

Embattled leader

Travel ban imposed on Yoon amid calls for his resignation
WORLD, PAGE 9



Daredevils descend on iconic peaks of Zhangjiajie
CHINA, PAGE 5



Magic of souvenirs

From ice-creams to magnets, museum creations spark frenzy
LIFE, PAGE 15

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2024

Leadership sets out plans for economic work

More proactive fiscal policy, moderately loose monetary measures to be taken for recovery

By XU WEI
xuwei@chinadaily.com.cn

Top policymakers pledged on Monday that China would adopt an even more proactive fiscal policy and a moderately loose monetary policy in 2025, as part of broader moves to boost the recovery of the world's second-largest economy and strengthen the living standards of the people.

The pledge came as the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, the Party's core leadership, met to map out economic priorities and plan anti-corruption efforts for next year.

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the meeting.

Analysts noted that China's policymakers have signaled a greater resolve to stabilize growth, in order to embrace uncertainties next year with enhanced policy measures.

The meeting vowed to roll out more proactive and effective macro policies to boost domestic demand and spur sci-tech innovation, highlighting the need to ensure the stability of stock markets and the real estate sector.

The prevention and defusing of risks in key sectors and external shocks were also stressed by policymakers, aiming to stabilize expectations and stimulate the vigor of the economy.

They also pledged to enrich and improve the policy toolkit, strengthen "unconventional countercyclical adjustments", intensify the coordination of various policies, and make macro regulation more forward-looking, targeted and effective.

Zhang Jun, chief economist of China Galaxy Securities, said the nation's embracing of a "moderately loose monetary policy", a major shift in stance since 2011, could entail greater strides in rate cuts and reductions in the reserve requirement ratio by the People's Bank of China next year.

Meanwhile, an even more proactive fiscal policy could point to a greater emphasis on consumer spending and the real estate sector, Zhang said.

The meeting reaffirmed the importance of lifting consumption and improving investment efficiency, saying that domestic demand should be expanded across the board.

The role of sci-tech innovation must be better harnessed to lead the development of new quality productive forces and develop a modern industrial system, the policymakers said.

They also called for the leveraging of reforms in the economic systems and implementation of landmark reform measures.

China's economy has shown growing signs of recovery in recent months after the central government rolled out wide-ranging stimulus measures since late September.

The official purchasing managers index for the manufacturing sector rose from 50.1 in October to 50.3 in November, remaining above the 50 mark that separates expansion from contraction for the second consecutive month and hitting a seven-month high.

Anti-graft drive

The fourth plenary session of the 20th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China will be held from Jan 6 to 8 next year, according to a decision made at a key Party meeting on Monday.

The meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee signaled that the Party will continue with its unrelenting momentum in fighting corruption and advance the anti-corruption campaign with greater depth and intensity next year.

The top anti-graft body is set to include the implementation of major reform initiatives in the scope of inspections to ensure reforms progress smoothly under rigorous scrutiny, said a statement issued following the meeting.

The anti-graft campaign will continue to tackle corruption and misconduct at the grassroots level, ensuring that the benefits of reform and development are distributed more equitably among the people, the policymakers said.

Meanwhile, the Monday meeting also signaled that Beijing will continue to expand high-level opening-up and try to stabilize foreign trade and the inflow of foreign investment.

The policymakers also stressed the need to carry out stronger regional strategies to unleash regional development potential, while pledging to take coordinated actions in cutting carbon emissions, reducing pollution and expanding green initiatives.

They required steps to scale up measures in guaranteeing and improving public well-being to bolster stronger senses of gain, happiness and security for the people.

Monday's meeting was held three days after the CPC Central Committee held a symposium to solicit advice from non-CPC personalities on the economic performance and economic priorities for next year.

While presiding over the meeting on Friday, Xi said it is of paramount importance to firm up confidence, adding that the Chinese economy remains on a firm footing, underpinned by abundant advantages, strong resilience and vast potential.

The fundamental drivers and long-term positive trajectory of the economy remain unchanged, he explained.

He stressed that achieving next year's economic goals would require the concerted efforts and hard work of the entire Party and society.

He noted the significant uncertainties and challenges facing the nation's growth, which he said must be addressed with a strong emphasis and concrete efforts.

China, in the face of difficulties and challenges every year, has always grown stronger through trials and adversity, he pointed out.

Zhou Lanxu and Fan Feifei contributed to this story.



Uncertain road ahead

Above: People venture out on Sunday amid explosions on the streets of Damascus after the capital of Syria was taken over by rebel forces. Syria's president Bashar al-Assad is reported to have sought asylum in Russia. UGUR YILDIRIM VIA GETTY IMAGES



Left: An Israeli armored vehicle patrols near the so-called Alpha Line that separates Israeli-occupied Golan Heights from Syria, in the town of Majdal Shams, on Sunday. MATIAS DELACROIX / AP See more, pages 3, 11

Premier: China offers strong momentum for world

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China will steadfastly advance high-level opening-up and take on international obligations commensurate with its own capabilities to jointly promote the healthy

Inside

Editorial, page 11
Qiang told heads of major international economic organizations on Monday.

Li made the remarks in Beijing during the "1+10" Dialogue, which

aims to enhance policy communication with leaders of organizations including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the International Labour Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Financial Stability Board amid growing uncertainties and challenges to economic globalization and multilateralism.

This is the first time that the number of organizations attending the dialogue has expanded, from the previous six to 10, with the addition of the New Development Bank,

the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Bank for International Settlements and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

In his opening remarks, Li said the purpose of expanding "the circle of friends" is to build more consensus on development, in order to promote global common prosperity.

"If we look at the obstacles to economic globalization, some countries now easily resort to imposing additional high tariffs, erecting barriers for protection. There are more and more restrictive measures on trade," he said.

Li added that "the number of new discriminatory trade and investment measures globally has increased annually" since 2020.

Noting that China, as a staunch defender of economic globalization and multilateralism, has been injecting strong momentum into the world economy, the premier said the country will, among other things, increase countercyclical adjustments, strengthen the intensity of macroeconomic policies and make every effort to expand domestic demand and boost consumption.

See *Economy*, page 3

What close Sino-Indonesian collaboration could mean

WORLD WATCH
By Putra Adhiguna

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto concluded his three-day state visit to China on Nov 10, after which he headed to the United States, before attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Lima, Peru. The visit saw a number of investment deals sealed in key areas of green transition, including lithium, new energy vehicles and green energy development.

Prabowo's visit to China, his second since being elected president in February, speaks of the significance of the relationship. China is now Indonesia's biggest trading partner and a major investor in infrastructure and green projects.

The Indonesian president's target of 8 percent GDP growth, along with advancing energy

security and green transition, is no mean feat amid all the global competition. With Indonesia importing 60 percent of its oil requirements, achieving national energy self-reliance and sovereignty sits high on his agenda.

All of these, coupled with Indonesia's aim of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 and tripling its renewable energy capacity by 2030, means that developing a clean energy value chain and leveraging the China-Indonesia partnership are key priorities.

Significant strides were made by Prabowo's predecessor to attract green foreign investments, including from China. These efforts have brought in major Chinese players, such as electric vehicle makers Wuling and BYD and solar panel producer Trina Solar, to address both growing domestic demand and export markets.

See *Partnership*, page 3

SAVING BABY ROUROU: CASE HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGES OF PREMATURE BIRTHS

After 143 days in a Shenzhen hospital he survived, but his mother faces ongoing hurdles

By LI BINGCUN in Hong Kong
bingcun@chinadailyhk.com



The baby was incredibly tiny, just a tad larger than the palm of an adult's hand. His thigh was almost as thin as a chopstick and his mouth looked like a little soybean.

Born five months premature and weighing less than 450 grams, the newborn was as light as a bottle of mineral water.

His skin was translucent and his eyelids were still fused shut. His organs were not fully developed and he relied on tubes inserted into his mouth and stomach to stay alive.

The nurses at Shenzhen Mater-

nity & Child Healthcare Hospital in Guangdong province performed their duties with the utmost caution to avoid harming his fragile body. They nicknamed the baby Rourou, meaning chubby and adorable, and hoped for the infant's survival.

Born at 21 weeks and four days, about half of a 40-week pregnancy, the baby is the youngest child saved in China, and only three days older than the record for such a birth.

See *Births*, page 2

Newsstand prices:
US \$1 Canada C\$1
UK £1.2 EU €1.6
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;
Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee

www.chinadailyglobal.com
A member of China Daily Global
©2024 All Rights Reserved
ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

PAGE TWO

A nurse takes care of a premature baby in an incubator at a hospital in Ji'an, Jiangxi province, on Jan 17, 2023. LI JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Births: Miracle babies fight for chance at life

From page 1

Beating a theoretical survival rate of zero, the baby was discharged from the hospital in March and celebrated his first birthday in October.

Premature birth is the leading cause of neonatal death, resulting in the loss of 900,000 babies across the world in 2019. Globally, one in 10 babies is born prematurely. For those born at 23 weeks, their theoretical survival rate is only about 40 percent, and one in four is severely disabled.

Brain hemorrhages, intestinal necrosis, respiratory distress, and retinopathy are among the complications that can lead to death or lifelong problems.

Each year, in neighboring Hong Kong there are about 4,000 premature births, including 120 babies born before 28 weeks. In recent years, the survival rate of 23-week premature babies in the city has risen to 50 percent.

The Shenzhen Maternity & Child Healthcare Hospital has saved over half of the nearly 200 infants born under 28 weeks each year, and consistently sets records for the survival rate of extremely premature babies.

Despite the medical breakthroughs, families with surviving premature babies still face challenges including ongoing health risks and caregiving, as well as trying to ensure their child keeps up with his or her peers.

Beating the odds

With a short cervical canal and intrauterine infection, Huang Wei delivered Rourou in October last year, about five months earlier than the due date.

Babies born extremely prematurely have nearly no chance of surviving. Almost everyone advised Huang to give up on the pregnancy.

But she was determined to have her first baby, even if it posed a risk to her own life. After six years of marriage, Rourou was conceived with the help of in vitro fertilization. The baby was born at night, and the doctors and nurses involved in the delivery were determined to save Rourou. They worked quickly to ensure the newborn's resuscitation and provided respiratory, circulatory, and nutritional support in the "golden" first hour after the birth.

Never having treated a baby born so prematurely, the medical team had to explore the most suitable care methods based on past experiences. They kept the incubator's environment as similar to a human womb as far as they possibly could. The brain tissue of a premature baby is as soft as tofu. So, to avoid a hemorrhage, two to three nurses were involved in moving Rourou's fragile little body.

Huang was separated from the baby and not allowed to visit the neonatal ward. The new mother had to rely on video calls and photos to see her son.

She did not return to her home in Jieyang, Guangdong, but rented a room near the hospital. Huang expressed milk every day and sent it to the hospital, where the nurses fed it to Rourou.

After 143 days in the hospital, his weight increased from 450 g to 4 kilograms, even heavier than some full-term babies. During his recovery, he overcame a serious infection and underwent eye surgery. With all his tubes removed and suffering no brain hemorrhage, the baby was discharged from the hospital safe and sound.



Clockwise from top: The medical team of the neonatal department of Shenzhen Maternity & Child Healthcare Hospital takes care of premature babies in October, 2022; medical staff insert a catheter into a premature baby in 2021 to deliver medication directly to the large central veins near the baby's heart and for other treatments; Huang Wei hugs her son Rourou on Feb 13, 2024, when he was over three months. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Huang spent about 380,000 yuan (\$52,000) to save her son, with 60 percent reimbursed by national health insurance.

Due to financial pressure, she returned to Jieyang to raise the baby and goes to Shenzhen every month for checkups.

Yet the burden of childcare has been compounded. She is seeking a divorce from her husband, who she said has a significant gambling debt.

