, cameramen, videographers and makeup artists for their nuptials, Pei Yuxin, a professor at Sun Yat-sen University's School of Sociology and Anthropology, said in an interview with China Youth Daily in March.

"The average amount spent on a wedding varies from a few hundred thousand yuan to over 100,000 yuan (\$13,800), but they (the couples) tend to be rational and aware of their budget limits," she said.

Pei said an important factor behind the increasing popularity

of so-called "minimalist" weddings is a stronger sense of autonomy among younger generations.

"In the past, the organization of a wedding event was dominated by parents or handed over to a wedding planning agency. There was a uniform set of procedures to follow and an emphasis on grandeur," she said.

"But nowadays, young people prefer actively participating in arrangements and incorporating their unique personalities and personal traits into the occasion."

Pei added that young people have taken a frugal approach to their weddings as they tighten their purse strings. "We have talked to young couples who DIY decorations, and shop online for cheaper ornaments to reduce expenses," she said.

Love, my way

In addition, young couples are not comfortable with occupying the spotlight throughout the wedding event. They are inviting more of their peers to the ceremony, and trying their best to engage them in playful and fun activities.

Parents, who used to have the final say in wedding logistics, have begun staying in the background, according to Pei. "Some parents will provide funds only and give their children full autonomy, although some still intervene in guest invitations and other affairs," she said.

As the size of households in China is becoming smaller, young couples will become more independent than their parents' generation when planning weddings. The old practice of parents using their children's wedding as an opportunity to develop and showcase social connections is gradually disappearing.

However, a strong sense of family remains ingrained in some young wedding couples.

Wu, the bride who took a bus to her wedding, said that she cared about the experiences of her parents and in-laws no less than those of her peers, and she valued their advice.

When her mother-in-law opposed hiring a public bus, Wu put great effort into persuading her it was a good idea by sharing successful examples from other couples.

In the end, it was a great relief to hear older people speaking highly of her wedding, she added.

"To my surprise, a friend told me that he shared my wedding with his younger brothers and sisters at home, and these youngsters, fearful of marriage, had expressed a longing for marriage," she said.

Zhai Jiayi and Fang Bilin contributed to the story.

University offers new bachelor's in matrimonial expertise

By WANG XIAOYU

China Civil Affairs University has established the nation's first university degree in marriage, aiming to foster professionals in all matrimony-related sectors from matchmaking to couples counseling.

Yu Xiaohui, dean of the university's wedding culture and media arts college, said that the undergraduate program, called marriage services and management, will offer courses in management, sociology, marriage industry economics, family ethics and more, as well as core modules focusing on practical skills such as flower arranging,

photography and event hosting.

"We are looking to cultivate talents covering the entire cycle of marriage and family, from marriage registration, marriage and family counseling, to wedding services and matchmaking," she said.

The university's campus in Beijing will have a marriage customs exhibition center and offer students a number of training studios where they can improve and practice various skills.

They will also be able to take internships through the program's partnerships with local civil affairs authorities, wedding culture associations, and leading nuptial planning companies.

"Graduates of the program are expected to fill roles such as marriage registration personnel, marriage and family counselors, wedding planners and matchmakers," she said.

The inaugural batch of 68 students started their first semester in September, the university said.

The marriage-themed program has been initiated as the younger generation's reluctance about tying the knot could be changing.

China registered 7.68 million marriages in 2023, up more than 12 percent from the previous year, and ending a decline lasting nearly a decade, according to Ministry of Civil Affairs data.

Experts have attributed the uptick primarily to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also predicted that it would be temporary. For the first nine months of this year, about 4.7 million marriages were registered, down 943,000 year-on-year.

Huang Jie, a 19-year-old freshman studying the matrimony major, said during an interview with Beijing Daily that he aspires to become a capable matchmaker after graduation.

"My sister, who is six years older than me, has been on a string of blind dates set up by our family but none of them worked out," he said. "She told me that she is tired of

matchmaking, but does not want to settle down too easily. She is looking for a partner who connects with her spiritually and emotionally."

Huang hopes that matchmaking sessions can be provided in a more relaxed and comfortable manner in the future, and potential professionals like him can play a constructive role.

Zhang Mengzhuo, another student, said that a number of newlyweds like incorporating ancient customs into their nuptials, which requires event planners to understand Chinese traditional weddings' intricate details and cultural connotations.

She appreciates the management courses and hopes to gain knowledge in family finance management and family psychology. After graduation, Zhang hopes to get a job at a marriage registration office.

Yu, the college dean, said that there is a lack of professionals specializing in marriage-related sectors.

Education programs that train professionals who solely specialize in planning wedding receptions cannot meet society's demands, and more efforts are needed to nurture those who understand romantic relationships and are educated in marriage and family counseling, she added.

TOP NEWS

Algorithm issue targeted by campaign

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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Chinese netizens have expressed support for the government launching a campaign targeting the algorithms behind various internet services, aiming to address long-standing user complaints on issues including homogeneous content recommendations and the malicious manipulation of trending topics.

The Office of the Central Cyber-space Affairs Commission announced the campaign on Sunday, adding that it will run until February.

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According to the statement, internet content platforms are required to establish mechanisms to prevent the formation of "information cocoons", a term that refers to the phenomenon where people's focus on certain information fields is habitually guided by their interests.

Therefore, the platforms are required to enhance the diversity and richness of recommended content, prohibiting the promotion of highly homogenized content.

These platforms must not force users to select interest tags or collect personal information beyond the necessary scope for content recommendation, it said. They are also required to provide users with negative feedback options for recommended content, such as "not interested".

Additionally, the campaign targets the manipulation of trending topic rankings, mandating that internet

platforms fully disclose the algorithm principles behind their trending lists to enhance "transparency and explainability".

In China, all major information-sharing platforms such as Weibo, and video-sharing sites Kuaishou, Douyin and Bilibili maintain real-time trending topic lists, which are primary sources of information for netizens.

The statement emphasized the need to improve technical means to detect and identify fake accounts and malicious ranking manipulations, strictly regulating illegal activities that exploit ranking rules to manipulate lists and hype topics.

Besides content and information distribution, the campaign also focuses on the rights of workers and consumers involved in internet services.

The commission's statement highlighted the need to prevent internet platforms from blindly pursuing profits at the expense of workers providing services.

The number of those workers surpassed 84 million in China as of 2023, according to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

Among them, there are 13 million food delivery riders. In recent years, these riders have often violated traffic rules to deliver food as quickly as possible, due to the requirement by food delivery platforms to deliver orders within a specified time, or face wage deductions.

The statement stressed the importance of preventing platforms from excessively reducing delivery times, which leads to more frequent delivery delays, traffic violations and accidents.

Platforms are required to clearly disclose algorithm rules for time estimation, fee calculation and route planning. They must promptly handle appeals from workers regarding delivery delays caused by uncontrollable factors such as traffic control, accidents and adverse weather conditions.

Friendship on the stage



Producer Aurore Liang (center) and actors take a curtain call after performing *The Monkey King*, a dance drama in French, in Montreal, Canada, on Saturday. YU RUIDONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Bonds: President Xi's visit elevates ties to 'a new level'

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Lion also noted that the positive climate established by Xi's recent visit has greatly contributed to a surge in Chinese delegations arriving in France. "There have been numerous delegations related to the Olympic Games and beyond," he added. "This trend is a promising sign, with leaders and influencers encouraging travel to France."

Far-reaching impact

Li Zhipeng, a researcher at the University of Poitiers and the National Centre for Scientific Research in France, echoed Lion's sentiments, emphasizing the far-reaching impact of Xi's visit.

"President Xi's visit broke through the Cold War mentality of some Western countries toward China," Li said. The visit not only reinvigorated Sino-French relations, but also elevated them to a new level — a comprehensive strategic partnership in the new era, he added.

During the three-day visit, Xi and Macron engaged in extended talks that far exceeded their original schedule. Li highlighted the informal, yet deeply symbolic moment when Xi and Macron shared a meal in the Pyrenees that featured local cheese as well as folk performances. This intimate gathering underscored the special friendship between the two leaders and reflected a broader sense of mutual understanding between their nations, he said.

Li also pointed to the concrete achievements of the visit, such as China's contribution to the success of

“We cannot envision the world's future without considering China, and likewise, it is not in China's interest to disregard Europe,” Raffarin told China Daily.

Jean-Pierre Raffarin, former French prime minister

the Paris 2024 Olympics. From Olympic sports equipment to high-tech LED displays, China's involvement was vital to the event's success, demonstrating the breadth of Sino-French cooperation across diverse fields, including infrastructure, technology and culture.

Moreover, academic and cultural exchanges that followed Xi's visit have continued to grow, particularly in higher education. An increasing number of French scholars are visiting China, while Chinese academic institutions are building stronger ties with their French counterparts. "This deepening cooperation in education will play a crucial role in furthering the European youth exchange program and fostering mutual understanding," Li said.

Geopolitical significance

Former French prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin underscored the broader geopolitical significance of Xi's visit.



Premier Li Qiang (front row, center) and the attendees of the second China International Supply Chain Expo stand for a group photo before their meeting in Beijing on Monday. The expo, which runs from Tuesday through Saturday, will exhibit cutting-edge technologies in areas including advanced manufacturing, clean energy, smart vehicle and digital technology, among others. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Li: Stable industrial and supply chains key

Enterprises encouraged to bolster support for economic globalization

By CAO DESHENG
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Premier Li Qiang called on Monday for opposing all forms of decoupling and firmly upholding stable and unimpeded global industrial and supply chains.

He said that China is a key link in global industrial and supply chains and will continue to take concrete actions to maintain the stability and smooth operation of these chains. Li made the remarks at a symposium attended by representatives of enterprises and organizations participating in the second China International Supply Chain Expo, which begins on Tuesday and runs through Saturday in Beijing.

He said that over the past few decades, global industrial and supply chains have gradually expanded with the deepening of economic globalization, which has promoted rapid economic growth and benefited all parties involved.

Exclusiveness leads nowhere, while openness is the right path forward, he said.

The premier warned that amid the sluggish global economic recovery, protectionist moves and overstretching of security are harming global industrial and supply chains, further driving up enterprise costs, reducing economic efficiency and hindering common development.

He underlined the need to recognize the importance of global industrial and supply chains for the world economy, and called for building a broader consensus on strengthening cooperation on this issue.

Noting that the Chinese economy is improving while maintaining stability, the premier said that the nation will continue to increase countercyclical adjustments to promote a sustained upturn in its economy. Furthermore, China will continuously foster and strengthen new growth drivers and steadily advance high-quality development, in order to make greater contributions to deepening global industrial and supply chain cooperation and promoting global economic recovery, he added.

China will step up the construction of a modern industrial system and strengthen the deep integration of technological and industrial innovation to contribute to the efficient operation, transformation and upgrading of global industrial and supply chains, Li said.

He reiterated China's commitment to advancing high-standard opening-up, saying that the nation will further expand market access and welcomes more foreign enterprises to carry out industrial cooperation in China.

Li encouraged enterprises to be steadfast defenders of and active contributors to global industrial and supply chains and to continue firmly supporting economic globalization.

He urged them to make greater efforts to promote innovation and the green transition of industrial and supply chains, work together to create more vibrant, resilient and efficient global industrial and supply chains in order to seek better development of enterprises, and contribute to the common prosperity of all countries.

Business leaders from Sumitomo Electric Industries, Apple, Chia Tai Group, Rio Tinto Group, Corning, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Contemporary Amperex Technology Co, Lenovo Group, TCL Technology Group, Yum China and the US-China Business Council attended the symposium.

They highlighted the Chinese market as a crucial part of global industrial and supply chains that significantly contributes to global connectivity and innovation. They also acknowledged China's commitment to developing new quality productive forces, implementing robust economic policies and fostering an increasingly favorable business environment.

They said that foreign enterprises operating in China have witnessed the country's development achievements, and they are confident in the Chinese economy and optimistic about the vast potential of the Chinese market.

In addition, they expressed their commitment to further expanding their investments in China and strengthening cooperation on global industrial and supply chains.

Speaking at the symposium, Yang Yuanqing, chairman and CEO of Lenovo Group, said that the global market presents opportunities for China, while China's development serves as a driving force for the world.

Lenovo is willing to work together with global enterprises to build secure, stable, smooth, efficient and mutually beneficial global industrial and supply chains, Yang said.

Market: Local touch vital for success

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Over the past 10 years, we have seen the rising interest of Finnish universities to build partnerships with Chinese institutions and attract more Chinese students. In the tourism sector, more and more Chinese tourists are flying to the Finnish Lapland to appreciate the northern lights and enjoy winter fun at the hometown of Santa Claus.

While we use social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo and Douyin to help brands connect with their consumers, each day I am astounded by the rapid development of China's digital ecosystem and how seamlessly people's daily life is integrated with mobile experiences. This integration is something I believe the rest of the world can learn from.

Today, I see growing opportunities for collaboration between Chinese and non-Chinese companies. With Chinese brands increasingly entering global markets, there is a need for deeper cultural understanding on both sides. Just as European companies have spent years learning how to reach Chinese consumers and decision-makers, Chinese brands must now learn to adapt to foreign markets.

In recent years, many Chinese consumer brands have made significant inroads in Europe. From mobile technology to consumer electronics, Chinese products are gaining popularity. To continue this trajectory, Chinese companies should consider building local teams in European markets to implement their strategies with a local touch for better adaptability. Integrating

European professionals into these organizations can help Chinese brands better align with local preferences, values and business practices.

At the same time, I would urge non-Chinese companies to look further into China for opportunities. China's economy, still growing rapidly, remains a crucial player on the global stage despite recent economic instability worldwide.

Times of economic uncertainty can be pivotal for companies willing to invest strategically. Historically, businesses that continued to invest during recessions have grown faster once the economy rebounded. Now, perhaps more than ever, companies need to actively "earn" their place in the market.

In addition to business growth, we should aspire to use cross-border opportunities to address shared challenges. The world is facing complex issues — climate change, biodiversity loss, economic inequality and challenges in international trade — that demand collaborative solutions. International trade and shared commercial success can foster meaningful relationships between nations and pave the way for a sustainable economic future. Businesses have always played a crucial role in building global communities and complementing diplomatic efforts.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb made a state visit to China at the end of October, engaging in fruitful dialogues with Chinese leaders and boosting further exchanges between the two nations in areas such as academics,

trade and tourism, among others.

Through joint efforts, Finland and China can leverage each other's strengths in technology, culture and economic growth, creating a world where collaboration drives solutions for pressing global issues.

In this interconnected world, China plays a pivotal role, and now, perhaps more than ever, we need strong alliances based on mutual benefit. Win-win partnerships can bring China, Europe, the United States and other countries and regions together to address shared challenges. By encouraging such collaboration, we can not only strengthen economic ties but also build a foundation for understanding and peace.

As someone who has experienced firsthand the potential of China's economy and the openness of its people, I am hopeful that more international companies will recognize the immense opportunities within China. Likewise, I hope that Chinese businesses will continue to seek out partnerships across borders. By embracing a global perspective, we can build a future where economic success goes hand in hand with social and environmental progress. And perhaps, in the process, we can all work together toward a more united and hopeful world with more understanding.

The author is cofounder and chairman of Nordic Friend, a marketing, communications and advertising agency. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Sporty tourists



Tourists dressed as court ladies during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) era play *cuju*, an ancient Chinese soccer game, in a ginkgo forest at the Small Wild Goose Pagoda Scenic Area in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Sunday. RUAN BANHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Forestry forum promotes international cooperation

By ZHANG LI and SHI RUIPENG
in Nanning

International delegates at a forestry conference in southern China called for greater global cooperation and innovation to strengthen the forestry sector and promote sustainable growth.

The 2024 World Forestry Industry Conference, held in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, opened Saturday with nearly 1,100 companies in attendance. The two-day event featured exhibitions of new technologies and discussions on sustainable forestry practices.

Guan Zhiou, head of China's National Forestry and Grassland Administration, emphasized the forestry sector's critical role in fostering green development and boosting the economy. He said China is committed to large-scale land greening initiatives to build a sustainable future.

China leads the world with 87.6 million hectares of planted forests and 263.7 million hectares of grass-

lands, according to official data. The nation's forestry and grassland sector generated a total output value of 9.28 trillion yuan (\$1.28 trillion) last year, benefiting over 100 million farming households and more than 60 million industry workers. The sector has also contributed significantly to rural vitality efforts.

Charlotte Austin, New Zealand's vice-minister for primary industries, highlighted the strong forestry trade relationship between New Zealand and China. She noted that China receives more than 90 percent of New Zealand's softwood log exports.

"Forestry trade and cooperation between our two countries result in tangible economic outcomes and contribute to the prosperity of both our peoples," Austin said. She added that New Zealand sees significant opportunities for its pine wood in China's construction sector.

Bayarsaikhan Javkhlan, an adviser to Mongolia's president, expressed appreciation for China's

“Forestry trade and cooperation between our two countries result in tangible economic outcomes and contribute to the prosperity of both our peoples.”

Charlotte Austin, vice-minister for primary industries of New Zealand

support of green development initiatives. He cited the two countries' joint efforts under Mongolia's "Billion Trees" initiative announced in 2021 at the United Nations General Assembly.

As part of the initiative, the two nations are establishing the Mongolia-China Cooperation Center for Combating Desertification, which is expected to play a key

role in environmental protection and forest restoration in the region.

During the conference, participants signed 35 contracts worth a combined 19.4 billion yuan (\$2.68 billion), reflecting the event's focus on innovation and high-quality development in the forestry sector.

Guan praised Guangxi for its rich forest resources, noting that the region has the largest area of planted forests in China. Guangxi's forestry and grass industry contributed 956.9 billion yuan (\$132.6 billion) in total output value last year, leading the country. Its star anise and rosin products, along with their processed derivatives, account for more than 50 percent of global trade volume.

Guan said he hopes Guangxi will use the conference as an opportunity to deepen international cooperation and advance sustainable forest management.

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China enforces penalties for family violence

Top court underscores importance of personal safety protection order

By CAO YIN
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China's top court has stressed the importance of implementing personal safety protection orders against domestic violence, making it clear that those who violate the orders will be held criminally liable.

While urging courts nationwide to continue fighting crimes involving domestic violence, the Supreme People's Court also jointly issued five influential cases with the All-China Women's Federation on Monday to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

In a recent case, a man surnamed Wang was sentenced to eight months in prison for failing to adhere to a personal safety protection order, which is similar to a restraining order issued in the West. Wang divorced in April 2019 but continued to live with his ex-wife in the same apartment. After he repeatedly assaulted and threatened her, she called the police on Aug 25 last year, leading Wang to be placed under administrative detention for seven days and fined 300 yuan (\$41).

