

Vital supply

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# CHINA DAILY

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## China, Singapore eye closer ties

Xi calls for seizing opportunities in digital, green development

By ZHOU JIN zhoujin@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping expressed hope on Tuesday that Singapore will continue to act as a pioneer in cooperation with China by making good use of bilateral platforms and effectively managing major projects.

Xi made the remarks during a meeting in Beijing with Senior Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong. It is Lee's first visit to China since he stepped down as prime minister of Singapore.

Noting that next year marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral ties, Xi called on both sides to intensify high-level exchanges, further align development strategies and deepen cooperation in various areas to bring more benefits to the two peoples.

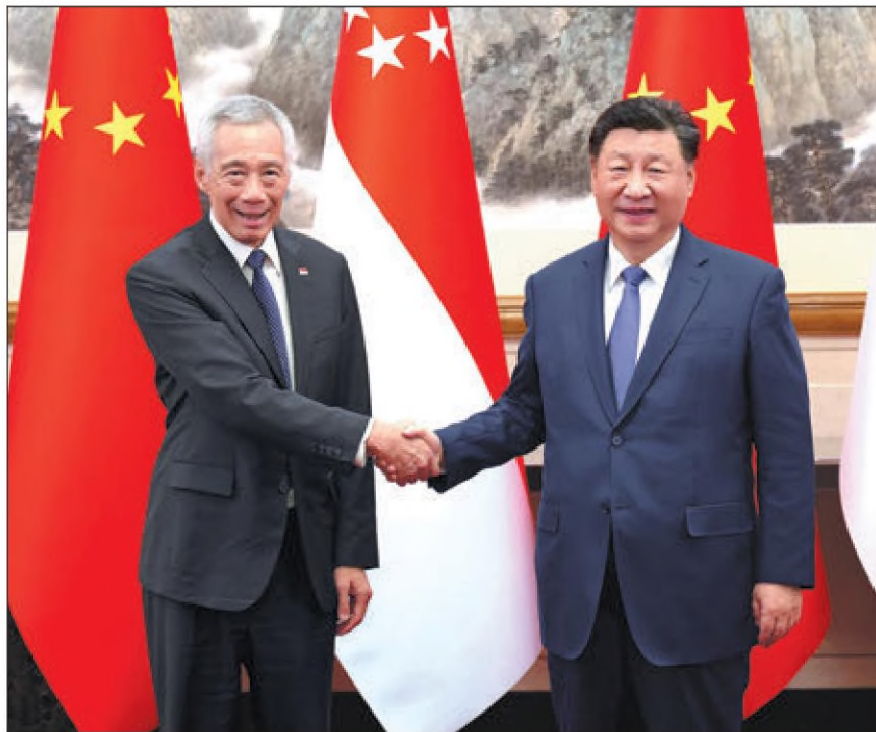
The president called for both sides to seize opportunities in digital and green development cooperation, two important areas under the framework of the China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park.

Once a low-lying field, the industrial park has been transformed into a hub of innovation over the past 30 years, setting a vivid example for bilateral cooperation, Xi said.

It also stands as a testament to Singapore's deep involvement in China's reform and opening-up, he added.

Founded in 1994 and home to over 400 Singaporean enterprises, the park has witnessed the development of closer cooperation between the two sides. Statistics show that the park has attracted more than 5,000 foreign-invested projects, with actual foreign investment use exceeding \$40 billion over the past three decades.

Lee told Xi that Singapore remains confident in China's future, and he believes that a growing and prospering China will contribute more to world peace and development.



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Senior Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong in Beijing on Tuesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Singapore will remain committed to deepening cooperation with Beijing and actively participate in the process of Chinese modernization, he said.

Lee reportedly visited China 14 times in his two decades as Singaporean prime minister. The last time he visited China was in March last year, when the two countries agreed to elevate bilateral ties to an all-around, high-quality, future-oriented partnership.

Speaking at a forum in Suzhou on Monday, Lee said that it would be "shortsighted and unwise" to dismiss the world's second-largest economy, The Straits Times reported.

China has shown that it can take a strategic perspective, maintaining consistent policies over the long term to ride through transient ups and downs, and Singapore is committed to deepening cooperation with China, including through the Suzhou Industrial Park, he added.

Zhou Shixin, a research fellow at the Shanghai Institutes for

International Studies, said that Lee's visit aims not only to strengthen the stability and resilience of China-Singapore relations, but also to lay the foundation for more robust bilateral ties and enhance the ability and confidence of regional countries to deal with multiple crises in the future.

China has been Singapore's largest trading partner for 11 consecutive years, with bilateral trade volume reaching \$108.39 billion last year. In addition, Singapore is the first country in Asia to sign a bilateral free trade agreement with China.

The Suzhou Industrial Park cooperation model demonstrates that the partnership between China and Singapore has extended throughout their economic and industrial structures, Zhou said.

He added that it provides both countries with a stronger sense of shared development and greater confidence in the future.

Zhou said bilateral cooperation can be further strengthened in

areas such as digital trade, e-commerce, biotechnology and smart cities.

During the talks, Xi and Lee also expressed the commitment to upholding multilateralism and solidarity to jointly deal with challenges. They also exchanged views on issues of common concern, including China-United States ties.

Noting that Lee's trip to China comes after a visit to the US, Zhou said this shows that in the face of increasing uncertainty and instability, Singapore seeks to strengthen its strategic interactions with both Beijing and Washington in order to find a foreign strategy better suited to its future development.

As Singapore is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the country also represents the common aspirations of ASEAN, which hopes to cooperate with its partners, including China, to address potential disruptions to regional industrial and supply chains, Zhou said.

## Texas governor's orders have local Chinese worried

By MAY ZHOU in Houston, Texas mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

It was done in the name of protecting more than 250,000 Chinese descendants living in Texas. Yet the three executive orders targeting China issued by Texas Governor Greg Abbott about a week ago brought a sense of anxiety and uncertainty to many Chinese Americans living in Texas.

One of the orders targeted individuals "preying on dissidents on the behalf of any foreign adversary"; another ordered a task force be formed to counter potential threats to Texas infrastructure from China, and the third outlined details to prohibit state agencies from engaging in business and research and exchanges with Chinese entities with ties to the Chinese government.

Colleges and research institutes are forbidden to enter new contracts or renew existing agreements with entities either owned or governed by the Chinese government.

All employees of Texas public institutions and agencies are prohibited from accepting gifts from such entities or conducting business trips to China, the order decreed.

If traveling to China for personal reasons, the employee is required to notify the agency "prior to their travel and submit a post-travel brief outlining details of the trip, including the dates and purpose of the travel."

In addition, state agencies, including public higher education institutions, are required to have minimum security requirements for new hires as well as for existing employees to remain in positions key to critical infrastructure.

One Chinese American, who is in her 40s and only wanted to be identified as Wendy, has been working at a Texas state agency for almost a decade.

"I do visit China once every couple of years to see my parents who live there. Now I would have to file notice before I see my parents and tell them what I have done in China after the trip. That would make me feel untrusted and insulted. It's an invasion to my privacy on the part of the state government," Wendy said.

"I am very angry over this executive order, but I am also afraid and dare not to speak out openly," Wendy continued, adding that she's considering switching her job to the private sector to avoid this "unfair treatment".

Following the announcement of Abbott's executive orders, Mosaic Paradigm Law Group, a Houston law firm, published an analysis of the potential impact of those orders.

"Companies with ties to the Chinese government will face more restrictions entering the Texas market, and interaction between some Chinese enterprises and Texas government and public higher education institutions will be negatively impacted," said the analysis, calling the executive orders "full of flaws and short-sighted".

In addition, Chinese companies operating in Texas will face higher costs of compliance to ensure their activities follow the new regulations.

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Wendy, Chinese American working at a Texas state agency for almost a decade

The analysis said the documents required for personal travel to China means individuals will have to spend more time and energy to file paperwork, thus reducing their desire to travel to China.

The prohibition of exchanges between higher education institutions between Texas and China will negatively impact Texas' innovation and academic research, the analysis said.

"This executive order reflects broader tensions in Sino-US relations and may lead to a decline in confidence among many impacted Chinese companies in investing in the United States, thus having a negative impact on the atmosphere of bilateral trade and cooperation," the analysis said.

Another Chinese American, who only want to be identified as Mr. Liu, said these executive orders are going to have a long-lasting chilling effect on the Chinese American community in Texas. Liu is a lecturer and researcher at a Texas public university.

"The executive orders say that the state wants to protect Chinese Americans in Texas. Aren't all Americans protected by the Constitution already? Why did the governor say that Chinese Americans need special protection?" Liu asked. "On the contrary, many of my fellow Chinese Americans and I feel threatened by these orders rather than protected because we are being singled out for having ties to China."

Liu said the executive orders violate American values. "People have to report to the government about personal travel! What has happened to personal liberty and freedom?" Liu asked.

## G20 Summit marks new era of global collaboration, inclusivity

WORLD WATCH By Michael Schumann

global warming front and center, commits to reforming international institutions and emphasizes common prosperity through equitable taxation. The G20 also launched a Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, an initiative rooted in the powerful acknowledgement that the world does not lack resources or expertise, but the political will to ensure that all people have access to the basic right of sustenance.

The declaration's commitment to limiting global warming to 1.5 C is also an essential affirmation of the international community's resolve to protect our planet. Equally important is the G20's pledge to work toward reforming the United Nations Security Council, ensuring it becomes more representative, inclusive and effective in addressing the complexities of today's global conflicts. These outcomes signal not only progress but also a recognition that cooperation and reform are prerequisites for addressing the interconnected crises of our time.

That this summit took place in Brazil underscores a profound truth: the world order is undergoing transformation. Emerging economies are taking on roles of increasing leadership and responsibility.

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## DOOR OPENED WIDER FOR FOREIGN-INVESTED BUSINESSES

Positive policies, easier market access, advances in innovation attract more overseas players

By ZHONG NAN zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

When discussing the pace of innovation in China, Matthew Ye, the local head of the French tire and mobility company Michelin, offers a perspective that differs from many senior executives in other parts of the world.

Collaborating with Chinese electric vehicle companies and traditional car manufacturers has become more demanding in terms of response speed and technical requirements compared with the past, said Ye, CEO and president of Michelin China and Mongolia.

"As a result, I must spend more time to push our local, European and Japanese engineers in China to accelerate their innovation efforts," Ye



said, adding the company will continue to expand passenger car tire production capacity at its factories in Shanghai and Shenyang, Liaoning province, to meet the country's surging demand.

With a similar outlook, Josh Weiss, president of the manufacturing intelligence division at Hexagon AB, said the Swedish industrial group will put its new South China headquarters in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, with investment of more than 200 million euros (\$214.38 million), into operation by the end of 2025.

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INSIDE Late-mover can secure upper hand in supply chain Global Views, page 13

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## PAGE TWO

From page 1

Along with supporting the company and its partners' manufacturing businesses in China, the facility will provide solutions for clients in Southeast Asia and other Asian countries.

With China creating more favorable conditions to transform and modernize traditional industries and cultivate emerging sectors, market watchers and executives from multinational corporations are confident about the substantial growth opportunities and greater commercial engagement in the world's second-largest economy.

Recent policy measures to remove all market access restrictions for foreign investors in the manufacturing sector are expected to prompt foreign companies to increase their investments in China, with a focus on high-end manufacturing and innovation, they said.

**'Negative list' update**

The latest edition of China's national negative list for foreign investment, which took effect on Nov 1, removed the last two manufacturing-related restrictions, according to the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner.

The items on the latest negative list, which specifies fields that are off-limits to foreign investors, have been further reduced to 29.

Another negative list applied in the country's free trade zones, which involve pioneering pilots in opening-up practices, achieved zero restrictions on foreign investment in manufacturing in 2021.

Wang Xing, a partner expert at management consultancy Roland Berger, believes that these opening-up moves have significant strategic importance.

The updated national negative list, in conjunction with other policies aimed at attracting overseas capital, not only demonstrates China's determination to deepen reforms, but also creates a better investment and business environment for foreign companies. They are key measures for the integration of Chinese industries into the global economy, said Wang.

"In the current complex geopolitical environment, many multinational corporations are reconfiguring their global manufacturing bases and supply chain layouts," said Wang.

Numerous companies are actively establishing "lighthouse factories" — advanced manufacturing facilities recognized for their leadership in applying cutting-edge technologies to drive innovation, efficiency and sustainability in production — across China. These investments cater not only to the Chinese market, but also strive to bolster overall global competitiveness and digital transformation, he added.

Lighthouse factories can effectively optimize operations, and significantly reduce waste, energy consumption and production costs while boosting productivity, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The manufacturing industry was the earliest sector in China to open up to foreign investors and is also the most competitive and closely coordinated one in terms of the global industrial division of labor.

Scaling up high-tech manufacturing can help China enhance the value-added component of its economy and secure its position in global value chains. This will move China away from reliance on low-cost, labor-intensive industries, said Zhao Ping, dean of the academy at China Council for the Promotion of International Trade in Beijing.

"A well-established supply chain and infrastructure for high-tech industries make it easier for foreign companies to set up operations and integrate into local ecosystems," said Zhao. "By prioritizing innovation, China grants opportunities for collaboration in research and development, which appeals to multinational corporations seeking to advance their technologies."

**Confident outlook**

Attracted by these factors, German investment in China has reached a record high so far this year, and again reaffirmed the confidence German companies have in the Chinese market, said Clas Neumann, chairperson of the board of German Chamber of Commerce in China, East China.

Currently, around 5,000 German companies operate in China, while over 2,000 Chinese companies have invested in Germany. The industrial and supply chains of both China and Germany are deeply integrated and their markets are highly interdependent, according to information released by the chamber.

With the structure of foreign investment continuing to be optimized, China saw the high-tech manufacturing sector utilize 80.18 billion yuan (\$11.07 billion) in foreign direct investment between January and October this year, accounting for 11.6 percent of the national total, data from the Ministry of Commerce shows. That represents an increase of 0.7 percentage points from the same period last year.

Investment in China from Germany, Australia and Singapore has also increased, surging by 7.5 percent, 6 percent and 4.4 percent respectively year-on-year.

Expressing long-term confidence in the Chinese market, German carmaker BMW Group announced in April an additional investment of 20 billion yuan in its production base in Shenyang. In September, French industrial group Schneider Electric SE completed the second phase of an innovation lab-



WANG YANGYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

oratory park project in Shanghai.

US chipmaker Intel Corp announced in late October the expansion of its packaging and testing base in Chengdu, Sichuan province, along with a \$300 million capital injection for its subsidiary there.

Eager to expand its market share in China, Trane Technologies plc, a US manufacturer of heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration systems, put a new plant into operation in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in mid-November.

With an investment of 300 million yuan, the facility not only aims to enhance the company's production capacity in China but also to supply products to other markets in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India.

Noting that China is one of Trane Technologies' key growth markets globally, Wu Chuangang, the group's vice-president of operations and integrated supply chain for the Asia-Pacific region, said that the company has maintained double-digit growth in China over the past three years, demonstrating strong business performance.

"The new factory will introduce additional product lines, particularly temperature control products, in the coming years, which are expected to drive further business growth," he added.

Chen Jianwei, a researcher at the Beijing-based University of International Business and Economics' Academy of China Open

Economy Studies, said: "By actively engaging in global industrial division and reinforcing multilateral, bilateral and regional economic cooperation, China has played a key role in maintaining a diversified and stable international economic framework."

The nation's ongoing progress in market openness, business model transformation, and industrial, consumption and large-scale equipment upgrades, will consolidate its position as a strategic priority for global manufacturing businesses, fostering sustainable long-term financial growth, he said.

**Customized solutions**

That sentiment is in line with the latest trade figures. Exports of foreign-invested businesses in China amounted to 5.77 trillion yuan between January and October of 2024, marking year-on-year growth of 1.9 percent, according to data from the General Administration of Customs.

With more Chinese firms rushing to adopt new equipment to cut carbon emissions and boost productivity, Swiss technology company ABB Ltd said it will focus on developing more customized solutions for local clients, with plans to extend these innovations to other parts of the world.

Joachim Braun, president of ABB process industries, said that process industries serve the steel and nonferrous metals, mining, pulp and paper, and cement sectors, all of which hold a significant global share in China.

"Therefore, if you are active in these sec-

tors, the Chinese market naturally plays a crucial role. We believe that the outlook for the Chinese market will be fairly positive over the next three years," said Braun.

Apart from extensive production on a global scale, quality upgrades and decarbonization will become key drivers for further development in China, making ABB quite optimistic about future demands in this market, Braun added.

Tsuyoshi Nishiwaki, chairman of China trading at ASICS Corp, a Japanese sportswear manufacturer, said as China, along with Europe, North America and Japan, is one of the group's four major global markets, the company will continue to invest in the Chinese market.

China's consumption trends present a significant growth opportunity, and ASICS is actively responding to them through a combination of market expansion and localization, said Tsuyoshi, who is also the company's senior managing director for China.

"We are firmly committed to further investing in the Chinese market through local product development, digital transformation and national initiatives, strengthening our position in China and meeting the evolving needs of Chinese consumers," he added.

Wang Xiaohong, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said China is already established as a key export hub for many foreign corporations, and this has generated numerous growth points for businesses,

including those in the service sector.

On Nov 21, US express transport company Federal Express Corp announced more frequent international cargo flights between Xiamen, Fujian province, and the US, along with the inauguration of its Xiamen international gateway facility.

These initiatives will enhance FedEx's network in China and empower local businesses with more efficient and intelligent logistics services and solutions, said Poh-Yian Koh, senior vice-president of FedEx and president of FedEx China.

In addition to the removal of all restrictions on foreign investment in the manufacturing sector, China has also vowed to further shorten the negative list for foreign investment in services sectors such as telecommunications and healthcare to be reduced.

In September, steps were announced to expand opening-up in the medical field, including giving the greenlight for the establishment of wholly foreign-owned hospitals in selected cities including Beijing and Shanghai.

The government also decided in late October to allow foreign investors to operate wholly-owned businesses such as internet data centers and to engage in online data processing and transaction processing in certain areas, as part of a pilot program to expand opening-up in value-added telecom services.

## TOP NEWS

# Nation urges US to continue fight against narcotics

Washington should cherish Beijing's goodwill, safeguard hard-won dynamics in cooperation

By MO JINGXI  
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday that the United States should cherish the goodwill of China and safeguard the hard-won positive situation of China-US cooperation on drug control.

On Monday, United States President-elect Donald Trump said on social media that he has "had many talks with China about the massive amounts of drugs, in particular fentanyl, being sent into the United States — But to no avail". He added that the US will be imposing an additional 10 percent tariff on all Chinese imports.

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The Foreign Ministry spokesperson said China is one of the world's toughest countries on counternarcotics, both in terms of policy and its implementation. Noting that fentanyl is an issue for the US, the ministry spokesperson said that China has given support to the US' response to this issue in the spirit of humanity. "As early as 2019, China officially scheduled all fentanyl-related substances and is the first country in the world to do so," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said China is willing to continue counternarcotics cooperation with the US on the basis of "equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect". "We hope the US will not take China's goodwill for granted and work to ensure that the hard-won positive dynamics will

stay in the counternarcotics cooperation," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson also said it is "a clear fact for all to see" that China has carried out extensive and in-depth counternarcotics cooperation with the US, which has been highly productive.

In November last year, the two countries agreed to establish a working group on counternarcotics cooperation as one of the important points of consensus reached during the meeting between President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden in San Francisco. A meeting of the working group was held in Washington on July 31, during which senior officials from both sides reviewed progress and discussed the next steps in furthering counternarcotics cooperation.

Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington, cautioned on Monday that there will be losers on all sides if there is a trade war. "China-US economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial in nature. No one will win a trade war or a tariff war," he said in a post on the social media platform X.

According to Liu, China has notified the US of the progress made in US-related law enforcement operations against narcotics, and has responded to US requests for verifying clues in certain cases and taken action.