Huang quit her job to prepare for pregnancy and has taken to social media for financial help. She has shared Rourou's videos online and generated income from selling maternity and baby products.

At the baby's one-year *zhuzhou*, a ceremony where a child randomly picks an item to predict their future, Rourou grabbed a writing brush representing future good wishes.

This auspicious choice filled Huang with hope that her child will grow into a knowledgeable person capable of making meaningful contributions to society.

Ongoing challenges

After premature babies return home the test for the family begins in earnest.

Jennifer Lam's son Lucas weighed 775 g when he was born at 26 weeks in 2012. The early birth impacted the functions of many

of his organs, such as his brain, lungs and eyes, as well as his muscles.

He is prone to pneumonia, so Lam keeps her house clean and at a constant temperature and humidity. After three months of intubation in the hospital, Lucas tends to vomit easily. He can only consume small meals, but eats more frequently than other children.

Lam devotes almost all of her free time to taking care of her son. By the age of eight, Lucas lagged behind his peers in many development aspects, such as speech, walking, and especially social interactions. Now aged 12, he is relatively small compared to his peers, one of the more obvious development indicators of children born prematurely.

Lam has taken Lucas to swimming classes and social interaction lessons to improve his weakness. She has also helped him explore his strengths, such as literature, computer programming, and music, in the hope these skills can help him later in life.

Lam, who is also the vice chairperson of Premie Parents Support Group (Hong Kong), has heard many heartbreaking stories from families with preterm children. They include cases of dwarfism, serious myopia, being wheelchair bound from an early age, and even cerebral palsy.

Although many preterm children eventually integrate well into society, a new study shows that they are less likely to gain a higher education or secure a high-paying job.

A scientific research article published by *plos.org* in November, analyzed data of 2.4 million babies born between 1990 and 1996 in Canada.

It suggested long-term support, including providing psychological, educational and vocational resources that go beyond clinical care to help mitigate the long-term effects of premature birth.

Improving prospects

Three years ago, Queen Mary Hospital in Hong Kong established a cross-discipline medical team to provide comprehensive support for families with babies delivered at 23 to 25 weeks.

In August, the team said it had assisted over 20 parents. The assistance included helping them delay the delivery date, monitoring the overall situation, deciding emergency plans, and in some cases helping parents recover from the sorrow of losing a baby.

Before Rourou's delivery, Shenzhen Maternity & Child Healthcare Hospital had saved five babies born at around 22 weeks over a three-year period.

Despite medical advances, the risk of premature births is on the rise due to an increase in the maternal age and the use of assisted reproductive technologies.

The ultimate goal is not to set records on the age of saving premature babies, but to try and ensure they have healthy development, experts said.

Zong Haifeng, deputy director of Shenzhen Maternity & Child Healthcare Hospital, called for special financial support for families with premature babies, such as single-parent ones, that face money difficulties. He also hopes more professional and affordable care services for premature babies can be provided, and parents have more channels to seek help and ease their mental stress.

Many young couples are just starting out in life and have small savings. But the birth of a premature baby brings big challenges, which are prolonged, demanding, and costly, Zou pointed out.

In serious cases, the hospital costs can exceed 1 million yuan, and there are also follow-up examinations, and training and childcare expenses. In some complex situations, even two or three carers may not be able to manage at home.

Lam Hung-san, professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's pediatrics department, urged the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government to strengthen follow-up assessment of all premature babies so doctors can better monitor their development. He also called for reducing the waiting time for rehabilitation treatment. Sometimes it can last for six months to a year, which denies the children the best time for treatment.

Given the pressure of caring for premature babies, it's often usual for one parent to quit their job. He suggested that the government consider recurring support measures such as tax rebates.

Lam also called for more guidelines and assistance for children born prematurely to have a suitable education to lay a good foundation for their future employment.

Without support, young parents and their children may be overwhelmed by their difficult circumstances, which could deter other young people wanting children, he cautioned.

Jennifer Lam, from the parents support group, called for greater attention to be paid to parents' mental health.

Unprepared for the early arrival of their babies, young parents are often haunted by fear of receiving bad news and the pain of being unable to provide adequate support.

They can find themselves overwhelmed by anxiety about their child's development, and left feeling guilty about their child's slow learning.

Lam said for her, the encouragement given by other parents of premature babies is even more valuable than that of family and friends. She urged more parents of these children to join activities organized by related associations, which could ease stress and improve mutual support.

While some children struggle to keep pace with their peers, some others born prematurely, including Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein, have been recognized for their genius and contributions to science. Lam hopes that society does not put a label on premature babies or set limits for them.

As Rourou's mother Huang Wei emphasized, "no foot is too small to leave a footprint", Lam believes these little feet will eventually carve out their own paths.

TOP NEWS

Solution urged to bring peace, stability in Syria

China hopes that all parties concerned will proceed with interests of Syrians in mind

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
jan@chinadaily.com

China, the United Nations and the Arab League have called for efforts to peacefully resolve the situation in Syria, with due respect for the aspirations of the Syrian people, as the country grapples with uncertainty on multiple fronts, following the departure and reported resignation of its president.

China hopes that all parties concerned will proceed from the fundamental interests of the Syrian people and find a political solution to restore stability in Syria as soon as possible, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Monday.

The future and destiny of Syria should be decided by the Syrian people, and the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected, Mao said, adding that China is paying close attention to the development of the situation in Syria.

Bashar al-Assad, who left the presidential palace after opposition forces stormed Damascus on Sunday, is in Moscow, Russian state media said.

Syrian Prime Minister Mohammad Ghazi al-Jalali said on Monday that most Cabinet ministers are still working from offices in the capital. Hundreds of Syrians have returned home from neighboring countries.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday that Russian President Vladimir Putin made the decision to grant Assad asylum. Peskov also said that it was premature to talk about the future of Russia's military facilities in Syria, adding that it would be "a subject for discussion with those who will be in power in Syria".

At Russia's request, the UN Security Council plans to hold an emergency meeting on Syria late Monday.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Sunday that the future of Syria is a matter for the Syrians to determine and his special envoy, Geir Pedersen, "will be working with them toward that end".

"I reiterate my call for calm and avoiding violence at this sensitive time, while protecting the rights of all Syrians," Guterres said in a statement.

"We remain committed to helping Syrians build a country where reconciliation, justice, freedom, and pros-

perity are shared realities for all," he later posted on social media.

Syria has been in turmoil for years. The Arab League restored Syria's membership in May last year, ending 12 years of suspension and isolation.

The general secretariat of the Arab League called on all Syrians to uphold tolerance, engage in dialogue, safeguard people's rights, and work toward completing a peaceful and secure political transition.

It also reiterated its condemnation of Israel's exploitation of the internal situation in Syria to illegally change the status quo in the Golan Heights, by occupying additional land there and terminating the 1974 UN-monitored Disengagement Agreement.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Monday that they will work for the safe and voluntary return of Syrian migrants it hosts, and will help in the reconstruction of Syria.

Hussein Maklad, professor of international relations at Damascus University, told China Daily that this is an opportunity for the country to form a government that represents its ethnically and religiously diverse population, foster economic recovery, and allow refugees and internally displaced people to return home.

"A power vacuum in Syria could lead to regional instability" and risk turning Syria into a field for regional contest for hegemony, "potentially creating more chaos if not appropriately managed," Maklad added.

Meanwhile, Israeli tanks advanced on Monday into the southwestern Syrian city of Quneitra near the occupied Golan Heights, reaching the governorate building as drones circled overhead, a Syrian source told Xinhua News Agency.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar claimed at a news briefing that "Syrian militants" had crossed into the buffer zone over the weekend, violating the disengagement agreement between the two countries.

"In response, and given the threat to our communities in the Golan Heights, the Israel Defense Forces carried out a targeted and temporary operation to take control of areas near the border," he added.

Wang Qingyun contributed to this story.



Premier Li Qiang (center) presides over the "1+10" Dialogue in Beijing on Monday. The meeting was also attended by heads of 10 major international economic organizations. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Economy: More opening-up policies to be adopted

From page 1

Li also pledged to further comprehensively deepen reform, build a unified national market and focus on boosting scientific innovation and industrial innovation, thereby enhancing economic endogenous growth.

He reiterated China's willingness to share development opportunities with the rest of the world, saying that the country will introduce more autonomous and unilateral opening-up policies,

further expand the network of high-standard free trade zones, and continue to create a market-oriented, law-based, world-class business environment.

The underlying logic for a stronger Chinese economy remains unchanged and its guiding principle of benefiting the world also remains unchanged, Li said, adding that China will provide great certainty for the world economy through its economic development.

Li expressed China's willing-

ness to work with all parties to uphold the basic norms governing international relations and the multilateral trading system, emphasizing that China supports international economic organizations in playing an important role in global governance.

According to a news release, attendees at the meeting spoke highly of the tremendous achievements made in China's development, saying that they are full of confidence in the transformation and prospects of the

Chinese economy, which has injected stability and strong momentum into global peace and development.

They also expressed willingness to strengthen cooperation with China, jointly uphold multilateralism and the process of globalization, prioritize development issues, uphold free trade, increase support for developing countries, address global challenges such as climate change, and promote inclusive growth for common prosperity and sustainable development.

Japan's defense expansion triggers concerns

By CAI HONG
caihong@chinadaily.com.cn

Japan's efforts to expand its defense industry both domestically and internationally could heighten tensions in the region and spark an arms race, experts warned.

Under its Official Security Assistance program, Japan plans to supply defense equipment and provide assistance to the Philippines, Indonesia, Mongolia and Djibouti in the financial year 2024, which ends in March 2025, the newspaper Asahi Shimbun said.

Launched in April 2023, the OSA program aims to assist nations that "share Japan's values and face similar diplomatic challenges" in countering China's so-called expanding military presence in the region.

Tokyo is also revising its "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology", which regulate the export of military equipment. These principles include prohibiting certain overseas transfers, limiting permissible cases through stringent review and transparency, and ensuring proper oversight to prevent unauthorized use or third-party transfers.

In December 2023, Japan amended its export guidelines to allow domestically produced defense platforms, including lethal weapons, to be exported to licensee countries such as the United States. As part of this policy, Japan agreed to supply missiles for the Patriot PAC-2 and PAC-3 systems to replenish US stockpiles.

In March, Japan revised its arms export policy further, permitting the sale of next-generation combat aircraft developed jointly with the

United Kingdom and Italy under the Global Combat Air Programme.

Potential markets for the jets include 15 countries with which Japan has defense partnership agreements, such as the US, Germany, India and Vietnam, according to the Associated Press.

Additionally, Japan, Britain and Italy are reportedly considering inviting Saudi Arabia to join the fighter jet development program as a financial contributor, Kyodo News reported.

Analysts observed that Japan lifting its export ban on fighter jets marks a major departure from its post-World War II security policy, which traditionally prohibited arms exports.

Jumpei Ishimaru, a research assistant at the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Japan Chair Programme, noted in an online analysis that the revised defense export policy provides a pathway for Japan to expand its presence in the global arms market, potentially bolstering its domestic defense industry.

Japan's military build-up since 2022 has fueled a surge in domestic orders, with some companies reporting a more than 300 percent increase in new contracts, according to a Dec 2 report released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

SIPRI data revealed that arms revenues for five Japan-based companies, including Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Kawasaki Heavy Industries, rose by 35 percent to \$10 billion in 2023.

Lu Hao, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Japan Studies, warned that Japan's efforts to lift restrictions on weapons

exports and revitalize its defense industry could contribute to regional instability.

"Tokyo's aggressive armament expansion will likely trigger an arms race, escalate security conflicts and undermine regional peace and stability," warned Lu.

To encourage investment in its defense industry, Japan has raised the profit margin for defense-related government orders from 8 percent to 15 percent, a significant shift in a country where defense spending was once considered taboo under the Constitution, which renounces war, Nikkei Asia reported.