The woman also sought the assistance of the local women's federation and approached a local court for a personal safety protection order on Oct 12 that year. After a review, the court soon issued a six-month order, prohibiting Wang from assaulting or intimidating his ex-wife, as well as harassing, following or contacting her and their daughter.

However, Wang continued his atrocities and was found to have beaten the woman and her colleagues on Nov 28 last year. Although the court drew Wang's attention to the personal safety protection order and gave him a warning, he still threatened his ex-wife through WeChat by sending her pictures of knives and pesticides multiple times from Dec 9 to 12.

His repeated violations constituted the crime of failing to comply with court rulings, and his actions seriously harmed others' personal safety, so he was rightfully held criminally liable with a prison term, according to the court.

"Personal safety protection orders are not empty letters. They are serious judicial decisions that must be respected and implemented once they are made," the top court said on Monday.

It stressed that those who refuse to adhere to such orders are challenging judicial authority and will be severely punished.

It praised the grassroots court for Wang's sentencing, adding "it not only demonstrates our determination to safeguard the dignity and authority of the law, but also ensures that such orders can be a powerful weapon to protect the legitimate rights and interests of victims of domestic violence."

Since its establishment on March 1, 2016, the personal safety protection order system has played an important role in preventing domestic violence, the SPC said, revealing that the issuance rate of such orders has increased year by year.

"Domestic violence, in general, is a repeated and long-term harm, so it is crucial for victims to call police or turn to courts if suffering from the harm," it said.

"Seeking help from local village committees or women's federations is also necessary."

Additionally, the court called on people from all walks of life to further enhance the awareness of anti-domestic violence and take relevant measures, "because family harmony is the cornerstone of social stability and civilization."

Four other domestic violence cases also disclosed on Monday included a man who was sentenced to death for assaulting his wife multiple times and killing her due to his disagreement on divorce.

Exceptional creativity can bind nations

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou
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To promote national culture and foster exchanges with cultures worldwide, nations must first create exceptional artistic works, experts said at the second Liangzhu Forum, which opened on Monday in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. They stressed that only outstanding cultural achievements will attract global attention.

"The idea that 'what is national is also international' has been proposed for a long time. Personally, I believe this statement holds true," said Ye Xiaogang, chairman of the China Musicians Association and founding dean of the School of Music at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

"This is because the music culture created by each nation is unfamiliar to others around the world. If the music of a particular nation is truly remarkable and capable of expressing the genuine thoughts and profound spiritual insights of that nation — its understanding and feelings toward humanity, nature and society — then that national music is certainly international," Ye said.

With the theme "Exchanges and Mutual Learning for a New Model for Human Advancement", the forum welcomed over 300 partici-



Tea artists demonstrate the Jingshan tea ceremony, a traditional tea-making technique, to attendees of the second Liangzhu Forum in Hangzhou, capital city of Zhejiang province, on Monday. DONG XUMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

pants, including archaeologists, writers and musicians, from more than 60 countries and regions.

"I am convinced that the richest cultures are those that engage in dialogue with others. We exist because others exist. So, we need others to know who we are," said Santiago Gamboa, minister counselor and cultural attaché at the Embassy of Colombia. "This idea is central to the conversations at the forum, bringing together representatives of diverse cultures from around the world."

Mai Jia, a Mao Dun Literature Prize winner and vice-chairman of the China Writers Association, highlighted the growing global influence of Chinese literature during his presentation at the main forum.

"In fact, it is not difficult to notice that over the past decade or so, the status of Chinese literature in the world has almost suddenly risen. Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in literature, Liu Cixin won the

Hugo Award, and so on," he said. "Today, China has a presence, footprint and influence in every corner of the world. Literature, as the most accessible way for people to understand a country and a nation, has thus enjoyed good fortune and garnered significant attention."

Mai noted the attendance of prominent writers and critics at the forum, including leaders of influential literary magazines.

"These people do not come here casually. I believe they are drawn to China and to Liangzhu. The 5,000-year-old civilization of Liangzhu, with its long history and profound cultural heritage, is attracting them," he said.

Liangzhu Culture, a late Neolithic archaeological culture around Taihu Lake in the lower Yangtze River region, dates back approximately 5,300 to 4,300 years. On July 6, 2019, the Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City were inscribed on the World Heritage List.

HK yacht experience can benefit GBA

By ZHOU MO
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Enhanced cooperation in the yacht industry could promote Hong Kong's cross-boundary tourism and help ease its berth shortage problem, while bringing sound management experience to mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, industry leaders said. They also called on the government to take full advantage of the experience of the Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles program and set up a similar system for the cross-boundary operation of yachts.

The Guangdong provincial government last week issued a work plan to promote the high-quality development of the yacht industry from 2024 to 2027. According to the document, the province aims to increase the market value of the yacht sector and related industries to 100 billion yuan (\$13.8 billion) or more by 2027, with the number of registered yachts reaching 4,000.

Cooperation between the nine mainland cities in the GBA and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions has been put in a more important position. The province will push forward with the launch of a Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao individual yacht travel pilot scheme and strive for the implementation of a series of facilitation measures for the sailing, berthing, repair and maintenance, and tourism of Hong Kong and Macao yachts in the mainland cities.

It will also actively promote the

free flow of yachts between Guangdong and the two SARs, the mutual recognition of yacht licenses and certificates for yacht operators, and the development of cross-boundary tourism products.

"The greatest significance of Hong Kong yachts' free travel and the mutual recognition in mainland cities of the GBA is that mainland industry players can learn from Hong Kong's yacht management system," said Allen Leng, chairman of Heysea Yachts Group.

"With a population of 7 million, Hong Kong's yacht number is much higher than that of other cities in the GBA. This is because the industry in Hong Kong is highly in line with the international standards."

Hong Kong boasts a number of advantages in developing the yacht industry, including good natural resources, an open management system and a solid industrial foundation, Leng noted.

But its biggest challenge is a lack of berths, he pointed out. Hong Kong currently has around 4,300 berths for yachts, far short of its roughly 12,500 licensed yachts.

"The good news is that the government is planning to develop new berths for yachts, which will surely help the city retain its advantages in the field," he said.

The berth project, which is part of Hong Kong's ambitious Airport City project, is scheduled to be completed by 2028.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said in his latest Policy Address that Hong Kong will promote yacht tourism in the expansion area of the Aberdeen

Typhoon Shelter, the ex-Lamma Quarry area and the waterfront area near Hung Hom Station.

Adrian Pang, commodore of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, said the successful operation of the Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles program is a good example of how to promote the free flow of Hong Kong yachts in mainland GBA cities.

The program, which came into effect on July 1 last year, allows eligible private cars from Hong Kong to travel between the city and Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge without being subject to regular quotas.

Currently, Hong Kong and Macao yachts can only travel to several designated sites in Guangdong and aren't allowed to move freely across the region.

"The cross-boundary vehicle program has achieved very good results. The government is advised to follow the example and adopt a similar model on yachts," Pang said.

"As more Hong Kong yachts travel to Guangdong, the problem of berth shortages and the lack of maintenance professionals in Hong Kong could also be eased. Besides, this will help promote the integrated development of tourism and the shipping industry in the GBA."

Jerry Ye, director and executive general manager of the Shenzhen Bay Marina Club, expressed a similar view.

"The mainland needs to make breakthroughs on a yacht management system, and Hong Kong can offer its expertise. There is huge potential for both sides to work together."

CHINA



The top three winners of the Chinese mainland round of the James Dyson Award for design innovation (from left): Zheng Qingyun and the VirtX suit that renders audio waves into touch; Li Yuanjing and the Co-jump rehabilitation glove; Yin Nan and the Dysphagia Dynamics device that helps those with difficulty swallowing.

Innovator conveys sound to those with no hearing

By WANG YING

Zheng Qingyun and his team are attempting to bring rich, nuanced and spatial sound waves to the deaf community.

In the past two years, Zheng and his team have created VirtX, a tactile suit using innovative textiles to render high-resolution tactile sensations, designed to help those with hearing loss experience sound through touch.

The suit uses advanced electrohaptic rendering technology to simulate tactile sensations and patterns triggered by a variety of sounds, which can assist deaf individuals in experiencing sound waves from spatial directions.

Over 1.5 billion people globally live with hearing loss, with the number estimated to rise to over 2.5 billion by 2030, according to the World Health Organization.

Over 15 percent of people in China have some form of hearing impairment, or 206 million in total, reported China National Radio, citing a survey conducted by organizations including the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

"All of us are very interested in human-machine interaction, and so we decided to develop a product that offers a complementary experience of hearing through haptic feedback," said Zheng, a 24-year-old postgraduate student at Shanghai's Tongji University.

Conventionally, human-machine interaction research focuses on hard materials, but Zheng and his team decided to explore the possibility of applying human-machine interaction to soft materials like fabric. Their research has led to the design of innovative clothes where each thread of fabric is connected to a switch.

"Clothing, as a medium for human-machine interaction, can be naturally integrated into people's daily lives. What's more important is that it can improve people's lives," Zheng said.

In the beginning, the team sought to address the inconvenience faced by people with visual and hearing challenges, so they focused on providing complementary experiences for them through haptic feedback.

As the fabric of the clothes is reversible, this means that in addition to the haptic pattern on the inside layer, some similar haptics are also created on the outside layer, thus allowing partially sighted people to receive assistance.

"Another challenge troubling this specific group of people is that they cannot distinguish the direction of sound. The absent information affects their overall perception of their surroundings," said Zheng.

One example is walking in the street as a vehicle passes by. Ordinary people can tell the location and distance according to the sound made by the vehicle.

"Our VirtX full-body virtual haptic interface is trying to offer sensory support via sound waves to significantly improve deaf people's life quality. Hopefully, the integration of the assistance in the format of clothing can open a new window for them to feel the world," Zheng said.

Despite there being great potential for future commercialization, Zheng admitted there remain challenges with the technology.

The postgraduate said market feedback has inspired them to create products not only for a specific group of people, but also to apply the technology in a wider scope of social scenarios for more opportunities and possibilities.

"With the further development of the invention, our team has discussed with a number of enterprises commercial applications, including entertainment, specific training scenarios and medical applications," said Zheng.

The VirtX design was awarded the top prize at the James Dyson Award in the Chinese mainland this year.

Designers inspired by improving lives

Young Chinese winners of James Dyson Award showcase creative quality of life solutions

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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The top three winners of the Chinese mainland round of the James Dyson Award for design innovation had one thing in common this year — they were all focused on improving people's life quality.

The team that took the top spot at the awards this year, announced at a ceremony held in Shanghai on Sept 12, consisted of a trio of young innovative thinkers.

Zheng Qingyun, Lin Hongnan and Jiang Shengsheng have developed a tactile suit using innovative textiles to render high-resolution tactile sensations, designed to help those with hearing loss experience sound through touch.

It took two years to develop the VirtX full-body virtual haptic suit, said Zheng, 24, a postgraduate student at Tongji University in Shanghai, adding that it opens the door to enabling those with hearing loss to feel the world in a more immersive way.

The team that took second place designed a soft robotic rehabilitation glove called Co-jump, primarily aimed at helping people recover from stroke.

Team member Li Yuanjing, 24, a postgraduate student from South China University of Technology, said that initially their research focused on helping people with flat feet, but realizing this focus was too narrow the team turned to stroke rehabilitation.

"While carrying out our research on rehabilitation, we were surprised to discover an extremely large number of stroke cases in China, with over 2 million cases per year," Li said.

According to Li, existing rehabilitation gloves on the market are too bulky, weighing 2 to 3 kilograms each, so their design is centered around being lightweight.

"The special glove we've designed weighs just over 600 grams. It's customized and equipped with electromyography sensors and artificial intelligence-powered visual assistance for finger function recovery, which ensures the user experience is comfortable and safe," Li said.

Targeting patients with hand dysfunction caused by impairments from surgery, stroke and hemiplegia, the glove enables users to recover at home.

Third place at the James Dyson Award also focused on those recovering from stroke, particularly those experiencing swallowing difficulties.

Dysphagia Dynamics is a smart assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation platform designed for patients with post-stroke dysphagia, and consists of a swallowing disorder assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation training platform specifically designed for patients with post-stroke dysphagia. It comprises wearable hardware for the neck and accompanying post-stroke dysphagia health management software that can be connected to vari-



From above: A team member explains Nezha, a machine invented by a team from Shanghai Jiao Tong University that can both fly like a drone and dive into the ocean, during the finals of the China International College Students' Innovation Competition 2024 in Shanghai last month. LIU YING / XINHUA Hu Hongfei (right), senior electronics manager at Dyson, talks with Chen Haifeng, a past winner of the James Dyson Award, during this year's awards ceremony in Shanghai in September. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Visitors observe a system that uses laser direct writing technology to monitor the rehabilitation of bone fractures at a display of innovative projects at Tsinghua University in Beijing in April. LI MUJI / FOR CHINA DAILY Students debug their project as they prepare for an innovation competition in Tianjin in May. ZHAO ZISHUO / XINHUA



"The designs highlight the many possibilities of original design to promote social progress."

Hu Hongfei, senior electronics manager at Dyson

ous medical hardware. According to Yin Nan, a member of the team behind the medical device, dysphagia is one of the most common complications after stroke, and at present there is a lack of low-cost and noninvasive means for assessment and intervention. "These patients are leading a

low-quality life, and their families are under a great burden too," said Yin, 24, a postgraduate student at Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Although development is still in its initial stages, Yin said the team is optimizing and improving the hardware and software to expand testing to different patient groups with varied conditions, so as to upgrade the device to better meet the clinical needs of patients.

Singapore-based home appliance maker Dyson first held the James Dyson Award on the Chinese mainland in 2016, aiming to attract young Chinese inventors to showcase their creativity and innovation.

"This year's winners have paid great attention to the humanistic and innovative thinking of the young generation inventors, and the designs highlight the many possibilities of the original design to promote social progress," said Hu Hongfei, senior electronics manager at Dyson, during this year's awards ceremony in Shanghai.

Hu said he is very glad that the design competition has offered a platform for promising and innovative talents, and hoped the event can bring more original designs and greater social value.

This year's event attracted 612 original designs.

In the past nine years, the competition has received more than 3,000 entries, and seen the participation of more than 20,000 university students across China.

During the awards ceremony, a collaborative education program was announced between Dyson and Shanghai Jiao Tong University for postgraduate students specialized in design.

Wen Xiaojing, director at Shanghai Jiao Tong University's School of Design, said the cultivation of innovative talents requires both solid theoretical knowledge and cutting-edge industrial insights and practices.

"It is hoped that this cooperative course can stimulate the students' original potential and encourage them to endeavor to create inventions with social value and industrial potential," Wen said.

The James Dyson Award is just one of many competitions that offer stages for college students and young people in China with innovative dreams and aspirations.

In addition to competitions organized by renowned enterprises, the Ministry of Education organizes or accredits dozens of national student competitions for inventions and innovative designs.

More than 5 million projects from 5,406 colleges from China and abroad participated in the China International College Students' Innovation Competition 2024, which concluded last month. Nezha, a machine invented by a team from Shanghai Jiao Tong University that can both fly like a drone and dive into the ocean for scientific missions, won the eventual championship.

WORLD

Memorial for Korean laborers held in Japan

SADO, Japan — South Korea paid tribute to wartime Korean forced laborers at Japan's Sado Island Gold Mines in a memorial ceremony on Monday, a day after boycotting a similar event organized by Japan, as tensions over historical atrocities continue to strain relations between the two sides.

Monday's ceremony at a former dormitory near the 16th-century Sado Mines, which were listed this summer as a UNESCO World Heritage site, was organized by South Korea's Foreign Ministry and attended by nine family members of Korean wartime laborers, the country's ambassador to Japan and other officials.

About 1,500 Koreans were forced to labor at the mines under abusive and brutal conditions during World War II, historians say.

Japanese officials at Sunday's ceremony paid tribute to "all workers", including Korean laborers who died at the mines, without acknowledging that they were forced laborers — part of what critics call a persistent policy of whitewashing Japan's history of sexual and labor exploitation before and during the war.

Disagreements cited

The ceremony, which was supposed to further heal wounds, renewed bad feelings between the two sides. South Korea boycotted Sunday's memorial service, citing unspecified disagreements with Tokyo over the event.

There was speculation that the South Korean boycott was related to Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Akiko Ikuina's attendance at Sunday's ceremony.

Ikuina reportedly visited Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine in August 2022, weeks after she was elected as a lawmaker. Japan's neighbors view Yasukuni, which commemorates 2.5 million war dead, including war criminals, as a symbol of Japan's past militarism.

At the Korean-sponsored memorial on Monday, South Korea's Ambassador to Japan Park Cheol-hee offered his condolences to the forced laborers and their families in a short speech, expressing hope that the memorial would bring comfort to families. He said South Korea and Japan should both make efforts to ensure that the painful wartime history is remembered.

"We will never forget the tears and sacrifices of the Korean workers behind the history of the Sado mines," Park said.

The Sado mines were registered as a UNESCO cultural heritage site in July after Japan agreed to include an exhibit on the conditions of Korean forced laborers and to hold a memorial service annually, following repeated protests from the South Korean government.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



A displaced Palestinian woman clears water from a tent following heavy rainfall north of Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday amid the ongoing conflict in the region. BASHAR TALEB / AFP

Gaza medical worker deaths exceed 1,000

Experts call for more efforts from intl community to stop killing of civilians

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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More than 1,000 medical workers in Gaza have been killed in Israeli strikes since October last year, local authorities have said, as Tel Aviv is accused of waging a "campaign of extermination" in north Gaza.

Experts said now that arrest warrants have been issued against Israeli and Hamas officials, the international community "should do more to stop the killing of civilians" and damage to critical infrastructure.

Hussam Abu Safia, director at Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia, who was injured in an Israeli attack on Saturday, renewed an appeal for global intervention in a letter published in English on Telegram, Al Jazeera reported.

"After the failure of the occupying army to evacuate the north, they have now begun to directly target our healthcare system... For the past seven consecutive days, we have been bombed directly," Al Jazeera quoted Safia as saying.

The attacks included the hospital's reception, emergency departments, electricity generators, oxygen station and water network.

Safia also accused Israeli forces of using a new type of weapon. "Specifically a quadcopter that drops bombs containing tiny fragments that are nearly invisible to the naked eye. These projectiles penetrate the bodies of our workers, causing severe bleeding and damage to internal organs," he was quoted as saying, adding that Israeli forces were waging a "campaign of extermination" in northern Gaza.

Israeli army spokesperson Avi-

chay Adraee posted a new evacuation order for some blocks in the Shejaiya neighborhood in the Gaza Strip on X on Saturday, alleging that "terrorist organizations" were once again firing rockets toward Israel in these areas.