"All these prove that the idea of China knowingly allowing fentanyl precursors to flow into the United States runs completely counter to facts and reality," he wrote on X.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

## No more landmines



People in Siem Reap, Cambodia, rally on Tuesday to protest against the decision of the United States to send antipersonnel landmines to Ukraine, a day after the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World kicked off. The Southeast Asian country is riddled with unexploded ordnance as a legacy of decades of conflict. SOVANNARA / XINHUA

# Trump's second term can prove tricky for Ishiba on key issues

By CAI HONG  
caihong@chinadaily.com.cn

The decision by United States President-elect Donald Trump's transition team to decline a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has sparked unease in Japan.

Ishiba has been reportedly informed that US law generally prohibits the president-elect from meeting with foreign leaders before formally taking office. The Japanese leader had hoped to secure a meeting with Trump while returning from the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Peru and the G20 Summit in Brazil.

Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun described the rejection as an embarrassing diplomatic setback for Ishiba.

The situation contrasts sharply with 2016, when then prime minister Shinzo Abe became the first foreign leader to meet Trump in New York shortly after the latter's election victory. Abe even gifted Trump a gold golf club on the occasion.

During Trump's first term, the two leaders developed a close personal relationship, highlighted by rounds of golf at Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club in Florida and in Japan when the US president visited.

Tellingly, at a gala held at Mar-a-Lago on Nov 14, Argentina's President Javier Milei congratulated Trump, who said it was an "honor" to have Milei at his club.

Ishiba, meanwhile, remains optimistic, telling reporters he "would

like to meet (Trump) as soon as possible at a mutually convenient time".

The Japanese government is now trying to schedule a meeting sometime after Trump's inauguration on Jan 20. Tokyo sent Ishiba's special adviser Akihisa Nagashima to the US on Nov 20 to connect with Trump's team.

Analysts suggest that Ishiba may struggle to forge a strong bond with Trump, particularly given Ishiba's push to revise the Status of Forces Agreement between the US and Japan.

The issue of Japan shouldering a greater share of the costs for hosting US troops is likely to resurface under the second Trump administration. This comes despite Japan's 2022 decision to nearly double its annual defense spending to approximately 2 percent of its GDP by fiscal 2027.

According to Japanese political

analyst Yuya Watase, working out a China strategy will be on Trump's list of priorities, not Japan.

Moreover, Ishiba's leadership of a vulnerable minority government leaves him with limited flexibility. This constraint could make it challenging to both fund the planned defense spending increases and negotiate with Trump on trade agreements and burden-sharing, Watase said.

Trump's first presidency was marked by significant unpredictability, particularly in areas such as trade tariffs and defense negotiations. Notably, Trump once demanded that Japan quadruple its annual payments for hosting US troops.

After meeting former Japanese prime minister Taro Aso in New York in April, Trump praised the encounter as a "great honor" in his social media post, but also criticized the depreciation of the Japanese yen, calling it a "disaster" for US manufacturing.

Lyu Yaodong, deputy director of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that Ishiba will face challenges in building an Asian version of NATO or achieving a more balanced alliance between Japan and the US under Trump's leadership.

The US, not Japan, would assert dominance in any proposed Asian NATO, according to Lyu. Consequently, the US would reject Ishiba's vision for such an alliance.

Ishiba's push for greater symme-

try in the US-Japan alliance — including revising what he sees as historically unfair aspects of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security and the potential stationing of Japanese troops in the US — is considered unrealistic.

The US-Japan alliance remains the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy, and the US relies on Japan's support to advance its interests in Asia. Lyu cautioned that tensions between the two allies could arise, potentially affecting stability in the region.

On Nov 19, Ishiba said at a press conference in Rio de Janeiro that he will pursue cooperation, not confrontation, with Trump.

Unlike the administration of President Joe Biden, which prioritizes strengthening alliances, Trump has historically taken an opposite approach. In this context, Ishiba is unlikely to feel confident challenging the US on key issues, according to Xiang Haoyu, a research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies.

Looking ahead, the US and Japan may find themselves at odds over several contentious topics, including defense burden-sharing, trade tariffs and the exchange rate between the US dollar and the Japanese yen.

Ishiba is likely to pursue an all-out diplomatic effort with major global powers to demonstrate Japan's strategic autonomy, Xiang said. He is also expected to navigate a delicate balance between China and the US, seeking to improve ties with Beijing. This approach could provide Japan with greater flexibility in shaping its foreign policy.

"However, maintaining a strong relationship with the US will remain at the top of the Ishiba administration's diplomatic agenda," Xiang added.

## Boat accident



Rescuers tend to a survivor after a tourist boat capsized off Egypt's Red Sea coast, in Marsa Alam, on Monday. Thirty-three people, including two Chinese tourists, have been rescued so far. Four bodies were recovered, while seven people are still missing. VIA AFP

# Summit: China and Germany key players among G20 members

From page 1

By hosting the summit, Brazil highlighted the Global South's capacity to shape the global agenda. The choice of location was also a reminder that solutions to global challenges must transcend traditional power blocs and draw upon the diverse perspectives and resources of all nations.

Among the G20's key players are China and Germany, two nations whose cooperation remains pivotal in the quest for global stability and shared prosperity. Both countries, represented in Rio by Chinese President Xi Jinping and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, respectively, brought significant influence to the table. Their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the summit underscored the importance of Sino-German collaboration in addressing global challenges and navigating the shifting tides of international trade and geopolitics.

China's role within the G20

cannot be overstated. As the world's second-largest economy, it is a crucial player in promoting global economic stability and development. President Xi's recent statement at the 31st APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Peru resonates deeply in the context of the G20 Summit: "We should tear down the walls impeding the flow of trade, investment, technology and services." These words highlight a fundamental truth: protectionism and economic fragmentation hinder progress, particularly at a time when global challenges demand unity and cooperation.

Many entrepreneurs in Germany, Europe's largest economy, share this perspective. Despite facing challenges from shifting economic conditions and a rise in protectionist measures, the German economy remains committed to open markets and international collaboration. For Germany, embracing China's vision of dismantling barriers to trade and investment is not

just strategic; it is essential for maintaining its economic strength and global competitiveness.

While recent years have brought challenges to Sino-German economic relations — stemming from pandemic disruptions, geopolitical tensions and economic headwinds — there is still tremendous potential for cooperation. In fact, the G20's emphasis on shared prosperity and reform provides a road map for enhanced collaboration.

China and Germany can find common ground in several areas:

Both nations are leaders in renewable energy technologies. Germany's expertise in engineering and manufacturing complements China's capacity for large-scale deployment and innovation. Joint ventures in green hydrogen, wind energy and battery technologies could drive the global transition to a sustainable energy future.

As the world embraces new productive forces, Sino-German partnerships in artificial

intelligence, robotics and digital infrastructure can set standards for innovation while promoting equitable technological development.

Both countries have faced disruptions to supply chains in recent years. By working together to create diversified, resilient networks, China and Germany can ensure stability for their industries and contribute to global economic recovery.

The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty offers an opportunity for Sino-German collaboration in sustainable agriculture, food distribution and addressing rural poverty.

The shared G20 commitment to reforming the United Nations Security Council aligns with Germany's long-standing advocacy for a more inclusive multilateral system. By joining forces, China and Germany can champion a new era of global governance that reflects the realities of the 21st century.

For these opportunities to materialize, both nations must navigate existing tensions and differences constructively. President Xi's call to dismantle barriers is a reminder that cooperation, not confrontation, yields the greatest rewards. Chancellor Scholz, in his own remarks after meeting with President Xi, echoed this sentiment: Together, Germany and China can create prosperity for the growing global community and promote peace and stability.

Germany's export-driven economy has long thrived on international cooperation. As China seeks to deepen its global partnerships, the alignment of these two nations' interests offers a powerful opportunity to bridge divides, counter protectionism and set an example for the rest of the world.

The Rio summit was a reminder that progress is possible even in turbulent times. The G20's achievements have demonstrated that the world's leading economies can come together to address shared challenges, laying

the groundwork for a fairer, more sustainable global order.

Sino-German collaboration, as highlighted during the meeting between Xi and Scholz on the sidelines of this summit, is both a necessity and an opportunity. By deepening their partnership, Germany and China can not only advance their own interests but also contribute to the broader goals of the G20: eradicating poverty, combating climate change and fostering peace.

The road ahead will not be without challenges, but the path forward has been clearly illuminated. The spirit of cooperation displayed in Rio, underpinned by visionary leadership and shared responsibility, offers hope that even in the face of crises and conflicts, reason can prevail. Let us seize this moment to build a world where prosperity, inclusivity and sustainability are within reach of all.

The author is chairman of the Board of the German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade (BWA). The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Seeking blessings



People light butter lamps and pray for blessings to celebrate the Butter Lamp Festival at Kumbum Monastery in Xining, Qinghai province, on Monday. The annual festival is held on the 25th day of the 10th month according to the Tibetan calendar to commemorate Tsong Khapa, a master of Tibetan Buddhism. MA MINGYAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Deans share insights on role of business education in future

Collaborative EMBA program serves as a bridge connecting China and the US

By ZHAO YIMENG and JIANG CHENGLONG

Business education is increasingly vital to prepare future leaders with strong soft skills, cultural sensitivity and critical thinking abilities in today's globalized and technology-driven world, deans of global top management schools said.

Liu Qiao, dean of Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, and Francesca Cornelli, dean of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, shared their insights in an exclusive interview with China Daily on the current value of business education amid challenges posed by the geopolitical landscape and rapidly evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Both emphasized strengthening future collaboration between the two business schools, applauding the partnership's role as a bridge that helps China and the United States find more common ground through consistent academic exchange and cross-cultural communication.

Their schools marked the 10th anniversary of the Guanghua-Kellogg Executive MBA Program earlier this month. The program, jointly launched by the two schools in 2014, secured 12th position in its first appearance in the global EMBA programs ranking released by Financial Times last month.

Despite debates about the value of business education, Cornelli said that today's complex world makes business education degrees like MBA more crucial than ever.

"An MBA teaches you how to deal

with unknown challenges," she said. It equips students with a guiding "northern star", empowering them to lead in uncertain times, respond to new obstacles and view disruptions — whether due to technological advancements or cultural shifts — as opportunities rather than setbacks, she said.

Although analytical skills are foundational, especially as fields such as AI and data science gain prominence, the leader of the Kellogg school — one of the top business schools in the US — highlighted that technical expertise alone is insufficient for effective leadership.

Modern leaders must use soft skills to bridge understanding between technical experts and other stakeholders within an organization. For instance, while a scientist may be deeply versed in AI, it is the leader's role to connect with them, understand their perspective and integrate their insights into a broader vision, she said.

The dean took a practical course at Kellogg as an example, which she said teaches MBA students how to use AI tools such as ChatGPT to facilitate coding. The course does not aim to turn business students into expert coders, but rather helps them understand the logic of coding and gain the skills to communicate effectively with technical teams.

AI may not replace humans, but humans who work with AI will replace humans who don't know how to work with AI, she said, stressing that business education aims to integrate business with other disciplines and help scientists innovate and transform their

achievements into real business opportunities.

In addition, Guanghua's dean Liu pointed out that critical thinking has become an essential skill for business leaders, especially as AI tools such as ChatGPT make information and answers more accessible than ever.

"I think what we really need right now is people who can identify problems — especially most relevant and important problems," he said, adding that critical thinking is as crucial as knowledge and experience in enabling leaders to discern real issues.

The structure of the GK program fosters the skill of thinking by bringing together students from diverse backgrounds who share different perspectives, Liu said, adding that as students interact with peers globally in the same classroom, they develop the ability to think critically and respect diverse viewpoints.

One of the unique features of the program is the global network, which is enhanced during students' studies at Kellogg and through global electives offered by other partner schools, Liu said. Students can work with peers from Asia, Europe and the Americas, fostering mutual respect and adaptability that extends far beyond specific cultural boundaries.

Echoing Liu, Cornelli said globalization has created a highly interconnected business world where leaders should communicate across cultures with sensitivity and inclusivity.

Emphasis on cultural awareness is particularly crucial in multinational companies, where leaders often face the challenge of uniting employees from vastly different backgrounds.

Acknowledging and respecting these differences can prevent conflicts within teams, enabling lead-

ers to build inclusive environments where diverse voices are heard and valued.

"You need to inspire people and have people to follow even when they disagree, because you're never going to have everybody agree with you," Cornelli said.

Leaders need to create a discourse that "celebrates diversity", allowing for strong but respectful disagreements, which is valuable in an increasingly polarized society, she added.

Programs such as GK EMBA are important for preparing leaders who can navigate cultural differences and work effectively across borders.

"It's very important to send out leaders who understand each other's culture and can see what that can bring," Cornelli said.

Both she and Liu said the program is a key initiative for advancing cross-cultural understanding and sustaining a constructive partnership between China and the US in business education.

"We're seeing some kind of decoupling in science and technology between the US and China. So this is why we even value this partnership with Kellogg, because we believe that exchanges between two schools and more communications between two peoples will help both countries find common ground," Liu said.

By leveraging each other's strengths, such partnerships help foster mutual understanding and offer a pathway toward beneficial outcomes, Liu said, hoping to strengthen the long-standing collaboration that started a decade ago.

Zhai Jiayi contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn

## Girl garners attention for unique martial arts skill

By YANG JUN in Guiyang yangjun@chinadaily.com.cn

Ten-year-old Liu Shuhan, a girl from a rural village in Bijie, Guizhou province, has drawn public attention for her skillful balance on the soft rim of a plastic basin — a feat many liken to the martial art *qinggong*.

A short video shot by her father went viral on social media. With sandbags on her legs, the girl pauses, steadies herself and then hops onto the basin's edge, where she walks, remarkably, without wobbling.

Viewers have called her control "true martial arts skill," with some even analyzing how it's possible for a 32-kilogram child to balance on the narrow edge of an 8-kg basin.

For Shuhan, walking on the edge is just a daily practice. Every day

before and after school, she practices kung fu for a while.

Her father, a martial arts enthusiast named Liu Yong, noticed her talent when she was 6 years old. With no formal training, she could perform basic movements with ease, such as splits and the "Chaotian Kick," a one-legged stance with her other leg lifted parallel to her head. Inspired, the two have practiced together, following online tutorials.

"I want to be a martial artist," he recalled her telling him.

Over time, the girl developed a deep passion for the discipline.

The youngest of three children, Shuhan joins her siblings each morning as her father helps them strap on 1.3-kg sandbags for a 1-kilometer run. Despite a disability caused by a car accident, Liu cares

for his family and works as a security guard for a local cooperative with government assistance.

"I hope that martial arts can help my children grow up strong. This is what I, as a father, should do," he told China Daily.

After Shuhan's videos gained attention, a martial arts teacher from Weining county offered the girl free lessons. Now she trains every weekend and on holidays, mastering martial arts techniques, including her signature basin walk, a technique used in Shaolin and Wudang schools.

Martial arts has given Shuhan confidence and dreams for the future. She even performed at her school's Children's Day event, drawing admiration from peers and teachers alike. After school, she often asks her father to teach her new moves.

"The best part is that she finds joy in it and truly enjoys practicing kung fu," Liu said.

Since gaining online fame, some people have invited her to train in private clubs in cities such as Beijing, but Liu has declined these offers.

"She's still young," he said. "I'd prefer she attends a martial arts school to fully develop her potential and fulfill her dream of becoming a martial artist."

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.



Online See more by scanning the code.

## FAST discovery of pulsars exceeds 1,000

By YAN DONGJIE yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

The number of pulsars discovered by China's Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope has exceeded 1,000, surpassing the total number of pulsars discovered by all other international telescopes over the past seven years, the National Astronomical Observatories of China announced on Tuesday.

These pulsars include a large number of millisecond pulsars and pulsar binaries, enriching the diversity and quantity of known pulsars, which is of great significance for understanding the formation and evolution of pulsars, said Zhu Weiwei, chief scientist at the FAST Operation and Development Center.

Pulsars are the remnants of massive stars that have died. Due to their high density, rapid rotation and strong magnetic fields, they are considered "natural laboratories" for studying many frontier astronomical issues.

The discovery of the first pulsar in 1967 proved the existence of neutron stars, earning a Nobel Prize in 1974. The discovery of the binary pulsar in 1974 provided indirect evidence of the existence of gravitational wave radiation, winning the Nobel Prize in 1993.

"Observing pulsars allows us to test general relativity, detect low-frequency gravitational waves and provide crucial data for theoretical research in pulsar physics," Zhu said.

FAST made its first pulsar discovery in 2017. Since its official opening in 2020, the telescope has averaged more than 5,000 hours of observation time per year.

Since 2021, it has been open to international applications, with about half its observation time allocated to open projects, Zhu said.

A team led by NAOC researcher Han Jinlin has been conducting a pulsar survey of the Galactic plane since 2020, discovering over 750 pulsars to date.

Han said that the team's discoveries have provided key evidence of faint pulsars in the Milky Way. The millisecond pulsars and pulsar binaries found in the Galactic star field offer new insight for understanding the still-debated evolutionary pathways of binary stars and serve as excellent probes for monitoring gravitational waves.

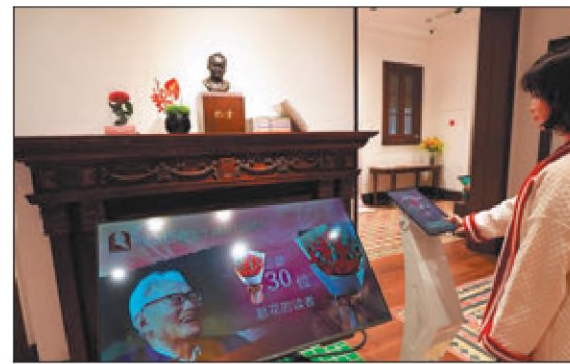
"The FAST discoveries include many of the weakest and lowest luminosity pulsars known, giving new information about the low end of the pulsar radio luminosity function," said Dick Manchester, a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.

Xu Renxin, a professor at Peking University, believes that scientific research related to pulsars perfectly embodies the fundamental principles of quantum theory and relativity. The construction of the world's largest and most sensitive single-dish radio telescope, the China Sky Eye, has ushered in a new era of radio astronomy research.

Dai Zigao, a professor at the University of Science and Technology of China, said that there are still many key issues in the field of pulsar research that remain unresolved. The China Sky Eye is aimed at observing and studying these critical issues.

"In the future, the China Sky Eye will explore ways to enhance spatial resolution and play an important role in more areas such as fast radio bursts. It is expected to make more significant achievements, such as eventually detecting nanohertz gravitational wave signals, revealing the origins of fast radio bursts and discovering black hole-neutron star binaries," he said.

## Remembering Ba



A visitor pays tribute to Chinese literary giant Ba Jin by presenting digital flowers to mark his 120th birthday at the Ba Jin Library in Shanghai on Monday. ZHANG HENGWEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Long March 12 to debut from new space complex

By ZHAO LEI zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

China's newest carrier rocket, the Long March 12, is scheduled to make its debut flight, which will also be the first launch at the new Hainan International Commercial Aerospace Launch Center, the nation's first spaceport dedicated to facilitating commercial operations.

The first Long March 12 was moved on Tuesday morning to the No 2 launch service tower at the new space complex in Hainan province's coastal city of Wenchang, the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology, the rocket model's developer, said in a brief news release, noting the maiden flight will take place in the near future.

The Long March 12 is the first Chinese rocket with a diameter of 3.8 meters; most Chinese rockets have a diameter of 3.35 meters. A wider body means the rocket can contain more propellants than 3.35-meter-wide models, giving it greater carrying capacity.

It has two stages with a combined height of more than 60 meters. Propelled by six liquid oxygen-kerosene-fueled engines, the model is capable of transporting spacecraft with a combined weight of about 10 metric tons to a low-Earth orbit or 6 tons of satellites to a typical sun-synchronous orbit at

an altitude of 700 kilometers, according to the Shanghai academy, a subsidiary of State-owned conglomerate China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp.

The Hainan International Commercial Aerospace Launch Center is a joint venture of the Hainan provincial government and three State-owned space conglomerates — China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp and China Satellite Network Group.

Construction of the center, which began in July 2022, was undertaken by China Aerospace Construction Group.