Defense and aerospace startups in Japan are attracting growing interest from US venture capitalists as Tokyo accelerates efforts to strengthen its defenses.

Major industry players like Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Kawasaki Heavy Industries and IHI are forecasting a combined \$9.82 billion in defense-related revenues for the fiscal year ending March 2025, according to Nikkei Asia. Mitsubishi Heavy has been designated by Japan's Ministry of Defense as the prime contractor for key projects, including the development of standoff missiles and other critical defense systems.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries President Seiji Izumisawa told Nikkei Asia that Japan's defense sector is undergoing rapid expansion in response to the country's national security initiatives, with annual revenues projected to reach 1 trillion yen (\$6.7 billion) during the medium-term business plan through March 2027.

Traditionally, Japanese defense contractors have struggled to

secure direct financing from banks, relying instead on government funding through the defense ministry for capital investments. However, this dynamic is shifting as startups increasingly play a pivotal role in the global defense industry.

In response, the Development Bank of Japan has committed \$63.7 million in financing for defense-related startups over five years, through 2025.

Lian Degui, director of the Center for Japanese Studies at Shanghai International Studies University, noted that Japan's defense policies align closely with US strategic objectives. "The United States has consistently supported, requested and even encouraged Japan to bolster its defense capabilities and increase defense spending," he said.

"Japan is leveraging US pressure as a pretext to enhance its military capabilities, modernize its weapons systems, and pursue its long-held ambitions of becoming a 'normal country' or even a 'political and military power,'" said Lian.

While Japan publicly maintains an exclusively self-defense-oriented policy, its consistent increases in military spending, weapons development, and procurement of long-range arms have undermined this stance and challenged the constraints of its Constitution, Lian observed.

Wu Jinan, a senior researcher at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, added that the use of Japanese weapons in overseas conflicts could blur the lines of integrated force application, potentially conflicting with Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

"Japan's recent military build-up and increased arms exports are unlikely to achieve the security improvements it seeks," Wu remarked.

Celebrations on the street



Supporters of Ghana's main opposition National Democratic Congress party candidate and former president John Dramani Mahama celebrate on Sunday after his rival conceded defeat in the presidential and parliamentary elections. ZOHRA BENSEMRA / REUTERS

Partnership: Responsive actions needed to achieve green transition

From page 1

In the nickel sector, where Indonesia meets half of the global demand, the country has attracted significant Chinese investments in nickel smelters and basic processing industries. While improvements in the supply chain are needed on many fronts, these investments have demonstrated how Chinese investors can move at the speed aligned with Indonesia's broader economic goals.

So far, Indonesia has met less than one-third of the \$19 billion investment needed annually to achieve its climate targets, as outlined in its Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution — a

shortfall that also presents an opportunity.

With Indonesia aiming to nurture its historical ties in foreign relations while exploring emerging economic opportunities, China is a natural partner for deepening a green partnership.

A shared vision

Prabowo outlined eight missions for his administration, known as *Asta Cita*. Parts of this vision strongly emphasize self-reliance while developing Indonesia's economy, which bears some resemblance to China's vision of "a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". It is an avenue to weave a community with a shared future, preferably a green one.

Multiple transition initiatives are already emerging in the Asian region, such as the Just Energy Transition Partnerships and Japan's Asia Zero Emission Community initiative. What sets China apart in complementing these existing efforts is its strength in delivering low-cost, high-tech green industries, and its shared trajectory with Indonesia's aim to simultaneously grow and build global relevance, again, at speed.

While both countries are historically known as "coal giants", China's accelerated progress in the green space exemplifies how the global green transition can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a risk.

As Southeast Asian countries compete to enter the green value

chain, Indonesia's large economy and abundance of natural resources provide a strong footing, but the new, outward-looking president must move with haste.

What the new government needs to put forward consistent policy signals for renewable energy buildup, incentives to build local industries, while safeguarding a just and transparent green transition. There are also a few things to bear in mind.

First, Indonesia's green plans and road maps need better unification and accountability. Chinese investors are both patient and hasty. Convening and building relationships is the start, but clear near-term targets that all parties can rely on are crucial to moving forward. Toward that end,

the myriad sectoral road maps would benefit by having a unified road map, where ministerial plans complement the broader agenda of the president's office, rather than pulling in different directions.

Second, it is essential to remain responsive to the global market dynamics to stay relevant. The global green transition is not a linear process. Improvements in technologies and working standards are evolving simultaneously, addressing the various imperfections of the green value chain. As attention on environmental impact and labor standards intensifies, responsive actions are required from both the Indonesian government and Chinese investors.

Third, more attention should be given to showcasing green and responsible Chinese investment achievements in Indonesia and abroad. While challenges remain, there are also many positive stories that have largely gone untold to the wider Indonesian public.

Ultimately, in a world where the ground is constantly shifting, perhaps a mere "partnership" may prove insufficient, and a deeper bond between the two countries could be better forged toward the long road to greener economies. And what better way to begin the journey than with a warm visit to start charting the path forward together?

The author is managing director of Energy Shift Institute, an energy finance think tank focused on Asia's energy transition. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

More regions see subsidized fertility services

Administration pushes a slew of assisted reproductive treatments

By WANG XIAOYU
wangxiaoyu@chinadaily.com.cn

About 1.03 million assisted reproductive consultations or therapies costing nearly 2 billion yuan (\$270 million) were reimbursed by public medical insurance from January to September, as a growing number of regions started providing subsidized assisted fertility treatment, the National Healthcare Security Administration said late last month.

Earlier last month, the administration released a trial guideline that consolidates various fertility therapies into 12 major categories and laid out service pricing standards to better regulate the sector. So far, 27 provincial-level regions, including Beijing, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and the provinces of Jiangxi and Shandong, have extended medical insurance coverage to a slew of assisted reproductive therapies, it said in a statement.

The widening reimbursement of assisted reproductive services is part of a broader push led by the administration to reduce childbearing costs for families.

It said that in the first three quarters of this year, the nation's maternity insurance funds spent 89.3 billion yuan, up 11.5 percent from last year.

China's maternity insurance guarantees that employed women on maternity or childcare leave receive basic salaries, maternity subsidies

and reimbursement for medical expenses related to pregnancy.

As of the end of last year, 249 million women have joined the insurance program, including workers with flexible employment or those with new types of jobs, such as delivery agents.

More than 80 percent of newborns enroll in the basic insurance program within the year of their birth, compared to around 50 percent in the past few years.

Meanwhile, the administration said that since 2018, 174 types of pediatric medications have been added to the national drug reimbursement list following price negotiations with manufacturers, accounting for nearly 24 percent of newly added medications.

These drugs targeted over 20 types of pediatric diseases, including neurological and respiratory illnesses and rare diseases. For instance, the price of nusinersen sodium injections, which treat a rare disease called spinal muscular atrophy, has been cut from 700,000 yuan per dose to 30,000 yuan.

The administration's bulk procurement programs have also covered several pediatric drugs, it added.

The administration said it will make further efforts to improve its maternity insurance system and take advantage of various healthcare security tools to cut fertility costs and help promote high-quality demographic development.

Macao residents benefit from customs arrangement

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
qiuquanlin@chinadaily.com.cn

The efficiency of clearance for people, vehicles and goods between Guangdong province and the neighboring Macao Special Administrative Region has continued to improve since the implementation of a closed-loop customs arrangement, according to local customs.

"The implementation of the customs arrangement has facilitated a more efficient flow of various elements, providing greater convenience for Macao residents in their daily lives and employment, thereby injecting vitality into industrial development," said Yang Hai, deputy director of Gongbei Customs in Zhuhai, Guangdong, during a press conference on Monday.

Alongside innovations in customs arrangements, trade between Guangdong and Macao has steadily expanded over the past 25 years. In the first 10 months of this year, Guangdong's general trade imports and exports with Macao totaled 12.64 billion yuan (\$1.74 billion), marking a rapid growth of 30.3 percent.

Moreover, the structure of trade products has been further optimized and diversified. In terms of exports, electromechanical products have replaced textiles and clothing as the main export goods.

In the first 10 months of this year, Guangdong's exports of electromechanical products to Macao amounted to 3.62 billion yuan, with their proportion increasing from 9.6 percent in 1999 to 23.2 percent, according to provincial customs data.

Under the closed-loop customs arrangement, the tax policy of "opening up the first line and controlling the second line" was implemented in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, Zhuhai, on March 1.

The border between Hengqin and Macao was designated as the "first line," while the border between Hengqin and other parts of the mainland was designated as the "second line."

Under this closed-loop operation, goods that meet certain conditions are exempt from tax when entering the cooperation zone through the

"first line," while other goods are bonded. Imported goods entering the mainland through the "second line" are subject to tax, according to regulations.

As of the end of October, customs at the "first-line" port in Hengqin had cleared nearly 15 million inbound and outbound passengers and supervised over 1.6 million inbound and outbound vehicles, according to Yang.

Additionally, over 12.69 million vehicles have been cleared through the "second-line" exit channel. On Oct 3 alone, the number of inbound and outbound passengers through the "first-line" exceeded 103,000, while the number of vehicles exiting through the "second-line" surpassed 66,000, setting new daily records for both channels.

In the "first-line" area, customs have implemented innovative cross-border cooperation mechanisms covering customs supervision, health quarantine, agricultural and food product safety supervision, and industrial product qualification assessment to support the integrated development of Zhuhai and Macao, Yang said.

Guangdong and Macao have shared large-scale container and vehicle inspection equipment image data, deepened cooperation in nuclear radiation monitoring of goods flow, and achieved one-time machine inspection customs clearance.

"The Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone has become the first in the country to allow Macao residents to carry relevant animal and plant products through customs, facilitating smooth clearance of seven major categories of products, including fruits and fresh-cut flowers," Yang said.

Currently, 3,452 Macao residents have registered to carry over 6,436 batches of animal and plant products into the in-depth cooperation zone, strengthening their sense of belonging to their new home in Hengqin.

There are now over 6,500 operating entities with Macao investments, and 100 enterprises and institutions qualified for tax-exempt imports, with orderly tax exemption, insurance, and refund services in the zone.



Media representatives participate in the launching ceremony of a "Media Plus" cooperation project during the South and Southeast Asian Media Network Annual Meeting in Xishuangbanna, Southwest China's Yunnan province, on Monday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Meeting calls for media alliance to showcase regional strength

By FANG AIQING in Beijing and LI YINGQING in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan

The role of media collaboration in building a more efficient international communication system was highlighted at this year's South and Southeast Asian Media Network Annual Meeting, held in Xishuangbanna, Southwest China's Yunnan province, on Monday.

Initiated by China Daily Asia Pacific and the Yunnan International Communication Center for South and Southeast Asia in January, more than 100 media outlets from 12 countries took part in the network, aiming to highlight the importance of strengthening media exchanges and cooperation.

Over the past year, these organizations have explored agenda setting, technological innovation and cultural exchanges through their alliance, promoting the exchange and mutual learning among civilizations and people-to-people connectivity, according to Zeng Yan, head of the Publicity Department of the Com-

munist Party of China Yunnan Provincial Committee.

Zeng called for cooperation mechanisms for joint content creation, co-construction of media platforms and article exchanges, joint education and exchange programs for media talent, as well as organizing joint interviews, conferences and academic lectures, specialized training sessions and setting up awards.

Zhu Baoxia, deputy publisher of China Daily, said that over the past year, the network has deepened the understanding and cooperation between the media organizations in various countries and contributed to promoting cultural exchanges and people-to-people connectivity in the region.

"China Daily will continue to deepen exchange and cooperation with Yunnan province, as well as media organizations of the network. Facing a global audience, we aim to tell in a better way stories of China, South Asia and Southeast Asia, highlighting the region's cultural exchanges, mutual learning

and socioeconomic development. By doing so, we will showcase the region's strength in global development and amplify our shared voice," Zhu said.