Israel's operation in Gaza and Lebanon has caused widespread damage to medical facilities, aid distribution channels and civilian infrastructure, killing and injuring essential workers in the fields of healthcare and journalism.

Apart from the 1,000 doctors and nurses killed, over 300 other medical personnel had been arrested, tortured and executed in prisons, according to a Wafa News Agency report. The ongoing conflict has so far killed more than 44,000 Palestinians and 1,200 Israelis and foreigners.

Hospitals damaged

Ahmad Al-Farra, head of the pediatric department at Nasser Medical Complex and director of Al-Tahrir Hospital for Children and Maternity, told China Daily that nearly 35 hospitals and medical centers had been damaged by Israeli forces.

"They evacuate the hospital (of staff and medical supply), they try to destroy everything, even the generator, even the water supply, even the oxygen supply for these hospitals," said Al-Farra.

He also appealed for support for the health sector and said they would work on launching support on global platforms, which would include health organizations and health activists.

"(This is) to protect it from the Israeli forces, to be protected from

the damage that we expect to continue," said Al-Farra.

Hadi Rahmat Purnama, an assistant professor of international law and chair of the Centre for International Law Studies at the Faculty of Law at Universitas Indonesia, in Jakarta, told China Daily that the continuous targeting of medical personnel was "outrageous" as they "should be protected during armed conflict", citing the Geneva Conventions as the legal basis for protecting medical personnel.

He said Israel "has made indiscriminate attacks against Palestinians, which amount to war crimes", and that the majority of the international community has condemned these Israeli attacks, which are "not proportional".

"The US and European states have not done enough to prevent Israel from holding their attack against the Palestinians. The casualties are beyond necessary to weaken Hamas," said Purnama.

In another development, Lebanon's Hezbollah movement fired heavy rocket barrages at Israel on Sunday, and the Israeli military said houses had been destroyed or set alight near Tel Aviv after a powerful Israeli airstrike killed at least 29 people in Beirut the day before.

On Monday, Israeli Ambassador to Washington Mike Herzog told Israeli Army Radio that a cease-fire deal to end fighting between Israel and Hezbollah could be reached "within days".

Among the issues that remain is an Israeli demand to reserve the right to act should Hezbollah violate its obligations under the emerging deal. The deal seeks to push Hezbollah and Israeli troops out of southern Lebanon.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Film recounts tragic story of 'love, loss and sacrifice'

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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Beneath the waters of the East China Sea lies a silent witness to a forgotten tragedy — the wreck of the *Lisbon Maru*. In October 1942, this Japanese cargo ship traveling from Hong Kong to Japan, unmarked despite carrying 1,816 British prisoners of war, or POWs, was torpedoed by a US submarine near Dongji Island, part of the Zhoushan Archipelago in China's Zhejiang province.

After the attack, Japanese forces sealed the prisoners below deck, leaving them to drown. Those who managed to escape were met with gunfire from Japanese troops. In total, 828 soldiers were lost to the sea forever. Amid the despair of the survivors, local Chinese fishermen defied danger and risked their lives to rescue 384 drowning soldiers.

The tragedy, however, was compounded by decades of silence. Japanese authorities denied responsibility and the suffering of the British POWs was confined to the memories of their descendants.

Decades later, a Chinese documentary, *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru*, reveals this buried history. Directed by Fang Li, a geophysical exploration expert turned filmmaker, the film recounts the tragedy and heroism surrounding one of World War II's most overlooked events.

The film premiered at the British Film Institute in London on Aug 15, 2023. After premiering at the Asian World Film Festival in Los Angeles on Nov 18, the documentary began its Oscar-qualifying run in Santa Monica on Friday.

"No one had ever spoken publicly about this story before. It was as if history had erased these lives," Fang told China Daily during a recent special screening of *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru* in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles.

Journey begins

Fang's journey to document the forgotten history began in 2014 when he first heard residents recounting stories they had been told by fishermen. He started to discover more about the *Lisbon Maru* in 2016 and finally located its shipwreck in 2017.

Determined to restore their voices amid the absence of global recognition, Fang embarked on an eight-year journey, overcoming pandemic challenges, funding struggles, and historical silences.



Fang Li (right), director and producer of *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru*, speaks to a member of the audience during a special screening event on Wednesday in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles. RENA LI / CHINA DAILY

"For me, this is not just a movie; it is my lifetime commitment," Fang said. "This story is about the courage of human beings, about universal feelings — love, loss, and sacrifice."

Central to the film are the fishermen in Zhoushan, who risked their lives to save the British POWs. Despite the threat of Japanese forces, they sailed into dangerous waters, pulling struggling soldiers from the sea and sheltering them.

"When I imagine those British soldiers struggling in the water, shot at by the Japanese, and the Chinese fishermen rushing to their rescue, it's overwhelming. It's the kind of courage that leaves you in awe," Fang said.

Fang's documentary builds on the work of British historian Tony Banham, who in 2006 published *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru: Britain's Forgotten Wartime Tragedy* after interviewing survivors and unearthing critical documents. Fang expanded the narrative, incorporating the voices of descendants and focusing on the long-term psychological trauma faced by survivors.

"When I visited families of the POWs, many were in tears," Fang said. "No actor could portray the depth of emotion I witnessed. These families waited decades for answers, for healing... They were forgotten by history, yet their love continued. Our film gave them a sense of closure."

The film's message of humanity resonates deeply. Stephen Nemeth, a Hollywood producer, called it "a healing device between China and America".

"To see those incredible Chinese fishermen risk their lives for these British soldiers is remarkable," Nemeth told China Daily. "Fang's dedication to uncovering this story and connecting families, even at the very end of their lives, is a huge gift."

Arnold Schwartzman, an Oscar-winning filmmaker, praised the documentary for its artistry and historical significance.

"It's beautifully made and deeply personal. Stories like these remind us of the sacrifices made in war and the enduring light of humanity," he told China Daily.

For Fang, the film carries a heartfelt plea for peace.

"War is pure madness," he said. "It destroys families, leaving nothing but grief and unanswered questions. In times of peace, we have to hold our loved ones close and do everything we can to stay far away from the war."

Writer sheds light on forgotten history of Chinese Americans in US Civil War

By BELINDA ROBINSON
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Chinese Americans have a long and varied military history dating back 200 years on US battlefields, working alongside Americans, fearlessly running into the fray as muskets and cannons fired, and some losing their lives.

While the efforts of those who served in World War II are widely known, the stories of the estimated 74 Chinese men who served in the US Civil War tend to have been forgotten.

Writer Ruthanne Lum McCunn from San Francisco, California, has done extensive work for decades to uncover intricate details about the lives of these Chinese Americans.

McCunn of Chinese and Scottish descent told China Daily that the reason that this part of history isn't very widely known is that "American history unfortunately continues to lack diversity or nuance".

The Civil War erupted over a dis-

pute over whether slavery should be permitted to expand into the western territories or stopped from this expansion, which the North feared would lead to the abolition of the heinous trade especially after the election of anti-slavery president Abraham Lincoln.

As the Union (North) fought the Confederacy (South) between 1861 and 1865, around 31 Chinese soldiers fought for the Union Army, 43 were in the US Navy and around five are known to have sympathized with the Confederates, according to McCunn.

Her article *Chinese in the Civil War: Ten Who Served*, written nearly 30 years ago, provided an update to a widely missed part of this history. She has also written numerous books, including *Chinese Yankee: A True Story from the Civil War*.

In 1860, the US Census recognized just three races: white, black and mulatto. There was often confusion over how to classify Asian soldiers. It wasn't until 1910 that the census broadened its racial classifications.



Joseph Pierce (left) and Edward Day Cohota were among the Chinese Americans who served in the US Civil War. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Corporal Joseph Pierce of the 14th Connecticut Volunteer Regiment fought and was wounded at Antietam and Gettysburg during Pickett's Charge, ordered by Confederate General Robert E Lee, in an all-white and male unit. He was likely the only Chinese man out of 160,000 men at Gettysburg, John Dynia, a

retired US Army colonel and Civil War enthusiast, found. Dynia campaigned to get Pierce's image on the Gettysburg Wall of Faces at the Visitor Center in Gettysburg National Military Park.

Pierce, born in China in May 1842, was farming in Berlin, Connecticut, at the outbreak of the war. He was

promoted to corporal in the Army of the Potomac on Nov 1, 1863 — the highest rank for any Chinese American in the Union Army. After the war, Pierce married and had four children. He died in January 1916.

John Tomney arrived in New York after the war began but did not speak English. When he was captured by Confederate troops in March 1862, General John B Magruder, surprised at his appearance and color, asked him if he was a mulatto, Indian, or what. He said he was from China.

Many of the Asian men who enlisted hoped to gain citizenship and acceptance in their new home. However, after the Civil War ended in 1865, many were denied the right to citizenship by the Naturalization Act of 1870 and the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. This made it difficult to get a Civil War pension. The Geary Act in 1892 forced Asian service members to apply for citizenship.

Edward Day Cohota, born near Shanghai, was brought from China to Massachusetts as a boy by a sea

captain. He did 16 months of service at Cold Harbor, Petersburg, and Appomattox.

Cohota spent 30 years in the Army altogether, escaped death a few times and had seven bullet holes through his clothes. After the war, he became a restaurateur, married and had six children.

When he tried to take up a home- stead in 1912, he was notified that "he was not a citizen". Despite years of trying, he never became a US citizen. He died in 1935.

Only a few books such as Arthur Bonner's *The Chinese in New York, 1800-1950* ever mentioned these Chinese men's service.

McCunn explains that her love of uncovering and showcasing these veterans' stories is because "we all live in the context of our times. To understand the motivations of people, it's necessary to know the context in which they live. Since the present evolves from the past, we cannot understand our current circumstances without knowing our history, and I mean all of our history."

WORLD

FRIENDS AFAR

Editor's note: China Daily presents the series Friends Afar to tell the stories of people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries. Through the vivid narration of the people in the stories, readers can get a better understanding of a country that is boosting openness.

Young Japanese holds deep affection for Peking Opera

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
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Takanori Kobayashi, 23, has had a deep connection with Peking Opera that reaches back to his childhood. His fascination with Chinese history began early, as he was drawn to manga about Chinese tales, especially works like *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin* by Japanese manga artist Mitsuteru Yokoyama. This passion for Chinese history and culture inspired him to look for related videos online.

When he was 14, he came across a video of the historical opera *The Battle of Red Cliffs*. Although he couldn't understand the language, he was captivated by the elaborate costumes, expressive makeup, and unique music of Peking Opera.

At 17, he discovered a website for the Shincyo Theater, a Tokyo-based Peking Opera troupe founded by Zhang Chunxiang, a Peking Opera artist born in Beijing and the third generation in his family dedicated to the art.

Zhang graduated from Beijing Vocational College of Opera and Arts, later joining the Jingju Theatre Company of Beijing, and moved to Japan in the 1980s. He went on to establish the Shincyo Theater and later founded the Japan Association for the Promotion of Peking Opera.

Kobayashi reached out to the theater via email, sharing with Zhang his childhood passion for Chinese historical manga, his admiration for the elaborate costumes and music of Peking Opera, and his desire to join the troupe.

Zhang remembered, "What impressed me most about Kobayashi was his maturity and composure, qualities that are quite rare for someone who is 17. His genuine interest in traditional Chinese culture and Peking Opera also intrigued me."

At the time, Kobayashi was living in Gunma Prefecture. At 18, he moved to Tokyo to attend Chuo University, where he majored in Chinese language and culture. "I chose to study Chinese language and culture in college specifically to learn Peking Opera," he said. He began attending Zhang's Peking Opera classes held every Saturday.

"I had no prior knowledge of Chinese," Kobayashi said, "so I started from scratch in college. When I began learning Peking Opera, my teacher guided me through the pronunciation, note by note. Gradually, I started to pick up some Chinese in this immersive environment."

Kobayashi is especially drawn to the singing style of *laosheng*, which represents dignified, upright male characters, typically middle-aged or older. He dreams of performing roles like Zhuge Liang, the brilliant statesman and military strategist of the Three Kingdoms period (220-280), or Yang Yanhui, a former Song Dynasty (960-1279) general who endures great hardships to visit his mother.

Notable pieces

To help his students, Zhang explains Peking Opera movements in simple Japanese. Kobayashi, who favors civil roles, prepares by listening to performances of notable pieces, such as *Sitting in the Palace*, a scene from *Yang Silang*



Top: Takanori Kobayashi portrays Dian Wei, a general at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Left: Takanori Kobayashi (left) and his tutor Zhang Chunxiang, a Peking Opera artist and founder of Shincyo Theater in Japan, take a picture on Sept 14 in Tokyo. JIANG XUEQING / CHINA DAILY

Visits His Mother, performed by Yu Kuizhi, a leading Peking Opera artist. This listening practice gives him a sense of the piece, allowing him to pick up the lines more quickly, with Zhang's guidance refining his interpretation.

"Kobayashi studies singing *laosheng* roles. His calm demeanor is well-suited for these roles, and although his voice is somewhat low, it meets the requirements for *laosheng*. However, the troupe needed him to take on *hualian*, a painted-face role," Zhang said.

In 2020, Shincyo Theater staged plays such as *Wild Boar Forest*, where Kobayashi made his debut in a *xiaohualian* role, a small painted-face character. He also portrayed Liu Lihua, the innkeeper in *At The Crossroads*.

"To portray a *hualian* character, I shaved my head because the make-up requires either a bald head or closely trimmed hair. There are few Japanese as dedicated to Peking Opera as I am, and many Chinese people find it surprising, especially since there aren't many enthusiasts of Peking Opera among their own," said Kobayashi.

"I'm lucky to be surrounded by people with friendly feelings toward China, who are interested in Chinese culture and food," he said.

A fan of Chinese history, novels, and cuisine, Kobayashi is particularly fascinated by stories from the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. His study of Peking Opera has given him a deeper appreciation of China's historical legends.

After graduating this spring, he began working for a company specializing in pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, while in his spare time, he continues studying Peking Opera and occasionally performs in Shin-

cyo Theater's public productions.

"Becoming a professional Peking Opera performer in Japan is difficult and might not be viable as a long-term career. In China, performers usually start training at four or five when their bodies are very flexible, whereas I began close to 20. For someone like me, it's more typical to treat Peking Opera as a passion rather than a career. Even so, I'd still like to pursue it professionally and give it my best shot," said Kobayashi.

He added, "I hope to study Peking Opera in China someday and bring what I learn back to Japan to help this art thrive here."

Kobayashi is also inspired by Yuta Ishiyama, a Japanese Peking Opera actor who trained at the Middle School Affiliated to the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts and became the first foreign performer at the China National Peking Opera Company. After returning to Japan, Ishiyama performed as the Monkey King in Shincyo Theater's 2024 production of *Havoc in Dragon Palace*.

Rising talent

"Each generation succeeds the previous," Zhang said. "Kobayashi is a promising rising talent among my students. Even though he is currently a corporate employee, he still aspires to master Peking Opera, which brings me great joy."

Kobayashi has visited Beijing twice — first as a tourist and later in 2023, when he accompanied Zhang on a family visit to purchase Peking Opera props. Zhang, originally from Beijing, took him to Tianqiao, a well-known artists' hub, which made a lasting impression on him.

On Sept 25 this year, the Union of Chinese Residing in Japan held a gala to mark the 75th anniversary of the

founding of the People's Republic of China. Zhang led the Peking Opera segment, performing three acts with two other professionals and Kobayashi, who took on the martial role of Yu Hong, a main character in *The Race of the Bamboo Grove*.

Founded in 1996, Shincyo Theater initially showcased Zhang's performances alongside fellow Peking Opera actors and musicians. Realizing the need for actors to fill minor roles, Zhang then established a Peking Opera class.

Shincyo Theater delivers ticketed performances with audiences of around 300, of whom only 5-10 are Chinese, while the majority are Japanese, mostly women aged 50 to 70. To attract attendees, the troupe often chooses popular plays, such as *Havoc in Dragon Palace*, which features "monkey roles".

In 2015, Zhang founded the Japan Association for the Promotion of Peking Opera, which submits project proposals to Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to apply for opportunities to perform in Japanese elementary and middle schools, often with government sponsorship.

Before performances, Zhang teaches students basic roles of monkey or heavenly soldier, giving them a chance to experience Peking Opera. After they learn a set of moves, Zhang brings in the professional troupe to perform, including the students in the show. The students' involvement creates a special resonance.

"Promoting Peking Opera significantly enhances the Japanese people's understanding of China. After watching our performances, many express a wish to visit China, explore the birthplace of Peking Opera, and experience authentic performances," he added.

Role of Global South praised at G20 summit

Experts say declaration well reflects demands for a fairer, inclusive world

By ZHENG WANYIN in London
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The 19th G20 Leaders' Summit, which concluded in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, last week, has underscored the important roles the Global South has assumed in different fields, experts said.

"The overall tenor of the communique, when read in the context of the adjacent multilateral meetings of APEC and BRICS, points to a growing confidence among countries of the Global South that there is 'no time like the present'. The world is changing; the decades of unipolarity dominated by the United States are in the past," said Warwick Powell, an adjunct professor at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia and a senior fellow at the Beijing-based think tank Taihe Institute.

The Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration focused on the priorities of the Brazilian presidency: social inclusion and the fight against hunger and poverty; sustainable development, energy transitions, climate actions; and the reform of global governance institutions.

Notable outcomes outlined in the document include the launch of the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, an agreement to tax the wealthiest billionaires with "full respect for member states' tax sovereignty"; a call to scale up climate financing for developing countries and to enhance their representation in the decision-making processes of financial institutions.

Powell said the declaration document has well reflected the demands of the Global South for a fairer, more equitable, and inclusive world, though challenges in converting words into concrete actions remain.

"The Global South has legitimate aspirations for fair and equitable economic development and to benefit from the clean energy transition. The Global South

demands a greater voice across a raft of international institutions, which have, since their formation in the years after World War II, largely been dominated by the Western powers," he said.

"The Global South has demonstrated not just at the G20 but also at APEC and BRICS beforehand, that they will no longer sit by silently." Xie Yizhe, a nonresident research fellow at the Beijing-based think tank Center for China and Globalization, also recognized the growing presence of developing countries at the G20.

China, as the world's second-largest economy and the largest developing country, is also one of the key members of the G20.

President Xi Jinping's attendance this year was in the spotlight.

Voice grows louder

Maria Francesca Staiano, director of the Center on China Studies at the International Relations Institute of the National University of La Plata in Argentina, praised Xi's remarks at the Leaders' Summit as "deeply inspirational," as the speech speaks for the Global South.