Its No 1 launch service tower was completed in late December and is specifically tasked with servicing Long March 8 carrier rockets.

The second tower was finished in early June. It is capable of servicing more than 10 types of liquid-propellant carrier rockets, including those in the Long March family and models developed by private companies.

After starting formal operation, the new spaceport will become the fifth ground-based launch complex in China and the first dedicated to facilitating commercial space missions, generally paid for by a business entity, rather than government-funded programs.



From left: Boehringer Ingelheim pledges unwavering support for innovation in Shanghai. Straumann has established a production, academic and research base in Shanghai. Thermo Fisher has been expanding investment in Shanghai over the past few years. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Biomedicine industry growing in Shanghai

Globally leading biopharmaceutical companies favoring city as place to set up regional operations

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanghai, as one of the pioneer cities in China to foster the biopharmaceutical industry, has witnessed substantial growth in both the market scale and comprehensive strength of such enterprises, with many indicators ranking highest nationwide in recent years.

In 2023, the overall market scale of the biopharmaceutical industry in Shanghai reached 933.7 billion yuan (\$128.95 billion), an increase of 4.9 percent year-on-year. The total industrial output value increased from 131.9 billion yuan in 2019 to 186 billion yuan in 2023. There are seven industrial parks for such businesses scattered across Shanghai. They include Pudong New Area, Fengxian district, Songjiang district and Baoshan district.

Since 2021, companies in Shanghai received the approvals to market 26 first-in-class innovative drugs and 42 innovative medical devices. In 2024 alone, six first-in-class innovative drugs received marketing approvals, ranked second in China.

The city also saw an influx of investment projects established by globally leading pharmaceutical and medical device developers. Figures from the Shanghai government show that 18 of the top 20 international pharmaceutical and medical device companies have established regional headquarters, production facilities or research and development centers in the city.

Over the past few years, Shanghai has been accelerating steps to become a globally influential innovation hub and industry cluster for biopharmaceutical businesses.

In 2022, the biopharmaceutical industry has been recognized as one of three pioneering industries of the city.

In July, Shanghai unveiled a slew of measures to support innovation along the entire industry chain of the biopharmaceutical sector. For instance, the city will strengthen efforts to develop cutting-edge biomedical technologies, such as gene and cell therapies, mRNA, synthetic biology and regenerative medicine. The city will also support artificial intelligence technology to empower drug R&D, and provide more intelligent application scenarios.

At the end of September, Shanghai released a three-year action plan to help

biopharmaceutical businesses to enhance their global competitiveness between 2024 and 2027. Shanghai also introduced a slew of measures to support related business development, for instance, setting up a fund of funds for the biopharmaceutical industry.

It is forecasted that biopharmaceutical enterprises in Shanghai will have a stronger presence in the international market by the end of 2027. The export value of medical devices from Shanghai will exceed 50 billion yuan, with two or three enterprises achieving overseas sales exceeding 10 billion yuan.

## Long-term investment

Thermo Fisher Scientific has been in China since 1982. In 2008, Thermo Fisher marked its expansion by setting up its China headquarters in the Pudong New Area of Shanghai. Over the past 16 years, the company has been increasing investment in the city to better embrace emerging opportunities in China.

In 2013, Thermo Fisher established the China Innovation Center in Shanghai to strengthen local R&D for China and emerging markets. In 2018, the company established the Bioprocess Design Center in Shanghai to accelerate localized innovation.

In 2020, Thermo Fisher's largest and most advanced Customer Experience Center settled in Shanghai. This demonstrates the company's commitment to working with customers and local academic and research ecosystem partners to enhance R&D capabilities, according to Miguel Faustino, president of Thermo Fisher Scientific China.

Faustino said that factors such as Shanghai's robust policy support, comprehensive biopharmaceutical industry ecosystem, abundant clinical resources, skilled professionals, a gathering place for leading players and thriving capital and data-related industries have all played roles in encouraging Thermo Fisher to expand its investments in the city.

Thermo Fisher said it will continue to bolster development of the biopharmaceutical industry in Shanghai by providing advanced products and services. It will use its expertise to support local partners to accelerate pharmaceutical innovation across all stages of drug development, helping customers simplify all stages of drug development and

**18**  
of the top 20  
international pharmaceutical and medical device companies have established regional headquarters, production facilities or research and development centers in Shanghai

**\$128.95**  
billion  
overall market scale of the biopharmaceutical industry in Shanghai in 2023

provide treatment plans for patients more quickly.

"We believe that with the implementation of a series of industrial support policies and the further opening-up and internationalization of the market, Shanghai will play a more important role in global economic development and technological innovation," said Faustino.

"Thermo Fisher also looks forward to establishing closer cooperative relationships with governments in Shanghai and other enterprises to jointly promote the high-level development of the city," he added.

## Serving as a cornerstone

Straumann Group, a global leader in oral health, wellness and aesthetics headquartered in Switzerland, has increased its investment in China in recent years. One of its key projects involves establishing a production, academic and research base in Shanghai's Minhang district.

This is the group's largest investment project in China, with a total investment exceeding 1.2 billion yuan. It focuses on production, research and education related to dental implants.

The first phase of the project has been completed and the second phase is being planned, according to the company.

"We chose Shanghai for this high-end integrated implant project due to the city's favorable policies for foreign enterprises. We selected Minhang because of the excellent services provided by the district government and the substantial policy support it offers," said Li Congzhen, general manager of Straumann China.

Shanghai is also a city that can quickly access the most advanced academic directions and concepts from abroad. The local government encourages innovation and supports and promotes innovative enterprises and projects, she added.

Li said that the company's decision to establish the base in Shanghai is forward-looking.

"The base currently focuses on local manufacturing but, in the future, we will certainly engage in local innovation, developing implants suitable for the anatomical structures of Asians.

"This requires not only manufacturing talent but also research talent to drive local R&D, and Shanghai has many nationally renowned universities that can cultivate such talent," Li said.

She believes that in the next three years, through local manufacturing and innovation, the group will be able to introduce more products suitable for Chinese consumers.

"We hope this base will facilitate collaboration with more research institutions and universities. Once local products are launched, we also hope they will first be used and receive feedback from hospitals and institutions in Shanghai," Li said.

This year marks Straumann's 25th anniversary of development in China. The group's main business areas in the country include implants, orthodontics, digital healthcare and biomaterials, with implants being the largest segment.

China introduced an implant system volume-based procurement policy in 2023, providing an effective way to enhance the affordability of dental implants for the public and promoting implants as the most effective treatment for missing teeth.

This has led to an increasing number of people choosing implants to address their dental issues. "The Shanghai base ensures that Straumann can better serve Chinese consumers with its product supply," Li said.

In recent years, the Shanghai government has also introduced a series of related policies, raising public awareness of oral health. These policies help people access excellent treatment services and options when they face oral health issues, which "presents an opportunity for industry development", Li said.

At the same time, "we recognize certain challenges within the industry that require collaboration among enterprises,

various levels of government and educational institutions to overcome", she said.

For instance, there is a shortage of high-quality dentists capable of handling more complex procedures. This has created a significant demand for relevant professional education, and Straumann hopes to contribute in this regard.

With the development of digital technology, Straumann is also transitioning from a traditional manufacturing company to a digital enterprise. The goal is to enable more doctors to perform implant surgeries more easily through digital empowerment, leading to better treatment outcomes such as optimal implant solutions, restoration plans and aesthetic results.

"China has unique advantages in developing digitalization, with the largest pool of AI and digital talent in the world," Li said.

In 2023, Straumann acquired a digital product line in Pudong New Area; a local startup company specializing in intraoral scanners. The company's products have received recognition in many countries for their technology and cost-effectiveness.

## Contributing expertise

The 2024 Forum on Innovation of Shanghai Foreign-Invested Pharmaceutical Enterprises was held on Nov 18. Mohammed Tawil, president and CEO of Boehringer Ingelheim Greater China, delivered a keynote speech at the event. He introduced Boehringer Ingelheim's innovative concepts, as well as the company's practices and achievements in using digital technologies to aid drug R&D, explore digital therapeutics and promote the digital transformation of the supply chain.

He said that China is one of the focus markets and an innovation hub for the company. Operating in China for nearly 30 years, the company has achieved a full value chain footprint including R&D, manufacturing, commercial operation and external innovation collaboration.

The company is pleased to see Shanghai utilizing pilot projects to promote cross-border data flows and explore the application of big data in drug R&D, healthcare and medical insurance, he said.

"Boehringer Ingelheim is willing to contribute our experience and practices to jointly promote the high-quality development of the biopharmaceutical industry," said Tawil.



A bird's-eye view of Zhangjiang area in the Pudong New Area of Shanghai, which is home to a large number of foreign biopharmaceutical companies.

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The booth of Apple Inc at the China International Supply Chain Expo. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## Top executives in Beijing for supply chain expo

By CHENG YU  
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Tim Cook, CEO of Apple Inc, reaffirmed the critical role of China's supply chains in supporting the US tech giant during his recent visit to China, aligning with other multinational companies in committing to the Chinese market and integrating more deeply into global industrial and supply networks.

In a visit before the opening of the China International Supply Chain Expo, Cook said that the company is "very committed to China", citing that he has visited the country three times so far this year.

When asked about Apple's future relationship with China, Cook told China Daily: "I think it will only get

better. I always do something special in China."

China is one of Apple's largest supply-chain providers and one of its most important international markets. More than 80 percent of Apple's 200 major suppliers have production in the country.

In Cook's previous visit to China last month, he also said that Apple will continue to increase investment in the country and contribute to the high-quality development of supply chains.

Cook joined a group of top executives from companies at home and abroad, including Rio Tinto Plc, Corning Inc and Chinese computer maker Lenovo Group, which are participating at this year's CISCE, which kicked off in Beijing on Tuesday.

Jason Juang, managing director

of HP Greater China, told China Daily: "As one of the most dynamic and important markets in the world, China plays an important role in HP's global supply chain."

US tech company HP has always adhered to the development strategy of "in China, for China", and continuously introduced advanced technology and management expertise into the Chinese market, he said.

"We will continue to provide consumers here with continuously iterated high-quality products, boost the digital upgrading of industrial and supply chains, and actively support the construction and development of China's information technology industry," he added.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the

Communist Party of China — a meeting key to the nation's reforms and modernization progress — said that China will further deepen reform and opening-up, and facilitate international cooperation in industrial and supply chains.

Zhang Qingwei, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, said during a recent meeting that China is both a participant and beneficiary of global industrial and supply chains, as well as a firm defender and builder of the chains.

The country will integrate more deeply with the global industrial and supply chain system and firmly oppose protectionism and any form of decoupling, while maintaining the desired outcome of the global public good, he said.

# Push on to up consumption's GDP share

Expert: Protectionism, decoupling would end up damaging all parties

By ZHOU LANXU  
zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

**2 trillion yuan**

China is seeking to increase the share of consumption in GDP to more than half within the next decade in order to achieve a smooth transition in growth engines amid property sector adjustments and rising risks of slowing global trade, said a top economist.

Zhu Min, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund and former deputy governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, warned that the share of world trade in GDP could drop due to the United States' potential tariffs.

Speaking at the 2024 US-China People's Dialogue in Beijing, Zhu said that the Chinese economy now faces challenges on both external and domestic fronts, ranging from low global economic growth and sluggish world trade to real estate oversupply and local government debt issues.

"We were expecting (US president-elect) Donald Trump's trade policy in particular. Over the next few years, the share of global trade in (the world's) GDP will slow down. So, in three years we estimate it will fall by about 3 percent," Zhu said.

While it is too early to predict an accurate outcome, Zhu said that the potential tariffs would be bad for both sides and the world, as inflation has become a major political issue in the US while Chinese exporters would need to further diversify export destinations and strengthen cost management.

Equity markets in Asia and Europe dropped on Tuesday following Trump's threat to impose a 25 percent tariff on products from Mexico and Canada and an additional 10 percent tariff on goods from China.

"To me, economically, a 60 percent tariff is not a real tariff — it's simply a way to force China to decouple from the US or to push the US to decouple from China," Zhu said, referring to an earlier rate mentioned by the former US leader.

"Decoupling is the real risk. If trade is divided into two blocs, other things will follow — capital flows, for example, have already dropped to almost zero between the US and China. Technology transfers between the two countries are also almost zero today.

"This will lead to more political

expected funds to be allocated in the coming years for local authorities' infrastructure investment

issues and greater uncertainties. We must work hard to avoid this kind of situation and prevent a return to a Cold War-style divide."

On Monday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang called for opposing all forms of decoupling and firmly upholding stable and unimpeded global industrial and supply chains, while pledging to increase countercyclical adjustments to promote a sustained economic upturn.

"It's a bumpy road ahead. That said, I think China is comfortable with the situation and well-prepared to handle it," Zhu said, stressing that China has identified three potential new growth engines to replace the three old ones — namely, infrastructure investment, real estate and exports.

Zhu said consumption will become the primary focus and the most important driver of growth, while the transition of manufacturing into high-value and digitalized sectors and the push toward carbon neutrality will also serve as key engines.

If China can increase the share of consumption in GDP from 48 percent to 58 percent in next 10 years, that would be a significant achievement. It's not easy, but the government is determined to make it happen, Zhu said.

He said the government is committed to ensuring that income growth is stronger than GDP growth rates, adding that more efforts are needed to open up the services sector to unleash consumption potential of services.

"The services sector will become a major area for foreign investment, joint ventures and Chinese companies alike. Twenty-some years ago, everything was focused on manufacturing. Now, I think the services sector will be the next big opportunity."

Zhu added that China's recent stimulus package is working and further reforms and policies are needed, as he expects 2 trillion yuan (\$276 billion) to be allocated in the coming years for local authorities' infrastructure investment and 2.5 trillion yuan from the monetary side to support the construction of unfinished real estate projects.

## Guangdong, HK sign \$14b economic, trade deals

By ZHENG CAIXIONG  
zhengcaixiong@chinadaily.com.cn

South China's Guangdong province and Hong Kong signed 126 economic and trade cooperation projects valued at more than 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) at the Guangdong-Hong Kong Deepening Economic Trade and Investment Cooperation Conference, demonstrating further integrated development of the two regions.

The projects signed at the event, held in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong on Monday, mainly involved commerce, investment, financial cooperation, modern logistics, innovative science and technology, green development, low-altitude economy, culture, tourism and sports.

Huang Kunming, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, urged Hong Kong enterprises to strengthen their confidence, seize opportunities, root themselves in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and actively invest in industries and technology in Guangdong in the coming months.

Guangdong and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region should join hands to expand in the global market, he said.

"The Guangdong provincial government will continue to spare no effort to support the development of Hong Kong enterprises in Guangdong, vigorously promote the construction of a first-class business environment, and strive to build a sound market, industry, enterprise and service system, allowing investors from around the world to come and develop their business with peace of mind," said Huang, who is also Party secretary of Guangdong.

Huang made the remarks during his keynote speech at the conference.

John Lee Ka-chiu, chief executive of the HKSAR, said the business community of Guangdong and Hong Kong has, for decades, been a participant, beneficiary, and contributor to economic, trade, and investment cooperation between the two regions.

"The GBA has now become one

of the most open and economically vibrant regions in China, bringing unlimited opportunities for investors from around the world," Lee said.

He said Hong Kong would continue to strengthen win-win cooperation with Guangdong to build the GBA into an international first-class bay area and world-class city cluster, as well as promote the formation of more effective economic and trade cooperation results.

Zheng Yanxiong, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, said the central government attaches great importance to the construction of the GBA and shows great concern and care for it.

"Guangdong and Hong Kong can rebuild an upgraded and innovative cooperation model based on the previously successful creation of the 'stores in the front, factories in the back' economic cooperation mode, make good use of international platforms, innovation development center, world manufacturing base and the vast mainland markets to

introduce various high-end global resources, deeply expand the international market to better serve the country's higher-standard opening-up to the outside world," he said.

Jean-Christophe Pointeau, senior vice-president of Pfizer Global and president of Pfizer China, said he was very proud to be a part of the development of China's healthcare industry.

Since 2022, Pfizer has conducted nearly 100 clinical trials in Guangdong, of which 26 are currently underway. Through GBA's preferential policies, two of Pfizer's products have been introduced and benefit patients in the GBA, he said.

Peter Wong, chairman of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp Ltd, said the GBA has gathered the talent, funding, market and policy support needed for innovation and has a first-class business environment.

"As a financial institution, we support the growth of science and technology innovation enterprises through services such as innovation banks and new economy credit funds," he said.

## Petrochemical SMEs encouraged to accelerate tech innovation

By ZHENG XIN  
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

Private enterprises in China that have strong momentum in innovation, research and development, have significantly contributed to the country's petrochemical industry during the past few years, with many evolving into world champions in niche markets, said industry experts.

Currently accounting for 90 percent of all large-scale enterprises in the sector by the end of 2023, China's private petrochemical and chemical enterprises have been fostering a new era of high-quality development, employing 80 percent of the industry's workforce and generating over 50 percent of its revenue, according to Li Yunpeng, Party secretary of the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Federation.

According to the China Petroleum and Chemical Private Enterprises Development Report, recently published by the federation, among the 1,523 recognized "little giant" enter-

prises specializing in advanced technologies, 90 percent are private, with 1,371 companies originating from the sector. This underscores the substantial presence of high-quality private enterprises, it said.

The term "little giant" refers to small and medium-sized enterprises that typically specialize in niche sectors, command high market share and boast strong innovative capacity.

Private enterprises now encompass the entire industrial chain in refining and chemical sectors. Notably, private firms in the fine chemicals segment command 80 percent of production capacity, cementing their critical role. In 2023, private enterprises represented over 30 percent of production capacity in both refining and basic chemical fields, the report stated.

Wang Jingmin, secretary-general of the federation's SME working committee, said many private companies have become world champions in specific fields, leveraging

technological accumulation to secure leadership in niche markets.

Among the country's four major petrochemical provinces, Shandong's private enterprises dominate refining and tire manufacturing, while private companies in Guangdong possess significant domestic and international influence. Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces now lead in new chemical materials, fine chemicals and specialized chemical equipment manufacturing, she said.

The top 100 private petroleum and chemical companies employed 763,000 people in 2023, a 16.64-fold increase compared to 2014. Their tax contributions also surged, with total taxes reaching 294.2 billion yuan (\$40.54 billion) in 2023, an 11.2-fold increase since 2014.

Despite steady growth in production and overall industry stability, the economic benefits of the sector remain under pressure, said the report.

In the first nine months of 2024, the sector's revenue reached 12.02



Technicians check products at a private chemical fiber enterprise in Tongxiang, Zhejiang province. XU YU / XINHUA

trillion yuan, up 3.5 percent year-on-year. However, profits fell by 10.2 percent, reflecting challenges such as rising production pressures, market difficulties and lower-than-expected returns, especially for private SMEs, the

report showed.

"Structural issues such as product and service homogenization, as well as gaps in modern corporate governance, are hindering private enterprise growth. These challenges demand immediate attention," said Wang.

### Briefly

#### Zhejiang to build bulk commodity hub

Zhejiang province in East China is set to build a "bulk commodity resource allocation hub" within its free trade zone, according to a plan released by the Ministry of Commerce and the provincial government. The hub will be built primarily in Zhoushan, an archipelago city known for its maritime industries, and the neighboring city of Ningbo will also be involved.

#### Insurance sector sees adequate solvency

China's insurance sector maintained steady operations and adequate solvency in the third quarter. The average comprehensive solvency ratio of the country's insurers was 197.4 percent by the end of September, and their average core solvency ratio was 135.1 percent, said the National Financial Regulatory Administration.

## BUSINESS



Consumers check out Huawei Mate 70 smartphones at a store in Yantai, Shandong province, on Tuesday. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Huawei unveils Mate 70 handsets

New series seen as 'most powerful Mate in history' and 'smartest' flagship product

By CHENG YU  
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Huawei Technologies Co on Tuesday unveiled its Mate 70 smartphone series, dubbed by several industry insiders "the most powerful Mate ever", directly intensifying competition in the premium handset market.