Neth Pheaktra, Cambodia's minister of information, said that the members of the network will create a more potent synergy to connect the hearts of people across borders and expressed hope that the media sector harness their strengths, actively promote positive energy, and foster cultural exchange and mutual appreciation, to contribute to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

During the event, members of the network signed an international communication cooperation agreement for the upcoming year and launched a "Media Plus" cooperation project, which will include joint media production, exhibitions and cultural exchange programs in China, Cambodia, Laos and other countries in the region.

Contact the writers at fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Champion's promotion

Olympic champion Wang Chuqin (second from the left) and teammates and coaches from the national table tennis team interact with a face-changing artist during a community table tennis promotion event in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Monday. HUA XIAOFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Fudan's AI regulations stir controversy

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Fudan University's introduction of a new set of regulations to control the use of artificial intelligence tools in undergraduate thesis writing has sparked heated online debates.

The policy, which includes six prohibitions and penalties, such as revoking degrees for severe violations, is believed to be the first of its kind worldwide to impose such restrictions on AI use in academic settings.

The university's move has divided opinions online. Supporters argue that AI misuse threatens academic integrity and that Fudan's policy is a pioneering effort to establish guidelines for responsible AI use.

Critics, however, question whether the regulations are too stringent in a world where AI tools are becoming increasingly essential in education.

Fudan has long focused on AI education. Earlier this year, the university announced plans to launch 100 AI-themed courses for the 2024-2025 academic year. By 2025, Fudan aims for all students to take AI courses, incorporate AI into all disciplines, and meet AI competency requirements.

The new rules, however, have raised questions about Fudan's stance on AI's role in education. The university's academic affairs office clarified that the policy is not a ban but a set of guidelines designed to ensure the responsible use of AI tools in thesis writing.

"This is not a step backward," a university representative said. "Our goal is to help students use AI in ways that enhance their work without compromising academic integrity."

The six prohibitions outlined in the regulations include banning students from using AI to generate or alter original data, experimental results, images, or thesis content such as text and acknowledgments. AI is also prohibited from being used in the thesis review process.

The regulation also explicitly bans AI tools for language polishing and translation.

"Smooth writing and clear logic are key skills we expect from undergraduates across all majors. These abilities are closely linked to creative thinking," said a university representative.

However, the policy allows AI tools to be used in certain contexts, such as helping with coding,

debugging, or selecting research methods, provided they do not interfere with the student's ability to demonstrate critical thinking and innovation.

The policy was developed with input from faculty, students and ethics experts, who agreed that while AI could improve the quality of theses, it should not replace independent thought or original research. The university also cited examples of AI's limitations, including an instance where an AI model fabricated a list of essential works in mathematics.

Fudan's regulations are part of a broader trend among universities to address the challenges posed by AI in academia.

Institutions like the Communication University of China and Tianjin University of Science and Technology have also implemented policies to prevent students from using AI-generated content in theses.

Fudan University emphasized that the guidelines are not final and may be adjusted over time. "Our focus is on developing core competencies in students," the Fudan representative said. "If the role of AI evolves, we'll adapt our policies accordingly."

Pioneer of railway ticketing system honored

By CHINA DAILY

Shan Xinghua, a pioneer in modernizing China's railway ticketing system, was awarded the title "Role Model of the Times" by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on Monday.

As chief researcher at the China Academy of Railway Sciences Corporation, the 50-year-old Shan has dedicated her 28-year career to developing and advancing China's online railway ticketing system. Her contributions have helped to establish 12306, the world's largest real-time ticketing platform, which serves over 700 million users and handles more than 50 billion daily visits during peak periods.

Widely regarded as the "super brain" behind the 12306 platform, Shan has played a pivotal role in transforming railway ticketing from manual sales to fully digital operations and from station-based ticketing to a unified national network.

Shan began her career in 1996 when she joined a newly formed research team tasked with creating a unified national ticketing system. Over the years, she has guided the system through major milestones.

Today, the 12306 platform can issue over 1,000 tickets per second during peak periods, enabling users to secure their tickets in just 1.2 seconds.

When the system was first launched in 2011, it faced its biggest challenge during the 2012 Spring Festival travel rush, a time of intense demand. "At this critical moment, we had to overcome the challenges, no matter how difficult," Shan told her team.

At the time, a single ticket search could require tens of thousands of computations, considering train types, routes and seat availability. Shan and her team worked around the clock, analyzing system performance by day and testing optimizations by night. Their relentless efforts allowed the system to handle over 1.4 billion daily visits and double its peak-day ticket sales capacity to 1.2 million tickets during the 2012 Spring Festival.

Under Shan's leadership, the platform has become the primary ticketing channel for China's railway system, saving an estimated 300 million yuan (\$41.2 million) annually in ticketing costs.

In 2017, Shan's team spearheaded the electronic ticket reform in Hainan province. They improved the speed of ID-based e-ticket gate processing by implementing self-developed artificial intelligence and parallel computing technologies, reducing the average gate-passing time to just 1.5 seconds.

Shan's expertise has extended internationally as well. Her team developed tailored ticketing systems for the China-Laos Railway, which began operations in 2021, and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, launched last year. Both systems were designed to accommodate local conditions and user preferences.

Shan has prioritized user-friendly innovations for diverse groups. Key reforms include online student identity verification, barrier-free interfaces for elderly users and group ticketing options for migrant workers.

Recent enhancements to the 12306 platform include onboard transfers, online seat selection, pre-filled ticket preferences and ticketing reminders.

Shan said her team had introduced many new features to improve ticketing efficiency and user-centric. "Technological innovation should ultimately serve society and improve people's lives," she said.

Li Shangyi contributed to this story.

CHINA

By ZOU SHUO in Zhangjiajie, Hunan
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Standing atop a vertigo-inducing platform 1,458 meters in the air, and surrounded by Zhangjiajie's iconic towering verdant peaks, Ambroise Serrano from France, dives into the air, gliding in his specially designed wingsuit toward a 10-centimeter target in the valley below.

The Frenchman was not alone on his way to this year's World Wingsuit League Wingsuit Flying World Championship title, joined by similar daredevils from across the globe descending on Tianmen Mountain National Forest Park in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, for the 10th iteration of the event.

The world's top 16 fliers competed in the most recent championship in September, which included a speed section, where contestants launched themselves from a 1,458-meter platform on the mountaintop, gliding 1.3 kilometers to the finish line, descending 990 meters vertically before landing. Their maximum speeds reached can hit more than 200 kilometers per hour.

The stunning performance of the athletes and the breathtaking view of the scenic areas in the city have prompted the return of increasing numbers of international travelers to Zhangjiajie, known for being the inspiration for the scenery in the Hollywood blockbuster *Avatar*.

From this year, the country has implemented a visa-free entry policy for 38 countries for 30 days, and expanded the 144-hour visa-free transit policy to 37 ports and 54 countries, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Tian Hongman, deputy director of the Zhangjiajie bureau of culture, tourism, radio, television and sports, said the city welcomed a total of more than 786,000 international travelers in the first half of this year, up by 671 percent from the same period last year.

Tourism revenue from international travelers reached more than \$218 million during the period, marking a year-on-year increase of 737 percent, she said.

The total number of foreign travelers is expected to reach between 1.3 million to 1.5 million for the whole year, she said.

Nie Senfeng, director of Zhangjiajie immigration inspection, said the number of foreign travelers arriving via international flights to the city has seen remarkable growth this year, with the highest daily entry being more than 3,000.

The number of travelers on international flights this year had reached almost 400,000 as of Sept 26, with more than 2,500 flights arriving, marking an increase of 177 percent compared to last year, he said.

There are 50 international flights each week between Zhangjiajie and 13 international destinations, he added.

Serrano, the wingsuit champion, said he enjoys coming to China, and especially the scenery in Zhangjiajie.

The scenery and landscape in Zhangjiajie are amazing, and he had no idea something like this existed in the world before coming to the place, he said.

According to the organizers, the seven-day competition, from Sept 13 to 19, attracted almost 100,000 visitors to Tianmen Mountain, and the event was viewed by more than 10 million people online.

Ding Yunjuan, deputy manager of the marketing department for Tianmen Mountain, said the scenic area is always thrilled to welcome flying enthusiasts from home and abroad.



A flyer hits a target during his glide at the World Wingsuit League Wingsuit Flying World Championship in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, in September. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Daredevils descend on Zhangjiajie's iconic peaks

Growing number of international visitors discovering scenic area's natural wonders



Clockwise from above, left: Argentina's Lautaro Chialvo celebrates after winning the 2024 Parkour on the Highest Ladder at Tianmen Mountain National Forest Park in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, on Aug 25. CHEN ZEGUO / XINHUA Tourists from South Korea take pictures on a glass bridge in Zhangjiajie in May. CHEN ZHENHAI / XINHUA Tourists take pictures in front of the iconic Tianmen Cave in Zhangjiajie. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

nic area is always thrilled to welcome flying enthusiasts from home and abroad.

The scenic area is known for its Tianmen Cave, a natural karst cave, which has a height of around 131 meters, a width of

approximately 57 meters and a depth of about 60 meters, Ding said.

The cave has also become a hub for extreme sports enthusiasts to take part in parkour, bungee jumping and experiencing the

glass walkway, she added.

All of this has made it one of the most famous scenic areas for international travelers in Zhangjiajie.

Jean Jacque Wallis from South Africa finished second in this year's wingsuit target competi-

tion and second in the speed competition.

It was the third time he'd participated in the event in Zhangjiajie, and he believes it's the best wingsuit event in the world.

"There is no place in the world

like this, where there is a big cave and lots of spectators. The whole crowd can watch it. It's the best place to watch the sport and it's amazing to have the energy of all the people," he said.

Tian, the local tourism official, said that with the combined efforts from the local government and private tourism enterprises, Zhangjiajie has made strides in its international image branding through various marketing events and strategies.

The city has also worked hard to improve its services and infrastructure for international travelers. All major transport hubs, scenic areas, hotels and restaurants have signs in Chinese, English and Korean, she said.

Dhiren Rodrigues, 23, from Australia and visiting Zhangjiajie, said the popular tourist site was highly recommended online.

"Many people in the West believe it is difficult to travel to China, but if foreigners get Didi, Alipay (Chinese ride-hailing and payment apps) and a translation app, they will be okay. You do not need much," Rodrigues said.

The thing that shocked me the most is how friendly people here are, he added.

Tourism to China is not a big thing in Australia, and most people who visit are among the first of their friends to do so, so there is so much potential, he said.

China is affordable to get around, has very good food, safety, friendly people everywhere, and it can rival Western countries in terms of tourism attraction, the Australian added.

Twenty-three-year-old Fabian Kulhavy and his father Micheal, from Spain, also recently visited Zhangjiajie.

It's portrayed in Western media that it is not safe to travel to China; it's scary and one might get lost and never come back, Fabian Kulhavy said, so he wanted to see for himself. He found out it was just the opposite.

"I really like it and people are very nice. Even if they do not speak English, they will try to help you in any way they can," he said.

He said he will recommend his friends travel to China, because it's nothing like what the Western media says.

They are portraying China in a negative way because they are afraid that China has so many people, is a big country with advanced development, he said.

David Santiago Escriband, 35, also from Spain, said the infrastructure in Zhangjiajie, with cable cars and elevators, makes it accessible for everyone to enjoy the beautiful mountain views.

"Everything is impressive. Perhaps there are too many mountains," he joked.

People in Spain do not think too much about traveling to China, and they usually go to Japan, Thailand and the Philippines when they consider traveling to Asia, he said, adding that there are more people coming to China.

Visa-free travel helps a lot, according to Escriband. He has obtained a longer visa because he wants to spend more time in China, but 15 days is enough for most foreigners, and opens the country up to the rest of the world, he added.

Tom Foley and Sam Shand, both in their 30s and from the United Kingdom, also visited Zhangjiajie recently. They said it is one of the most beautiful places in the world and they really liked it.