She highlighted Xi's call for seeing the world as one community with a shared future and the necessity of equitable transitions in the energy, digital, and scientific fields.

"China is a symbol for the Global South," she said. "It provides an example that opens new horizons of meaning, through a 'new humanism' in which theoretical and scientific innovations can serve both humanity and nature, also in a *Tianxia* (all under heaven) perspective, where dialogue between people can mark the beginning of a new era in which the populations of the Global South are finally included in the construction of a peaceful common prosperity."

Rena Li in Los Angeles contributed to this story.

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Bolstering China ties will benefit EU: Hungarian envoy

By MO JINGXI
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When Mate Pesti first came to China to study in 2007, he anticipated a decade or even a century where China's rapid socioeconomic rise would position it as a dominant global power.

Today, as Hungary's ambassador to China, Pesti sees that vision unfolding and believes that strengthening cooperation with China will benefit not only Hungary but also the entire European Union.

"If you have strong leadership and strategic views, plus you have 1.4 billion people who don't want to live off benefits, but they actually want to work, you are bound to be very successful," he told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

As this year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Hungary, Pesti expressed confidence that bilateral ties will only grow stronger, underpinned by deepening political alignment, closer people-to-people exchanges, and enhanced cooperation on global challenges.

Hungary was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China on Oct 4, 1949, and just two days later, on Oct 6, the two countries established diplomatic relations.

"The China-Hungary relationship has deepened steadily in the past decade and, in many ways, is at its peak today," Pesti said, adding he expects this momentum to continue in the years ahead.

Hungary is the third-largest trad-



Mate Pesti

ing partner of China in the Central and Eastern European area, while China remains Hungary's largest trading partner outside the European Union. Statistics show that the central European country received 44 percent of all Chinese foreign direct investment in Europe in 2023.

During President Xi Jinping's state visit to Hungary in May, bilateral relations were elevated to an all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era, marking a new milestone in the bilateral relationship.

Pesti said the new positioning of bilateral relations shows that "the

two countries are always committed to consultation and dialogue no matter what kind of political tensions we face in the world and no matter how our ideas might be different in some issues."

The ambassador emphasized the resilience of the China-Hungary relationship. "It is able to withstand not just geopolitical shocks, but growing hostility toward Chinese interests in the EU and beyond," he said.

Last month, the European Commission finalized its decision to impose additional tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles, which Hungary voted against.

Pesti noted that for Hungary and China, both of which prioritize development and growth, connectivity and cooperation are much preferred over the decou-

pling of global supply chains.

"For Hungary, any kind of trade destruction or barrier is very dangerous," Pesti said, adding that free trade rather than protectionism offers the best path forward for Hungary and the region.

Positioning Hungary as a bridge between the East and the West, the ambassador said his country is willing to act as a mediator between China and Europe, promoting dialogue that aligns with Hungarian, European and Chinese strategic goals.

Pragmatic approach

"We hope that Hungary's support for a more pragmatic approach toward China will be seen as an example of how the EU can engage with Beijing in a mutually beneficial way," he said.

In recent years, Hungary has become an increasingly popular destination for Chinese tourists,

with 21 direct flights per week connecting Budapest to seven Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an in Northwest China's Shaanxi province and Guangzhou in South China's Guangdong province.

Pesti said his country would like to further its people-to-people exchanges with China, which serves as the foundation for relations in all other areas.

While initiatives like the Confucius Institute in Hungary have played a role in promoting the Chinese language and culture, the ambassador said the Liszt Institute in Beijing shall continue to introduce Hungarian art and culture to a large number of young Chinese people.

It is also hoped that there will be more scholarships and exchange programs for students from both Hungary and China, which can enhance mutual understanding and foster a generation more attuned to each other's cultures, Pesti said.

THE HANDS OF TIME

Traditional arts and crafts are supreme examples of Chinese cultural heritage. China Daily is publishing this series to show how master artisans are using dedication and innovation to inject new life into heritage. In this installment, we explore the carpet craft in Xinjiang.

Weaving a decorative history

Xinjiang artisans use traditional patterns to tell stories and attempt to ignite the next generation's interest to keep the ancient craft alive, **Xing Wen** in Hotan and **Mao Weihua** in Urumqi report.

Stepping into a random traditional household in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, carpets are usually the most eye-catching and distinct interior decorations.

Superior wool meticulously woven with intricate patterns bursts with vibrant colors. These objects of beauty are used by different ethnic groups in Xinjiang to cover floors and sofas or adorn walls, serving as both insulation and decoration.

Xinjiang is among the birthplaces of such unique carpets.

Archaeological evidence tracing the artistry of wool handmade carpet dates back over 2,000 years in the region.

Carpet fragments from the late Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) unearthed from the ruins of the ancient city of Loulan in southern Xinjiang are among the earliest known carpet artifacts discovered in China. The findings attest to the local origins of this craft.

Xinjiang carpets often feature basic motifs of plants, flowers, fruits, branches, leaves and animals, expanded upon and transformed with geometric patterns.

Traditional designs include *amaral* (pomegranate flower), *bash chichak gul* (five-petaled flower) and *chachma gul* (scattered flower). The carpets typically adopt a full-border composition.

As an ancient Silk Road crossroads, Xinjiang produces carpets reflecting diverse cultural influences.

"For instance, the idea of using rose patterns in carpets comes from Egypt while mountain peak designs originate from Turkey and Iran," says Pei Ming, 66, a craft artist from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region folk literature and art association.

"Meanwhile, the peony and lotus patterns on Xinjiang carpets are inspired by popular embroidery designs from the Central Plains of China."

Pei has been researching the history and craft of Xinjiang carpets.

The inclusive beauty of Xinjiang carpets has won international acclaim since ancient times, he says.

During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Samarkand, an ancient city in Uzbekistan, served as the distribution center for carpets in Central Asia. By the 16th century, Xinjiang carpets had already entered European markets.

The production of handmade carpets in the region flourished during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) when carpets produced in Xinjiang's Hotan prefecture became essential tribute items for the imperial court.

Hotan carpets are made from high-quality semi-coarse wool from a local breed of sheep, characterized by a rough yet nisticky texture with moderate thickness, good elasticity and great resilience.

The wool is spun into yarn and dyed into vibrant colors, then twisted together in warp, weft and pile.

To ensure output, patterns and color schemes are designed before workers begin weaving.

Xinjiang carpets are mostly woven with vertical looms. Warp and weft threads are intertwined to create a base, followed by knotting small wool knots on the warp with the pile. A carpet with thousands of knots can withstand the test of time.

Even with partial damage, the life span of the carpet as a whole remains unaffected. This technique also gives rise to crisp patterns on both sides, adding to its enduring beauty.

A stunning piece of handmade wool carpet requires several months of arduous labor by skilled weavers. Even today, this ancient time-consuming, carpet-weaving technique continues to be passed down from generation to generation in Hotan.

Culture and industry

At Nakikwan Carpets, a handmade carpet company in Hotan, 63-year-old designer Iham Jumat, first sketches the patterns on paper with a pencil.

Different areas are marked with numbers representing specific colors.

These drawings are hung on the loom and weavers follow them to create the carpet. The size and density of a carpet determine the production time. A higher density, with more knots per square meter, requires more time.

Growing up in Hotan, Iham loved drawing from a young age.

Many of his neighbors ran home-based carpet



Mawlan Muhtar, 32, introduces a customer to the handmade products of Nakikwan Carpets in Hotan prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. TSERING DONDURP / FOR CHINA DAILY



Top: Pei Ming, 66, an artist in Urumqi, has been researching the history of Xinjiang carpets. Center and above: Carpet weaving is time-consuming, and sometimes it requires the collaboration of several craftspeople. PHOTOS BY XING WEN / CHINA DAILY AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Every year, he takes Hotan handmade carpet products to export across the country to seek new sales channels and exchange ideas with peers on new designs.

For example, to echo this year's zodiac sign — the dragon — the company collaborated with a designer from Tianjin in North China to create a carpet featuring the mystical creature as the main image.

Despite his factory having a steady stream of orders, including from customers in countries like Japan, the United States, Portugal, Spain and Australia, he remains concerned about the shortage of backup designers.

Cultivating young designers

Iham is the only experienced and stable designer in the company. As he ages, he has started working remotely from home.

Pei is also concerned that the lack of young designers is a challenge for the sustainable development of the handmade carpet industry.

He says traditional carpet patterns were passed down orally by craftspeople. In the 1970s, these patterns were summarized and standardized.

In the 1980s, Pei studied traditional carpet patterns systematically for three years in Hotan.

"My teacher told me to be careful with every stroke. In those years, I spent my mornings drawing patterns and afternoons interning in the workshop learning about every aspect of carpet weaving," he recalls.

"This craft requires years of practice to gain experience."

Nowadays, carpet designer training sessions are regularly held but are just 10-day crash courses.

"Each training period is short and most participants come from private companies and might leave before the next session starts, making it hard to cultivate young designers effectively," Pei points out.

For instance, carpets shrink after their first wash. Designers must estimate the shrinkage rate based on the size of each carpet. The higher the carpet density, the lower the shrinkage rate. These require a designer to invest a significant amount of time and effort to learn and master.

Pei has been a guest professor at institutions, such as Xinjiang Arts University, where he teaches students about the aesthetics behind Xinjiang handmade carpets, hoping to ignite the younger generation's interest in this ancient craft.

Qadirin Muhabbat, 34, chairman of Hotan's handmade carpet industry association, is working to find new opportunities for handmade carpets.

The son of an established designer, Qadirin remembers waking up every day to see his father up and drawing patterns. His parents run a carpet factory.

He graduated from Jimei University in Xiamen, Fujian province, in 2016 and returned home, torn about whether to take over the family business.

Later, he had the chance to study carpet design at Xinjiang Arts University for three months.

"I learned about the origins and meanings of patterns commonly seen on Hotan carpets. People often express their wishes through these patterns," he says. For example, wave patterns reflect local people's desire for water — Hotan is located on the edge of the Taklimakan Desert.

"I suddenly felt that carpet had a life of its own," he says. This realization led him to join the industry.

Qadirin now runs social media accounts on Douyin and Xiaohongshu, using beautiful images and explanatory videos to raise awareness about Hotan's handmade carpet.

He highlights the advantages of handmade carpets and teaches viewers how to distinguish between machine-made and handwoven pieces.

"I hope that when people think of Hotan, they not only think of the renowned Hotan jade but also of its carpets," he says.

Contact the writers at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn



A project initiated by Gaotai Gallery in Urumqi invites young artists to create works inspired by Hotan handmade carpets. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Carpets are reminder of home's rich tapestry

By XING WEN in Hotan, Xinjiang

In 2010, Ma Hailun, then an 18-year-old middle-school student, left Urumqi in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region to study in New York City.

Among her belongings was a handmade wool carpet measuring 1.2 meters in length and 80 centimeters in width, an item that reminded her of home, sweet home.

The piece was made from high-quality, durable wool with intricate traditional patterns in a rich array of colors centered on shades of red. It was from her bedroom in Urumqi.

Xinjiang is one of the world's centers of carpet weaving, with archaeological findings tracing the art in the region back over 2,000 years.

"I feel that the carpet is an extension of Xinjiang," Ma says.

Following completion of her postgraduate studies in fashion photography at the School of Visual Arts, she returned to China and settled in Shanghai in 2018, where the red carpet still has a place in her studio.

Now as a photographer, who frequently focuses her lens on her hometown and its people, handmade carpets have become a recurring element in her work.

"Carpets give me a sense of being grounded. They bear the weight of life, much like a soft patch of land," she says.

"Growing up in Xinjiang, carpets are an integral part of my life, as familiar to me as any other piece of furniture."

The daughter of parents who worked at a television station, Ma's childhood was spent in a large courtyard that housed the station's employees. On hot, dry summer afternoons, she would sit with her family and neighbors on a carpet, eating watermelon, watching TV, and chatting.

If a family in the courtyard needed to clean their carpet, all the children would come together to help.

"We would use small knives to scrape the dust from it. The carpet holds many such memories for me about home and childhood," she says.

This is why, when she learned in 2021 that the Urumqi-based Gaotai Gallery was starting a project to introduce art to the carpet workshops in Hotan prefecture in Xinjiang to inspire new product development, she joined up without hesitation.



Top: Ma Hailun and her boyfriend pose for a photo titled *Intimate Relationship*, in which a carpet becomes a symbolic element. Above: A carpet designed by Joey Xia, a Shanghai-based artist.

The gallery is seeking to introduce new ideas to traditional crafts, and participating artists are expected to breathe fresh life into the ancient craft through their designs, while also spreading word about the history and skill behind Hotan's handmade carpets.

"Through the innovative designs of the artists, our goal is to transform the public perception of Hotan carpets from being heavy and outdated, to being modern, finely crafted pieces that seamlessly combine strength and softness, with skill and creativity," says Ma Xing, curator of the gallery.

The artists involved in the first round made sketches, which were then brought to life on carpets by weavers in Hotan. The collaborations resulted in the creation of five designs that were later exhibited and made available for sale in limited quantities.

Ma Hailun named her design *A Room of One's Own* after British author Virginia Woolf's classic feminist novel.

She approached the carpet from the perspective of a photographer, retaining the traditional borders to frame it like a viewfinder. The focal point is on a young woman at ease in her own bedroom.

For her, the carpet symbolizes intimacy. Its soft, warm texture also feels feminine.

She views this as an innovation, given that traditional carpet patterns usually depict nature, landscapes and other macroscopic elements. She also made a deliberate choice to use baby pink and baby blue wools instead of the dark blue and red shades typical of Xinjiang carpets, with the intention of deviating from the traditional color scheme.

The weavers who brought her design to life in Hotan were all women.

"I really appreciate this female narrative. The carpet is interwoven with the stories of women from beginning to end," Ma Hailun says.

After this initial collaboration, she discovered that different weavers working from the same blueprint would produce finished carpets with subtle differences.

She plans to turn *A Room of One's Own* into a series by providing the women with uncolored sketches, and allowing them to interpret the colors for themselves and produce distinct carpets.

She will present them as collaborative pieces bearing both her name and those of the female artisans with whom she collaborates.

Joey Xia, a Shanghai-based artist, has been using a variety of materials to create artistic installations that explore themes like the reshaping of power structures, the construction of identity, and reflections on cultural diversity within the context of globalization.

A graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Xia maintains a sensitivity to different materials. "I value the cultural information contained in the materials themselves," he says.

In 2022, when the aforementioned carpets were being sold at a pop-up booth at Tank Shanghai gallery, Xia stopped by and expressed his interest in Hotan carpets and later, applied to participate in the project's second phase.

"It was my first time seeing the process of hand-weaving carpets. I was shocked by how much time a person would spend on repetitive actions. I believe that this dedication infuses the weaver's energy into the making, giving the carpets special vitality," Xia says.

His design is based on his childhood image of a flying carpet, with a trident-shaped symbol representing the carpet's "engine" and the words "Time and space are imagination" written in Uygur.

He has been considering ways of incorporating carpets into his installations and exhibitions.

"As household items for nomadic people, I suppose that the carpet conveys a sense of urgency to go further in a globalized context," Xia adds.

Online Watch the video by scanning the code.

LIFE



From left: The elderly care service center in Shangxi town, Yiwu city, Zhejiang province, pairs up with 102 children in difficult situations (for example, orphans) to provide companionship and support. On weekends, these children participate in interest group activities together with the elderly; the elderly at the care center appreciate their artwork; social workers hold a drawing class for the center's residents.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A home where love and care are paramount

Special facilities for senior citizens can enrich the precious sunset years, **Yang Yang** reports.

Last month, two days before the Double Ninth Festival, a traditional Chinese occasion honoring senior citizens on the ninth day of the ninth month in the lunar calendar, an exhibition of caricature works themed on the life of the elderly people was launched at an elderly care service center of Shangxi town, Yiwu city of Zhejiang province.

Most of the works come from a national competition organized by the local government. From Aug 10 to Sept 15, the competition received more than 870 caricature works submitted by contestants, young and old, from around the country.

In various forms, including caricature, comic strip, paper-cutting and painted sculpture, these works feature the interesting moments in elderly people's lives in a care center or the vision of smart care in a humorous fashion.

The exhibition presents the 10 top works and 40 outstanding ones from all the submitted works, in addition to 38 others.

"This exhibition is not only a visual feast, but a profound conversation, which aims to call for people's support and participation in the care of the elderly, promote the development of the silver economy and let the senior citizens enjoy a happy life," writes Xu Jiazeng, president of the Zhejiang Elderly Service Industry Association, in a preface for the event.

At the exhibition, a painted sculpture titled *Dragon Dance, Drum Rhythms, and the Red Sunset* attracted a lot of attention. Made of ultralight clay, the work vividly captures the moment when elderly people in splendid attire perform a dragon dance and play drums.

"In communities, such a happy scene is often seen. I myself would join them, so I want to use this work to show the healthy life and spirited state of the senior citizens," says the submitter Zhu Guohong, a teacher at Yiwu Urban Vocational School, who spent two weeks completing the work together with her students. The work won third prize.

A cartoon work titled *A Full-Time Nanny Watcher* depicts a scene where a gray-haired grandmother is monitoring a nanny who is feeding her grandson. The author Zhao Xuefeng, in his 70s, explained his cartoon, saying that busy with work, young parents hire a nanny to take care of their kid. To avoid burdening their own parents, they install surveillance cameras at home to monitor the nanny. Consequently, the grandparents end up closely watching the surveillance footage to supervise the nanny, he said.

The first prize went to *Rehearsal*, a cartoon by Shen Miaoliang, also in his 70s. It represents a happy

moment at an old people's home; two performers are in the middle of a comedy skit when something goes wrong. One of them scratches his head and says, "I forgot the next line." This results in the elderly people in the audience bursting into laughter.

Other winning titles show elderly people's ageless love for beauty, differences in thoughts between the elderly and the young, the hobbies of aged people, the difficult moments in old people's home and so on.

Apart from the entries, the exhibition also presented some other works created by the residents at the elderly care center of Shangxi town.

A picture titled *Sunflower and Hairly Crab* was created by 86-year-old Gong Jincui, who has been living in the care center for three years due to hemiplegic paralysis and loves drawing. Another work called *My Home* was created by 88-year-old Chen Jinju, who has been living here for five years and taken the care center as her home.

"Typically, our center schedules several art classes each week led by dedicated social workers and organizes many interactive activities. Each month, the drawing class has a different theme to encourage the elderly to create their own art. For us, the focus is not on the beauty of the art, but on allowing the elderly to express their emotions. Each month, we select some of the artworks for a small exhibition," says Chen Zhiya, head of the care center.