Industry experts said a breakthrough has been made from operating systems to chips, and it is likely to extend beyond smartphones, once again showing that the suppression of China's tech sector by the United States will only fuel a domestic drive for independent innovation.

At a time when Apple has yet to launch its artificial intelligence features in China, Huawei's Mate 70 series boasts AI-enabled functions, including improved photography, AI gestures and live transcription.

The new smartphone series also marks the first major commercial rollout of HarmonyOS NEXT, a "pure-blood" version of Huawei's own operating system, that does away with roots to the Android system and enables connections with other products like electric cars and watches.

Yu Chengdong, executive director of Huawei, said at a product launch event on Tuesday that the new series is "the most powerful Mate in history" and its "smartest" flagship product.

The price of Huawei's Mate 70 series starts at 5,499 yuan (\$758) for the base model, 6,499 yuan for the Mate 70 Pro, 8,499 yuan for the Mate 70 Pro+ and 11,999 for the Mate 70 RS.

As of Tuesday, there were more than 3 million preorders for the latest flagship series on the Chinese technology company's website.

“US suppression of China's tech industry is counterproductive to global supply chains and will only cause harm to itself.”

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

“It is a major breakthrough moment for Chinese smartphones,” said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, a telecom industry association.

In addition to several new features, Xiang said the Mate 70 series' chips and the per-

formance of applications fully supported by HarmonyOS NEXT were its two spotlights.

Huawei's Mate 70 series is a successor to its Mate 60 series launched by the company in August last year with a surprisingly advanced chip that it said had been completely produced in China.

Though the Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based company did not reveal details of the chips on Tuesday, Xiang said that he had "immense confidence" in Huawei.

“When the outside world generally believes Huawei has hit a dead end, it often surprises us with groundbreaking achievements,” he said.

“Similar breakthroughs have extended from chips to operating systems, and are very likely to go beyond smartphones,” he added.

“US suppression of China's tech industry is counterproductive to global supply chains and will only cause harm to itself,” Xiang emphasized. “Instead, these pressures will only fuel China's drive for more homegrown and independent technological breakthroughs.”

## Smart pig farming helps bring home the bacon

By ZHOU HUIYING in Harbin  
zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn

After eight years of research, a team led by Cang Yan, Chen Chunyu and Qiao Yulong from the college of information and communication engineering at Harbin Engineering University in Heilongjiang province has successfully developed a series of intelligent pig farming robots.

The robots can monitor the growth status of pigs in real time through a mobile app, providing scientific guidance for breeding and raising the animals.

Their scientific and technological achievements have been applied in four smart farming-related listed companies, as well as five centrally-administered State-owned enterprises and small and medium-sized firms, with an expected economic benefit of over 100 million yuan (\$13.78 million).

In early 2016, a friend of Chen showed him a short video about intelligent pig farming technology overseas.

“In the video, the foreign farmers could scan and instantly obtain the weight and quantity of pigs via intelligent cameras, enabling real-time monitoring of pig growth,” said Chen. “It was like being able to tell a person's weight with just a glance, which sounded a bit unimaginable.”

The short video greatly aroused his interest.

After that year's spring semester began, Chen invited Cang and Qiao, who specialize in image processing research, to approach the idea with a trial-and-error attitude.

They used a 3D camera to capture images of two differently sized crocodile models and, after analysis using deep learning methods, were pleasantly surprised to find that they could identify the size of the reptiles.

Although there were significant discrepancies in weight measurement, they saw the power of deep learning potential in intelligent robots.

“Through deep learning, intelligent robots can continuously grow like humans,” said Chen. “We believed that by constantly inputting a large amount of pig growth data and refining the deep learning methods, we could definitely achieve the goal of intelligent pig farming.”

In 2017, the team began to conduct small-scale experiments and data collection at pig farms in Beijing and Jilin province.

“We achieved technological breakthroughs in remote data transmission, massive data storage, cleaning and other information collection processes. We could remotely collect and analyze data on pig growth in Harbin. Differences in the forms of pigs' lives can lead to significant differences in identification results, and different postures such as standing and lying down can result in different weights captured and analyzed by the camera,” she said.

Over the past few years, the team has overcome challenges in flexible nonrigid body measurements and dense small target recognition.

In 2020, the team collaborated with Beijing Focused Loong Technology Co Ltd, an innovative firm focused on the digitalization of the livestock industry, to develop their first intelligent inspection robot named Farm Watcher, that can accurately identify the number of pigs and the weight of each pig at a glance in complex environments.

“By simply using a mobile app every day, the farmers can see the growth curve of pigs in a pen and accurately track the weight changes of each pig, helping the farmers promptly determine whether pigs should be sent to market, whether they are sick, and their daily feed intake, thus truly achieving intelligent pig farming. To accurately assess the weight, physical condition, growth and development parameters of pigs, as well as production parameters such as the number of livestock in a farm through noncontact means, it ultimately boils down to breakthroughs in basic scientific research,” Cang said.

“So far, we have sold over 6,000 intelligent farming robots, including intelligent inspection robots and pig vending machines, to different regions across China, with a revenue of 200 million yuan,” said Gao Yanhong, the company's chief operating officer. “We are also actively expanding overseas markets and have successfully implemented projects in countries and regions such as Vietnam, Japan, Europe and the United States.”

In addition, the team is also focusing on research on fundamental scientific issues such as the strong dependence of artificial intelligence methods on data and exploring the construction of universal large language models for intelligent farming to support the development of new quality agricultural productivity.

“We will continue to strengthen technological innovation and contribute our strength to the high-quality development of modern agriculture in Heilongjiang,” Cang added.

## Report: Chinese companies accelerating global expansion

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese companies are accelerating their push for global expansion, driven by national strategies, capital flows and the restructuring of global supply chains, according to a new report.

The report, released by Deloitte China on Tuesday, showed that in the 2024 fiscal year ending on May 31, the firm assisted more than 2,000 Chinese companies in expanding their businesses across 96 countries.

After years of development, Chinese companies expanding overseas are shifting from merely seeking new markets to integrating global supply chains and building international brands, the report added.

Despite the rapid acceleration, the road to globalization is not without obstacles. According to Deloitte, the instability of international markets, increasing compliance requirements, and fierce competition in foreign markets present significant risks for Chinese firms. Additionally, adapting to local cultures and navigating different regulatory environments also pose challenges to companies venturing abroad.

Alan Wang, Deloitte China Northern Region managing partner, highlighted that the pace of Chinese companies' internationalization has significantly increased over the last few years.

“The past two to three years have witnessed a sharp rise in Chinese businesses expanding overseas. We've seen that flights to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Mexico are packed with Chinese entrepreneurs and investors looking to tap into new opportunities,” Wang said.



An aerial view of a wind farm in Yichang, Hubei province. PENG QIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

He noted one of the key drivers for Chinese firms' international push is the search for new growth opportunities outside of China's domestic market. “In many industries, domestic competition has become fierce. Companies are increasingly looking abroad for new avenues of growth,” Wang added, stressing the importance of the “out or out” strategy — essentially, firms must go global or risk being left behind.

“Since the beginning of 2023, nearly all Chinese companies around us regard going global as a very important strategic decision,” said Collin Jin, deputy president of CPA Australia's East and Central China Committee. “Due to China's massive production capacity, the domestic market may face competition in many niche sectors. Thus, a rising number of Chinese companies choose to leverage their strong production and service capabilities to explore broader markets.”

“From the perspective of future development opportunities, Chinese companies particularly need to focus on overseas markets, especially key destinations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states, the Middle East, and Central and South America,” he added.

In fact, Chinese companies are also finding that international expansion is fraught with challenges, including compliance concerns and brand building.

Wang noted that ESG considerations are becoming increasingly crucial for Chinese firms operating abroad. “In many countries, the focus is shifting from purely profit-driven goals to considering the impact of business on the environment and society. Chinese firms need to integrate these concerns into their strategies if they are to succeed internationally,” he noted.

Given the continued growth trend, Wang expects the momentum behind Chinese companies' global expansion will continue for the foreseeable future.

The focus, however, will shift from merely entering new markets to refining business operations and organizational structures for better efficiency and sustainability. Companies will need to build stronger global supply chains and focus on long-term resilience rather than short-term market entry, he added.

According to the report, Deloitte's ongoing efforts to support Chinese companies in their global endeavors include tailored solutions that address everything from business model design to digital transformation, and organizational restructuring.

With its extensive global network and expertise, Deloitte said it is positioning itself as a key partner for Chinese companies aiming to thrive in an increasingly complex and competitive international landscape.

## BUSINESSFOCUS

## CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Tech-driven goods diversify export landscape

Chinese exporters expand presence in well-established, emerging markets

By ZHONG NAN  
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

At a workshop of Ningbo Kaifeng Electric Appliance Co Ltd, rows of intelligent power connectors move smoothly along an assembly line.

The export value of these intelligent power connectors, which have wireless fast charging functionality on the side and USB interfaces on top, had already exceeded 20 million yuan (\$2.76 million) in the first 10 months of this year.

The power connection products manufacturer, based in Ningbo, East China's Zhejiang province, has developed and launched several intelligent sockets with wireless fast charging features, which are now popular in various countries and regions.

"The demand for intelligent charging products has notably surged this year," said Shen Fengguang, manager of the company's exports unit. "In response, we developed a series of products at different price points to sell to more countries."

From January to October, the total export value of Ningbo Kaifeng's products reached 380 million yuan, marking a 22.7 percent growth year-on-year.

The growing exports reflect a broader trend in China's overall export landscape, where innovative and tech-driven products are increasingly meeting global demand.

Chinese exporters like Ningbo Kaifeng are leveraging innovation, competitive pricing and tailored solutions to expand their presence in both established as well as emerging markets.

To stay competitive and address risks from geopolitical tensions, Chinese exporters have been deepening their engagement in emerging markets, using cross-border e-commerce platforms, investing in green technologies and establishing overseas factories, said Cui Fan, a professor specializing in international trade at the Beijing-based University of International Business and Economics.

Their products, including electric vehicles exported to Brazil and Saudi Arabia, high-end medical equipment shipped to Egypt, Thailand and South Africa, and household appliances sold in Australia, the United States and Europe, are gaining global recognition.

In the first 10 months, China's foreign trade rose 5.2 percent from a year ago to 36.02 trillion yuan, with exports up 6.7 percent and imports up 3.2 percent, said the General Administration of Customs.

Highlighting the country's ongoing industrial upgrade, policy



Two officials from Chengdu Customs inspect an export-bound vehicle to be transported via the China-Europe freight train service in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

support and popularity of tech-intensive green products, Lyu Dalang, director-general of the administration's department of statistics and analysis, said that China is capable of achieving its full-year foreign trade goal of improved quality and stable growth volumes.

Global market demand has increased this year.

In the second half of the year, concerns over potential tariff increases by the United States prompted some importers to stockpile goods, further driving up overseas demand and boosting exports, said Zhou Mi, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

At the same time, China's domestic production has shown stable growth, partly due to increased financial support for manufacturing, said Zhou.

"As a result, the dual drivers of domestic production expansion and international demand growth have led to generally optimistic forecasts for this year's export growth," he added.

China has introduced a series of policies to boost its foreign trade. The government unveiled a slew of policy measures on Nov 21 to promote the steady growth of foreign trade and consolidate economic recovery.

For instance, the country will drive innovative development in green and border trade, attract and facilitate cross-border business travel, enhance maritime transport support for foreign trade, and strengthen employment services for foreign trade enterprises, according to the new policy measure, as outlined in information released by the Ministry of Commerce.



Employees at work in a textile factory in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, in July. ZHONG NAN / CHINA DAILY

This move shows China's continued commitment to fostering new competitive strengths in the global market and advancing mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries, said Chen Bin, deputy director of the expert committee at the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation.

As Chinese manufacturers produce a vast array of machinery and electrical equipment suitable for various industries, from construction to manufacturing, demand has surged from many developing nations for importing machinery and electrical products from China to drive their urbanization and industrialization, he said.

Southwest China's Sichuan province — a vital hub for high-val-

ue manufacturing and exports in western China — exemplifies this growth. Its export of machinery and electrical products, like electric vehicles and aerospace equipment, grew 6.6 percent on a yearly basis to 368.67 billion yuan during the January-October period, accounting for 75.3 percent of the province's total exports, data from Chengdu Customs showed.

One notable example is Sichuan Honghua Petroleum Equipment Co Ltd, a Deyang-based oil drilling equipment manufacturer.

"Since the beginning of this year, we have successively exported multiple sets of complete equipment, with a total import and export value exceeding 1.3 billion yuan, representing a year-on-year growth of over 20 percent," said Lyu Dong, head of the compa-

ny's foreign trade unit.

Guangzhou Sameway Electric Bicycle Co Ltd, an electric bicycle manufacturer in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong province, with 80,000 units in annual production capacity, exported lithium battery mountain bikes and other products worth nearly 45 million yuan in the first three quarters.

The company unveiled its latest long-range electric mountain bike at the 136th China Import and Export Fair, commonly known as the Canton Fair, in Guangzhou that concluded in early November.

Guangzhou Sameway's electric bicycles are powered by motors and lithium batteries, providing riding assistance. They are faster than regular

bicycles and lighter than traditional electric bikes.

"Cycling is a popular sport in Europe and the US, but many cycling routes feature numerous slopes," said Chen Junjun, the company's head for Customs affairs.

"To help more people have fun while cycling, we have conducted extensive research into overseas markets and developed products such as lithium battery mountain bikes, which have been well-received by foreign consumers," said Chen.

To cultivate new growth points, the Chinese bicycle maker is actively expanding its cross-border e-commerce operations and has established a presence in multiple overseas warehouses for cross-border exports located in countries such as the US, Canada, Poland, and Germany. The total value of goods stocked in these facilities exceeds 80 million yuan.

Mechanical and electrical products dominated China's exports between January and October accounting for nearly 60 percent of the total, according to Customs data.

Specifically, exports of automatic data processing equipment and components rose 10.9 percent year-on-year during this period, integrated circuits were up 21.4 percent, while automobiles climbed 20 percent.

The ambitious carbon neutrality goals set by many countries have fueled demand for tech-intensive green products from China, including electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, dual-power trains and energy-efficient appliances, said Chen Zongwang, deputy director-general of the GAC's department of general operation.

In addition to new growth points generated by the tangible growth of the Belt and Road Initiative, free trade agreements like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership will continue to facilitate China's exports of green products and technologies across Asia and beyond, said Chen.

Foreign companies also share the same view.

Milliken & Co, a US specialty chemical and performance materials company, believes that China's complete industrial system, massive market scale and abundant human resources will continue to create export opportunities for multinational corporations in the country.

"Apart from supplying textile materials and chemicals to domestic customers, we also export to markets like South Korea, Singapore, Vietnam and India from our plants in Shanghai and Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province," said Ed Zhao, the group's senior vice-president and managing director for Asia.

Exports of foreign-invested businesses in China amounted to 5.77 trillion yuan from January to October, marking a year-on-year growth of 1.9 percent, according to data from the GAC.

## Water supply project brings accolades for Chinese firm

By ZHONG NAN

In several regions of Africa, towering skyscrapers and sprawling railroads may symbolize progress, but for local communities, the priorities lie elsewhere — clean water, power supply and accessible healthcare.

Projects that directly improve public well-being, such as water supply systems, remain at the forefront of people's concerns.

In areas where daily survival hinges on basics, residents often question the value of high-profile infrastructure when families still wake up at dawn to fetch water or go without electricity for days.

State-owned China Railway 20th Bureau Group Corp, a subsidiary of Beijing-based China Railway Construction Corp Ltd, has responded to that call and sought to address these fundamental needs in the continent.

Earlier this month, the company announced that a large-scale and advanced water supply project had

passed final inspection in Angola's Cabinda province.

Since its completion and commissioning in 2021, the project has met the water needs of over 600,000 people, improving the quality of public drinking water in the region and allowing local residents easy access to clean, convenient drinking water without leaving their homes.

The system's 74 water supply sites now deliver 50,000 cubic meters of water on a daily basis, benefiting 90 percent of the residential areas in Cabinda.

Drinking water safety has long been a major issue in Angola.

The development and use of local water resources have been constrained by a lack of funds and outdated technology, hindering its economic and social development, said Li Zhengfeng, head of CR20G's water supply project in Cabinda.

In the province's Futila area for example, the water supply system was largely nonfunctional for an

extended period due to the aging, dilapidated facilities and insufficient water pressure.

Li said that locals relied solely on a few wells for daily water supply, which couldn't satisfy their needs. Many of them had to get up at 4 am to collect water. Despite these efforts, it was still hard to ensure the quality of water sources.

"As a key project under the Belt and Road Initiative, we have not only been responsible for the normal operation and maintenance of the water plant, but also provided training for employees of the local water company since it became operational in 2021 to ensure efficient, independent operation after handover," he added.

During the operation, CR20G's construction team made more than 10 design variations and scheme optimizations. Due to the scarcity of local resources, nearly 200 types of construction materials and equipment were sourced from China, Portugal and neigh-

boring countries.

Li said that the project has created over 1,000 job opportunities for local residents, imparting advanced management practices and construction experience, and training a group of engineers.

The completion of this project has significantly alleviated residents' water shortages and is anticipated to positively impact local business growth and transportation services, he noted.

Driven by the tangible growth of the BRI, China's efficient supply chain operations and its companies' willingness to expand overseas markets, Chinese companies are well-positioned to conduct business activities in Africa and other emerging markets, said Peng Bo, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

"As globalization accelerates and more economies focus on building or upgrading infrastructure, these opportunities contin-



An engineer from CR20G conducts operational training for local workers at a service facility in Angola's Cabinda province in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ue to grow," Peng said.

With more than 17,000 employees, Xi'an, Shaanxi province-based CR20G has built a market presence in more than 20 countries, including Mozambique, Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

Aside from the design and con-

struction of transportation infrastructure, the Chinese company's business scope includes real estate development, manufacturing, logistics and trade, railway transportation, environmental protection, engineering project inspection, design consulting and training.

## WORLD

## Lebanon cease-fire within reach: Official

UN doubles down on appeals for peace as Gaza humanitarian situation worsens

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
jan@chinadailyapac.com

The United Nations Security Council and senior officials have doubled down on their calls for a cease-fire amid reports that a deal could be within reach in Lebanon.

The appeals came on Monday during a briefing to the 15-member Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, just days after the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders and after the US veto of a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza.

Elias Bou Saab, the deputy parliament speaker of Lebanon, told Reuters there were "no serious obstacles" left in the Washington-proposed cease-fire with Israel, "unless (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu changes his mind".

According to the report, the proposal would entail Israeli military withdrawal from south Lebanon and regular Lebanese army troops deploying in the border region within 60 days.

Netanyahu was expected to convene a high-level security cabinet in Tel Aviv on Tuesday evening to approve a 60-day cease-fire after more than a year of fighting, the Times of Israel reported, adding that Israel was accepting a cessation of hostilities but "not an end to the war on Hezbollah".

However, in Gaza, there is still little hope of a cease-fire and the situation there is getting worse.

In his briefing on Monday, UN Deputy Special Coordinator for the

Middle East Peace Process Muhanad Hadi said developments across Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, suggested "we are at imminent risk" of losing the frameworks operating since 1967 and 1973 when the Security Council adopted the resolutions aimed at laying the foundations for a just and lasting peace.

If the forces seeking to undermine the two-state solution are successful, he said, the collapse of the relevant principles and institutional structures "will have a ripple effect that could spread far beyond the Middle East".

"We need a cease-fire; we need to get the hostages out, we need life-saving support to be delivered safely now, and we need to ensure the long-term safety and security of Palestinians and Israelis," Hadi said.

At a news briefing the same day, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN secretary-general, said 1.6 million people are now living in makeshift shelters across Gaza and blamed "severe restrictions" that have been challenging for aid agencies to prepare for the rainy season.

The UN said about 100 flood-prone areas were hosting 450,000 men, women and children in Khan Younis, Deir al-Balah and Rafah.

In Italy, at the outreach session of the second G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, attended by several Arab leaders, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud also pushed for an immediate cease-fire, the unrestricted delivery of humanitarian aid, and progress on the two-state solution.