"Once you have the necessary apps, it's easy. We'd recommend people to come here," Foley said.

More tour guides needed to cope with surge in travelers

By ZOU SHUO

Tour guides for international travelers in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, have welcomed the return of overseas travelers saying the surge this year has left them run off their feet, though they're not complaining about it.

With China issuing visa-free entry policies for 38 countries for periods of up to 30 days, expanding the 144-hour visa-free transit policy to 37 ports and 54 countries, there has been a leap in travelers from numerous countries and regions, they said.

The demand for travel guides with foreign language skills far outweighs the supply, and travel agencies in Zhangjiajie have even been forced to turn down some interna-

tional groups simply because they are too busy, they added.

Wang Xiaoqing, who has worked as an English tour guide in Zhangjiajie for more than 10 years, said she has been extremely busy since March with her calendar fully booked almost every day.

At the busiest times, she only gets half a day to a day of rest for a whole month, she said.

"I am extremely happy and have fallen back in love with being a tour guide again," said Wang. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, I waited tables at restaurants, so I feel really lucky to become a tour guide again."

She can make as much as 30,000 yuan (\$4,120) per month, she said. One of the benefits of being an

"We have overcome the sluggish days of the pandemic and we are welcoming more foreign travelers from all over the world to appreciate the natural beauty and culture of Zhangjiajie."

Li Ping, secretary-general of the Zhangjiajie tourism guide association

English tour guide is making friends with people from different countries and cultures.

"Some of the relationships are a one-time thing and some can last very long. I have guests who are very satisfied with my service while traveling to Zhangjiajie and they would

recommend friends and family to come," she said. "I am happy when they are happy."

Ding Shibiao, deputy general manager of Hunan Star Tours International Travel Service Co, said all of its tour guides with foreign language skills have been very busy since April.

With China relaxing its visa policies for foreign visitors, there has been a surge of tourists from Western countries to Zhangjiajie, so the demand for tour guides who can speak languages such as English, French and Spanish keeps increasing, he said.

"It's been a headache for me to find qualified tour guides. We need to find people with these language skills such as university teachers or students, or ask former tour guides to come and work in the industry again."

When there is no one available, Ding, who used to be an English tour guide, has to pitch in himself.

"It's been tiring and hard work, but my colleagues and I are more than happy to see the return of foreign travelers to the city," he said.

Li Ping, secretary-general of the Zhangjiajie tourism guide association, said the number of foreign tourists visiting Zhangjiajie is expected to reach a new record this year.

The city only has 400 licensed tour guides for international travelers, and to cope with the strong demand local culture and tourism authorities have green-lit people with foreign language skills to serve as translators and interpreters for foreign travelers, and there are about 1,500 of them in the city, he said.

It is good to see that tour guides have had a bumper year this year, which comes with a much higher salary, he added.

Tour guides can make about 500 yuan per day, and for those who are fluent in minor languages such as Russian, Mongolian and French, the salary can rise to 800 yuan per day, Li said.

"We have overcome the sluggish days of the pandemic and we are welcoming more foreign travelers from all over the world to appreciate the natural beauty and culture of Zhangjiajie," Li said.

BUSINESS

MORE NEWS WHENEVER YOU WANT IT · CHINADAILY.COM.CN/BUSINESS

LG Chem to up battery material production

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

LG Chem, a South Korean chemical company, will further expand battery material production capacity in China and strengthen collaboration with Chinese companies as it sees enormous growth opportunities from China's emphasis on sustainable development and the cultivation of new quality productive forces.

Shane YS Hwang, president of LG Chem Greater China, said the company's development is inseparable from the Chinese market and it will continue to bolster its business in the world's second-largest economy.

Hwang said since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992, LG Chem, as the first South Korean chemical company to invest in China, has been engaged in the Chinese market for more than 30 years, with more than 3,600 employees, adding that "these have shown that our investment in the Chinese market is sustained and prominent."

He noted that the Chinese market has contributed significantly to LG Chem's global sales, emphasizing that "the Chinese market still holds immense growth potential and plays a leading role in driving global economic growth."

So far, LG Chem has built more than 10 factories in Tianjin, Ningbo, Zhejiang province and Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and two technical centers. It has over 10 branches across the nation including Shanghai and Guangzhou.

The company has established a plant by teaming up with China's battery material producer Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt Co Ltd to manufacture precursors, a key battery component used in electric vehicles, in Quzhou, Zhejiang province. Meanwhile, LG Chem has built a new energy vehicle cathode material production base in Wuxi, Jiangsu province.

Hwang said the company regards eco-friendly materials,

battery materials and global innovative new drugs as its three major new growth engines, while bolstering the digital transformation and green, low-carbon operations via building smart factories with the help of artificial intelligence technology and improving the efficiency of production bases.

China has contributed to the global green shift by providing high-quality and cost-effective new energy products, including EVs, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products.

A considerable number of Chinese chemical companies are deeply integrated into LG Chem's industrial chain and localized production, as they can provide high-quality basic chemical raw materials and accumulated rich technical experience in the research and development, synthesis and production of chemicals, with advanced production facilities and strict quality control, Hwang added.

Last year, LG Chem signed a comprehensive memorandum of understanding with Huayou Cobalt to build a joint EV battery material plant in Morocco. The plant, set to start production in 2026, aims to produce 50,000 metric tons of lithium iron phosphate cathode materials annually, enough to be installed in 500,000 entry-class EVs, the South Korean chemical maker said in a statement.

In addition to the plant in Morocco, the two companies agreed to cooperate in Indonesia, which is actively promoting the battery manufacturing and EV sector, and are considering the establishment of a precursor plant there.

Zhang Jianping, deputy director of the academic committee at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the implementation of a new round of opening-up measures, such as the shortened negative list for market entry, the Foreign Investment Law and pilot free trade zones, has created favorable conditions for foreign businesses to invest in China.



Shoppers buy vegetables at a supermarket in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

PPI shows modest recovery last month

First higher performance for factory gate prices in 6 months; CPI modest

By ZHOU LANXU
zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

China's factory-gate prices edged up in November for the first time in six months, adding to signs that recent stimulus measures have bolstered industrial demand, though consumer inflation remained sluggish, officials and analysts said on Monday.

Going forward, bolder-than-expected interest rate cuts may consolidate the fledgling demand recovery while a near-term cut in banks' reserve requirement ratio is likely, analysts said, as a top-level meeting called for "moderately loose" monetary policy for the first time since the 2007-09 global financial crisis.

China's producer price index — which measures factory-gate prices — rose by 0.1 percent month-on-month in November, compared with a 0.1 percent drop in October, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Monday.

November's rise, albeit modest, marked the first positive reading since May, when the PPI rose 0.2 percent.

The year-on-year PPI decline also narrowed to 2.5 percent in November from 2.9 percent in October, the NBS said, the first improvement in five months, beating expectations of many analysts.

"A series of existing and incremental policies continued to show their effects. Real estate and infrastructure projects accelerated, sending prices of cement, nonferrous metals, steel and other industrial products higher," said Dong

Lijuan, an NBS statistician.

"November's PPI showed improvement both year-on-year and month-on-month, reflecting the positive impact of a series of incremental policies on the production side," said Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank.

The NBS said prices within non-ferrous and ferrous metal smelting and rolling processing industries rose 1.2 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively, month-on-month in November.

"However, with the consumer price index declining, domestic demand remains weak, consumer confidence is low and a negative output gap — when an economy produces below its potential — persists in the economy," Wen said.

The CPI, the chief gauge of consumer inflation, dropped 0.6 percent month-on-month in November, an eight-month low, versus a 0.3 percent drop in October, the NBS said, driven by lower food prices due to warmer-than-usual weather and reduced travel demand.

On a yearly basis, CPI growth fell to a five-month low of 0.2 percent in November and missed expectations. The core CPI, which excludes food and energy prices, rose 0.3 percent from a year ago in November, up from 0.2 percent in October, pointing to still lukewarm consumer demand that is improving slightly.

"The data highlight the fragile foundation for the recovery in industrial production and the need to ramp up countercyclical policy

adjustments," Wen said.

On Monday, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held a meeting that analyzed and studied the economic work of 2025, which called for more proactive fiscal policy and moderately loose monetary policy, marking a shift from the "prudent" monetary stance that had been emphasized in recent years.

"This is the first time since the global financial crisis that the implementation of a 'moderately loose monetary policy' has been proposed. Monetary easing is expected to be stronger next year compared to this year," said Feng Jianlin, chief economist at Beijing FOST Economic Consulting Co.

"Given current levels of the RRR (averaging 6.6 percent) and interest rates — which are relatively high in real terms after factoring in inflation — they should see cumulative cuts of 50 basis points next year," said Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China.

"There is a possibility of larger reductions," Lou added. "These cuts are more likely to occur in the first half."

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura, said his team expects a 50-basis-point RRR cut before the end of the year and two RRR cuts of the same amount in 2025.

Ming Ming, chief economist at CITIC Securities, said China's central bank is also expected to step up ultra-conventional easing policies, such as treasury bond purchases.

With that, inflation figures are expected to recover in 2025, though likely still subdued in December, Ming said, projecting a year-on-year average CPI growth for 2025 of 0.76 percent and PPI at -0.94 percent.

New solar tariffs to affect US companies

By LIU YUKUN
liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

The United States' preliminary decision to impose anti-dumping tariffs of up to 271 percent on solar products from four Southeast Asian countries could significantly raise procurement costs for US companies and squeeze profit margins for its downstream businesses, aside from impacting Southeast Asian production and exports, said analysts on Monday.

Many leading Chinese solar companies that previously established factories in the four Southeast Asian countries are now actively seeking new sites for localized production. Yet, experts noted the Southeast Asian market still has potential for silicon wafer and cell exports to the US, as the US lacks the capability of quickly setting up production, though modules' exports might be restricted.

A report from Eastmoney Securities indicates that after the tariffs are implemented, the competitive advantage of the four Southeast Asian countries in exporting to the US will be significantly weakened, to the point where they may even lose the ability to export to that country for some products. Meanwhile, with subsidy support from the US' Inflation Reduction Act, its domestic solar component production capacity will rapidly increase.

Several top Chinese manufacturers like JA Solar and Jinko Solar had already initiated moves to build factories in the US.

On Friday, China's Ministry of Commerce expressed concerns over the US tendency to turn trade remedy investigations into political tools and suggested that the investigation's results were predetermined.

Tan Youru, a solar analyst at research provider BloombergNEF, said: "While the US has established some module packaging capacity locally through the IRA, however, most US-manufactured crystalline silicon solar modules still use imported cells. Despite substantial subsidies to attract upstream solar manufacturing, few well-known companies are planning to produce silicon wafers and cells in the US."

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, pointed out that unlike solar module manufacturing, which can be quickly expanded through investments, solar cell and silicon wafer manufacturing involve complex technological inputs, presenting challenges for rapid expansion.

Sun Lei, a senior partner of trade remedies practice at law firm DENTONS, noted: "To meet US renewable energy goals and boost solar installations, the US will continue to require imported equipment. Ultimately, this will increase procurement costs domestically, further reducing profit margins for purchasers or the purchasers may pass on these increased costs downstream."

With that, inflation figures are expected to recover in 2025, though likely still subdued in December, Ming said, projecting a year-on-year average CPI growth for 2025 of 0.76 percent and PPI at -0.94 percent.



The booth of LG Chem during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

More support for foreign talent in Pudong to boost innovation

By SHI JING in Shanghai
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

Supportive measures aimed at providing more convenience to foreign talent working in the Pudong New Area of Shanghai will further facilitate business exchanges and boost innovation, said experts and officials.

The comments came after a set of 34 measures were released at the 2024 Pudong International Talent Hub Forum on Saturday.

A major step has been made with regard to the entry and exit of foreigners in China.