Chen Zhiya, 35, graduated from Peking University with a doctor's degree in neuroscience in 2023. At the invitation of the government of her hometown Yiwu, she opened the old people's home in the city in early 2020 as the population in Yiwu was aging quickly in recent years with more than 21 percent of the residents aged 60 and above.

At first, Chen Zhiya was hesitant about running an old people's home because she had misgivings about the project.

"I'm an optimistic, extroverted and sensitive person. I didn't want to work in an unhappy place," she says. However, since 2016, after the invitation, she had visited old people's homes in Japan, the United States and Australia over three years.

The visits completely changed her idea about homes for the elderly and she saw they can be clean and warm and the residents have a sense of belonging.

In old people's homes in Japan, she saw light in the eyes and smiles on the faces of the residents, who were willing to communicate with her.

"When I had meetings with my teams, I always said there's only one goal that we are aiming at in our work, that is, how to make the elderly's eyes sparkle," she says.



Top: Chen Zhiya, head of the center, gives a cognition training class to residents. Above: Prize-winning caricature works: (from left) *Manicure*, by Li Linglong from Hubei province, second prize; *A Retiree's Normal State of Life*, by Yang Liangyi from Shandong province, third prize; and *Rehearsal*, by Shen Miaoliang, Zhejiang province, first prize.

Now Chen Zhiya's home has about 240 people, whose average age is 87 and 180 suffer from severe dementia.

"So currently, what we do is to let dementia patients live a quality life through good care," she says.

Chen Zhiya's first experience of dementia happened when she was a sophomore student at university. One day during that Spring Festival, her grandmother suddenly left home in an irritated state, and died in an accident. It was not until one year later that she learned that her grandmother had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for years.

"Now with this old people's home, I want to do something for the elderly people who have dementia, to make up for any previous shortcomings," she says.

In the first two years after the home opened, Chen received a lot of Alzheimer patients who had not been properly looked after.

"Some people were covered with

scratches and bruises, and were in a terrible state. Their families did not know what to do," she says.

Besides memory loss, late-stage Alzheimer patients display other symptoms such as leaving home unexpectedly and delusions of persecution and theft, causing deep distress.

What is worse, some patients have no idea what to do with feces, so that they may smear it on the walls or put them on other people's beds.

"Their families have no idea why they behave like that and even think they deliberately make things difficult, so that they may just lock the patients in a small room. After several months, when they sent the patients to our home, they were in a terrible state," she says.

At the home, Chen Zhiya's team tries to help them with professional knowledge, care and patience.

"For example, if an old lady suddenly claims that she lost her necklace, what we need to do is to help her recollect memories about the

'missing necklace'. Then we become a team so that she trusts you and is not so anxious. After looking for a while, her attention could be distracted so that she would forget about the necklace," she says.

To better help dementia patients, the home tries to create different spaces for them to walk around. However, they often cannot find way back to their rooms.

"So we use different colors and patterns to decorate their doors. Some patients may remember that there is a kid or two pandas on their doors, and patients with more serious cognition problems may vaguely remember the colors, orange or blue," she says.

Besides, the care center invited some painters to make cartoons or paint some old scenes on the corridors — old houses, rice fields, and one of the scenic spots, Taohuawu, in Shangxi, which is covered with peach blossoms in spring.

Chen Zhiya found these paintings are really helpful for patients to find

their way back to their rooms and cheer up.

Among the classes organized by the old people's home — knitting, playing cards, sports, singing and so on — Chen Zhiya observed that the residents are best at drawing. Every month, in the drawings of each person, they will choose one, which will be exhibited at the care center.

Having also drawn a lot of pictures about the stories in the home herself since 2020, she thought about using caricature to let people learn more about old people and their lives.

In the series *The Stories about Time and Me*, Chen Zhiya records many touching moments in the care home. One is about a couple, both over 85.

The man was severely disabled, and his wife suffered from severe dementia. At home, the wife usually looked after the man. As her dementia worsened, both were sent to the care center, living together at first.

The wife would treat the old man like a child, "disciplining" him. If she saw that he was reluctant to eat, she would swiftly raise a shoe and hit him. Because living together posed a risk of harm, they had to live separately. However, the man felt very uneasy, and the wife would look for him everywhere when she couldn't see him, running back and forth.

The first picture by Chen Zhiya depicts a scene on Feb 21, 2020, when both were relatively stable and happily holding hands.

However, about half a year later, the wife suddenly suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and became unresponsive to any external stimuli. Despite the pandemic at that time, Chen Zhiya found a way to arrange a meeting between them. On the way to the wife's CT scan, the caregiver brought the husband to her side, who slowly reached out and gently held her hand. A miraculous moment occurred: sunlight streamed through the window, shining on them, and at that instant, the wife turned her head to look at her husband and tears rolled down her cheeks. This was their last meeting.

A little over two months later, they passed away within 24 hours in different places.

This scene is deeply etched in Chen Zhiya's mind. She drew a picture from the photo she had taken and added a heartfelt caption: "I strive to keep my eyes open, just to see you once more when we hold hands."

"This picture touches many people. That's why we organize such a competition with a theme about elderly care. I want to let people know that elderly care is not only about pain, chaos, sadness or lifelessness," she says.

Contact the writer at yangyangs@chinadaily.com.cn

Trainee Colombian technicians learn lessons from Xi'an Metro

XI'AN — To mark the end of his studies in China, Colombian metro technician Dayron Camilo Bemudez Mendoza wrote this to share at the commencement ceremony for new undergraduates:

"The day of returning to Bogota is getting closer, which motivates me even more to end this in the best way possible. I will return with many gains, new knowledge, new friends and valuable experiences. I cannot wait to contribute to the project in our city."

Bemudez Mendoza was referring to the construction of Bogota's Line 1 metro project. He and nine peers moved to Xi'an in Shaanxi province in

September 2023 for a yearlong metro operation training program provided by the Xi'an Metro and Xi'an Railway Vocational and Technical Institute.

The project is being undertaken by Chinese consortium APCA Transmetro, led by Xi'an Metro and the China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd, which won the bid for the project in 2019, marking a major achievement in China-Colombia cooperation.

On Nov 12, the inaugural group of 10 trainees proudly accepted their certifications at the graduation ceremony, all eager to head back to Bogota and spearhead operations of the city's new metro system. Concurrently, the event marked the com-

ment of training for the second group of 40 trainees, who had arrived just a few days earlier and are now poised to embark on their educational journey in China.

Bemudez Mendoza's training program combined theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience tailored to the needs of Bogota's metro. The second cohort will benefit from an optimized training session, involving industry experts, designers and academics, an innovative approach in China that involves companies, academia and experts.

"The courses in Xi'an, especially those on automated lines, gave me a clear understanding of how such a

complex system works. ... This is a year I will never forget," says Laura Daniela Avellaneda Chaparro, a trainee who was part of the first cohort.

Another graduate, Jefferson Paolo Martinez Arcila, proudly showed his Xi'an Metro uniform and said: "Bogota doesn't have a metro system, so learning and training there was not enough. In Xi'an, I worked on actual metro systems, which deepened my understanding of advanced metro technology. I am really excited that Bogota Metro will adopt the same cutting-edge technology as Xi'an."

Running for 23.96 kilometers, Line 1 is set to revolutionize the capital

city's transportation by connecting key areas, including the downtown, southern and northern districts. Expected to open in 2028, the project will make the long-awaited metro dream a reality for Bogota's citizens.

"Xi'an metro left a deep impression on us. It's bright, modern and orderly. It gave us a glimpse of Bogota Metro's future," says Angel Esteban Diaz Sarmiento, one of the graduates.

"Currently, Bogota's commuters mainly use buses and bus rapid transit. It takes over two hours to get from the south to the north," Martinez Arcila says, adding that, "with the metro, that time will be cut to just one hour."

During the ceremony, Colombian Ambassador to China Sergio Cabrera Cardenas spoke of the significance of the bilateral partnership. "Colombia and China recognize the critical role of transportation in socioeconomic development and bilateral trade.

"Colombia will promote and welcome investment and knowledge from China. I hope that programs like this, in different sectors, will continue to be an example for the development, improvement and operation of our infrastructure," he says.

XINHUA

COMMENT

Editorials

Visit highlights shared vision of a prosperous and peaceful future and joint efforts to realize it

In their meeting on the sidelines of the 31st Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Lima, Peru, on Nov 15, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Lawrence Wong, who succeeded Lee Hsien Loong as the Singaporean prime minister in May, affirmed the close and multifaceted relationship between China and Singapore, which was upgraded to an all-round high-quality future-oriented partnership in 2023.

Highlighting the two sides' "excellent" relations, Lee, who is now senior minister in the new government after stepping down as prime minister, began a six-day visit to China on Sunday which is widely expected to further bolster their friendly and cooperative bilateral ties.

Under the careful nurturing of successive leaders of both countries, China and Singapore have remained friendly neighbors and important cooperative partners over the years, with their cooperation encompassing an ever-widening range of areas.

As an old friend of China, Lee is in a good position to ensure that the rosy picture in China-Singapore ties, opened up by his late father and also Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew, will continue to thrive and bring more benefits to the two countries and the two peoples.

Lee's first stop was Suzhou in East China's Jiangsu province, where he participated in commemorative activities for the 30th anniversary of the China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park. He will then head to Beijing before concluding his visit in Shanghai later this week.

The industrial park in Suzhou is viewed as the gem among gems of the government-to-government cooperation projects between China and Singapore, alongside the China-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City, the China-Singapore (Chongqing) Demonstration Initiative on Strategic Connectivity, and the China-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City.

Founded in 1994, the industrial park has become an important vehicle to anchor bilateral cooperation and a hub of innovation and openness. And its production value has increased to 368.6 billion yuan (\$50.87 billion) in 2023 from 1.13 billion yuan in 1994, with the number of Chinese and overseas companies in the park reaching 188,717 today, compared with 150 when it was established 30 years ago.

With the exemplary effect of the Suzhou park, China-Singapore trade and investments have flourished: Since 2013, China has remained Singapore's largest trading partner, largest export market and largest source of imports while Singapore has become China's largest source of newly increased foreign investments for 11 consecutive years.

Such fruitful results would not have been achieved if China and Singapore did not treat each other as trustworthy partners and stay true and committed to continually injecting vitality into their reciprocal cooperation.

It is heartening to see that while some Western countries have been hyping up and pushing for "decoupling" from China in the economic arena, Singaporean companies have increased their investments in China in recent years, demonstrating their strong belief in the health and vitality of the Chinese economy and cooperative bilateral relations.

It is also noteworthy that China and Singapore have agreed to promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and continue to expand and strengthen the building of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor. They have also displayed a high level of mutual trust through their military cooperation.

Stable and growing China-Singapore relations contribute to China's overall diplomacy with Southeast Asian countries, and peace and development in the region at large. Singapore's independent foreign diplomacy and inclusive culture have made it an ideal bridge between the East and the West.

It is anticipated that the Singaporean senior minister's ongoing visit to China represents a good opportunity for the two partners to build upon their achievements in promoting connectivity and mutually beneficial cooperation and to further strengthen the China-Singapore all-round high-quality future-oriented partnership.

Lee, who is visiting the country at the invitation of the Chinese side, has a good understanding of China's modernization path and a good rapport with China's leaders. With the change of administration in the United States giving rise to concerns about increased volatility in the region, it is also widely hoped that he will be able to leverage his experience and insights to correct any misperceptions and act as a steady influence.

Secessionist antics should not be condoned

Multiple senior members of the ruling Lai Ching-te authorities of Taiwan island have engaged in a series of overseas "visits" recently, indicating that the secessionist-minded Democratic Progressive Party authorities are trying to take advantage of the power transition in Washington to make a splash in the world for their push for "Taiwan independence".

The DPP authorities' "foreign affairs chief" Lin Chia-lung paid a weeklong visit to Brussels to meet European Union lawmakers and to offer Taiwan's drone tech to Lithuania; former Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen paid a trip to Canada to accept a so-called democracy leadership award; and Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te is paying ongoing "visits" to three Pacific "diplomatic allies" — during which he is reportedly to have a "technical stop" in or "transit through" the United States, where talks will be the real purpose of his detour.

The three "visits" are characteristic of the Lai authorities in their pursuit of "Taiwan independence" — exploit the island's technology and economy to advantage for their narrow political ends, mount the moral high ground of "democracy" to make the island part of the West's "value alliance", and always curry their foreign patrons' support.

But these seemingly carefully planned moves are just a veneer of "nonofficial contacts" to try and muffle Beijing's words and blind the world to their "provocative" and "pro-independence" nature, so as to further strengthen the island's "presence" on the world stage as not only an economic powerhouse and a tech pioneer, but more importantly a "democracy" in its own right.

These are indispensable, as Lai's "secessionist" framework speeches on May 20 and Oct 10 indicate, to forging the "legitimacy" of the island's "noble independent" status from the Chinese mainland.

Leaving no room for any possible misinterpretation of those colluding parties' overtly and covertly tangoing with the Lai authorities in these "pro-independence" pantomimes, the Chinese government said it opposes any form of official interaction between Taiwan and countries having diplomatic ties with Beijing. It has called on the relevant parties to fully recognize the extreme importance and high sensitivity of the Taiwan question, strictly abide by the one-China principle, stop any form of official interaction with the Taiwan authorities, and stop sending wrong signals to "Taiwan separatist forces".

Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. The Chinese government has always firmly opposed any form of official exchanges between countries with diplomatic ties with Beijing and the Taiwan region, including the signing of any agreement with sovereignty implications or of an official nature that de facto creates a "one China, one Taiwan" falsehood violating the one-China principle.

The one-China principle is the basic norm of international relations and the general consensus of the international community. The Lai authorities' political manipulation and provocations through the aforementioned tricks will never succeed, nor can they alter the firm pattern of the international community's adherence to the one-China principle. They cannot stop the historical trend that China will eventually reunify.

The separatist acts of the "Taiwan independence" elements are incompatible with peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. If those external forces giving their nod and a wink to the antics of the Lai authorities really want to maintain peace across the Taiwan Strait as they claim, they should fully recognize the "Taiwan independence" nature of the DPP authorities led by Lai, handle the Taiwan question with great caution and due prudence, and support China's peaceful reunification.

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Song Chen



Opinion Line

Visa-free policy highlights China's sincerity to improve ties with Japan

China's recent extending of its visa-free policy to the citizens of nine countries, including Japan, will not only increase personnel exchanges between China and these countries, but also become an important symbol of its expanded opening-up.

In addition to adding the nine countries to its visa-exemption list, effective from Nov 30 to the end of 2025, China has decided to further optimize the visa-free policy, including exchanges and visit purposes into the visa-free entry scope, and extending the period of visa-free stays from 15 to 30 days.

Since the end of last year when China experimented with unilateral visa-free policies for multiple countries in Europe and Southeast Asia, Japan kept communication lines open with China, requesting the resumption of the visa-free policy it had enjoyed to facilitate its business and personnel exchanges with China. The new measure will add new incentives to economic and trade ties between the two countries. Half an hour after China announced the poli-

cy, searches for Chinese destinations on online travel agency Ctrip.com's overseas platforms surged, with a 112 percent increase from Japan.

The measure will also help consolidate the foundation of bilateral relations, which has been rocked by various factors from the Japanese side. "The most important foundation of Japan-China relations is exchanges between the two peoples," Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said recently.

Increasing people-to-people exchanges will help eliminate mutual misperceptions, enhance mutual understanding and improve economic and trade relations between the two countries.

China and Japan have been interdependent in economic and trade spheres, and restarting the visa-free policy could rekindle economic and trade enthusiasm, which had lost steam since the pandemic, facilitate Japanese exports to and investment in China, and help Japanese companies seize new business opportuni-

ties brought by China's renewed economic development momentum.

For a long time, Japan's policy toward China has been largely restrained by the baton of the United States, and on many China-related issues it just toes the US line, adopting an unfriendly stance toward China. Japan should wake up to the reality that long-term friendly China-Japan relations cannot be built on China's unilateral goodwill, sincerity and efforts, and that it cannot unilaterally enjoy the "economic dividends" from China while continuing to take actions that undermine bilateral friendship in other aspects.

The Chinese government has always attached great importance to facilitating personnel exchanges between China and foreign countries. The Japanese side is expected to work with China to jointly enhance the level of facilitation of personnel exchanges between the two countries by reciprocating China's friendly gesture.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

Regulating algorithms not against platform economy

The Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission and three other central departments have, through a joint notice issued on Sunday, emphasized the importance of addressing the improper use of algorithms that infringe upon users' legitimate rights and interests, and urged companies to conduct in-depth self-assessments to improve the algorithms.

It is no secret that some express delivery companies have developed apps introducing provisions for customers to pay for a faster delivery, but in their quest to hasten deliveries and increase their business volume by beating their rivals they are forcing delivery personnel to overspeed, often jumping red lights and increasing the risks of accidents, thus compromising public safety.

Similarly, some e-commerce platforms analyze consumers' purchasing history and sell the same products at higher prices the next time they order it, which constitutes a violation of market economy rules.

A reasonable balance that factors in public interest and the security of society as a whole, instead of just the responsible companies, must be found, which in turn requires the designation of a healthier and more rational algorithm model. Further, regulating algorithms is also an internal requirement for breaking free from certain path dependencies and building new development models.

Furthermore, the notice calls for the openness and transparency of algorithms, which include detailed public disclosure of time estimations, cost calculations, route planning and other algorithm rules of express delivery platforms. This is equally important for the long-term development of the platform economy.

On the one hand, openness and transparency of algorithms prevent "black box" operations, in which the internal mechanism is usually hidden from the user; on the other hand, it helps the public view algorithms of such platform companies,

thus enhancing public understanding of them.

It is important that the new directives are not misinterpreted as regulation against the development of the platform economy. A recent executive meeting of the State Council, China's Cabinet, clearly stated that developing the platform economy is crucial for expanding domestic demand, stabilizing employment, benefiting people's livelihoods, empowering the real economy and developing new quality productive forces. Further guidance on the healthy development of the platform economy is thus required.

All policy signals indicate that advancing the resolution of typical issues with online platform algorithms is ultimately aimed at promoting the healthy and long-term development of the platform economy, thereby better serving the well-being of the people with better regulated algorithm.

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

Impending chip moves expose US hypocrisy again

The Joe Biden administration is set to unveil new export restrictions on China as soon as this week, the US Chamber of Commerce told members in a Thursday email.

The new regulations could add up to 200 Chinese chip companies to a trade restriction list that bars most US suppliers from shipping goods to the targeted companies, the email from the Washington-based lobbying group said, according to a Reuters report.

The US Commerce Department, which oversees US export policy, plans to publish the new regulations "prior to the Thanksgiving break", on Thursday, according to the email.