A fireball erupts at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the area of Tayouneh in Beirut's southern suburbs in Lebanon on Monday amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. AFP

Ayman Yousef, a professor of international relations at the Arab American University in Jenin, West Bank, lauded "some serious attempts on the international and regional level" to de-escalate the situation in Lebanon and Gaza.

"Israel is involved in both these conflicts with the support of the US, and I think there are many alarming signals that are coming from these two fronts. Frankly speaking, the Lebanon front is easier for a peaceful, political settlement for many reasons," Yousef told China Daily.

"I am a bit optimistic when it comes to Lebanon. ... But in the case of Gaza, I'm still very much

pessimistic," said Yousef. Even as officials and experts have expressed growing optimism over a cease-fire, Israel has continued its campaign in Lebanon, which it says aims to cripple Hezbollah's military capabilities.

Israeli jets struck at least six buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday. One strike slammed near the country's only airport, sending large plumes of smoke into the sky. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Other strikes hit the southern city of Tyre, where the Israeli military said it killed a local Hezbollah commander.

Belal Alakhras, a political analyst and researcher at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, told China Daily that Israel's approach to the cease-fire negotiations in Lebanon "exposes the complex predicament it has created for itself".

"Responsible global powers with significant influence need to critically examine these Israeli strategies and prioritize pushing for genuine regional stability that serves the broader geopolitical interests, rather than being swayed by potentially misleading pretenses," he added.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Businesses in UK say budget will stifle growth

By EARLE GALE in London  
earle@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Businesses in the United Kingdom expect a bumpy ride in the coming months because of the new government's first annual budget.

The financial plan, which was set out by the country's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves at the end of October, will have a significant negative impact on enterprises, Britain's biggest business lobby group, the Confederation of British Industry, or CBI, said on Monday.

After surveying its member businesses, the CBI said tax rises contained in the budget mean companies now expect to scale back expansion plans, reduce workforces, and abandon recruitment drives.

The CBI's survey, which was completed by 266 enterprises, found almost half are expecting to delay or temporarily reduce pay rises. Some 62 percent are planning to hire fewer people, and around six businesses in 10 believe the budget will not make the UK more attractive for investment.

Rain Newton-Smith, the CBI's director-general, said before the budget, companies had not been expecting tax hikes, especially the increase in national insurance, which enterprises pay the government to help fund workers' health and social security needs.

"Tax rises like this must never again simply be done to business," she said at the CBI's annual conference on Tuesday. "Even where the risk isn't critical, firms that have been through really tough years are now in damage control again."

## 'Heavy burden'

Newton-Smith said the tax hikes "caught us all off guard" and will "put a heavy burden on business".

Her comments were the latest in a series of scathing assessments of the new government's first budget.

Employers have also been highly critical of the new Labour Party's decision to raise the country's minimum wage and its plans to protect workers' rights with new legislation.

Reeves said she had no choice but to raise taxes after the government found a 22-billion-pound (\$27.7 billion) "black hole" in the country's finances after it came to power following the general election on July 4.

Reeves' budget increased taxes by more than 40 billion pounds, with most of that money coming from the increase in the amount of national insurance that employers must pay.

Newton-Smith said the budget will significantly dent the profitability of many UK businesses, which is bad news for everyone.

"Profits aren't just extra money for companies to stuff in a pillowcase," she said. "Your future profitability shapes your ability to invest and grow sustainably."

Newton-Smith called on the government to borrow more money to pay for services, instead of forcing companies to contribute more. She also called for cuts in red tape to ensure companies enjoy the benefits of speedier planning decisions, simplified tax rules, and quicker adoption of technology.

## Chinese song contest in Yangon boosts exchange

YANGON — A Chinese song competition recently held in Yangon offered Myanmar students an opportunity to enhance their language skills while celebrating cultural exchange.

The event was organized under the supervision of the Chinese embassy in Myanmar and the Center for Language Education and Cooperation.

The competition supports Myanmar students' Chinese learning and gives them a chance to showcase their talents, Kyi Shwin, rector of the Yangon University of Foreign Languages, said on Sunday.

Competitors like this provide students with opportunities to engage beyond the classroom, allowing them to connect with a broader audience, which greatly benefits their development, he said.

Cho Cho Myint, principal of Bowen Chinese School and organizer of the event, said: "This is the first time a Chinese song competition has been held in Myanmar and it is an incredible opportunity for students."

"They can see that learning Chinese goes beyond lectures; it can also happen through music."

"I am delighted to see so many Myanmar students participating alongside Chinese students. Music brings people closer together, and I am truly happy to witness this connection," she added.

The competition attracted more than 100 students from Chinese schools across Myanmar. Participants were divided into three groups based on age — children, teenagers, and youth — with 45

students receiving awards.

Nan Phytusin, 18, who won first prize, said: "This competition allowed me to showcase my talent on stage. Singing is both my happiness and therapy and this event gave me the opportunity to share that with others."

"During the event, I also witnessed how Myanmar people can sing Chinese songs very well, which helps strengthen the cultural relationship between the two countries," she said.

Aung Thiha Han, 17, who won third prize, said, "This competition gave me the chance to make friends with students from schools across the country, including those who traveled from other regions and states."

"Speaking Chinese continuously while preparing for the competition helped me improve my language skills. When studying becomes dull, I find learning through music (to be) a highly effective and enjoyable way to progress," he said.

Myintzu Han, 21, who earned a special award, said: "I listen to Chinese songs every day, which helps me improve my tone, pronunciation and word arrangement. Singing makes me happy, and I never get bored with learning Chinese this way."

The competition showcased the benefits of learning Chinese through music while fostering cultural exchange and building confidence among participants, said the principal of Bowen Chinese School.

XINHUA

## Youth, culture key to Sino-US relations

By YANG RAN  
yangran1@chinadaily.com.cn

Emphasizing the importance of sustained people-to-people interactions for fostering positive China-US relations, Carol Robertson Lopez, chair emerita of Sister Cities International of the United States, called for increased youth and cultural exchanges between the two nations.

Lopez's first visit to China was in 2009 with the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, or CPAFFC.

"During a two-week tour, we traveled extensively and witnessed the country's incredible diversity and beauty. It truly opened my eyes to what a beautiful country China is," she recalled.

She said that China and the US are the two largest economies in the world, and the relations between the two countries could have a global impact.

"We must continue to promote mutual respect and understanding between our countries," Lopez said.

She advocated for building sister-city ties as an effective tool for promoting mutual understanding. "When people get to know each other, we realize we have much more in common than differences. We focus on cultural exchange, educational exchange, and building mutual respect and understanding."

In 1979, Hubei province and Ohio became the first sister prov-

ince/state, while Nanjing and St. Louis, Missouri, established the first sister-city relationship, initiating local-level exchanges. Since then, China and the US have formed 287 sister relationships, including 50 between provinces/states and 237 between cities.

Since 2014, Sister Cities International of the US has co-hosted the US-China Sister Cities Summit six times with the CPAFFC to promote subnational exchanges between the two nations.

The relationship between countries and cities will not always remain at the same level, said Lopez, emphasizing the need for continuous efforts to maintain open lines of communication and cooperation even during the ups and downs of the relationship.

## Moments of solidarity

She also highlighted the historical moments of solidarity, such as the US and China standing together during World War II, as reminders of the importance of these bonds.

Looking to the future, Lopez stressed the critical role of youth in shaping global relations. "With the internet, the youth now are more internationally connected than ever, learning about and engaging with cultures worldwide. We must focus on fostering these connections because our youth are our future," she said.

At a welcome dinner held by

friendly organizations in the US in San Francisco in November 2023, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that to increase exchanges between the peoples of China and the US, especially between the youth, China was ready to invite 50,000 young people from the US to China on exchange and study programs in five years.

Lopez praised this initiative, noting the positive impact such experiences have on young people. "We've had young Americans return from China with great experiences, some even choosing to move to China for further education. These exchanges are crucial," she said.

A July report by the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based think tank, revealed that more than 60 China-US youth exchanges took place in China across 20 provincial regions in the first half of this year. Participants included students, young entrepreneurs, media professionals and more, engaging in activities ranging from roundtable discussions to cultural performances, all aimed at fostering mutual understanding and friendship.

"China is a vast and diverse country, much like the US. Sometimes our lack of knowledge hinders our appreciation of its beauty and uniqueness. We need to learn more about each other to build mutual respect and understanding," Lopez emphasized.

## Indonesia digs out as flooding and landslide kill 20

JAKARTA — Rescue workers in western Indonesia used heavy equipment on Tuesday to dig out victims following weekend flooding and landslides that have killed at least 20 people, the national disaster agency said.

In North Sumatra Province, the bodies of five people listed as missing had been pulled from under a mountain of mud and debris, agency spokesman Abdul Muhari said in a statement.

"All victims have been found dead," he said on Tuesday, adding that 10 people in all had been killed in a Karo district landslide.

Beginning on Saturday, heavy rain pounded four districts across North Sumatra, producing deadly floods and landslides.

Juspri Nadeak, disaster chief in the hardest-hit Karo district, said on Tuesday that the discovery of victims not yet reported missing to



An excavator moves soil during a search and rescue operation at the site of a landslide in a village in Karo, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia, on Monday. REUTERS

authorities remained a possibility. "The landslide area provides access to hot springs, so there's a possibility that tourists were hit by it."

In a village in the Deli Serdang district, where four people have been found dead and two more are missing, piles of mud, logs and rocks were

scattered around the village where a rescue operation was underway.

"The electricity was cut off, and there is no cellphone reception, making it difficult for us rescuers to communicate," said Iman Sitorus, a local search and rescue agency spokesman. Authorities have also deployed heavy equipment to clean up the debris, he said.

The rest of the victims were found in South Tapanuli, Padang Lawas and Deli Serdang districts.

Indonesia has suffered a string of recent extreme weather events, which experts say are made more likely by climate change.

In May, at least 67 people died after a mixture of ash, sand and pebbles carried down from the eruption of Mount Marapi in West Sumatra washed into residential areas, causing flash floods.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS  
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,  
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888  
Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com  
readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

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WASHINGTON  
National Press Bldg., Suite 1108 529 14th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20045  
Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO  
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900, San Francisco, CA 94104  
Tel: 415-348-8288  
Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100  
Seattle, WA 98104  
Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100  
Houston, TX 77077  
Tel: 713-556-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

471 Yonge Street, 10th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 6B3  
Tel: 416-481-9706

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## WORLD

## Judge tosses Trump 2020 election case

WASHINGTON — A US judge on Monday dismissed the federal criminal case accusing Donald Trump of attempting to overturn his 2020 election defeat after prosecutors moved to drop that prosecution and a second case against the president-elect, citing Justice Department policy against prosecuting a sitting president.

The order from US District Judge Tanya Chutkan puts an end to the federal effort to hold Trump criminally responsible for his attempts to hold onto power after losing the 2020 election, culminating in the Jan 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol by a mob of his supporters.

The move came after Special Counsel Jack Smith, the lead prosecutor overseeing both cases, moved to dismiss the election case and end his attempt to revive a separate case accusing Trump of illegally retaining classified documents when he left office in 2021 after his first term as president.

It represents a big legal victory for the Republican president-elect, who won the Nov 5 US election and is set to return to office on Jan 20.

The Justice Department policy that the prosecutors cited dates back to the 1970s. It holds that a criminal prosecution of a sitting president would violate the US Constitution by undermining the ability of the country's chief executive to function. Courts will still have to approve both requests from prosecutors.

The prosecutors, in a filing in the election subversion case, said the department's policy requires the case to be dismissed before Trump returns to the White House.

"This outcome is not based on the merits or strength of the case against the defendant," prosecutors wrote in the filing.

Prosecutors in the documents case signaled they will still ask a federal appeals court to bring back the case against two Trump associates who had been accused of obstructing that investigation.

## Decision hailed

Trump spokesman Steven Cheung hailed what he called "a major victory for the rule of law".

Trump had faced criminal charges in four cases, the two brought by Smith and two in state courts in New York and Georgia. He was convicted in the New York case while the Georgia case, which also relates to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, is in limbo.

In a post on social media, Trump railed on Monday against the legal cases as a "low point in the History of our Country".

In another development, the chair of the Democratic National Committee, or DNC, informed party leaders on Monday that the DNC will choose his successor in February, an election that will speak volumes about how the party wants to present itself during four more years of Trump in the White House.

Jaime Harrison, in a letter to members of the party's powerful Rules & Bylaws Committee, outlined the process of how the party will elect its new chair.

The race to become the next chair of the DNC, while an insular party affair, will come days after Trump is inaugurated for a second term.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



## Poles apart

**Above:** People wearing winter clothes walk on a sidewalk during snowfall in Ankara, Turkey, on Monday. Four people were missing in Turkey's Ordu Province.

**Left:** One day later, in the other hemisphere of the Earth, a man jumps into the harbor at Manly Wharf in Sydney, Australia. A heat wave swept through New South Wales amid coal outages across the state. EVRIM AYDIN / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES; JAMES D. MORGAN / GETTY IMAGES

## Global South's joint climate efforts urged

Experts call for cooperation, saying green finance benefits all in long term

By PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong  
prime@chinadailyapac.com

Developing countries need to form a Global South alliance that will strengthen climate commitments and pressure industrialized nations to fulfill their "historical responsibility" to finance mitigation and adaptation efforts, according to participants in this year's climate negotiations.

The agreement reached at the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP29 — which concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Sunday — has disappointed the developing countries that claimed the \$300 billion per year climate finance pledged by the developed countries is woefully inadequate.

The developing nations had proposed \$1.3 trillion in annual assistance from the developed countries.

Under the Baku deal, the developed countries agreed to provide \$300 billion a year by 2035 to help the developing nations cope with climate change.

The agreement includes a broader goal of raising \$1.3 trillion per year in climate finance for developing countries by 2035, but that targeted funding includes both public and private sources. This means the bulk of the funding would come from private finance, rather than government-to-government assistance.

The latest target, which falls under the New Collective Quantified Goal, or NCQG, for climate financing, was approved on Sunday in Baku after two weeks of negotiations among representatives of nearly 200 countries.

Mohamed Nasheed, secretary-general of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, which represents 70 climate-vulnerable countries, said the active collaboration of countries like China, Brazil and South Africa with climate-vulnerable countries can only yield more meaningful outcomes in the global advocacy for international finance architecture reform.

## Financing gap

Rabby Tumiwa, executive director of the Institute for Essential Services Reform think tank in Jakarta, said what the world needs is climate cooperation that is led by the Global South countries. He said China, for one, can pioneer the "greening" of Belt and Road countries, by helping them accelerate energy transition.

Tumiwa, a longtime climate campaigner and participant in climate negotiations, said the developing countries need to maximize whatever funding they receive by investing in renewable energy generation, energy efficiency and climate adaptation. He said individual nations need to set aside a budget for climate finance and consider cutting subsidies for fossil fuels.

Masayoshi Iyoda, a Japanese campaigner at 350.org, a global environmental group, said that

industrialized nations need to understand that providing climate finance will also benefit the Global North in the long run.

"As one of the citizens in Japan, I see so many climate disasters happening every year," Iyoda said. He cited the heavy rains that flooded central Japan's Noto region in September, noting that even developed countries cannot escape the impact of climate change.

He said that by providing financing to the Global South, the developed countries can reduce the impact of climate change that affects everyone.

The developed countries had pledged at the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties, or COP15, in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009 to mobilize \$100 billion annually in climate finance by 2020 to support the developing countries in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. This commitment was reaffirmed in 2015, during COP21 in Paris, France, where signatories agreed to cut emissions so that global average temperature would stay well below 2 C above preindustrial levels.

Climate activists and campaigners at COP29 in Baku said that developed countries are now reluctant to take on very heavy commitments, citing budgetary constraints, a weaker global economy and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance has said the annual \$300 billion per year pledge by 2035 "falls short significantly" by at least \$390 billion a year by 2035 needed to deliver the goals of the Paris climate pact.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

## Unilateral coercive measures strongly opposed: UN envoy

By YANG RAN in Beijing  
yangran@chinadaily.com.cn

The unilateral coercive measures and the resulting "chilling effect" are important causes of the deterioration of the global humanitarian situation that cannot be ignored and significantly harm many developing countries, said Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations.

China firmly opposes all illegal unilateral coercive measures, Geng told the UN Security Council Arria-formula Meeting on the humanitarian impact of unilateral coercive measures, or UCMs, on Monday.

Geng pointed out that UCMs, imposed without Security Council authorization, override a country's laws over international law and the laws of other nations, and severely infringe on the fundamental human rights of the affected populations, including their rights to survival, development, and health.

Such measures negatively affect many developing countries, including Cuba, the DPRK, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Venezuela, he said.

Geng emphasized that as a key member of the Global South and a victim of unilateral coercive measures, China consistently stands with developing countries, justice, international law, and multilateralism, and resolutely opposes all illegal unilateral coercive measures.

Geng stated that UCMs severely restrict the development potential of many countries. These measures, including financial embargoes, trade

restrictions, and "long-arm jurisdiction", significantly hinder international trade, damage economies, and affect the provision of necessities like food, energy, and medicine.

Vulnerable groups, especially women and children, suffer the most, he pointed out. For example, the US' six-decade-plus embargo on Cuba has caused the country hundreds of billions of dollars in economic losses. In Syria, long-term sanctions have severely hampered living conditions, with 90 percent of the population now living below the poverty line.

## Blatant violation

Geng said that some Western politicians openly admit to using unilateral sanctions as "economic warfare", aiming to create economic hardship and humanitarian disasters to incite chaos in targeted countries, thereby stalling local development, exerting political pressure, and even attempting regime change. This is akin to using hunger, disease, and poverty as weapons to impose "collective punishment" on civilians, a blatant violation of international humanitarian and human rights laws, Geng added.

Over the past few decades, the UN General Assembly has passed more than a hundred resolutions opposing UCMs and urging the US to end its embargo against Cuba. On Oct 30, the General Assembly once again passed a similar resolution with an overwhelming majority of 187 votes in favor, 2 against (the US and Israel), and 1 abstention. This marks the 32nd consecutive year that the international community has voiced its collective stance.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz attends a news conference where he is announced as the officially nominated candidate for the upcoming general election after a Social Democratic Party board meeting in Berlin on Monday. ANNREGRET HILSE / REUTERS

## Scholz gets nod from SPD to run again for chancellor

By JONATHAN POWELL in London  
jonathan@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Germany's Social Democratic Party, or SPD, on Monday formally announced Chancellor Olaf Scholz as its top candidate for the upcoming snap election scheduled for Feb 23.

The decision to nominate Scholz followed two weeks of internal debate within the SPD, with party members deciding between supporting the current chancellor's bid for a second term or backing alternative candidate Defense Minister Boris Pistorius.

Pistorius, who polls show is currently Germany's most popular politician, announced last week that he would not seek the chancellorship and instead endorsed Scholz.

While this cleared the path for Scholz's nomination as the SPD's lead candidate, the incumbent chancellor continues to struggle with low public approval ratings, reported Germany's Deutsche Welle news network.

Pistorius was among 33 senior SPD members who voted for Scholz's nomination as the party's candidate for chancellor on Monday, ahead of what is expected to be a routine confirmation at the party conference on Jan 11.

## Coalition collapses

The German government's "traffic light" coalition collapsed earlier this month after Scholz dismissed the Free Democrats leader Christian Lindner from his position as finance minister. The FDP, a pro-business party, had been the smallest member of the three-party alliance that included the Greens.

According to Der Spiegel news magazine, Scholz is the "face" of a

failed government marked by perpetual disputes and "probably the weakest, most unsuitable candidate for the chancellorship that the SPD has ever put forward".

While the SPD, Germany's oldest political party, languishes at about 15 percent in opinion polls, the main opposition conservatives, the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union parties, or CDU and CSU, lead with 33 percent, and the resurgent far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, stands at 18 percent, reported AFP.

In the wake of the coalition's collapse, the Greens have put forward Economics Minister and Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck as their candidate for chancellor, backed by Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

Meanwhile, Friedrich Merz leads the poll-topping CDU into the election, and the AfD is represented by Alice Weidel, who secured her party's nomination in September.