According to the measures, Pudong can directly issue confirmation letters for high-level foreign talent, which foreigners can use when applying for talent visas.

The talent visa allows an applicant to stay in China for a maximum 180 days upon entry and the visa is valid for 10 years. The foreign talent's family can also enter China with the same documents.

Qi Yuxia, director of Pudong's talent office, said Pudong is the first municipal district in China to obtain the right to issue such a confirmation letter. This will largely facilitate academic exchanges, scientific research cooperation or business visits.

"This progress will help Pudong in attracting more foreign talent to support the development of key industries. Hopefully, the entry of more foreign talent will bring in new businesses and further boost innovation," she said.

The pilot program of electronic visas, which was first experimented at the Lin-gang Special Area of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone in July, will be promoted all throughout Pudong, according to the new measures.

With this, visas will be processed entirely online, exempting the applicant from providing paper material, original passports, or the affixing of paper visas. The foreigner can use their passports and e-visas to pass

through immigration to enter China.

Foreigners intending to set up new businesses or those entering with innovation ideas are welcome in Pudong. Foreign talent that has been pursued keenly in key industries will be directly granted work permits.

Pudong International Talent Station, which went operational in February 2023 to offer free accommodation and work space for foreign talent, will provide a maximum 14 days of free stay to qualified foreign talent. A maximum 12 months of free work space will also be provided at the station for nurturing quality innovative projects, according to the recently released policy.

The mechanism of direct recommendation for foreigners' permanent residency in China, which was adopted across Pudong in January 2023, should be further consolidated.

The mechanism, under which high-level foreign talent recom-

mended by the Pudong government can directly apply for permanent residency, should make its processing procedures faster and easier, according to the new measures.

Samuel Chuffart, global design director for international design company Icona Group, obtained his permanent residency under the direct recommendation mechanism.

Chuffart has lived in Pudong for about 14 years. The permanent resident ID card will make his life easier, including dealing with various financial, education, medical, transportation and accommodation services, he said.

Data from the Pudong government showed that it has produced such recommendations to more than 50 foreign talent since the program was implemented in early 2023.

Pudong was home to 26,000 expatriates at the end of 2022, accounting for 21.1 percent of

Shanghai's total expat population, according to the municipal public security bureau.

The area has made continued efforts to attract foreign talent. According to a comprehensive reform plan released in January, foreign talent are supported to serve as legal representatives of public institutions and State-owned enterprises in designated parts of the city.

Foreign scientists who have obtained permanent residency can take the lead in undertaking national science and technology projects or serve as legal representatives of new research and development institutions in Pudong, said the reform plan.

At the end of 2023, Pudong launched a program to invite international experts, talent and institutions to introduce more talent to choose Pudong as the first stop to tap into the Chinese market. About 180 such talented people have been introduced via this program so far.

Briefly

E-commerce logistics index up in November

China's e-commerce logistics index hit a seven-year high in November, according to the results of a survey released by the China Logistics and Purchasing Federation and e-commerce company JD. The e-commerce logistics index, an indicator of logistics operations, came in at 115.5 points last month, up 0.5 points month-on-month.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 22 pips to 7.1870 against the US dollar on Monday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE



Workers assemble hydrogen fuel cell engines on a production line in Luoyang, Henan province in November. ZHANG YIXI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Sinopec opens HK hydrogen refueling station

By ZHENG XIN

China Petroleum & Chemical Corp, the world's largest refiner, also known as Sinopec, recently launched the first public hydrogen refueling station in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, a milestone in the region's push for cleaner energy alternatives.

The station is expected to play a key role in the development of a hydrogen economy in Hong Kong and the broader region, which has been ramping up efforts to adopt cleaner energy sources to combat air pollution and meet global climate targets, it said.

With a daily refueling capacity of 1,000 kilograms, the hydrogen station is sufficient to support the growing fleet of hydrogen-powered vehicles in the region. The station will initially serve hydrogen-powered vehicles, including buses and cars, and is expected to be expanded as demand grows, it added.

An analyst said the launch of this facility is a major step toward the promotion of hydrogen as a clean alternative to fossil fuels in both transportation and industrial sectors.

Wu Mouyuan, vice-president of the China National Petroleum Corp Economics and Technology Research Institute, said hydrogen, serving as a clean fuel alternative, can produce energy without emitting carbon dioxide and has proven to be a promising solution for heavy industry, aviation and long-haul overland transport, decarbonizing sectors that are challenging to directly electrify.

Hydrogen can play a crucial role in consuming and storing renewable energy, an energy alternative for achieving deep emissions reductions at the terminal stage, he said.

The launch of the station in Hong Kong comes amid a growing global interest in hydrogen as a clean energy carrier. Hydrogen is widely regarded as one of the most promising solutions for decarbonizing industries that rely on high-temperature processes, such as steel and cement production, as well as heavy-duty transport, including buses, trucks and trains.

In addition to its environmental benefits, hydrogen refueling stations are also seen as a step toward diversifying Hong Kong's energy infrastructure, which currently relies heavily on imported fossil fuels, said Sinopec.

Sinopec's Hong Kong station is part of the company's broader strategy to expand its hydrogen infrastructure at home and abroad. The company has been making significant investments in hydrogen production, refueling stations and related technologies in recent years, to capitalize on the global shift toward low-carbon energy systems.

The Hong Kong government is also actively working toward establishing a regulatory framework conducive to the growth of the hydrogen industry, aiming to introduce a certification model for "green hydrogen" or "low-carbon hydrogen" by 2027, an initiative that is expected to position Hong Kong as a demonstration base for the green hydrogen industry globally.

Data released by the Chinese Renewable Energy Society show that China has built over 400 hydrogen refueling stations, ranking first in the world in number.

As the largest producer and consumer of hydrogen globally, China will see its hydrogen energy industry output value reach 1 trillion yuan (\$137.6 billion) by 2025, said the China Hydrogen Alliance.

The alliance estimated that China's hydrogen energy will account for more than 10 percent of China's terminal energy system, with the annual output value of the industrial chain expected to reach 12 trillion yuan by 2050.

Major leap seen for H2 energy industry

By 2060, this common element should be cheaper than its carbon-intensive, less-green counterpart

By ZHENG XIN

zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

As China positions itself as a global leader in the production and utilization of green hydrogen, industry experts project a transformative leap in the nation's hydrogen sector, driven by declining costs, policy support and technological innovation.

Expanding the application of green hydrogen will be crucial for China to achieve deep cuts in carbon emissions while ensuring domestic energy security, as hydrogen not only provides a clean, emission-free energy source, but also offers valuable energy storage capabilities, they said.

Global consultancy Rystad Energy expects the share of green hydrogen in China to continue growing in the years to come, especially since it is installing new electrolyzer capacity at a world-leading pace every year, with similar trajectories seen in the solar PV and wind industries, which China continues to lead, it said.

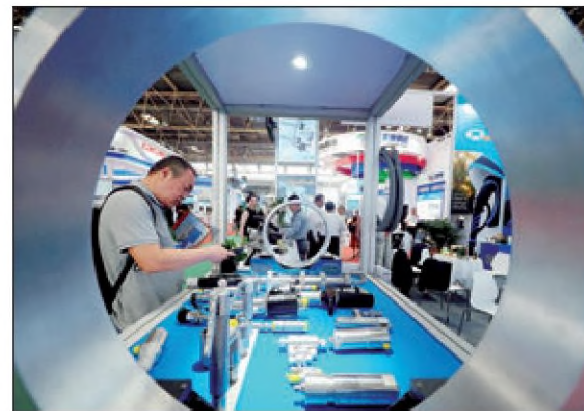
Green hydrogen, produced using renewable energy, will dominate China's hydrogen supply in the coming decades, accounting for 90 percent by 2060 from the current negligible 0.2 percent of total production, said Liu Shiyu, vice-president of the China Electric Power Planning and Engineering Institute.

China, already the world's largest producer and consumer of hydrogen, accounted for over one-third of global output in 2023, with production reaching 35 million metric tons and expected to nearly triple to 100 million tons by mid-century, said Liu.

However, 80 percent is derived from fossil fuels, while the remaining 20 percent comes from industrial byproducts, making green hydrogen production still in its infancy, with just 60,000 tons produced annually as of 2023, he said.

Hydrogen in China is mainly produced from fossil fuels without using carbon capture, utilization and storage technology, ending up with massive carbon emissions during the process known as "gray hydrogen." "Blue hydrogen" has its carbon emissions captured and stored, or reused.

Despite this modest starting point, China's green hydrogen sector holds immense growth potential, said Liu, predicting it could become a flagship export sector in the years to come, rivaling the nation's globally recognized innovations in electric vehicles, solar



Middle: An attendee views a hydrogen refueling nozzle at an expo in Beijing in May. DU JIANPO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Above: A hydrogen truck fills up at an H2 refueling station of CNPC at Chongqing International Logistics Hub Park in June. SUN KAIFANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

panels and battery storage.

China, being the world's largest producer and consumer of hydrogen, holds significant strategic importance in fostering the development of sustainable green hydrogen, said Guo Liejin, a professor at Xi'an Jiaotong University.

Guo believes that more efficient, low-cost and large-scale green hydrogen and electricity co-production is imperative.

The process of producing hydrogen from renewable energy resources and using it as a carrier for energy storage, which can later be converted back to electricity, is considered a pivotal option for deep decarbonization at the terminal end, and has been gaining more international attention for its potential as an emissions-free fuel.

With China identifying hydrogen as a key element in its low-carbon energy transition strategy, Rystad Energy projects the installation of

approximately 2.5 gigawatts of hydrogen electrolyzer capacity by the end of the year. This capacity is expected to produce 220,000 tons per annum of green hydrogen, 6-kilotons-per-annum more than the rest of the world combined, it said.

According to the institute, green hydrogen costs have already halved over the past five years, dropping to 22 yuan (\$3) per kilogram in 2024 from 42 yuan per kg in 2019.

The institute forecasts further reductions, with production costs expected to fall below 20 yuan per kg by 2025 and 15 yuan per kg by 2030, thanks to the scaling up of wind and solar power generation, as well as technological advancements such as improvements in electrolyzer efficiency.

By 2060, green hydrogen is projected to cost less than its carbon-intensive counterpart, gray hydrogen, which currently averages around 10 yuan per kg. The cost

parity between green and gray hydrogen is expected to unlock new commercial opportunities, paving the way for hydrogen to compete purely on economic merit rather than environmental credentials, said a report on China's hydrogen industry development released by the institute.

Recognizing the sector's strategic importance, Chinese provincial-level regions are rolling out tailored policies to boost hydrogen production, transport, storage and application.

Regions with strong solar and wind potential, especially those in Northwest China, have announced more ambitious hydrogen production targets.

The Inner Mongolia autonomous region aims for 480,000 tpa of renewable hydrogen production by 2025, while Gansu province has set a target of 200,000 tpa, all of which are expected to contribute enormously to China's hydrogen production in the region.

China's coal-rich regions are also transforming their energy landscapes by investing in hydrogen. Xiaoyi, Shanxi province, historically dependent on coal mining, has been investing in hydrogen technology and infrastructure, including building hydrogen production plants, refueling stations and research facilities, harnessing its industrial expertise and infrastructure.

Guo Qingzhi, mayor of Xiaoyi, believes that the hydrogen energy industry, as a representative of new quality productive forces in the energy sector, has strong momentum and promising prospects.

Rystad Energy said, geographical disparity exists between China's hydrogen demand centers in the east and its abundant solar and wind energy resources in the north, which are ripe for developing green hydrogen production.

This has resulted in a supply-demand mismatch, prompting China to explore the expansion of its network of hydrogen pipelines, it said.

To support this rapid expansion, a robust hydrogen transportation network is in the works. By 2060, China aims to establish a system capable of transporting 30 million tons of hydrogen annually, approximately one-third of the nation's projected production.