Another set of rules curbing shipments of high-bandwidth memory chips to China is expected to be unveiled next month as part of a broader artificial intelligence package, the email continues.

These are typical nonmarket moves that, if taken, show the Biden administration is plowing ahead with plans to further crack down on China's access to semiconductors even during its waning days in office, which contradict the administration's repeated vows that it does not seek to contain China's development, and hopes to make its competition with China in relevant fields "fair".

The semiconductor sector is highly globalized after decades of growth, and this is the result of the law of the market and the choice of enterprises. As the world's largest semiconductor market, China is willing to work with all sides to boost mutually beneficial cooperation and promote the security and stability of the global semiconductor industry and supply chains.

The practices of the Biden administration, reportedly under the

excuse of protecting "national security", will disturb the global industry and supply chains, cut off the global semiconductor market, and essentially deny emerging markets and developing countries the right to a better life for their people.

These moves represent a serious breach of international economic and trade rules, a gross interference in free trade, and the typical economic bullying of the United States.

In so doing, the US will seriously damage the interests of all parties and hinder global scientific and technological exchanges and economic and trade cooperation. Such selfish moves will not only poison the atmosphere for international cooperation, and fuel division and confrontation, but also inevitably backfire on the US itself.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Benjamin Hung

Ignite trade to spark next wave of global growth

To acknowledge that global trade is threatened by the rise of protectionism and geopolitical fragmentation is neither provocative nor fashionable. But that does not lessen the need to address these challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic, escalating geopolitical tensions and growing concerns over security have accelerated deeper trench lines pointing toward regionalization and balkanization, and countering decades of globalization. Rising trade frictions have resulted in more than 3,000 new restrictions being introduced on trade in 2023, up three times since 2019. Many restrictions include rules for export controls, tariffs and limitations on cross-border data flows. The most recent US election outcome, if anything, may further exacerbate what is already a very fractious state of global trade.

As a result, we have started to witness a profound re-wiring of supply chain and trade routes. The Global South increasingly acts as the intermediary between the east and the west. South-South trade has experienced significant growth — up more than 50 percent since the pandemic — and this process of fragmentation is only just beginning.

On the positive side, we are seeing constructive efforts to improve supply chain resilience, with increasing focus on reducing carbon footprints. However, fragmentation is inflationary. Against the backdrop of subdued global growth, costs are rising because of less efficient flows and lower levels of productivity. Shipping costs have also surged by 300 percent as container ships take longer routes to avoid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

These inefficiencies exact societal costs beyond price increases and shipping delays. The global trade finance gap — the shortfall between available financing and its actual funding needs — increased almost 50 percent to \$2.5 trillion between 2020 and 2022. Unfortunately, most of this gap is shouldered by those least able to bear: micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), with many of them coming from developing markets. Our research shows a more inclusive trade finance ecosystem can help lift exports across emerging markets by about 8 percent, boosting growth and employment.

How do we get there? The B20 Trade & Investment Task Force, on which I serve as a co-chair, has recommended several solutions that could make a real difference.

A key to extending trade finance to MSMEs is greater digitalization. The current heavily paper-based system means small businesses are often disconnected from top-tier suppliers as well as trade finance providers, and banks are left struggling with cumbersome on-boarding processes for the vast numbers of small businesses.

Digitalization and making basic

documents accessible would generate new, down-tier supply opportunities for MSMEs.



Streamlining “know your customer” documents could improve transparency of overall trade finance needs, while tokenization can increase finance deeper into supply chains with greater visibility and at much reduced financing costs.

Separately, establishing global common standards can facilitate the use of these digital documents and data across borders, yet most countries are yet to adopt internationally aligned legislation providing a legal basis for digital trade documentation. Doing so would create new channels for trade to flow, and standardization permits

seamless use across jurisdictions.

Lastly, we must implement universally aligned rules that allow safe storage. Digital solutions will not meet their full potential if the data they create are restricted from international use. Such restrictions at best increase the costs of international commerce, and at worst prevent direct trade flows, reduce innovation and increase security risks. These are ultimately passed on in the form of increased consumer costs.

Over the past half century, trade has been a key driver in powering global economic growth, improving living standards and reducing household consumption costs. This unparalleled era of prosperity and growth has been underpinned by a strong system of multilateral cooperation. But the rise in protectionist forces is now threatening this very commitment to open and

inclusive trade, with the bedrock of the rules-based global trade regime increasingly being eroded.

But there is time for us to arrest this situation. The above recommendations, among others, serve as a road map for G20 member states to foster a more frictionless trade environment. The world must adopt more sensible policymaking ways, recognize the value of a global trade system and re-establish the basis for multilateralism.

The clock is ticking. To ignite world trade and spark the next wave of global growth, we can and must rewrite this story now.

The author is president, International, at Standard Chartered Bank, and a co-chair of B20's Trade & Investment Task Force. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Wang Yisheng and Xie Yang

Optimizing climate health adaptation policies

At the just-concluded UN Climate Change Conference, or COP29, in Baku, Azerbaijan, health amid climate change was a prominent subject of discussion. Climate change does pose a serious threat to the health and well-being of people around the globe, because it is responsible for the increasing extreme weather events such as extreme heat, floods and forest fires.

According to a World Health Organization report, climate change is impacting human health in a myriad of ways, causing food-, water- and vector-borne diseases, including fatal health conditions, as well as increasing mental health issues and disrupting food production and supply.

A 2022 review published in Nature Climate Change showed that of the 375 infectious diseases under study, 218 (58 percent) had been aggravated by climate change. An increasing number of studies have also examined the economic impacts of climate change on human health. For example, Xie Yang, a professor at Beihang University, found that from 1960 to 2020, the monetary value of deaths caused by heat waves in China added up to about 1.28 trillion yuan (\$176.66 billion), while the economic losses caused by cold waves were as high as 1.51 trillion yuan.

Thankfully, global efforts are being made to combat climate change and protect people from its impact. The 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) host-

ed the climate change conference's first-ever Health Day in Dubai on Dec 3, 2023, with more than 40 million health professionals joining the WHO's call for prioritizing people's health amid worsening climate change.

This led to a wide variety of officials, professionals and other entities including ministers, climate and health experts, civil society organizations, youth representatives and businesses coming together to make the climate-health agenda mainstream.

In order to meet the challenges created by climate change, especially to safeguard people's health by, among other things, preventing health risks, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and other departments jointly issued the “National Action Plan for Health Adaptation to Climate Change (2024-30)” in accordance with the requirements of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2035. The plan will not only help combat climate change but also prompt people to adapt to climate change, promoting the construction of a healthy and beautiful China.

But if the policies of disease control, health, environment, water conservancy meteorology and other departments are not effectively coordinated and integrated, the plan cannot achieve its desired goals. Hence, we must lay equal emphasis on

climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. To achieve this, the authorities should establish a multi-departmental climate change and health work collaboration mechanism. By establishing a cross-departmental working mechanism, the authorities can facilitate smooth information sharing and thus make decision-making easier.

There is also a need to establish an early warning mechanism. By issuing early warnings for extreme weather events such as heat waves and cold waves, floods and heavy downpours, the authorities can help the public, medical workers and medical institutions better prepare for climate emergencies.

Like many other countries, China, too, should publish assessment reports every year. For example, the “Health Effects of Climate Change in the UK — State of the Evidence 2023” issued by the British government, assesses the threats climate change poses to public health, and suggests how to fill the gaps and what steps need to be taken to fight climate change. The United States, on its part, has set up a “Heat and Health Index”, which matches heat-related diseases by postal code to build a national database that can help state officials identify areas most likely to experience negative health impacts due to extreme heat, and take measures in advance to strengthen resilience.

Besides, to ensure everyone is equally equipped to adapt to climate change, it's necessary to educate the public about

how to prevent climate risks and take precautions against weather-related events. Promoting low-carbon and green living concepts among the people, too, is necessary to combat climate change.

Since China is a vast country, with different climate zones and stages of urbanization, the impact of climate change on different regions is different. In addition, the impact of climate change on different groups of people is also different. Those who are at a higher risk of exposure to climate-related health threats should be advised to take necessary preventive measures; they should also be provided with high-quality medical services in times of emergency.

Climate change is a common global challenge. No country is immune to its effects. Therefore, we must strengthen the global fight against climate change, increase technical support to countries and regions along the Belt and Road to enable them to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Only by fostering global cooperation, sharing innovative solutions, and building climate resilience together can we ensure a sustainable future for all.

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Kang Bing

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Market monitors, security officials must take steps to end e-bike menace

The management of electric bikes is becoming increasingly challenging for city administrators in the country given the rising number of such two-wheelers. Statistics show there were more than 350 million electric bikes in the country by the end of last year, averaging one e-bike for every four Chinese nationals. Big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have more than 5 million e-bikes each.

While e-bikes have become a lifeline for delivery people and made commuting more convenient for people, they are also mainly responsible for the increasing road accidents. According to an investigation by Guangzhou hospitals, between 60 and 70 percent of serious injuries from traffic accidents involve e-bikes. And in Jiangsu province, accidents involving e-bikes make up 70 percent of the total traffic accidents. Nationally, traffic accidents involving e-bikes have increased by more than 8 percent per year on average over the past decade.

While the increasing number of e-bikes can largely be blamed for the increase in traffic accidents — more than 40 million e-bikes are sold every year — e-bike owners' illegal retrofitting of devices in the two-wheelers and the riders' negligence and violation of traffic rules have also contributed to the rising number of accidents.

Since e-bikes are considered non-motorized vehicles in China, traffic controllers have limited their speed to 25 kilometers per hour. But many people illegally retrofit their e-bikes with devices to increase their speed to 50-60 km per hour. In one case, it was reported that the police caught an offender whose retrofitted e-bike was traveling at more than 100 km an hour. E-bike riders don't need a driver's license and many of them are, in fact, ignorant of traffic rules. And many of those who know the traffic rules turn a blind eye to them, believing they will never be caught red-handed speeding or breaking other traffic rules.

As rule-abiding citizens, we always have to check both the left and right side to make sure no e-bike rider is speeding towards us before crossing the road. We have to make way for e-bike riders traveling, silently, at breakneck speed, many of whom simply ignore the traffic rules. Speeding and traffic rules-breaking e-bike riders are a threat to not only others' lives but also their own lives.

We can avoid being knocked down by e-bikes on the streets but cannot avoid the menace that parked e-bikes create in our neighborhood.

A recent Xinhua investigative report said that last year the National Fire and Rescue Administration received a total of about 21,000 e-bike related fire reports, with 3,243 fires breaking out when e-bike batteries were being recharged. Also, spot-checking found that 22 percent of the e-bike batteries were substandard. The news agency went on to say that 90 percent of the fires broke out when the e-bikes were parked or being recharged in building corridors or inside apartments.

There are posters in the elevators of our building showing the e-bikes exploding, with warnings that e-bikes and their batteries are banned from being carried into the apartment building. The bloody pictures and warnings made me feel as if we were living among bombs which could explode any moment without warning.

The substandard e-bikes are said to be produced and sold by dubious entities. Since millions of such e-bikes are running on the streets of cities, I don't think it is difficult for our market supervisors and security officers to find dubious entities and hold them accountable.

It is good to learn that starting from this month, the related departments have introduced stricter product admission requirements for e-bikes and asked the e-bike industry to further regulate its operations. The traffic control departments in many cities have also pledged to tighten the reins on e-bike-related offenses.

I hope we will be able to cross the streets without the fear of being hit by a speeding e-bike.

GLOBAL VIEWS



Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategic Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.



YIN YIYUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

DAVID GOSSET

A re-imagined partnership

If Trump's re-election makes the EU and China work toward shared goals, it could lead to a stronger, more resilient global system that benefits humanity

The election of Donald Trump as the 47th president of the United States brings significant shifts to a world already grappling with economic, political, and environmental challenges. As one of the world's most powerful political unions, the European Union faces an array of internal and external difficulties, from economic strain within its member states to the challenges of handling major global issues such as security, climate change and international trade.



Under a new Trump administration, the EU will find itself in an increasingly difficult position, impacted not only by tougher US policies but also by potential marginalization on the global stage. Trump's direct interventions in international matters — especially concerning trade and security — could weaken the EU's influence in key areas.

It may become crucial for the EU to re-evaluate its strategies, including strengthening relations with China, to safeguard its autonomy and maintain a voice in shaping global governance.

One of the first ways the Trump administration can affect Europe is through hardened US-EU trade policies. Trump's previous administration was marked by a strong emphasis on "America First" policies, which often translated into protectionist trade measures designed to prioritize US businesses and workers. Upon his return to the White House, we can expect a similar stance, with stricter policies that might limit the EU's access to US markets and potentially impose tariffs on European goods. This could strain economic ties and create additional barriers for the EU, which is already struggling to address economic disparities and maintain cohesiveness among its members.

In addition to trade, Trump's approach to foreign policy, particularly regarding the Ukraine crisis, could further strain EU-US relations. During his first presidency, Trump was often criticized for his ambivalent stance on Russia, and it is possible that his return could bring a shift in the US's stance on the Ukraine crisis. If Trump were to adopt a more hands-on approach without regard for European con-

cerns, it could weaken the EU's position and hinder its ability to respond to security threats in its own neighborhood. Many European leaders would likely see this as a disregard for EU sovereignty and priorities, potentially leading to tensions between the two allies. In the face of these challenges, the EU risks being sidelined in critical international discussions if it does not take steps to protect and assert its interests independently.

In this context, EU-China relations become increasingly significant. While relations between the EU and China are complex and occasionally strained, they also represent an opportunity for the EU to expand its influence and promote a more multilateral approach to global governance. Given the likely reemergence of a unilateralist US foreign policy under Trump, a strengthened partnership with China could provide the EU with a counterbalance, enabling it to pursue policies that align with its own values and objectives rather than those imposed from abroad. Far from opting for a decoupling from China, the EU might benefit from deepening its cooperation with China, particularly in areas of shared concern such as trade, climate change and technological innovation.

One key area where EU-China cooperation could have a global impact is in the defense of multilateralism. Trump's previous administration frequently criticized and withdrew from international agreements and organizations, favoring a more insular approach. Should this happen again, the EU and China would have the opportunity to fill that vacuum, advocating for a rules-based international order and pushing for reform within global institutions such as the United Nations. By doing so, both powers could help sustain a multilateral approach to governance that balances diverse interests.

Climate change is another area where collaboration between the EU and China could prove essential. Both entities have committed to ambitious climate targets, and their cooperation could drive progress even if the US adopts a more isolationist stance. By sharing technology, pooling resources, and coordinating climate policies, the EU and China could set the stage for a global response to climate change that other countries might be more inclined to follow. In this way, their partnership could become a model for effective ci-

mate diplomacy, encouraging other countries, including the US, to eventually return to the table.

Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that EU-China relations come with their own set of challenges. Issues related to intellectual property, market access, and cybersecurity have long complicated their relationship. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. They can be addressed through a pragmatic approach that emphasizes negotiation, transparency, and diplomacy. If the EU can foster a constructive dialogue with China on these issues, it can lay the groundwork for a more stable and mutually beneficial partnership that could endure even as other alliances shift.

The EU's strength, in this regard, will depend on its ability to formulate an autonomous policy toward Beijing — one that is neither overly dependent on the US nor solely reactive to Chinese policy. Developing such an independent stance could position the EU as a bridge between the East and the West, capable of mediating between the US and China and fostering a more cooperative international environment. This would not only benefit the EU-China relationship but also ease tensions between China and the West as a whole, creating a foundation for a more balanced global order.

In the long term, such a strategy could benefit the entire international community, including the US. Global leadership in today's world cannot be derived from a fantasy of unilateralism; it requires a constructive effort to build an inclusive and fair global governance system. A re-imagined EU-China partnership, in which both sides work toward shared goals while respecting each other's distinct priorities, could exemplify the kind of global cooperation that is necessary to tackle the world's most pressing challenges. If Trump's re-election prompts the EU to adopt this approach, it could ultimately lead to a stronger, more resilient global system — one that balances the interests of multiple powers and benefits humanity as a whole.

The author is the founder of the China-Europe-America Global Initiative. 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.

AUGUSTO SOTO

Drawing on experience

Europe and China have managed their differences in the past and they can do so again

In the long weeks that separate us from Jan 20, 2025, when Donald Trump takes office, analyses are being fine-tuned in several European capitals, shrouded in bewilderment. And the frequently used phrase is that "we Europeans



must really take our fate into our own hands", already uttered by then German Chancellor Angela Merkel in May 2017, during the time of Trump's previous administration.

In this context, Spain's administration applies resilience and the relationship with China takes on a new dimension. Spanish Minister of Economy, Trade and Enterprise, Carlos Cuerdo, has recently declared that "Europe has to have its own view and its own position" distinct from both the United States and China when it comes to trade and tariffs, and that "Spain has to do its own analysis", insisting on "exhausting all possible avenues of negotiation and dialogue" with China in order to "reach an acceptable vision for both parties".

The country has the conditions to do so in light of a reading of the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook report published in October, which estimates that the Spanish economy will grow by 2.9 percent in 2024, the highest increase of all the major advanced industrialized countries in the West. The economic growth rate of Spain in 2024 is, overall, more than three times of the economic growth in the euro area.

After two visits to China in the past two years by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Madrid sees "huge potential" of bilateral cooperation. Some analysts have commented that Spain is opening its doors to China as a trade war between China and Europe looms, which has caused a stir on both sides of the Atlantic.

But it is an eloquent summary of the situation as China and Spain enjoy robust economic ties, as shown by the agreements Madrid and Beijing have signed in green development and electric car manufacturing. It should also be noted that Spain was the second-largest automaker in Europe

after Germany, and the eighth-largest in the world in 2023.

In the first half of this year, almost 60 percent of Spain's electricity came from renewable energy sources, a field in which Spain wants to lead in Europe, according to grid operator Redeia. In September 2024, Chinese wind turbine technologies developer Envision Energy agreed to invest \$1 billion to build an industrial park for green hydrogen in Spain, a milestone for the continent.

Spain's strategic proximity to China provides access to advanced technology in each of the mentioned fields, thus the agreements are win-win in nature. Concomitantly, Spain wants to highlight to Chinese investors Spain's long-standing cultural and economic ties with other Spanish-speaking countries, in order to serve, in parallel to the Latin American countries' respective bilateral ties with China. This takes on special relevance as during President Xi Jinping's visit to Peru, he inaugurated the megaproject of Chancay, the first Pacific logistics center in Latin America.