It is the first time in its history that the AfD has named an official chancellor candidate, marking a significant milestone for the party that Germany's domestic intelligence agency, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, has classified as "extreme right".

SPD General Secretary Matthias Miersch urged party unity on Sunday, calling for members to "stand united behind Scholz" while conceding that recent internal party debates had been damaging to its position.

Conservative leaders have welcomed Scholz's candidacy, seeing it as advantageous to their campaign, with CDU lawmaker Mathias Middelberg stating that Pistorius would have been "more unpleasant" for the conservative alliance to face.

## Briefly

## FRANCE

## Le Pen threatens to withdraw govt support

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen issued a new threat on Monday to bring down France's coalition government in a no-confidence vote after talks with Prime Minister Michel Barnier failed to satisfy her party's demands for budget concessions. Le Pen said she was not optimistic a compromise on the belt-tightening 2025 budget bill could be reached. Reflecting the growing risk that Barnier's government could fall, the premium investors' demand to hold French bonds over German ones flirted with highs not seen in over 12 years.

## LITHUANIA

## Spain, Germany to join DHL plane crash probe

Investigators from Germany and Spain will join the Lithuanian authorities to find out what caused a DHL plane crash in Vilnius, Laurynas Naujokaitis, director of the Lithuanian Justice Ministry's Transport Accident and Incident Investigation Division, said on Monday. The Boeing 737-476 plane was owned by Spanish airline Swift Air. While flying from Leipzig, Germany, on behalf of German shipping company DHL, it crashed into a residential building near the Vilnius airport. A pilot was killed, and three others were injured in the incident.

## JAPAN

## Rocket engine test halted after explosion

Japan's space agency aborted an engine test for the Epsilon S rocket on Tuesday after it exploded and caught fire, a repeated failure that will likely push the rocket's debut launch beyond the March-end target and delay the national space program. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said the combustion test resulted in an explosion of the second-stage motor 49 seconds after the ignition, causing a fire at the Tanegashima Space Center in southwestern Japan. While no one was injured, the blast damaged the facility, and the cause remains unclear.

## RUSSIA

## Official says Moscow seeks long-term peace

Russia opposes simply freezing the conflict in Ukraine because Moscow needs a "solid and long-term peace" that resolves the core reasons for the crisis, President Vladimir Putin's foreign intelligence chief said on Tuesday. Sergey Naryshkin, the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, said that Russia had the initiative on the battlefield. Naryshkin said Russia was categorically opposed to the "freezing of the conflict" and that Russia is open for talks.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## New chapter opened for future-oriented partnership between China and Singapore

Over the years through hard work and wisdom, Asia has maintained a sound momentum of overall peace and stability, as well as rapid economic development. Countries in the region have embarked on development paths characterized by mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, openness and inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation.

That is exemplified by China and Singapore, which enjoy broad consensus on and common interests in safeguarding regional stability and pursuing shared development.

As friendly neighbors and important cooperative partners, China and Singapore have steered a steady course in their relations under the careful nurturing of successive generations of leaders of the two countries, setting a good example of how to cultivate and grow a cooperative relationship of mutual benefit and common development.

That the two sides upgraded bilateral relations to an "All-Round High-Quality Future-Oriented Partnership" in March last year during the visit to China of Lee Hsien Loong, who was then the Singaporean prime minister, reflects their shared commitment to continually expanding bilateral cooperation.

With the regional situation volatile, and the world situation mired in uncertainties, China and Singapore should cement their bonds of friendship and continue to march forward hand-in-hand to the benefit of the two nations and the future stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific,

President Xi Jinping told Lee, who is once again visiting China, this time in his new role as Singapore's senior minister.

Next year marks the 35th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Singapore. China is ready to work with Singapore to write a new chapter for their all-round high-quality future-oriented partnership. As Xi said, the two sides should strengthen the docking of their development strategies to bring more tangible benefits to the two peoples, and make greater contributions to the building of an Asian community with a shared future.

Singapore is welcome to seize the new opportunities of China's development, and to pursue new collaborations in forward-looking areas such as the digital and green economies and artificial intelligence, and to expand cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

China is also willing to strengthen cooperation with Singapore in multilateral mechanisms such as the United Nations, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation to safeguard the peace dividend that the region enjoys and to promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and advance universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

Lee's visit will help chart the course for the future development of China-Singapore relations and strengthen their consensus on the need to work together to cherish the hard-won momentum of development in the region.

## Supply chain expo fuels inclusive global growth

The Second China International Supply Chain Expo opened in Beijing on Tuesday. The expo, along with other events such as the China International Import Expo and China International Fair for Trade in Services, points to the importance the country attaches to opening-up.

That more than 600 foreign and Chinese companies are taking part in this expo, an increase of 20 percent compared with the first one in 2023, and the number of foreign participants has risen by 26 percent, speaks volumes about how such expos are welcomed by domestic and foreign companies.

The number of top 500 transnational enterprises, the number of top 500 Chinese companies and the number of top 500 private Chinese enterprises that are participating in the expo have increased by 42, 46 and 70 percent respectively compared with the first event last year. This suggests that an increasing number of enterprises, whether foreign or domestic ones, have come to realize the important role the expo can play in promoting global supply chains.

China would not have achieved what it has without its opening-up policy, which enabled it to get involved in the world market.

That explains why the Chinese government has further expanded the country's opening-up by continuously shortening the negative list for foreign investment. China has lifted all restrictions for foreign investors to enter the country's manufacturing industry. China has also been deepening

its institutional reforms in order to further facilitate foreign investments in the Chinese market.

As a result, the total value of China's imports and exports of goods increased by 5.2 percent year-on-year in the first 10 months of this year. The number of newly-established foreign-invested companies increased by 11.8 percent during the same period. Which suggests what China has done in opening-up has met the needs of an increasing number of foreign firms and facilitated the development of global industry and supply chains.

As a huge market, an important global manufacturing powerhouse and a major destination for international investment, China's opening-up is of great significance to the development of the global economy. As China continues to further open up, it will considerably expand the space for global consumption, increase the resilience of the global industry and supply chains, and secure the smooth flow of capital, talent, technologies and data.

At a time when the unilateralism and protectionism of some major economies are negatively impacting the international supply chain, the expo China is hosting provides an opportunity for domestic enterprises and their international counterparts to consult and cooperate to bolster the development of the global industry and supply chains. With the expanded scale of this year's expo, the event is expected to play a prominent role in boosting the openness and inclusiveness of the global economy.

## Scapegoating others can't end US' drug crisis

US president-elect Donald Trump, who will enter office on Jan 20, plans to raise tariffs by an additional 10 percent on all Chinese goods exported to the United States, citing fentanyl abuse as the reason, which he attributes to China's failure in drug control.

On the same day, Trump also vowed to impose tariffs of 25 percent on all products from Mexico and Canada citing drug problems and illegal immigration as the causes. Trump said although he has had many talks with China about the massive amounts of drugs, in particular fentanyl, being sent into the United States, the talks were "to no avail". He also claimed that, contrary to promises, Beijing did not impose the death penalty on such drug dealers.

The excuse the president-elect has given to justify his threat of additional tariffs on imports from China is farfetched. If Trump really had many talks with China, he would know that the Chinese government attaches great importance to fighting the trade in narcotics. The control measures on fentanyl-like substances are a concrete manifestation of China's strict drug control regime and its upholding of co-governance to address global drug problems. These measures have been fully recognized by the international community.

China listed fentanyl-like substances as a whole category on May 1, 2019. Since then, it has not received any notification from other countries that fentanyl-like substances from China

have been seized. The responsibility for preventing non-listed chemicals from entering the drug manufacturing industry lies with the importing countries, but the US has not yet permanently listed fentanyl-like substances.

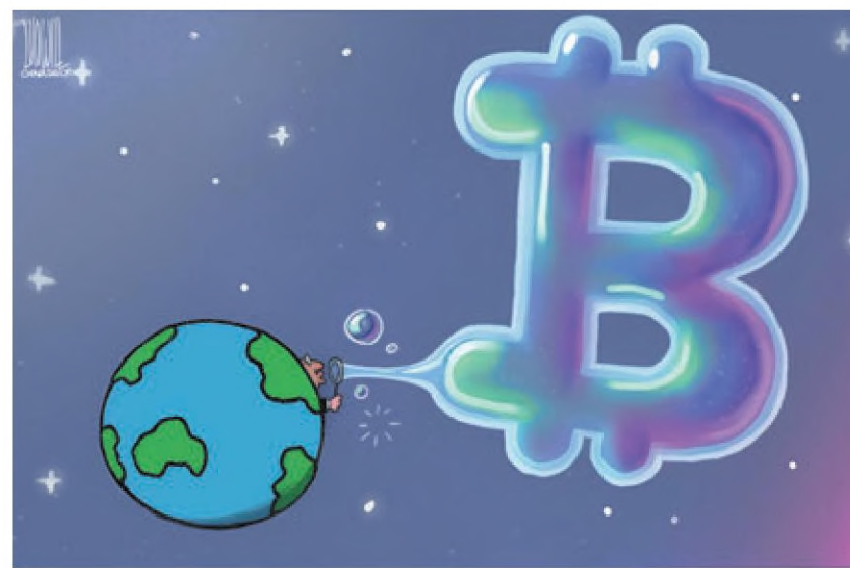
The world sees clearly that the root cause of the fentanyl crisis in the US lies with the US itself. The US side should stop shirking its own responsibility to better manage its drug problems.

Reducing domestic demand and domestic supply is the fundamental solution to the US' fentanyl crisis. What the US should do is to strengthen domestic prescription drug control and boost its publicity on the harm of drug abuse to reduce the domestic drug demand, rather than scapegoating other countries.

In the spirit of humanitarianism, China has provided support to the US in dealing with fentanyl-related issues. China is still willing to continue to carry out anti-drug cooperation with the US on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect. The US should cherish China's goodwill and maintain the hard-won good situation of Sino-US anti-drug collaboration.

There are no winners in tariff wars. If the US continues to politicize economic and trade issues by weaponizing tariffs, it will leave no party unscathed. And it is the US companies and consumers that will pay the heaviest price for the exorbitant tariffs levied by their own government.

Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Reform imperative to engage private firms in national projects

The top authorities have unequivocally said that China will improve the long-term mechanism for private enterprises to participate in major national infrastructure projects.

In recent years, private enterprises have actually participated in the construction of China's high-speed railways, nuclear power plants, oil and gas pipelines, and other major projects. However, major national projects are for public welfare and require huge investments. This affects private enterprises' expectations and confidence on whether long-term stable returns can be obtained from their investment. At the same time, the arduous construction of some projects and high operation and management requirements also dampen the investment enthusiasm of private enterprises in these areas.

Supporting private enterprises' participation in major national projects shows the country's determina-

tion to promote the growth of the private economy and the high-quality development of private enterprises. Given that private investment is more flexible and values efficiency, its participation in major national projects can help broaden the medium- and long-term investment channels for private capital and boost the confidence of private enterprises. In this process, private enterprises can also play a role in stabilizing economic growth and employment.

Major national projects involve cutting-edge technologies and require the joint efforts of an entire industry chain, while private enterprises play a major role in technological innovation, and their participation can promote technological progress and industrial upgrading.

In recent months, China has taken a number of measures to promote the development of the private economy by improving laws and policies, accelerating legislation, introducing

fair market access, and extending financing support. It has also improved regular communication mechanisms to coordinate and solve practical problems that private enterprises face.

Ever-increasing positive factors have enhanced the confidence of the private sector. In the first 10 months of this year, private investment in the manufacturing industry increased by 11.4 percent year-on-year, 2.1 percentage points higher than the growth rate of overall manufacturing investment.

The country should continue to deepen reforms to provide more opportunities and space for private enterprises to participate in major national projects by extending equal treatment to State-owned and private enterprises at the institutional and legal levels, unifying market access and breaking hidden barriers hindering the entry of private enterprises.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## Tailor-made 5G apps can help the tech prosper

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and 11 other departments have introduced a plan to increase 5G usage among individuals to above 85 percent. They also targeted 100 million terminals being connected to the internet of things by the end of 2027 and the development of 5G-based apps for hospitals and factories within this period.

Unlike the past four generations of telecommunication technologies, 5G uses electromagnetic waves with wavelengths so short that a finger can halt them; therefore telecommunication companies have to build large numbers of micro base stations to ensure free, unhindered flow of signals, which creates a strong link

between the number of users and the average cost one bears.

A significant advantage of 5G lies in its universal connectivity, or the high number of devices that can be linked to a single device, which makes smart rooms possible by installing chips in appliances, linking them to the same 5G network and commanding them to do what is required.

With over 100 million terminals linked with the IoT as planned as of 2027, smart home appliances that account for a percentage of the terminals will become more commonly used by then.

While large numbers of users and terminals lay the foundation for this

kind of smart setup, it's notable that the apps should be tailor-made too. However, as professor Zhang Ping from the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications pointed out, so far no revolutionary 5G apps are that popular yet. The reason, according to analysts, is that virtual reality and augmented reality technologies both require professional devices such as helmets with screens inside, which are not that much in use. By encouraging the development of 5G-based apps tailor-made for hospitals and factories, the action plan will help the whole 5G industry prosper, and enhance the popularity of the technology.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Ceasefire deal needs getting over the line

With the United States vetoing a Gaza ceasefire resolution at the UN Security Council for the fourth time last week, the prospect of making a breakthrough to bring an end to the crisis appeared as remote as ever.

But an apparent ray of hope has emerged. While it would certainly be a lot more conducive to peace in the region if a ceasefire was reached in Gaza first, given the stalemate at the UNSC and considering the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in a large part derives from what Israel is doing in Gaza, the latest talk of a ceasefire being on the cards in Lebanon is certainly a positive development. The Israeli ambassador to the United States claimed on Monday that a cease-fire deal could be reached "within days". And a US special envoy said in Lebanon last week a truce agreement was "within our grasp".

The ceasefire agreement being negotiated calls for a two-month ceasefire during which Israeli forces would with-

draw from Lebanon and Hezbollah would end its armed presence along the southern border south of the Litani River. While substantial headway seems to have been made on a deal, the exchange of fire between the two sides over the weekend shows how precarious the possibility of a ceasefire is. Even after Israel eliminated almost all the senior Hezbollah commanders, the latter was still able to launch what was one of its heaviest barrages in months.

But rather than seeing the violent tit-for-tat as making real ceasefire impossible, it would make more sense to take it as an ongoing lesson on the futility of violence in ending violence. The fighting has dragged on for far too long, and the cost in lives and human suffering has been high. According to the Lebanese health ministry, the Israeli offensives against Hezbollah had killed more than 3,750 people as of Sunday, left some 15,630 more wounded and displaced about 1.4 million people, or

one-fourth of the country's population. More than 100 soldiers and civilians have been killed on the Israeli side, with tens of thousands of residents evacuated from their homes in border areas.

More importantly, there is growing concern that the conflicts may extend to neighboring countries, most likely Syria and Iraq, as Israel struggles to cut off weapons supplies from Iran to Hezbollah. The Italian foreign minister, while opening the G7 meeting near Rome, noted that "We are perhaps close to a ceasefire in Lebanon", and said "Let's hope it's true and that there's no backing down at the last-minute." That is a sentiment that most of the international community will share and endorse.

China opposes any move that fuels antagonism and escalates regional tensions, and it hopes that the parties concerned will take the opportunity to cool down the situation and prevent the conflict from escalating further.

— TAN HONGKAI, CHINA DAILY

## CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

## Contact us at:

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

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

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

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

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

## COMMENT

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana

## Sustainable transport key to healthy growth

Across the Asia-Pacific region, especially in urban centers, electric cars and buses are increasingly replacing gasoline-powered ones as a means of transportation. Aided by the ubiquity of smart devices, smart mobility and other transport innovations are significantly reshaping everyday life through ride-sharing apps, driver-assistance technology and real-time traffic management. With new highways and railways operationalized in the last decade, the region is getting yet more connected, while the ongoing digitalization of road, rail and maritime freight transport further improves efficiency and cost reduction.

These are part of the wider trend of sustainable transport development, which benefits everyone through making transportation of people and goods safer, "greener", more efficient and more accessible. Countries across Asia and the Pacific have made great progress toward these goals, but major challenges remain. More cooperation will be needed to advance these trends and overcome obstacles.

The transition to sustainable transport leads to interlinked benefits that are felt across multiple aspects of life. The move toward public transport, walking and cycling not only improves general mobility by relieving congestion stress, but also significantly cuts down emissions from personal vehicles, reduces the risk of road accidents, and promotes physical fitness.

Ride-sharing or ride-hailing apps offer

personalized transport solutions tailored to individual needs, reducing fuel consumption and waste, while connected and autonomous vehicle technology improves traffic flow and prevents crashes — by UN estimates, up to 80 percent of non-alcohol ones — by minimizing human error. Coupled with inclusive transport planning, these developments make it much easier for the elderly, disabled, pregnant women and other underserved groups of people to access transport solutions and fully engage in society.

The knock-on effects across economic growth, health, climate action and social inclusion thus make sustainable transport a key enabler of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations.

The good news is that the Asia-Pacific region has made solid progress toward sustainable transport. Coordinated regional development of transport infrastructure continues to advance economies of scale to meet increased demand in freight transport. Currently, about 145,000 kilometers of Asian highways, 121,000 km of trans-Asian railways and 275 dry ports cover all parts of the region and almost 99.7 percent of the total population, while the region also hosts the world's 10 largest container ports and

accounts for more than half of the global maritime trade.

In addition to the widespread adoption of smart mobility solutions, countries are in general committed to decarbonizing their road, railway and maritime transport, with plans to electrify transport modes and fuel efficiency and the use of clean sources of fuel. Most countries have seen a decline in road traffic deaths in the last decade, and several have made progress in improving gender equality in the transport sector.

However, this path is fraught with challenges. Most of the projected future growth in global transport demand will take place in the Asia-Pacific region, owing partly to rapid urbanization and a growing appetite for personal vehicles. While the most tangible effect of this growth will be the rise in greenhouse gas emissions due to the ongoing heavy reliance on fossil fuels, these trends also add additional strain to existing urban transport systems, many of which are under-invested.

Missing links and sub-standard quality of infrastructure, coupled with lack of transport facilitation, continue to increase costs and delays of international transport, especially in landlocked developing countries. Likewise, small island developing states continue to show limited and often stagnant levels of their maritime connectivity, hindering their integration into the regional and global economy. The disparity in technological

capabilities between countries, as well as the current gaps in meeting low-carbon transport goals, hinder the effective adoption of region-wide smart mobility systems and net-zero strategies, respectively.

And despite improvements, a person in Asia and the Pacific loses his or her life in a road accident every 45 seconds. Women make up only about 16 percent of the regional transport workforce, a slightly lower figure than the global average.

Government representatives gathered in early November and assessed these achievements and challenges within the framework of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific. Many tasks, such as transport decarbonization, cannot be overcome by any country alone.

Meanwhile, the benefits of transport innovations such as digitalization and automation will only be fully realized if widely implemented. With Asia and the Pacific 32 years behind in achieving the SDGs, accelerating sustainable transport development would benefit everyone, so everyone needs to get on board to make it happen.

*The author is under-secretary-general of the United Nations and executive secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Guo Tiecheng

## APEC should play prominent role in driving innovation

The world has been grappling with one crisis after another — from the COVID-19 pandemic to the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts — and the resulting exacerbated global uncertainties. What has complicated matters further is the extension of the competition among major countries beyond economics into politics, with some countries using anti-market and unlawful measures to gain the upper hand. These developments have slowed global innovation, posing a serious challenge to economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Yet the fundamental interdependence of countries remains intact even in the digital age, and de-globalization moves by some countries have not caused structural shifts. Instead, globalization is gaining momentum. North America remains at the forefront of groundbreaking innovations and East Asia continues its robust growth as an innovation hub, with Southeast Asia emerging as a dynamic force in the global arena. Together, these trends have created new, exciting opportunities for innovation across the Asia-Pacific.