This network is set to become a cornerstone of China's energy infrastructure, enabling seamless integration of hydrogen into the broader energy mix.

China Petroleum & Chemical Corp launched a project last year to channel hydrogen from Inner Mon-

golia to Beijing this year through a 400-kilometer hydrogen pipeline, the country's first trans-regional, long-distance channel.

This pipeline will be able to handle about 100,000 tons of hydrogen annually when its first phase is completed, and has the potential to increase capacity by 500,000 tons over the long run, it said.

The company estimates that China's hydrogen energy consumption is projected to reach nearly 86 million tons by 2060, with an industry scale of 4.6 trillion yuan.

Tangshan Haitai New Energy Technology, a unit of Chinese solar company Haitai Solar, is currently constructing a 737-km hydrogen pipeline, the world's longest, paving the way for future exports of renewable hydrogen.

The Zhangjiakou Kangbao-Cao-feidian pipeline, named after its origin and destination points, is estimated to cost 6.1 billion yuan and is expected to be completed by June 2027.

The introduction of China's first energy law, which is to fully take effect on Jan 1, 2025 and fortify the legal framework within the energy sector, marks a turning point for the hydrogen industry, said Du Xiangwan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, emphasizing the law's pivotal role in providing legal backing for hydrogen's planning, development and emergency reserves.

"The energy law has removed hydrogen from the regulatory framework of hazardous chemicals, addressing a long-standing bottleneck," Du said.

The energy law explicitly prioritizes the orderly advancement of hydrogen energy, signaling strong government commitment to the sector.

"It offers clarity and confidence for industry stakeholders, while laying the foundation for high-quality development," Du added.

BloombergNEF predicts that China will emerge as a key market for hydrogen, with hydrogen fuel cell vehicles set for significant growth as the country pursues its dual carbon goals, reaching peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

China, along with Europe and the United States, are expected to account for more than 80 percent of global clean hydrogen supply by the end of the decade, driven by favorable policies and a robust pipeline of advanced projects, it said.

WORLD

Editor's note: As the People's Republic of China celebrates the 75th anniversary of its founding this year, China Daily asked prominent international figures to reflect on their relationship with the country and to talk of the direction in which they see it going.

CHINA LINK

Family fosters UK-China ties for 3 generations

Jack Perry Jr takes on the 'icebreaker spirit' of his father and grandfather to boost trade between both countries

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

For Jack Perry Jr, the relationship between him and China was rooted in stories, distant travels, the influence of his father and grandfather, and an unwavering spirit of ice-breaking passed on for three generations.

Jack has taken the helm of the 48 Group, which promotes equal and mutually beneficial trade between the United Kingdom and China, since February. He is the third generation of the Perry family which has been active in the business and trade between China and the West.

Throughout his childhood in the 1980s, Jack remembered asking his mother where his father was, and the answer he got had always been "China", because his father, Stephen Perry, was often on long trips to China for trade partnerships.

"China, to me, was a place of magic — a faraway land where my father would return with stories of accomplishment and progress," said Jack. "These trips were more than just business ventures; they were journeys that brought back a sense of family unity, values, and a deepening of our family's connection to China."

The Perry family's China story dates back to the early 1950s, when Jack's grandfather, Jack Perry Sr, despite the huge amount of pressure at the time, made the first trade with the newly founded People's Republic of China.

Since the founding of New China in 1949, the United States has imposed an embargo on the country. One year later, when the Chinese People's Volunteers army joined the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea, the US pressured more European countries to impose an embargo on China.

There was a thaw in the relations with the UK in 1953 when a group of 16 British business representatives embarked on a trip to China to discuss trade, which later became known as the "Icebreaking Mission".

John Boyd Orr, a British politician who was then serving as the first director-general of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, led the Icebreaker group, while Jack Perry Sr was the group's organizer.

Born in a Jewish immigrant family in East London in 1915, Jack Perry Sr worked from scratch to found his company manufacturing and selling clothes in 1937. Despite ups and downs, his business grew into a conglomerate in the women's dress industry in the late 1940s.

In his memoir *From Brick Lane to the Forbidden City*, Jack Perry Sr described the hostility and opposition he encountered in the UK and the hospitality and enthusiasm he experienced in China because of the icebreaking trip.

He recalled the encouraging words from Boyd Orr: "The Iron Curtain and the Bamboo Curtain would be less dangerous if there were more wagons crossing over them carrying goods from one side to the other. Trade increases understanding."

After days of negotiation in Beijing, the group signed a business agreement of 30 million pounds (\$39.6 million) overall with the China National Import and Export Corporation on July 6, 1953.

'Historic event'

"We felt we had participated in a historic event from which we could all draw immense satisfaction," wrote Jack Perry Sr in his memoir.

The trip paved the way for another trade mission with 48 businessmen from British companies the year after, which later became known as the 48 Group.

"The need for joint consultations and collective discussions with the Chinese gave birth to the formation of the '48 Group' of British traders with China. From its very inception, its philosophy and objectives were nonideological," wrote Perry in the foreword to the book *The 48 Group: The Story of the Icebreakers in China*.

"It concentrated on one single-



“

I'm from the family of icebreakers ... My goal is just to do what's in our DNA. We are not shying away that we are a friend to China, and we would stand up even when the weather might be turbulent.”

Jack Perry Jr,
chairman of the 48 Group

Jack Perry Jr (right) and Stephen Perry Sr watch Jack Perry Sr appearing in a video archive about the 48 Group during the 2024 Icebreakers Chinese New Year Dinner in London in February. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Jack Perry Jr speaks at a leadership workshop for Chinese entrepreneurs in Cambridge, the United Kingdom, in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Jack Perry Jr (left) and Stephen Perry Sr pose at the 2024 Icebreakers Chinese New Year Dinner in London in February. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Traders negotiate for perfumes imported from the UK at the China Yiwu International Commodities Fair-Export Goods Exhibition in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, on Nov 13. PAN QIUYA / FOR CHINA DAILY

nese New Year Dinner in London in February, Stephen announced his retirement in a room of prominent figures in the China-UK business community.

"Throughout the times, we have been very clear about our commitment to building China-British relations through trade and business, and it comes to the end of my reign as the chairman of the board of The 48 Group," he said. "My son, Jack, is going to take over. He has a mission in his hands. He needs to rebuild a young and vibrant 48 Group."

Just like his father, Jack Perry Jr has been immersed in the family's talks about China since childhood. "I grew up in Chinese restaurants in London and listened to my father talk with others about China," he said.

In 1992, Jack Perry Jr set foot in China for the first time during a family trip. The then 8-year-old was stunned by the Great Wall, the Beijing streets swarming with bicycles, and the curious locals flocking to have a taste of the newly opened McDonald's.

"I was just a boy watching my dad have meetings and everyone was listening to his every word. It was inspiring to see him and the difference in culture," recalled Jack. "For me, this was the beginning of a life-long journey of learning how to see the world differently."

Carrying on the baton

In 2006, Jack visited China again. This time, he stayed in Shanghai and Beijing for four years and set up an entertainment company to gain hands-on experience in doing business in China.

He also launched Young Icebreakers, a channel to share ideas, raise awareness and promote the achievements of British and Chinese young people, creating a sense of collaboration and community among young professionals in the UK who are interested in China and the broader community.

After becoming the chairman of the 48 Group, Jack became busier than ever, traveling between London and cities in China for business conferences and expos, and exploring the market opportunities that China offers. He visited dozens of companies in various provinces across China, looking for potential partners for UK businesses, and organized the 2024 China-UK Biomedical Exchange and Cooperation Forum in Beijing.

"I want to do action, and I want to make business happen between China and the UK and one cannot make effective changes without being willing to go out in the wind first," he said. "So I'll go out 40 times if that means one company can do business."

To Jack Perry Jr, the spirit of the Icebreaking Mission is to stand up for what is right even when the weather is bad. "It's easy to go out on a summer's day," he said. "I think the icebreakers stand up when the weather is cloudy, stand up when it rains."

"My grandfather did that. When he went to China, he was called a 'traitor'. My dad did that, he was called similar things, but still, they stood there. They stayed there during times that were difficult and did what was right," he said.

When the US administration announced tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles in May, Jack was among the first to point out that the nature of the tariffs was scapegoating China for US domestic problems.

"I think we are at a turbulent time, and I realize it is the time for a Perry to stand up to do the right thing," he said.

"I'm from the family of icebreakers, but I haven't ice-broken yet. My goal is just to do what's in our DNA. We are not shying away that we are a friend to China, and we would stand up even when the weather might be turbulent."



Online
See more by scanning
the code.

WORLD

South Korean president banned from leaving country

SEOUL — South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol was banned from leaving the country on Monday, the Justice Ministry said, less than a week after he plunged the country into chaos by briefly imposing martial law.

Yoon sent special forces and helicopters to parliament on the night of Dec 3 before lawmakers forced him to rescind the order by rejecting his decree.

The president narrowly survived an impeachment motion in parliament on Saturday even as huge crowds braved freezing temperatures to call for his resignation.

However, despite remaining in office, a clutch of investigations has been closing in on Yoon and his close allies, including a probe for alleged insurrection.

The Justice Ministry confirmed on Monday that Yoon had become the first sitting South Korean president to be banned from leaving the country.

A lawmaker was asked at a parliamentary hearing on Monday whether Yoon had been banned from leaving the country. "Yes, that's right," Bae Sang-up, an immigration services commissioner at the ministry, replied.

Also under travel bans for their roles in last week's events are former defense minister Kim Yong-hyun — currently in detention — and former interior minister Lee Sang-min.

The impeachment push failed to pass after members of Yoon's own People Power Party walked out of parliament, depriving it of the necessary two-thirds majority.

The PPP says that in exchange, Yoon has agreed to hand power to the prime minister and party chief,



Members of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions throw torn papers carrying the names of the ruling party's lawmakers who did not vote at the impeachment motion last week, during a rally in front of the ruling People Power Party's head office in Seoul on Monday. LEE JIN-MAN / AP

prompting howls of protest from the opposition.

"This is an unlawful, unconstitutional act of a second insurrection and a second coup," Democratic Party floor leader Park Chan-dae said on Monday.

Under South Korea's constitution, the president remains head of government and commander in chief of the army unless they are incapacitated, resign or step down. In such a case, power would then be handed to the prime minister on an interim basis until elections could be held.

Claiming that Yoon can remain in office but has delegated his powers to the prime minister and leader of his ruling PPP — who is not an elected official — is "a blatant constitutional violation with no legal basis," Park said.

"Their attitude of placing themselves above the constitution mirrors that of insurrectionist Yoon Suk-yeol," he said.

The Defense Ministry confirmed on Monday that Yoon remained at the head of the country's security apparatus.

"Legally, (control of military forces) currently lies with the commander in chief," Defense Ministry spokesman Jeon Ha-kyoung said.

Yoon has apologized for the "anxiety and inconvenience" caused by his declaration of martial law but has not stepped down, saying instead he would entrust decisions about his fate to his party.

He also said he would accept all political and legal responsibility for the martial law fiasco.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Youth exchange between China, US celebrated

Ambassador applauds initiative for ushering in new chapter of friendship

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

China's ambassador to the US has said that a program encouraging more young people in the United States to study in China is prospering.

"It is inspiring to witness the tree of goodwill between our two peoples continuing to flourish, and it is even more exciting to see our young people coming together for a better future," said Ambassador Xie Feng at an event at the Chinese embassy in Washington on Friday, which was attended by more than 300 people, including US students and teachers who recently returned from an exchange program in China.

In a speech titled "Pool small drops into a mighty river and inject constant impetus into China-US relations", Xie said that to implement President Xi Jinping's "50,000 in Five Years" initiative, China has set up the Young Envoys Scholarship, or YES.