Felipe Gonzalez, the former Spanish prime minister who led Spain's transition to democracy from 1982 onwards and is remembered, among other things, for spreading the famous saying by former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping "it doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice", which he learned in Beijing during his official visit in 1985, has called in various fora for correctly interpreting two famous reports to guide the work of the European Commission and the European Council this year, and particularly from next year on, in the light of the current challenges. One is the Letta Report published in April 2024 by Enrico Letta, the former Italian prime minister, empowering the single market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU citizens, and the Draghi Report published in September 2024 by Mario Draghi, former Italian prime minister and former president of the European Central Bank, directing the future of European competitiveness.

Today, it is clear from reading both that we must look with fresh eyes at China, one of the world's innovative powers, one of

Europe's most important partners, not see it as a "systemic rival", a concept that neither of these documents uses. We know that there may be trade disagreements, but they can be resolved through negotiations. However, in the case of the US, according to all indications, the margin for negotiation will be much smaller and erratic, putting at risk the spirit of bilateralism and the world economic order, and moreover, international stability.

The update on the Draghi Report by the Berlin-based think tank MERICS in September is striking. While noting the competitiveness challenges that China presents to the continent, MERICS highlights Draghi's calls for European industrial policies to allocate more resources to key industries and technologies as well as calls for further efforts in education, research, and foreign policies in strategic sectors where green industries, commodities and digital technology are front-runners.

The year 2025 marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between Spain and China and 50 years of relations between the then European Economic Community (now the EU) and China. These ties, in turn, were preceded at the bilateral level by the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Finland and Sweden in 1950, France in 1964, and Spain in 1973, as well as with other European countries in the 1970s. US-China relations were only established in 1979. It is time to demonstrate Europe's experience and resilience in dealing with Beijing and vice versa.

Depending on Trump's attitude to the EU, we might speculate that negotiations between China and the EU on the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment or a similar deal, might be back on the agenda. Let's wait and see.

The author is director of the Dialogue with China Project and former global expert in the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. 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.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

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Bicycles and e-bikes show positive progress

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
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China's bicycle and electric bicycle industry achieved steady progress in the first three quarters of the year, amid a complex external environment, economic reshaping driven by technological revolutions and the enormous potential of the domestic market, according to an industry association.

"The industry has shown continuous recovery and positive growth, as Chinese companies have made efforts in deepening structural adjustments and accelerating transformation and upgrading," said Liu Suwen, president of the China Bicycle Association.

Production of bicycles and electric bicycles has remained stable in the past nine months, with both revenue and profits increasing and exports gradually stabilizing, according to the association.

"As environmental awareness continues to grow, and green, low-carbon lifestyles become more deeply ingrained, two-wheeled transportation products, with their unique advantages, are gradually becoming the preferred choice for people's travel," said Liu.

Liu made the remarks during an annual three-day bicycle industry conference, which opened in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, on Friday.

The discussions from industry insiders and company representatives centered on further accelerating the development of the bicycle industry.

Data from the association show that the industry maintained a positive recovery trend in the first three quarters, with the revenue of enterprises above a certain designated size increasing by 8.6 percent year-on-year and profits increasing by 6.4 percent year-on-year from January to September.

Exports have stabilized and rebounded, with bicycle exports growing by 20.4 percent year-on-year in the first nine months, according to data from the association.

The international market is

expected to recover more rapidly, with the export growth rate of electric bicycles expected to remain above 10 percent in 2024, according to Liu.

"Despite facing some challenges, the bicycle industry's development trend is optimistic, with major economic indicators steadily rising, the capacity for mid-to-high-end supply continuously expanding and comprehensive regulation of the electric bicycle sector promoting standardized industry development," said Liu.

However, as a typical export-oriented industry, some bicycle and electric bicycle companies have already felt the effects of insufficient growth momentum in the global economy, according to Liu.

"Expanding the international market is no longer as easy as it once was, as competition within the industry from international counterparts is intensifying and internal competition is becoming increasingly severe, among other challenges," said Liu.

The current technological revolution, focusing on intelligence, green energy and health, has not only explored new paths to address major global issues like climate change and energy crises but also gradually leads to and creates significant new demand in the bicycle industry, according to Liu.

"The best way to overcome difficulties is to develop new sources of momentum — in the face of this technological wave, the two-wheeled transportation industry has also been actively exploring new technologies, products and services," said Liu.

The bicycle and electric bicycle industry in China has made substantial progress in technological innovation, brand building, and market expansion over the year, according to Liu.

"Intelligent and high-end products have been produced to meet the increasingly diverse needs of consumers, with a number of internationally competitive brands emerging, laying a solid foundation for Chinese two-wheeled products to reach global markets," said Liu.



A bicycle production line seen in Laoling, East China's Shandong province. ZHANG JINGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 24 pips to 7.1918 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

Over 100 trusted data matrixes planned

China is aiming to establish more than 100 trusted data matrixes by 2028, forming a set of data matrix solutions and best practices, said the National Data Administration.

This target was included in a newly issued action plan for the development of trusted data matrixes (2024-28), according to the NDA. The action plan defines a trusted data matrix as data circulation and utilization infrastructure based on consensus rules which connect multiple stakeholders with the aim of achieving the sharing and common use of data and resources.

Small businesses see tax breaks rise

China's small and micro-sized businesses enjoyed 946.1 billion yuan (\$131.4 billion) in tax breaks from January to September, up 6.7 percent year-on-year, official data showed. Such businesses are important in expanding employment, energizing the market, and improving people's livelihoods, said the State Taxation Administration.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY



Technicians install photovoltaic panels in Chongqing. SUN KAIFANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

China revises PV industry standards

Companies encouraged to focus on innovation, quality, production costs

By LIU YUKUN
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China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has announced revisions to photovoltaic manufacturing industry standards, addressing current challenges like businesses' repetitive expansion of low-level production capacity and falling profitability, to promote the PV industry's healthier development.

Revisions include raising the minimum proportion of investment that must be funded by shareholders' own capital to 30 percent. Previously, the 2021 regulations for the photovoltaic manufacturing industry set a minimum ratio of 30 percent for new and expanded polysilicon projects, and 20 percent for other new and expanded photovoltaic projects.

The MIIT has also raised the efficiency standards for new monocrystalline silicon PV cells and modules, which were 23 percent and 20 percent in the 2021 regulations, respectively. The revised standards specify 23.7 percent and 21.8 percent for P-type cells and modules, as well as 26 percent and 23.1 percent for N-type cells and modules. P-type and N-type are the two major silicon cells and modules at present. Major types of PV cells and modules have evolved from polysilicon to monocrystalline silicon, and to the current P-type and N-type.

The revised standards also address next-generation technologies such as perovskite modules, with conversion efficiency requirements set at a minimum of 14 percent for existing projects and 15.5

percent for new projects.

The ministry said these updates aim to guide local authorities in reasonably planning photovoltaic manufacturing projects based on resource endowments and industrial foundations, while promoting intensive and clustered industrial development.

The revised guidelines encourage photovoltaic companies to focus on technological innovation, product quality improvement and production cost reduction, rather than merely expanding capacity, MIIT said.

In recent years, the PV industry has faced significant internal competition. Industry experts and stakeholders have repeatedly called for stronger macroeconomic policies to promote industrial upgrades, ensuring healthy industry development.

Data from the China Photovoltaic Industry Association revealed that despite a more than 32 percent year-on-year increase in the production of silicon wafers, cells and modules in the first half of 2024, the domestic PV manufacturing output value (excluding inverters) fell by 36.5 percent to approximately 538.6 billion yuan (\$74.3 billion). Prices for polysilicon and silicon wafers dropped by over 40 percent, while cell and module prices decreased by over 15 percent.

Such a comparison of rising output and reducing value results from declining prices and indicates weakening capability from businesses to profit, experts said.

On the application side, China installed 102.48 gigawatts of PV stations in the first half of 2024,

marking a 30.7 percent year-on-year increase. However, the growth rate slowed, reflecting a contraction in downstream demand. Additionally, major global PV markets such as the United States, Europe, India, Brazil and South Africa have implemented trade barriers, restricting direct exports of Chinese products and challenging the overseas capacity of Chinese enterprises.

Wang Bohua, honorary chairman of the CPIA, said at the association's half-year revision conference that many companies had faced losses due to polysilicon prices falling below cost, continuous declines in module bidding prices, and a significant drop in the number of new projects. Over 20 projects have been announced as terminated or delayed.

"The new regulations would help accelerate the elimination of outdated capacity and support the industry's long-term healthy development," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

Wang said there is still significant potential for increasing the penetration rate of PV power generation under COP28's target of tripling renewable capacity by 2030.

"China's PV installations will continue to remain high, raising room of development for manufacturers of PV equipment and upstream materials," he said. "In this context, we should expedite the elimination of outdated capacity and encourage mergers and acquisitions among enterprises. Regulatory bodies should strengthen guidance for the construction of advanced capacity, and companies should be cautious with new investments."

Xizang has high hopes for aviation business

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing
and DA QIONG in Lhasa

The Xizang autonomous region saw its annual air passenger throughput top 7 million for the first time on Saturday, a record high, indicating steady growth momentum of the civil aviation sector and the local economy.

The volume of air passenger throughput handled in the autonomous region exceeded the full-year volume recorded last year on Nov 17, said the Xizang autonomous regional administration of the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

This year, Xizang's civil aviation sector is expected to handle 69,000 takeoffs and landings, passenger throughput of 7.73 million and cargo throughput of 53,000 metric tons, growing 13.6 percent, 12.1 percent and 12.9 percent, respectively, the regional administration said.

So far this year, Xizang Airport Group launched 10 new routes, and resumed international flights connecting Lhasa — capital of the autonomous region — and Kathmandu, capital of Nepal. The group is also preparing to launch flights connecting Lhasa with Singapore and China's Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, booking volumes of flights from various domestic cities to Lhasa so far this year have jumped 10 percent on a yearly basis, said Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

A number of scenic spots in Xizang have drawn the attention of travelers across the country. For instance, Nyingchi has been a hot spot for peach blossom viewing in spring and for its colorful autumn scenery, said Tuniu Corp, a Nanjing, Jiangsu province-based online travel agency.

Currently, there are eight civil airports in operation in the autonomous region, including one trunk line airport and seven regional airports. A total of 177 routes have been launched so far, connecting 75 cities. These include major cities nationwide and they are mainly located in Southwest and Northwest China, the regional administration said.

This year, Xizang Airport Group has been actively expanding business in the civil aviation market and promoting the facilitation of transit services for flights entering and leaving Xizang, which has helped attract more travelers to the autonomous region.

In addition, the group reached cooperation with the airport groups of Yunnan province, Sichuan province and Chongqing for the first time this year, as it aims to further expand market share, enhance service quality and boost core competitiveness.

Xizang Airport Group said it has strengthened efforts online and offline to create a new business model that integrates the sectors of aviation with culture and tourism, and has raised the popularity of the tourism market in the autonomous region.

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Qijiang embraces tradition to improve economy

By ZHUANG QIANG
and PANG BO

In Qijiang district in southwestern Chongqing, its 2,000-year-old salt trade, immigrant culture and Liao people's culture, as well as its regional cuisines are being better explored to help improve livelihoods and the local economy.

In Dongxi, a historical and cultural town, local residents are making the most of traditional Huangjing bean curd, Dongxi black duck and Dongxi fermented tofu dishes, while adding new varieties such as dried radish, Yanggou roast meat and Dongxi clear spring fish, to create an appetizing and unique "Dongxi Tourism" industry.

During the 10 or so days of this year's Spring Festival holiday, the town attracted over 500,000 tourists, who swarmed to see its rural

culture, cultural relics and delicious cuisine.

Huang Xiaobo, a farmer in Dongxi with a family tradition of woodcarving, has applied for intangible cultural heritage status for "Huang's Woodcarving".

After opening a shop in Dongxi selling his handmade woodcarving ornaments and utensils, he also began to offer woodcarving classes, where tourists can visit and learn how it is done firsthand.

The family's tradition has come back to life, and Huang's Woodcarving has become an attraction for tourists, as after learning the skill in the shop, they can make small souvenirs to take back home, gaining both spiritually and materially, he said.

Bamboo-woven dustpans, a common farming tool in local areas, is also a tradition that has been handed down over hundreds of years, and the

local people have combined it with salt transport pier culture to develop the Dongxi Intangible Cultural Heritage Dustpan Feast, which has become an instant hit among tourists.

"Cultural vitalization is one key aspect for rural vitalization," Huang said, noting that combining rural traditions and historical culture with people's daily needs can not only help preserve and develop rural culture, but also promote rural economic development and increase farmers' incomes.

In Dongxi alone, there are currently 16 municipal and district-level preserved intangible cultural heritage items, as well as over 200 municipal and district-level cultural relics, Huang said.

"Rural history, traditions, farming, intangible cultural heritage and other cultures are unique

resources for rural industrial development," he said, stressing that these cultural resources should be well protected and developed, making them a new driving force for rural vitalization.

In the first three quarters, Qijiang's regional GDP jumped 3.2 percent at constant prices, among which the total output value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery stood at 7.366 billion yuan (\$1.02 billion), he said.

Administering 31 towns and sub-districts with a population of 1.01 million, Qijiang — with its long history and profound cultural heritage — now has 42 ethnic minorities in its region, bringing it rich cultural characteristics.

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BUSINESS

CREC4 expands production line

State infrastructure builder launches major steel structure base in Nantong

By HAN JINGYAN
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A first-class intelligent manufacturing base for steel structures has been launched in Nantong, Jiangsu province, with the aim of automating and making greener the production of steel structures and perfecting the domestic footprint of such bases.

State builder China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd (CREC4) put into operation its intelligent manufacturing industry base on Saturday, which can provide a low-cost but high-quality alternative to domestic as well as overseas clients in buying large-scale steel structures.

The base, with an investment of 2 billion yuan (\$281 million) and covering 33 hectares, is located in the Tongzhou district of Nantong, which is adjacent to the Yellow Sea in the east and close to the Yangtze River in the south, with a river frontage of 10.77 kilometers.

Earlier, as a way to bolster its development of new quality productive forces, the Hefei, Anhui province-based CREC4 invested 5 billion yuan to start building the CREC4 High-end Intelligent Construction Headquarters project in the prefecture-level city of Nantong on March 19, 2023.

The project included a high-end building intelligent manufacturing headquarters and the intelligent manufacturing industry base.

Situated in Nantong's high-end equipment harbor-side industrial park on Tongzhou Bay, the industry base has a workshop area of about



An employee of CREC4 operates equipment at the company's intelligent manufacturing industry base in Nantong, Jiangsu province. LI YONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

110,000 square meters, and is able to produce 200,000 metric tons of steel structures each year, said Zheng Haitang, chief of the base.

As a modern heavy steel-structure industrial base integrating design, research and development, processing and manufacturing, it mainly engages in the R&D of bridge steel structures, offshore steel structures, shipbuilding and high-rise building steel structures, Zheng said.

As it is close to the Yangtze River and the Yellow Sea, Zheng said the base has also built an independent 10,000-ton inner-excavated harbor dock, which can berth 10,000-ton ships and load large steel components, as well as transport large steel components from the river to the sea, providing convenience for the future export of such products.

He said the factory is equipped with more than 200 sets of advanced equipment ranging from lifting, cutting, welding and spraying to transport facilities, with an automation rate of over 96 percent.

He said the workshop in the factory has set up an adaptive welding cluster composed of intelligent robots, which has been able to raise the overall efficiency by some 30 percent compared to traditional teaching programming robots.

Zheng said the factory is also equipped with a photovoltaic roof of 100,000 square meters, a green energy source for the daily hot water needs of employees, car charging and roadside lighting.

On the opening day, the base received its first order — manufacturing the widest steel box girders

for the Xihoumen highway and railway bridge on the Ningbo-Zhoushan Railway being built in East China's Zhejiang province, said Jiang Longyu, deputy party secretary of the CREC4 project command for building the railway.

With a total length of 3,118 meters, a main span of 1,488 meters and a cable-stayed suspension cooperation system, the bridge is a super sea-crossing bridge across the Xihoumen waterway on the double-track of Ningbo-Zhoushan Railway and the second Ningbo-Zhoushan expressway, Jiang said.

He added that with a bridge deck of 68 meters, the Xihoumen Highway and Railway Bridge is the world's largest span highway and railway bridge under construction and also the world's widest sea-crossing bridge.

Canada's CSA Group bullish on biz in China, to open more facilities

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Believing that it has "underinvested" in China despite its first steps made 27 years ago, Canada's CSA Group will open more facilities in the country to seize growth opportunities and keep abreast of the leapfrogging development made by Chinese companies, said David Weinstein, president and CEO of the international standards development, testing and certification services provider.

Weinstein made the remarks during an interview in late October as the Toronto-based company opened a new laboratory in Kunshan, East China's Jiangsu province.

The new lab is a joint venture with China Certification and Inspection Group, with CSA serving as the majority partner. It will provide testing and certification services covering photovoltaic modules and components, grid-tied inverters, power conversion systems, electric vehicle chargers, batteries, energy storage systems, light vehicles and other products.

New certification capabilities have been added, including fire-resistant capabilities, electromagnetic compatibility testing and home and commercial robotics testing, said Weinstein.

He said CSA will help outbound Chinese manufacturers "demonstrate compliance" with standards applicable in different markets around the world, covering the areas of safety, energy and efficiency, among others.

While the Chinese automotive industry now faces more challenges than other industries in overseas markets, a large number of Chinese appliances and industrial equipment companies are reaching out to North American and European markets, Weinstein said.

"The world is so dependent on Chinese products and manufacturing regardless of some geopolitical noise and tension. China will continue to manufacture products for the world, while the rest of the world will continue to import those products," said Weinstein.

Price is no longer the major factor attracting consumer interest in overseas markets. Good and smart product development skills — as well as quality engineering — have become the competitive edge of Chinese products. For industries like energy storage, electric vehicles and charging technology, China has developed an outstanding lead beyond the capabilities of many other countries in developing new products and working with new technologies, he added.

CSA first tapped into China with a representative office built in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in 1997, and now employs a total of around 350 people across the country.

Weinstein said that CSA is adding another lab in Guangzhou, which is under construction at present. For its Shanghai lab which has been running for 13 years, CSA is looking to replace it with a new facility in the city within the next year or two. Even for the just-opened facility in Kunshan, CSA is looking at the possibility of phase two of the new project.

Meanwhile, CSA is looking to potentially set up a new lab in China's interior in the next five years, possibly in Chengdu, Sichuan province, or Chongqing, he added.

CSA has secured double-digit growth both globally and in China, while single-digit growth is the industry average. Being strategic about which areas of technology to invest in has helped the company enjoy rapid growth over the past few years. Its focus on energy storage and photovoltaic testing are two examples, the CEO said.