North America, led by the United States, is home to more than one-third of the world's top scientists as well as leading enterprises in information communications technology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence and semiconductors. However, East Asia, comprising China — which includes Taiwan and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region — and Japan and the Republic of Korea boasts the world's largest pool of R&D personnel and leads North America in terms of investment in R&D.

The East Asian region also has a robust manufacturing base with rapid growth in emerging industries, with China's transition to a moderately prosperous society in all respects helping boost consumer spending and creating the world's largest market for innovative products.

And Southeast Asia, led by Singapore and comprising emerging players such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, too, has been increasing investments to promote innovation, foster talents and advance high-tech industries.

To seize these opportunities, the Asia-Pacific must adopt new policy tools to drive innovation while building on its foundation of economic cooperation and shared prosperity.

Given the multifarious developments, countries across the world should establish a mechanism to share the policies and practices that have boosted innovation. For example, the US excels in investing in foundational innovation, incentivizing private sector dynamism, and fostering a culture of nationwide creativity. China leads in high-tech R&D, technology parks, tech entrepreneurship and tech-driven poverty alleviation, and Japanese policies foster disruptive innovation, while the ROK prioritizes talent cultivation and future growth industries. By sharing their development policies and leveraging their respective advantages, the East Asian economies can significantly enhance regional innovation capability.

Investing in talent development is essential to building an ecosystem that promotes innovation, and nurtures entrepreneurs, high-tech experts and scientists. Innovation service platforms should support startups by offering entrepreneurship training, access to venture capital, market expansion, legal advice and technical support. Digital skills training programs in areas such as AI, big data, and programming can improve workforce readiness. Additionally, international educational exchanges — such as joint degree and student exchange programs, and collaboration between universities — should be expanded to optimize regional education resources and foster cross-border innovation.

Considering the diverse innovation capacities of the economies in the region, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation should establish a unified technology transfer platform to connect industries and research institutions across borders. Strengthened intellectual property rights protection and initiatives such as low-cost or open patent access can help expedite the spillover effects of advanced technologies, enhance local innovation capacity, and increase employment and income.

Besides, enterprises should take the lead in regional innovation projects to address shared challenges, such as climate change, pandemics, the digital economy and renewable energy. And multinational R&D initiatives should be made to fast-track technological breakthroughs and apply them to industry, while public-private partnerships must be encouraged by allocating more funds to promote innovation and enable venture capital to drive enterprise-led collaborations that integrate regional innovation resources.

Finally, an open policy should be adopted to advance scientific research and the results of such research should be made widely accessible. And APEC member economies should share large-scale research facilities and tools, such as supercomputers, advanced laboratories and data centers, to maximize their utilization capacity and output. By creating optimal research conditions, the region can achieve collaborative breakthroughs and shared innovation gains.

*The author is a researcher at the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

David Gosset

## Beware of the return of McCarthyist politics

The anti-Chinese sentiment is shown by the recent directive from Texas Governor Greg Abbott to state agencies to divest from China-related operations, which is deeply concerning. Abbott, the highest elected official in a state whose economy would rank as the eighth-largest in the world if Texas were an independent nation, wields considerable influence in not just the state, but across the United States as well. His actions, which align with the broader narrative of suspicion toward China, could set a troubling precedent for other US states and the federal government.

Abbott's loyalty to president-elect Donald Trump further intensifies the implications of his directive. Abbott was at one point even considered a potential vice-presidential candidate during Trump's campaign. This association underscores the alignment of the Texas governor's policies with the broader nationalist and protectionist agenda that has gained traction in recent years. As the nation approaches January 2025, when a new administration will take office, Abbott's actions could embolden other states to adopt similar measures, fueling an anti-China wave that could disrupt not only bilateral relations but also global stability.

Abbott's orders are emblematic of a broader trend that analysts fear resem-

bles a modern-day McCarthyism, a political climate dominated by fear, suspicion, and scapegoating of foreign powers. This emerging pattern of Sinophobia has the potential to engulf the US in an irrational paranoia that equates competition with enmity. While competition between the US and China is natural in areas such as technology, trade and even geopolitics, it does not necessitate outright hostility. Portraying China as an adversary, as Abbott's rhetoric and directives do, undermines the possibility of meaningful cooperation between the world's two largest economies.

What is especially troubling is the stark contrast between the growing anti-China sentiment in Texas and the urgent need for greater collaboration between the two largest economies. As global interdependence deepens, strategic partnerships, not divisive policies, are essential for ensuring economic prosperity and global stability. The notion that divestment from China-related operations serves the interests of Texas or the US is short-sighted and misguided. Instead, what is needed is a concerted effort to foster understanding, build trust, and work toward common goals.

Abbott's orders reflect a misguided perception of China as an existential threat to the US. This narrative ignores the complexities of the US-China relationship, which is characterized by both competition and cooperation. It also disregards the significant economic interdependence that has been built over decades.

The implications of a Sino-US decoupling extend far beyond the borders of the two countries. A world where the US and China are locked in a zero-sum rivalry would be marked by economic disruption, technological stagnation and heightened geopolitical tensions. Developing countries, in particular, would suffer from the ripple effects of such a decoupling, as they rely on the stability and cooperation of the global economy's two biggest players.

Moreover, the ideological framing of China as an adversary risks exacerbating cultural and racial tensions within the US. Anti-Chinese sentiment often spills over into discrimination against individuals of Chinese descent, fostering division and eroding the social fabric of a multicultural nation. This xenophobia, reminiscent of the "Red Scare" era, has no place in a society that prides itself on diversity and inclusion.

Rather than stoking fears and deepening divides, leaders such as Abbott should focus on fostering strategic collaboration

between the US and China. While competition is inevitable, it should be framed as a healthy and productive force that drives innovation and progress. Efforts to address shared challenges, such as combating climate change, ensuring global health security, and promoting peace and prosperity, require the active participation of both countries.

The world truly stands at a crossroad. The path of fear, suspicion and decoupling leads to fragmentation and instability. The alternative, a path of patient diplomacy and mutual understanding, offers the promise of a more stable and prosperous future for all. Abbott's directives may resonate with certain political constituencies, but they risk setting a dangerous precedent that undermines the broader interests of Texas, the US, and the world. It is imperative that such actions be condemned with clarity and that leaders on both sides of the Pacific work toward building bridges rather than walls.

*The author is the founder of the China-Europe-America Global Initiative, editor of China and the World in three volumes, and the creator of the Inspiring Series, a collection of books that aims to introduce China to the world. The forthcoming edition in the series is titled China: Inspiring Greater Bay Area. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## GLOBAL VIEWS

ONG TEE KEAT

## Safe and sound

China and ASEAN should step up their cooperation on non-traditional security challenges to bolster mutual trust

Since 2021, the successive roll-out of the three Chinese global initiatives, namely the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative, has been upending the normative myth espoused by the West on initiatives of sustainable development



and security concerns alongside cross-civilization interaction. The seemingly independent dimensions of global governance are

now increasingly proven to be mutually reinforcing and interconnected by the unfolding global dynamics, particularly in the lively Asia-Pacific region.

For a long time, the international community has been made to believe that Westernization is the only template for modernization and development can only be achieved at the expense of environmental degradation. Alongside this, nation states could only be assured of security by means of military alliances and the architecture of military deterrence spearheaded by the West; while civilizational clashes are said to be foreordained in a world of diverse cultures. Coexistence is not at all prioritized.

These predatory myths serving the interests of the collective West have been propagating as the gospel truth worldwide under the Pax-Americana, more so across the Global South which comprises countries that were once colonies of the West.

The emergence of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as a regional grouping at the height of Cold War was earlier dismissed as a motley group of new emerging economies from the perspective of the collective West. Despite the

West's proclaimed obligation of providing a security shield in Southeast Asia during the Cold War years of ideological confrontation, ASEAN being the regional grouping encapsulating the Southeast Asian countries has consistently been treading the tight rope of geopolitical rift with great circumspection. This was evidenced by the roll-out of the Declaration on Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in 1971. The signatory parties, comprising then foreign ministers of the ASEAN member states or their representatives publicly stated their intent to keep Southeast Asia "free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers", in addition to broadening "the areas of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship". It stood as a bold and defiant move against the prevailing tide of rallying behind the US-led West when the specter of a "domino effect" was riding high across the region.

Today, with the maturing of China-ASEAN relations and partnership, notably in economic cooperation, security concerns remain one of the few areas yet to be addressed concertedly. In this context, there has been a prevalent myth claiming that it is wise for ASEAN to straddle in the geopolitical contest between China and the US by betting on Washington for providing the security shield, while economically, ASEAN has to embrace Beijing.

This is a myopic choice constrained by a zero-sum mentality. Obviously when ASEAN embarked on the China-initiated Belt and Road Initiative, it didn't mean the bloc has since been drawn into the orbit of Chinese neighborhood diplomacy at the expense of others. In the same vein, now that China and ASEAN are each other's top



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trading partner, it's conceivable that the existing multidimensional and multilateral cooperation may spill over to the security dimension. Again, such collaboration is not meant to target others. Instead, it can yield "positive sum" outcomes if those concerned are able to look beyond the narrow interpretation of "security cooperation". After all, security is not synonymous with fostering military pacts between the so-called like-minded countries with a specific third party in their crosshairs. Much less in deploying troops and military installations on foreign soil of sovereignty.

In reality, we are not short of exigencies and insecurities that warrant security cooperation, notably between ASEAN and China. Non-traditional security concerns, ranging

from climate change, food and energy security to transborder terrorism and human trafficking appear more pressing than any others.

While exploring security cooperation to address these non-traditional security challenges, the existing disputes on overlapping territorial claims over parts of the South China Sea between China and a few claimant states from ASEAN remain a challenge to the enduring China-ASEAN neighborhood partnership. In the collective effort to nurture the prevailing China-ASEAN partnership in the interest of good neighborliness, more emphasis should be attached to the building of mutual trust and confidence. The dividends of common prosperity and the desire for coexistence accrued from inclusive eco-

nomical development across the region act as a good security stabilizer to keep the volatility of security dynamics in check. Plainly put, prosperity and peace which bring about the desired security further reinforce the conducive environment for development.

ASEAN, as a regional bloc dedicated to promoting economic cooperation and regional peace, has its collective aspirations and concerns to prioritize. Under the prevailing non-interference principle, all member states share the understanding that domestic issues should be solved on their own without any outside intervention, and that each member state should have sufficient state strength to handle these issues.

In the prevailing face-off between China and the Philippines, external powers are visibly involved and the target is none other than China. Any misjudgment or mishandling of the military stand-off on the high seas would invariably flare up into conflict, leaving the regional peace and partnership in tatters.

The external powers, notably the United States and its allies, are not stakeholders involved in the disputes, thus having no locus standi to meddle in them. The saber-rattling of their warships in the disputed areas in the name of upholding "freedom of navigation" is absolutely unnecessary, unconstructive and provocative in nature, as "freedom of navigation" has never been an issue in the South China Sea for civilian vessels for ages. It's an overstatement to say that the overlapping territorial claims have thrown the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea into jeopardy. The self-proclaimed role of Washington in policing the Southeast Asian waters merely provides opportunities and justifications for the US fleet of naval warships to

flex their military muscles on the doorstep of China. This only serves to up the ante in the inconclusive disputes, rendering them more intractable.

It's not a secret that the entire US-led security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region is part of its "Indo-Pacific" strategy targeting China, albeit on the pretext of serving the interests of "Indo-Pacific" security.

The US-led alliances such as the Quadrilateral dialogue (among the US, India, Japan and Australia) and AUKUS (a security pact among Australia, the United Kingdom and the US), fostered in the name of common defense interests, are conspicuously blatant moves in defiance of ASEAN security. After all, Washington's underlying goal lies in upholding its faltering global primacy and hegemony in the region, even if it has to be done at the expense of regional stability.

On the issue of managing disputes, inclusive engagement through dialogues and negotiations is the only viable option, but it must strictly be confined to the stakeholders.

Noting that all along ASEAN has never been a military bloc, and China not a conventional security provider from the global perspective, if all the ideals of the Global Security Initiative were to be translated into action in the Southeast Asian context, perhaps the low-hanging fruits lie in the arising non-conventional security concerns such as insecurities posed by climate change, food and energy crises.

*The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific. 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.*

YU ZHEN AND CUI JIE

## Leveraging late-mover advantages

As the world governance system is being reformed in a globally divided landscape, China should contribute Chinese wisdom and play a bigger role to find solutions

The structure of global industry chains is becoming more localized, regionalized and diversified.

During earlier readjustments of the global supply chains, late-developing economies were seen to take over industries relocated from



Yu Zhen



Cui Jie

developed economies through cheap labor and high demand created by demographic dividends. The United States, Japan, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Taiwan island are all beneficiaries of the earlier rounds of industry chain restructuring wherein they overtook more advanced economies.

Amid heightened uncertainties for the global economy, the restructuring of global supply chains is often accompanied by international competition. International trade and economic rules have a significant impact on late-developing economies' participation in the global supply chain. Trade protectionism and geopolitical conflicts increase the risks associated with late-developing economies' absorbing industries transferred from developed economies, threatening the steady restructuring of global supply chains.

Despite their large number, the small and medium-sized enterprises in China are sensitive to the economic environment and vulnerable to risks. As a result, the country's

industry chain faces high risk of disruption. Meanwhile, the country has not yet built a unified national market. More efforts are required to eliminate local protectionism and market fragmentation, and to remove regulations and practices that hinder market integration and fair competition.

In addition, in order to take the lead in the transformation of the global industry chain, countries are proactively taking part in the reshaping of global governance rules, and are implementing policies to enhance the autonomy of their own industry chains, further strengthening regionalism and the localization of trade and investment and fueling the restructuring of the global industry chain.

China's voice in the multilateral trade system is still weak. It is not proficient in practicing global trade rules, and needs to elevate the level of regional trade agreements it signs with other countries. It also needs to push its higher-level opening-up.

China must thus seize the opportunities presented by the global industry chain restructuring to realize its upgrading through technological advancements and ensure industry chain security by expanding domestic consumption. It is also imperative for the country to proactively participate in making new global governance rules, therefore overtaking advanced countries by fully exploiting its late-mover advantages.

First, China needs to establish its technological innovation system and improve research and development policies to promote industrial upgrading. It also needs to build an industrial innovation system by stimulating enterprise vitality, nurturing leading enterprises and boosting innovation synergy.

Meanwhile, the country should give stronger support to research and development efforts and invest more resources in promoting the integration of talents and enterprises to spur their creativity. In the second round of global industry restructuring, Japan seized the opportunity provided by the US' technology transfer to introduce advanced technologies and secure semiconductor technology patents, which fueled the development of its semiconductor industry.

Second, China needs to build a domestic consumption system, provide more quality products to consumers and stimulate new demand. It should also develop strategic industries, remove obstacles in domestic circulation, promote cooperation among regional industry chains and optimize its industry layout.

The country should integrate domestic and overseas markets, open its doors wider to attract more foreign investment, improve the quality of global trade and ensure the security of the industry chain. The transformation of the consumer market is an important prerequisite for promoting global industry chain restructuring.

Late-developing economies that receive industry transfers are often in a stage of rapid development with an expanding consumer market, which is beneficial to enhancing the resilience and security of the local industry chain.

In the third round of global industry chain restructuring, the ROK seized the opportunity created by the burgeoning personal computer market, and took the lead in producing personal computers on a large scale. It successfully nurtured globally competitive brands and took over the semiconductor industry transferred from Japan.

Third, China needs to advance institutional opening-up and shorten the negative list for foreign investment to create a better business environment. It should align with high-standard international trade rules and explore opening-up experiences that can be copied across the country. The country should proactively take part in regional trade agreements and integrate into the global economic governance system by leveraging the pioneering role of free trade zones.

It is important for the country to seek common interests with other countries to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation, use regional economic cooperation mechanisms and engage in international affairs more proactively. In this way, China will play a bigger role in global affairs and promote the building of a new international order.

Late-developing economies can have a greater say in the global industry chain restructuring by proactively participating in the forging of regional trade pacts, and enhancing exchange and cooperation between member states and neighboring countries.

For example, negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which were initiated in 2012 by the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, took into account the different conditions of each party and accommodated the interests of all. This has paved the way for the



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restructuring of the regional industry chain and ensured the sustainable development of local industries.

As the world governance system is being reformed to adapt to an increasingly divided global political landscape and to address complicated international issues, all economies are seeking to build a system of rules that meets their own development needs. At the same time, countries are paying greater attention to national security and striving to gain the lead in the restructuring of the global industry chain while ensuring the security of local industry chains.

China should leverage its late-mover advantages to achieve industrial upgrading and ensure

industrial security through promoting technological advancements, boosting domestic consumption and playing a bigger role in global governance, thus contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions to the development of the global industry chain.

*Yu Zhen is director of the Institute for the US and Canadian Economies of Wuhan University. Cui Jie is a research associate at the Institute for the US and Canadian Economies of Wuhan University. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z  
WEEKLY

## Chongqing's cultural ambassadors

By TAN YINGZI in Chongqing  
tanyingzi@chinadaily.com.cn

As more international students pursue their studies in Chongqing, the southwestern municipality has decided to invite them to tell their stories and help promote mutual understanding among different countries.

On Nov 16, the first group of nine international student correspondents from Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications (CQPT) began their roles at a traditional Chinese event held at Chongqing Cotton Mill Yard in Shapingba district.

The student correspondents come from the United States, Russia, India, Vietnam, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. They will write about their time in China and convey their perspectives through various media platforms.

The program is a collaboration between CQPT, the Publicity Department of Shapingba district, and the China Daily Chongqing Bureau.

The event featured a cultural experience centered around the "Start of Winter", the first solar term of the winter season. The students participated in traditional tea ceremonies, learned how to brew tea over a stove, and tried their hand at flower arranging.

Chongqing, a megacity in southwest China with a population of over 32 million, serves as a gateway to inland China and is a major manufacturing hub. It became China's fourth municipality in 1997, after Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin.

Spanning an area as large as Austria and five times the size of Beijing, Chongqing has experienced rapid development, transforming into a modern, cosmopolitan city with advanced transportation systems and impressive architecture.

While its futuristic skyline of skyscrapers reflects the city's progress, Chongqing, with its 3,000-year history, also preserves a distinct culture and lifestyle.

## Global perspectives

This combination of modernity and tradition makes Chongqing the ideal place for international students to tell their stories about China.

Ly Hoang Anh, a graduate student from Vietnam, is excited to become a correspondent documenting her studies and life in the city.

"Actually, my childhood dream has always been to become a journalist. This is an interesting job that allows me to explore not only the landscapes of China but also its local life. I hope to have a meaningful experience, find happiness, and gain a deeper understanding of China," she said.

Rucker Andrej Tavon from the US is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer science and enjoys exploring the city.

"I feel a deep passion about my life here in China, and I'd love to share it with others around the world, especially in my home country," he said.

Garayev Atajan from Turkmenistan said his five years in China have been "a journey of growth, filled with valuable experiences" that have shaped both his academic and personal life.

"[Being a correspondent] allows me to share my perspective as an international student and promote cultural exchange between nations," he said. "I aim to showcase the richness of Chinese culture — its traditions, festivals, and values — and how they connect with people from other cultures."



International students from Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications learn the art of brewing tea over a stove during a cultural event held in Chongqing on Nov 16. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Top: Ren Keyu (center), a CUC student volunteer at Guangming Cinema, guides visually impaired audience members during a film screening. Above left: Li Yiyi records narration for an accessible film. Above right: Li Chaopeng (left) assists a visually impaired child in exploring the production process of an accessible film. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Light beyond sight

Guangming Cinema, a public welfare initiative, empowers visually impaired audiences to experience and connect through cinema.

By MENG WENJIE  
mengwenjie@121st.cn

A special version of the Chinese animated film *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* (2019) was recently screened at a nursing home in Taiwan, allowing visually impaired elderly residents to "see" the movie.

This version was created by Guangming Cinema, a public welfare initiative launched in 2017 by the Communication University of China (CUC) in collaboration with Beijing Gehua CATV Network and Dongfang Jiaying Television Cinema Media Co Ltd.

The name "Guangming", meaning "bright" in Chinese, reflects its mission to make films more accessible to visually impaired audiences.

Li Yiyi, 27, a CUC student volunteer who joined the project in 2018, explained that accessible movies feature audio descriptions of visual elements, added during pauses in dialogue and sound effects.

According to her, most volunteers at Guangming Cinema come from CUC's Television School. The team has grown from an initial group of about 30 members to more than 800 today.

Making an accessible movie involves several steps: selecting a film from the copyright library, writing the audio description script, recording the narration, reviewing the content, and testing it with visually impaired audiences. The entire process usually takes about 28 days and involves at least three students and two teachers.

For many volunteers, the most difficult part of creating an accessible movie is writing the audio descriptions. "Film is an art where a picture speaks a thousand words. It's tough to fit concise, accurate narration into the brief pauses in the soundtrack without disrupting

“What we do may seem simple, but it gives the audience a way to interact and engage socially, helping them feel more connected to the world.”

Li Chaopeng, 28, a volunteer at Guangming Cinema

the film's rhythm," Li explained.

When she first started, it took her an entire day to write the script for a five-minute segment. To ensure accuracy, she paused the film over 3,000 times to review scenes.

Writing descriptions for suspense films is even more demanding, as it's crucial to avoid spoilers.

"I want to make sure that, even though visually impaired viewers can't see the screen, our narration still captures the emotions and atmosphere of the film, offering an experience that matches that of sighted audiences," Li said.

For 28-year-old Li Chaopeng, his biggest challenge is writing descriptions for sci-fi and fantasy films, as it requires describing scenes far beyond everyday experience.

While working on the animated film *Big Fish & Begonia* (2016), he researched extensively to accurately describe the film's fantastical creatures, many of which were inspired by the ancient Chinese text *The Classic of Mountains and Rivers*. These ancient and imaginative beings required lively and detailed narration.

Li Chaopeng was pleasantly surprised to discover that visually impaired viewers also deeply enjoy fantasy movies. "Whether sighted or visually impaired, everyone creates their own imagined world when watching such films. The ability to fantasize is something we all share," he said.

Chen Zhongrui, 24, recalled an experience after a screening when a congenitally blind girl asked her mother, "What is the color red?" This question made him realize the importance of paying closer attention to the details when translating visual elements into audio for accessible films.

For example, he now describes "red" through other sensory perceptions, such as the warmth of heat or emotions like passion and shyness, whenever appropriate.

"Seeing visually impaired audiences fully grasp the films we create gives me immense satisfaction," Chen said.

## Making a difference

Zhao Xijing, a CUC teacher and a Guangming Cinema volunteer, noted that the team currently produces 104 accessible films each year. This allows visually impaired people in China to watch two films per week, matching or even surpassing the viewing frequency of sighted individuals.

These films are distributed nationwide through hard drives or cloud storage, reaching cinemas, film festivals, neighborhoods, and public welfare groups. The network covers all 2,244 special education schools in China and serves visually impaired audiences across 32 provinces on the Chinese mainland, as well as in Taiwan and Macao.

In 2022, Guangming Cinema began offering its films on cable television, making it easier for visually

impaired individuals to watch accessible films at home.

"We want to make accessible films a regular part of visually impaired audiences' daily lives," Zhao said.

Li Chaopeng recalls meeting a visually impaired mother and her son at a film screening. The mother explained that after losing her sight, she struggled to find topics to discuss with her family and often felt isolated. However, at Guangming Cinema, she was able to enjoy films just as much as her son.

"What we do may seem simple, but it gives the audience a way to interact and engage socially, helping them feel more connected to the world," said Li Chaopeng.

Today, the volunteers at Guangming Cinema are not just making films more accessible; they are also working to promote the concept of information accessibility to better engage with visually impaired individuals.

With this goal in mind, Guangming Cinema continues to improve accessibility in cinemas and advocate for standardized film technology. For example, inspired by their efforts, renowned Chinese director Jia Zhangke proposed the development of an accessible film industry during the 2019 National People's Congress.

Moreover, the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled took effect in China in May 2022, opening up more opportunities for accessible film production and promotion.

"This journey of illumination is also a journey of breaking down barriers," said Li Yiyi. "We hope that accessible films can help our visually impaired friends discover a world of light."

## Z WEEKLY



**Clockwise from left:** On Nov 18, participants in the 2024 Global Gen Z Dialogue on Meizhou Island tried on traditional Meizhou women's attire, prayed before a Mazu statue, and styled their hair in the Meizhou bun. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wearing her hair in a bun resembling a ship's sail and dressed in a blue top symbolizing the sea, Nikita Li Van Heerden from South Africa immersed herself in the Mazu atmosphere of Meizhou Island in Putian, East China's Fujian province.

According to legend, the original Meizhou hair bun was designed by Mazu herself, the revered goddess of the sea.

Van Heerden, 22, took part in the 2024 Global Gen Z Dialogue on Meizhou Island, co-organized by China Daily and the Putian Municipal People's Government on Nov 18.

The event, part of the ninth Global Mazu Culture Forum, with the theme "Philanthropy, Peace, and Mutual Appreciation of Civilizations", highlighted Mazu culture's influence on Putian's development and its role as a spiritual bond in fostering cross-regional and international exchanges.

More than 30 young people from over 20 countries and regions — including Australia, France, Kazakhstan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States — joined the dialogue.

They visited the Meizhou Mazu Ancestral Temple, the world's oldest Mazu temple, dating back to 987 AD. They also enjoyed Mazu-themed performances, experi-

enced traditional clothing and hairstyles, and discussed innovative ways to promote Mazu culture. Van Heerden said she hopes to spread Mazu stories and spirit by sharing her experience on Meizhou Island with her social media followers.

In her speech at the opening ceremony of the dialogue, Lin Shaowen, deputy mayor of the Putian Municipal People's Government, encouraged young people to explore the rich connotations and values of Mazu culture, to boldly and creatively promote its modern expression, and to strengthen exchanges and mutual learning to enhance cultural diversity and inclusiveness.

#### Global cultural influence

In fact, Mazu's cultural impact extends far beyond Fujian. Accord-

ing to the Putian government, there are tens of thousands of Mazu temples worldwide, spanning about 50 countries and regions, with an estimated 300 million worshippers. In 2009, Mazu beliefs and customs were inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Tuen Li Huey, a young Chinese Australian, is keenly aware of the global reach of Mazu traditions. Having grown up in Australia, the US, and Malaysia — each with its own Mazu temples — she feels a strong connection to this heritage.

At the event, Tuen performed a song titled *My Mazu Goddess*, singing with heartfelt emotion: "On this side of the sea, on that side of the island, in every village and town, big and small, there is a temple in our hearts. I devoutly offer

incense, feeling your compassion and kindness."

Zheng Yaling, from Taiwan, China, said she was deeply moved by how Mazu culture connects people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Since childhood, she has participated in festivities celebrating Mazu's birthday. Upon arriving at Meizhou Island, she saw Mazu statues, posters, and cultural products everywhere and observed the people's devout faith in Mazu.

"This feels almost like a homecoming," Zheng said. "Mazu is a spiritual bond between people in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, connecting our hearts. She represents love and protection, and her spirit knows no bounds."

Marjina Gokova, from Turkmenistan, is pursuing her master's degree in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. When she arrived in

Putian, she found the local culture distinct from that of China's inland cities — more integrated and diverse, even bearing similarities to Southeast Asian characteristics.

After visiting the Mazu Origin Museum, she discovered the reason. Over 1,000 years ago, Fujian was a key hub of the ancient Maritime Silk Road, where cultures from various regions converged. Mazu, deeply rooted in China's maritime culture, has become known as the goddess of peace at sea.

In the 21st century, Mazu's spirit of "establishing virtue, doing good, and great love" remains relevant and aligns with the Silk Road spirit of "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit", as embodied in the Belt and Road Initiative.

"This is fresh information and a great experience for me, allowing me to see a new side of Chinese culture," said Gokova.

Mazu also impressed foreign Gen Zers with her international significance.

Tom-Louis Flohrer, 25, from Germany, was amazed to learn that in modern times, Mazu has her own ID card and can even buy tickets for trains and flights when people invite her statue to other places for worship.

Another part of Mazu's story that resonates with Flohrer is her role as a guide during the global climate crisis. He noticed that a large beer factory in Putian uses solar panels to generate power, adhering to the principles of low-carbon production.

"Mazu's deep connection to the sea reveals a profound respect for the natural world. Her story reminds us that our destinies are intertwined with the rhythms of nature — a lesson that feels ever more urgent today," he said.

Flohrer was also struck by how Mazu culture has withstood the test of time.

"What allows certain customs to endure while others fade? I believe it is because they carry within them values that speak to the human spirit," he said.

Contact the writer at [guiqian@i21st.cn](mailto:guiqian@i21st.cn)

## A goddess reborn

Global Gen Z explores the legacy of an ancient Chinese goddess and her enduring influence as a spiritual bond fostering international exchange, **Gui Qian** reports.

## Young people form closer bonds with AI

By **GUO JIATONG**  
[guojiatong@i21st.cn](mailto:guojiatong@i21st.cn)

At just 20 years old, Chi Guangyao made a bold decision to abandon the guaranteed path of graduate school, despite having a perfect 4.0 GPA.

Instead, he ventured into the world of AI startups, driven by the belief that artificial intelligence would redefine how we work and create.

His journey began during college with an innovative project — a mini-program called "Sushiji" that tracked time. It caught the attention of AI investment funds, but it wasn't until the rise of ChatGPT that Chi truly understood the vast potential AI had to transform industries.

Today, Chi is the founder of Copy-

Ask, an AI-powered software with over 90,000 downloads and nearly 100,000 users since its launch in May 2023.

The platform offers features like translation, summarization, and search, demonstrating AI's ability to boost productivity and automate repetitive tasks.

"Instead of writing lines of code, AI handles the heavy lifting, allowing us humans to focus on higher-level tasks like customer communication and decision-making," Chi explained.

As AI becomes a game-changer for industries, experts like Han Hua, a professor at Shanghai University of Engineering and Technology, predict that high-skill jobs like data scientists and machine learning engineers will become even more crucial.



“With AI, however, there's no judgment. It always offers emotional support and helpful advice.”

**Chen Suyue**, 26, a game translator

"The new changes in the job market require young people to constantly upgrade their skills and adapt," Han said.

AI's impact isn't limited to the workplace. For many young people, like 26-year-old game translator Chen Suyue, AI is a tool for navigating social pressures.

"I find myself having a strong desire to share my feelings, but I worry my friends might get annoyed if they keep listening to my complaints," Chen said. "With AI, however, there's no judgment. It always offers emotional support and helpful advice."

For example, whenever her parents asked about her salary, Chen would feel anxious. "I think earning is a very sensitive topic," she said. "More importantly, I'm afraid that I haven't met their expectation

as an 'outstanding daughter'."

In such moments, her AI companion offers comfort, helping her interpret her parents' concerns as expressions of care rather than pressure.

The AI also helps her navigate social situations — like politely declining social events she doesn't want to attend and settling her secret thoughts that she prefers to hide from her friends.

"Everyone is under so much pressure these days. AI is a great listener," Chen said.

However, she cautioned against over-dependence on AI, emphasizing that virtual relationships cannot replace real-life connections.

Beyond emotional support, AI is also fueling creativity and personal passions.

Guo Tiwei, 24, has integrated AI

into GoAfar, a travel-planning tool he designed to craft highly personalized itineraries.

The mini-program can quickly generate detailed travel plans, including recommendations for sightseeing spots, self-driving durations, and even weather forecasts.

Guo explained that AI makes travel planning not only easier but also more flexible. "You can adjust plans at the last minute without worrying about causing trouble for anyone," he said.

Guo's project exemplifies how AI is shaping the future, enabling young people to pursue their passions with greater freedom and flexibility.

From the workplace to personal life, AI is proving to be a transformative force for a new generation.

# ZWEEKLY

## Crafting culture in the oven

World champion baker Li Junfei shares how he blends traditional Chinese culture with world-class skills, **Li Xinran** reports.

The students at Renmin University of China's Suzhou Campus were in for a treat — not just a taste of fresh bread but the chance to learn from a world-class baker.

On Nov 17, Li Junfei, the 22-year-old winner of the baking event at the 47th World Skills Competition, held a special baking class for 30 students from China, France, Pakistan, the United States, Ethiopia, and Ghana.

Li, currently a student at Wuzhong Technician Institute in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, shared not only his baking expertise but also his inspiring story of perseverance and growth.

Despite his international recognition, Li has only five years of baking experience. In 2018, after dropping out of high school, he started working as an apprentice at a local bakery to gain practical skills.

Within six months, he progressed from kneading dough to producing an entire loaf of bread on his own.

For Li, the appeal of baking lies in its challenges.

"Each baking process is unique," he said. "The actions might be the same, but factors like temperature, humidity, and the type of flour make a big difference. For example, yeast reacts differently at varying temperatures."

By 2022, Li had worked at several bakeries. He was inspired when he heard about a Chinese baker winning a world baking contest — an unusual achievement he likened to a foreigner winning a dumpling contest in China.

This motivated him to apply to Wuzhong Technician Institute — the alma mater of the world champion.

In September, Li competed in the biennial World Skills Competition held in Lyon, France. Often described as the "Olympic of skills", the competition provides a platform for global youths under the age of 22 to showcase and exchange their talents.

According to Li, much like the Olympics, the competition is both an "individual and team sport".

"When you're competing, you're out there on your own. But behind every athlete or contestant, there's always a team — a coach who instructs on technique, actions, and skills, and another to focus on mental preparation. It's the same for us," said Li. His team included his teacher, Wang Sen, and three other coaches, all former champions in the baking event.

The competition challenges participants to create edible products using limited tools and materials within a set time and space, based on a theme announced two months in advance. This year, with France as the host country, the theme was the Eiffel Tower.

Li and his team knew that to stand out in a world-class competition, they needed not only solid skills but also a unique concept.

They drew inspiration from tradition-



"The French contestants and judges were amazed by how I incorporated my own culture — something they had never seen before."

**Li Junfei**, 22, winner of the 47th World Skills Competition



al Chinese culture, specifically the *sunmao* (mortise-and-tenon) joints, commonly used in ancient Chinese architecture.

Li acknowledged that this creative choice added extra challenges due to the unpredictable nature of baking. "As the bread shrinks during baking, it causes deformation," he explained.

To overcome this, the team adjusted the bread's texture to be as firm as compressed biscuits, ensuring the structure remained intact.

"The French contestants and judges were amazed by how I incorporated my own culture — something they had never seen before. They were also moved by the fact that, as a foreigner, I had delicately represented key elements of their culture," Li said with pride.

Li also brought his winning entry to the baking class at RUC's Suzhou Campus, where Zhao Yifan, 25, a graduate student in Chinese international education, was deeply impressed.

"The *sunmao* structure Li used in his baking holds significant cultural value in China. I believe his work will allow more people around the world to appreciate the wisdom of our ancestors passed down over thousands of years," Zhao said.

In the class, Li taught the students to make four types of bread, including croissants. He noticed that regardless of the quality of their final products, all the students experienced the joy and sense of accomplishment that baking brings. One of them was Janet Cobbinah.

"I've always wanted to try baking, and it was exciting to have this hands-on experience under the guidance of a professional," said Cobbinah, 27, a Ghanaian student at RUC's Suzhou Campus and a master's candidate in contemporary Chinese studies.

"I was also touched by his spirit of perseverance. I feel like I've learned something that will be helpful for me in the future," she said.

According to Li, his biggest takeaway from the competition was the opportunity to expand his vision. He explained that baking is not a standardized process like manufacturing cars, so it was truly eye-opening to watch other bakers at work.

"This was my first time competing and exchanging ideas with outstanding bakers from other countries," he said. "We were divided into two groups, which gave me the chance to observe the entire baking process of the other group, their styles, and how they approached each step."

Li also highlighted that although baking originated in the West, China has been making rapid progress in the industry. "We are already among the top tiers globally," he said.

"This year, we won gold medals in both baking and sugar art at the World Skills Competition. However, our daily food culture, training systems in academies, and industry standards still need to catch up. That requires more talent to join and strive in this field."

Contact the writer at [lixinran@i21st.cn](mailto:lixinran@i21st.cn)

**From top to bottom:** Li Junfei trains for the World Skills Competition in March. International students at Renmin University of China's Suzhou Campus participate in Li's special baking class on Nov 17. Li's winning entry at the 47th World Skills Competition: an Eiffel Tower-themed bread sculpture. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



**Above:** Sun Guotao working in the ICU at the First Hospital of Lanzhou University, Gansu province. **Left:** ICU diaries written by Sun for his patients. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Narratives of care: ICU diaries

By **LI XINRAN** and **MA JINGNA** in Lanzhou

For 25-year-old Sun Guotao, nursing is more than just a profession — it's a calling to make a meaningful difference in patients' lives.

Sun, a graduate nursing student at Lanzhou University in Gansu province, is completing his clinical internship in the ICU at the First Hospital of Lanzhou University. Since last October, he has diligently kept 37 diary entries for his patients, documenting their journeys over weeks or even months.

Sun explained that most ICU patients are unconscious, incapable of caring for themselves. They may also undergo invasive procedures like tracheal intubation, and to prevent unplanned extubation, their hands are usually tied to the bed.

"They are in a state of confusion, unable to distinguish between day and night. When they regain consciousness, they might feel disoriented," Sun said.

This is what inspired Sun to initially start his "special project". He believes a diary helps patients make sense of their recovery process and provides comfort, easing their fears and anxieties.

"By understanding the challenges they've overcome, patients can develop a more positive outlook on life and feel motivated to reintegrate into society," he said.

In these diaries, Sun records significant milestones of his patients — whether uplifting, like "you woke up today", or critical moments during touch-and-go situations — and includes heartwarming instances, such as family visits. To make the diaries more personal, Sun also takes photos, prints them, and glues them into the diary.

### A path of resilience

Sun's path to nursing was anything but straightforward. Growing up in a small village in Heze, Shandong province, he faced setbacks early on when he failed both the regular college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, and the sports talent exam. His only option was vocational school, where he randomly selected a few majors, eventually landing in nursing.

"From unfamiliar to familiar, to developing a passion for this major, I've discovered that I'm well-suited for this job," Sun said.

After completing vocational school in 2020, Sun transitioned to undergraduate studies at Qinghai University before pursuing a master's degree at Lanzhou University.

According to him, the daily duties of nurses include providing critical care to patients in life-threatening situations, administering treatments like injections and blood transfusions, and attending to their personal needs.

"Nurses are responsible for managing every aspect of a patient's care and illness. With families unable to be present, nurses must stay by their side 24 hours a day," Sun explained. "In my view, ICU nurses not only provide medical care and monitoring but, more importantly, offer compassion and kindness to each patient."

The job can be particularly tough at times, especially when he sees a patient his age pass away. "It takes a toll mentally, but you can't immerse yourself in sadness forever. You still have a job to do and other patients to care for — you must carry on," Sun said.

In addition to the physical and emotional demands of nursing, maintaining ICU diaries adds another layer of challenge.

Acknowledging that this task goes beyond his regular duties, Sun admitted that maintaining the diaries can be exhausting, often only finishing them after his shift ends. Nevertheless, he finds the effort worthwhile.

He recounted one particularly rewarding moment with an 11-year-old girl who had been unconscious for 56 days following a car accident. After she transitioned to a regular ward, Sun gave her the diary he had kept for her.

"As she and her father flipped through the diary, she said, 'Thank you, big brother.' At that moment, I felt that all the effort was truly meaningful," Sun shared.

As his clinical internship nears its end, Sun is preparing his dissertation and exploring job opportunities. He hopes to continue his ICU diary project if given the chance.

Following media coverage of his initiative, many people have expressed how his story has inspired them.

"I'm just an ordinary person doing his job. I've worked on construction sites and in restaurant kitchens. Each of these experiences is part of my journey, and I've learned a lot from every role," Sun said. "Once uncertain about my future, I have now found my path in nursing."