The logistical advantages of Kunshan, which is only a one-hour drive from Shanghai and has four high-speed railway stations, was one major reason for CSA to locate a lab in the city in 2012. With the new space added in late October, the Kunshan facility will span some 8,000 square meters.

Meanwhile, the abundance of highly skilled workers — especially young engineering graduates and technicians — readily available in Kunshan is another reason for CSA to expand its footprint in the city, Weinstein said.

While CSA discussed the expansion of the Kunshan facility two years ago, construction started in October last year, and was completed in one year's time.

"CSA is a global organization. We are currently in the process of building labs in other parts of the world. But none of our other construction projects has progressed as fast as those in China. The quality here is always very good. There is an energy and drive with those we are working with here that is unlike anything we have seen anywhere else in the world," he added.

To date, over 9,900 foreign-invested projects have landed in this county-level city, with the total investment value exceeding \$120 billion, said the Kunshan government. By the end of 2023, Kunshan attracted regional headquarters or facilities shouldering similar functions from 64 multinational companies, accounting for 17.2 percent of the total number in Jiangsu province.

S. Korea turns to Qingdao for kimchi

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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In Pingdu, a major pickle export center in China and a county-level city in Qingdao, Shandong province, local pickle processing enterprises are busy expanding production capacity.

Their automated production lines are running at full speed to meet surging demand from South Korea, where the cost of making kimchi has increased 20 percent from last year due to the rising price of ingredients such as cabbage and radishes, said the local government.

In the first eight months, Qingdao exported 173,000 metric tons of kimchi, an increase of 12.8 percent year-on-year, according to statistics from the agriculture and rural affairs bureau of Qingdao. It is

expected that Qingdao will export 300,000 tons of kimchi to South Korea by the end of this year.

Qingdao, located across the sea from South Korea, now supplies more than half of the kimchi in the South Korean market. Pingdu alone has a total vegetable growing area of nearly 50,000 hectares, serving as strong support for the sustained development of the pickle industry. In turn, the business has helped local farmers find a huge market to sell the vegetables they grow.

Thanks to convenient Customs arrangements, the kimchi produced in Pingdu can reach South Korean tables in just four days. The products are also sold in other international markets, including Japan and Europe.

Their products are popular because of the high quality of locally grown vegetables such as cabbage

and green onions that fit South Korean tastes.

"The raw materials such as cabbage, radishes and garlic used for making kimchi are fresh. We purchase them extensively throughout the country according to the ripening season of the different materials to ensure their freshness," said Xu Yuedong, general manager of Qingdao Xianglong Foods Co.

Each batch of raw materials required for kimchi is stored after passing strict inspections. The company also conducts 12 random inspections throughout the year to ensure product quality and safety, Xu said.

Cabbages go through a series of complex procedures, including cleaning, disinfection, screening, pickling and mixing, to become the final product.

Xu said that the storage of raw

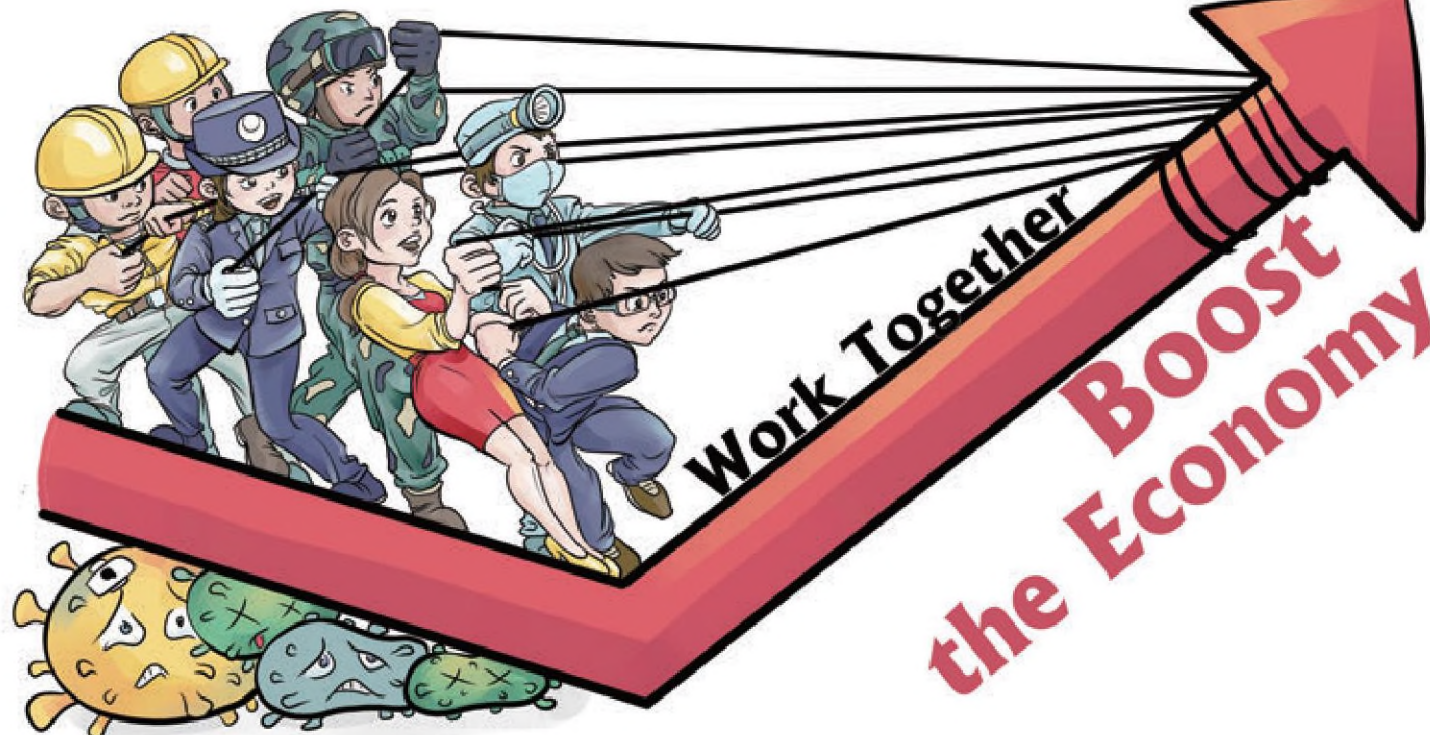
materials, semi-finished products and finished products — as well as the entire production process — are strictly temperature-controlled to reduce microorganisms.

Xianglong's products have been sold in the Japanese market since 2002, and in 2018, the company started exploring the domestic market, partnering with many leading supermarket and restaurant chains.

Its domestic sales are increasing at an average annual rate of 30 percent and now account for half of its total sales.

Qingdao Songyuan Food Co, another pickle exporter, has developed more than 40 flavors of kimchi products. The company develops each of its products after more than one year's research based on consumer taste, said Wu Yongjun, founder of the company.

"Our quality control staff keep tasting the product and modifying the formula, until we have a mature product," said Wu.



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New railway embraced by Gansu agri sector

Xining-Chengdu line boon for locals with faster travel, flow of products

By LI JIAYING
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For years, Gonpo Namgyal, a rancher in Luchu county, Northwest China's Gansu province, has been troubled by inconvenient local transport without railways and proper highways.

As a member of the Tibetan ethnic group, he aims to sell local agricultural and animal husbandry products, handicrafts and unique clothing in Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture to others outside his hometown of Lhamosi (Lhamo Monastery) town.

However, it takes him an hour to drive from his hometown to the county seat, two hours to the prefecture seat of Hezuo and five hours to the provincial capital of Lanzhou.

But good news is on the horizon as the Xining-Chengdu railway, which will pass through his hometown, has started construction, and upon completion he will need only 20 minutes to arrive at Luchu, 40 minutes to Hezuo and less than two hours to Lanzhou.

The railway runs from Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai province, and after servicing Qinghai's Haidong and Huangnan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, it enters Gannan in Gansu, and Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture of Sichuan province, before arriving in Chengdu, Sichuan's capital.

With trains running at speeds of some 260 kilometers per hour and with an estimated total investment of 58.3 billion yuan (\$8.05 billion), the railway will have newly built lines of 533.02 kilometers, including 173.38 km in Qinghai, 183.47 km in Gansu and 200.44 km in Sichuan.

Facilitating local travel

With some 745,900 residents, Gannan now administers Hezuo and seven counties including Luchu, Machu, Tebo and Xiahe.

Located in southwestern Gansu on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Luchu administers five towns, two townships and two State-run farms. It had 9,852 households with a total population of 38,478 by the end of 2023.

"We have many special products in Gannan produced on plateaus and lowland agricultural regions, as well as animal husbandry, such as yak alongside highland barley and winter wheat," said Gonpo Namgyal, noting that many agricultural and livestock products have high added value after good processing.

"At present, Tibetan fragrant pigs in Tebo, toasted barley flour in Luchu, cheese in Machu and air-dried meat in Xiahe are all well received in the market, and after the opening of the new railway, these products can be transported faster and become tourism products," he said.

He added that with faster transport, he can earn more.

In Luchu county, there will be three stations — Luchu, Tsecha and Lhamosi, said Xing Jiang, an office director from the Seventh Engineering of China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd (CREC4), which is partially constructing the railway.

The Xining-Chengdu railway will also serve Huangshengguan station via the Lanzhou-Chengdu railway, which is also under construction, and then the two lines will eventually run as one line, Xing said.

Training Tibetan talent

Xing said that since CREC4 project employees started their construction work, they have also paid heed to providing local people of the Tibetan ethnic group with more opportunities.

Khamdrug Tso, 25, is a native of Lhamosi and joined the CREC4 project team at the recommendation of the township government in July 2022 upon her graduation from Sichuan Vocational and Technical College.

Starting with a job in material management covering the approval of on-site materials and the sorting of materials entering and leaving construction sites, Khamdrug Tso earned unanimous praise from her colleagues thanks to her good attitude, flexible and clear project development ideas, and hardworking spirit.

She said she has not only mastered some skills, but also helped improve her family's income. Moreover, she was proud of helping build a railway in her hometown.

"We all like her very much, as she is dedicated to her job," Xing said.

Xing added that CREC4's bid for the railway is located in Luchu as well as Zogye county in Sichuan, at an elevation of some 3,500 meters above sea level. With a total length of 26.97 km, the bid carries a contract price of 3.623 billion yuan and has a construction period of six years.

"Our project has four major challenges — construction coordination, construction organization, ecological protection difficulties and safety risks, and it has five unique characteristics — high altitude, cold weather (-30.6 C at extremes), complex geology, fragile ecology and multi-ethnic settlements," Xing said.

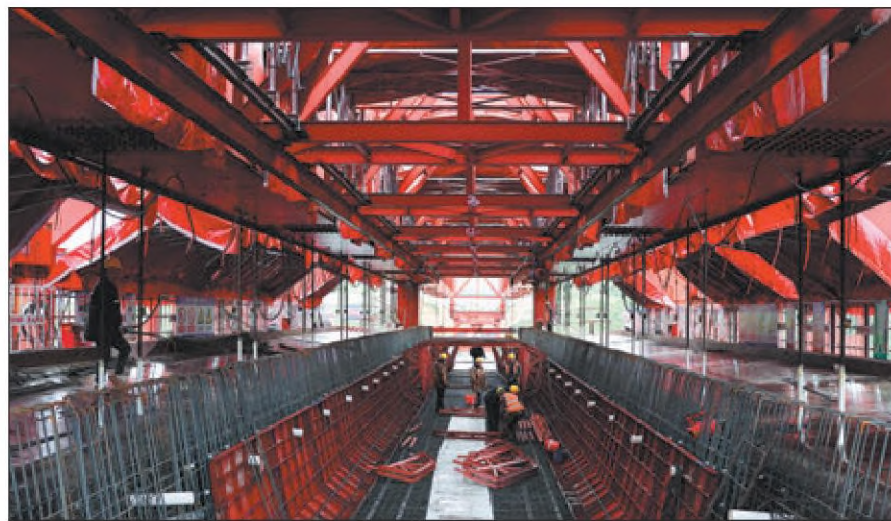
To cope with the harsh environment due to the cold weather and lack of oxygen, the project department has done a good job in the physical protection of all the employees, inviting the company's hospital to send a special medical examination vehicle to the construction site and conduct medical checks for them twice a year.

Anyone found unfit to work in the plateau region will be given special treatment at nearby designated hospitals, and employees can decide whether to continue working there or not, Xing said.

Wangchen Tso, a local divorcee of



Builders from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd make progress in building the Xining-Chengdu railway. XING JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



CREC4 employees carry out construction work on a bridge along the Xining-Chengdu railway in June.

CHEN BIN / XINHUA

the Tibetan ethnic group with three children, was a cleaner for the CREC4 project. An anomaly was discovered in her kidney during a medical examination.

Suspecting that it was a tumor, a CREC4 doctor recommended a re-examination. Under the persuasion of the project department, she went to a large hospital and found that it was indeed a kidney carcinoma.

After treatment, one of her kidneys and part of her liver were removed, and now she is recuperating at home.

Wangchen said she was so grate-

ful to the project department for her physical examination and assistance, enabling her to receive timely treatment.

Her income from the CREC4 job can help her and her three children enjoy a stable livelihood.

Previously, due to poor health awareness and difficult family conditions, locals were often reluctant to go to big hospitals for follow-up checks.

Boosting rural vitalization

Chigyung Tashi is Party secretary of Lhamosi and believes the new railway — as a major national

infrastructure project — will help Gannan bid farewell to its history of having "no railway", and bring more visitors, goods and information to Gannan.

"With the new railway, our town will witness faster rural vitalization, which is a comprehensive 'five-in-one' project covering industrial, talent, cultural, ecological and organizational vitalization," he said.

Actually, CREC4 workers are helping in many ways beyond their construction duties, Xing said.

"For example, by consuming local foodstuffs and buying hardware and specialty products, we are helping

promote consumption amid an industrial vitalization," he said, adding that hiring local graduates of the Tibetan ethnic group and helping train engineering and technical personnel are ways to facilitate talent vitalization.

By building shared bookstores and health checkup stations, they are helping boost local cultural vitalization, while by actively participating in planting tree seedlings, they are bringing about ecological vitalization, he said.

Furthermore, by enhancing the standardization of leased machinery and equipment, they are helping speed up organizational vitalization of the town, Xing said.

Xing noted that the total length of the Xining-Chengdu railway is 183.47 km in Gansu, including 69.65 km in Luchu, 91.85 km in Xiahe and 21.97 km in Hezuo.

Once operational, the Gansu section can link with the Sichuan section in Zogye, which is part of the tourism-rich Aba of Sichuan, he said.

With the full completion of the Xining-Chengdu railway as well as the Lanzhou-Chengdu railway, travel conditions for locals will be largely improved, and access times to three capital cities in Northwest China and Southwest China will be shortened remarkably, he said.

At the same time, connections between the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Yangtze River Economic Belt will be greatly enhanced, while the national strategy of developing the western region in the new era will be significantly promoted, he said.

Western China railroad work progressing smoothly, boosting shared growth

By LI JIAYING

When builders from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd (CREC4) started their work in Gansu province on a railway project in 2022, a young woman of the Tibetan ethnic group approached the technicians, asking, "What is that device you are using?"

The technicians from CREC4 Seventh Engineering were surveying the terrain in Luchu county under Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, preparing to help build the Xining-Chengdu railway, which links Northwest China's Qinghai and Gansu provinces with Sichuan province in Southwest China.

Seeing the young lady tending her herd, they explained to her the uses of the survey tool and its role in helping construct the railway, which traverses the county sitting on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The CREC4 staff members officially started their work on Oct 26, 2022, embarking on their six-year-long task, with 255 managerial employees and 1,376 construction

workers, said Guan Lei, Party secretary for the first division of CREC4's railway project for the Xining-Chengdu railway.

"We also brought 398 pieces of mechanical equipment into our construction site," he said, noting that his preliminary research showed the task to be an arduous one, as their bid sits at an elevation of some 3,500 meters above sea level, with some sites surpassing 3,700 meters.

"We have to spare every effort in properly building this national railway infrastructure," Guan said.

Some months into his work, Guan made a mini-movie — *On the Xining-Chengdu Railway, It is No Longer Cold* — detailing his colleagues' combat with the cold weather (-30.6 C at extremes) and the high altitude, which brings a lack of oxygen.

"Despite the cold wind which blows over the plateau, and the snow which falls at an early date, we have progressed well in accordance with our schedule," he said.

Khamdrug Tso is a native of Lhamosi town in Luchu county and joined the CREC4 project team in July

2022 upon her graduation from Sichuan Vocational and Technical College.

Her dedication to her job in materials management has won her widespread praise from colleagues.

"My sincere thanks go to the CREC4 project department, which not only helps me master my skills, but also hands me 6,300 yuan (\$869) each month for my salary, helping improve my family's income," she said.

To express her thanks, she brought her friends of the Tibetan ethnic group to an evening party at the project department during the Dragon Boat Festival in 2023, performing traditional Tibetan dances for participants.

Wangchen Tso, a member of the Tibetan ethnic group who is divorced with three children and works as a cleaner for the CREC4 project department, found an anomaly on her kidney during a CREC4 medical examination for staff members.

After undergoing timely treatment at a hospital, Wangchen is now recuperating at home, and the managerial staffer from the CREC4 project department went

to comfort her with gifts.

She said she was grateful to the CREC4 project department for her physical examination, which enabled her to have timely treatment, and her income from her job can help her and her three children live better lives.

In addition to building the railway, CREC4 employees help locals of the Tibetan ethnic group overall, said Xing Jiang, an office director from CREC4 Seventh Engineering.

Xing said they leased local machinery and equipment and improved the standardization of local machinery leasing; bought local foodstuffs, hardware and specialty products to enrich local incomes; hired locals to help train engineering and technical personnel; set up shared bookstores and health checking posts to boost local culture; and planted more trees to help improve the local environment.

Chigyung Tashi is Party secretary of Lhamosi town and often pays visits to the CREC4 project department to help solve related problems.

It is expected that the Xining-Chengdu railway will extend for 183.47 kilometers in Gansu, includ-



CREC4 technicians show surveying tools used in building the Xining-Chengdu railway to a young Tibetan woman in Gansu province. XING JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

ing 69.65 km in Luchu, which will have three stations — Luchu, Tsecha and Lhamosi.

"With the new railway, our town will witness faster rural vitalization," he said, adding that the unit is doing a lot of work for them.

Xing said they are working harmoniously with local colleagues in their

daily construction job and in their recreational activities.

One get-together for a drill with the local police and a joint signing ceremony for safety enhancement among the CREC4 staff members this year allowed those from various ethnic groups to develop warm memories, he said.