Over the past year, Xi has invited US youths to visit China, and students from around the US have actively participated. Some 14,000 young people from the US have been to China under the initiative, proposed in San Francisco last year.

"The initiative has provided an effective platform that brings our youths closer, opened up an important window for better understanding China, and ushered in a new chapter of friendship between the Chinese and American peoples," Xie said.

The exchanges have faced headwinds in recent years, but are still yielding good results, he said.

"We need to continue removing disruptions, stay undaunted by the chilling effect, oppose any backpedaling, and move forward hand in hand, so as to build more bridges for people-to-people exchanges and inject constant impetus into China-US relations."

Xie encouraged the youths to foster a sustainable bilateral relationship and become pioneers in developing the right perception of each other, advancing dialogue and cooperation and becoming trailblazers in making the world a better place.

"So in that spirit, let's together say YES to exchanges and cooperation between China and the US, say YES to our peoples' friendship, and say YES to a brighter future for the youths in both China and the US," Xie said.

The event also included panel discussions — "My Stories of China-US Youth People-to-People Exchanges", "The '50,000 in Five Years' Initiative" and "Future Outlook of China-US People-to-People Exchange".

Participants shared their experiences studying Mandarin, how they got involved in the exchanges, their visits to Chinese cities and stories of their friendships.

During the event, Wanxiang America Group announced a new program for the exchanges: funding 1,000 young US people to travel to China to study in the next five years.

Brody Bluemel, chairman and an associate professor at the Department of Languages and Literatures at Delaware State University, has traveled to China

“

The ("50,000 in Five Years") initiative has provided an effective platform that brings our youths closer, opened up an important window for better understanding China, and ushered in a new chapter of friendship between the Chinese and American peoples."

Xie Feng, Chinese ambassador to the US

regularly over the past 15 years.

He told China Daily that he took a group of students there in May, and they were impressed with Chinese culture and the friendliness of the people.

"We are hoping that with the partnerships we have with our colleagues in China at several different universities, we'll just be able to increase the good things that we're doing there, regardless of what the political climate is," Bluemel said.

"The more that we can increase our youth exchange programs, the more of our young and upcoming generation will have that same perspective and see people from another country, people from China, just as they see themselves."

Better understanding

Ilaria Luna, 17, a student of Sidwell Friends School in Washington, shared her experiences in the YES program and in studying the Chinese language.

"I understood that language goes deeper than just the words, and it is that human connection that we get, and it is through language that we can learn how to connect and interact with others and better understand different experiences," she said.

"This is crucial to improving our best relationships in China. There is no other way to go about it. You have to appreciate, understand each other as people first, and then problem-solving comes second," she added.

Xie said 2024 would be "a very fruitful year" and that the "50,000 in Five Years" initiative has been "overfulfilled".

"I think it's indispensable to have the personal commitment of President Xi to have the active participation of the young people from both sides and also from continuous and very important support from the friends of both sides of the Pacific," Xie said.

The young people who took part in the YES program presented the ambassador with a special gift — in Chinese calligraphy and English — that said, "50,000 in Five Years Initiative YES!" The students also performed a Chinese song, *On the Field of Hope*.

"So beautiful," Xie said of the presentation, adding the future and hope for China-US ties "lies in our two peoples and relies on our youth!"

Scientists call for collaboration on cancer treatments

By RENALI in Los Angeles
renali@chinadailyusa.com

Chinese and American medical professionals are continuing to pursue innovative therapies for cancer despite geopolitical constraints.

A forum on Thursday themed "Cancer Immunotherapy: Breakthroughs and Barriers", organized by the International Association of Biomedical Sciences (IABS), highlighted the persistent efforts to strengthen collaboration in biomedical and medical sciences.

Erxi Wu, a researcher at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, emphasized the perseverance of nongovernmental exchanges in the Sino-US medical community.

"Although the China Initiative has hindered cooperation between the China and US medical community, nongovernmental exchanges continue," Wu told China Daily.

The China Initiative, launched in November 2018, with the stated objective to deter economic espionage, was terminated in February 2022 after concerns about racial profiling and due to its limited success in prosecutions.

The Baylor College of Medicine has maintained partnerships with Chinese institutions such as Xi'an Jiaotong University, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Yantai University.

Wu shared an example of a breakthrough from his hospital's collaboration with Yantai University: the discovery of a new compound with multi-target anti-tumor properties that has shown promising results in treating lung cancer.

"China has more students and more resources, and compared with the technology in the US, only by working together can we achieve strong research results and benefit the world," he said.

Wu also highlighted efforts to integrate traditional Chinese medicine with advanced Western technologies, a partnership that could unlock unique therapies.

"Cancer is a common challenge facing mankind," Wu said. "The Chinese and American medical communities should continue to cooperate."

Cancer remains a leading cause of death worldwide, claiming nearly 10 million lives annually, with lung, colorectal, liver, and breast cancers among the most prevalent.

According to the World Health Organization, 1 in 6 deaths globally is due to cancer, and cases are projected to rise significantly, from 19.3 million new cases in 2020 to an estimated 28.4 million by 2040.

In that context, cancer immunotherapy, which leverages the body's immune system to fight cancer, is seen as a transformative but complex field.

While immunotherapy has delivered remarkable success, including checkpoint inhibitors and CAR T-cell therapies, the high cost of treatment and the complexity of targeting tumors remain significant challenges.

Ethan Shevach, a scientist from the National Institutes of Health, described the dual effects of CAR T-cell treatments using the concept of yin and yang, emphasizing both their promise and limitations. His team has spent two decades working on an experimental method to selectively target tumors, but success has been limited.

"We really hope the two sides can develop essential cooperation to battle cancer," Shevach said.

Fan Chaohong, an oncology medical officer at the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), pointed to the potential of China's large population and workforce for biotech drug development. She also noted the critical role of collaboration in navigating regulatory challenges, particularly in gene and cellular therapies.

"The main challenge is the historical lack of regulation and the need for more communication and trust between the US and China," Fan said.

Fan noted that while some Chinese medical practices may not directly apply to the US population, successful collaborations have already led

to FDA approvals for several Chinese drugs treating hematologic malignancies.

With rising investment in gene therapy, cellular therapy and immunotherapy, the partnerships could significantly improve global oncology care.

The forum also explored various areas of tumor immunotherapy, such as immune checkpoint inhibitors, CAR-T therapy, cancer vaccines and personalized immunotherapy, to revolutionize cancer treatment.

The technologies enable precise targeting of cancer cells and tailored therapies to meet individual patients' needs. However, their development and implementation require significant resources, specialized expertise and international collaboration.

"With cancer cases on the rise globally, international partnerships are becoming increasingly essential to address medical needs," said Li Yongtian, president of IABS.

China's large population and workforce provide a robust foundation for biotech research, while American innovations in technology and regulatory frameworks can accelerate the development and approval of new treatments.

The global medical partnership has the potential to reshape the future of cancer treatment, offering hope to millions of patients worldwide, according to the forum.

Trump says 'can't guarantee' tariffs won't raise prices

By HENG WEILI in New York
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

US President-elect Donald Trump said in an interview aired on Sunday that he could not "guarantee" consumer prices would not rise under his proposed tariffs, while US economists and companies have called for no more increased tariffs.

During his presidential campaign, Trump said he would consider putting a 60 percent tariff or higher on all imports from China.

Although he said he disagrees with economists' contention that consumer prices would rise with increased tariffs, he said in an interview on NBC's *Meet the Press*: "I can't guarantee anything. I can't guarantee tomorrow."

In an article published on the Harvard Business Review website on Wednesday, Gordon Hanson, a professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and one of the authors of a paper that studied the effects of the trade war, said: "The Trump administration had promised that enacting tariffs on China would bring manufacturing jobs

back to the United States, and that we didn't really need to worry about Chinese retaliation. We find that both of those claims look like they're wrong.

"When you enact tariffs, you are targeting not just an industry — you're targeting a place. And the employment impacts of China's retaliation were palpable," he said.

In Trump's first term in office, he imposed tariffs on more than \$300 billion of Chinese-made goods. China, a top importer of US agricultural products such as beef, corn, pork and wheat, reciprocated with 25 percent tariffs on such products.

The Harvard Business Review reported that Hanson and his co-authors found that not only did the retaliatory tariffs lead to a loss of US agricultural jobs, "but also employment in transportation, warehousing, and business services in affected regions."

Economist Peter Schiff, in a Sunday post on X to his 1 million followers, wrote: "Trump doesn't understand tariffs at all. He claims he will make America rich by imposing tariffs. Tariffs are taxes. They are

imposed on Americans, not the Chinese or Canadians. Higher taxes will make Americans poorer, not richer. We don't need more taxes. We need less spending."

More recently, Trump has floated 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico, and 10 percent on China — its top three trading partners.

He has pledged that on his first day in office on Jan 20, he would impose tariffs on all goods imported from Mexico and Canada unless they prevented immigrants from illegally crossing into the US and stemmed the flow of illegal drugs.

High demand

Numerous companies and retail organizations have said the increased tariffs would be passed on to US consumers. In anticipation of higher costs, many importers brought in goods over the summer to prepare for the current US holiday season, when demand for goods — many of which come from China — is high.

Consumers in the US could see their purchasing power decline between \$46 billion and \$78 billion a

year if new tariffs were put in place, according to a study published last month by the National Retail Federation in Washington.

The Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington estimated in August that increased tariffs could cost the typical US household more than \$2,600 a year.

Trump began imposing tariffs on China in 2018, and said in the NBC interview that those levies had a minimal effect on prices.

"They cost Americans nothing," he said. "They made a great economy for us."

During an earnings call on Wednesday, Michael Creedon, CEO of discount retailer Dollar Tree in Virginia, said increased tariffs could lead the company to alter its product offerings.

"We believe there is a wide range of potential actions that we can take to help mitigate additional tariffs if and when they materialize," Creedon said.

Some 40 percent of Dollar Tree's sales are generated by imported goods, according to an analysis by KeyBanc Capital Markets, CNN reported.

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

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

z.com/chinadaily

facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 520 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: 206-922-2666

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6R8

Tel: 416-481-5706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 - No. 1476

WORLD

Concerns voiced over EU's business climate

Most Chinese firms remain optimistic in market despite challenges: Survey

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

Chinese companies operating in the European Union have voiced deep concerns over the worsening business climate in the bloc, from the growing uncertainty and discrimination to the politicization of trade and investment, according to an annual survey released on Monday by the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU, or CCCEU.

The report shows that the ratings by Chinese companies about the business environment in the EU declined for the fifth year in a row since the survey first started. In 2024, Chinese companies gave the EU business climate a score of 62 points, compared with 73 points in 2019. Some 68 percent of respondents believe the business environment has worsened over the past year.

More than half of the Chinese companies surveyed say the EU market is no longer "fair and open".

This trend reflects mounting challenges in political, economic and talent-related areas, says the report, published by CCCEU and consulting firm Roland Berger after a four-month survey and interviews with some 200 Chinese companies in the EU.

Uncertainty has emerged as the primary challenge, according to 78 percent of the Chinese companies surveyed. Rising compliance costs and growing anti-China sentiment are also significant factors affecting Chinese companies in the EU.

Liu Jiandong, chairman of the CCCEU, said on Monday the EU market is strategically important for Chinese companies, which have set up research, design and production facilities across the bloc. He also cited the huge daily two-way trade volume between China and the EU at more than 2 billion euros (\$2.11 billion).

"These companies contribute to EU tax revenues, job creation and innovation," Liu said.

"The CCCEU report, which addresses issues like market access and trade barriers, aims to support deeper China-EU trade ties."

He expressed hope for more China-EU cooperation as the two sides mark their 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2025.

Political impact

According to the survey, market barriers driven by political issues have become the most pressing challenge. At least six out of 10 Chinese companies feel they have been treated differently due to their Chinese origins, which poses challenges in public procurement, market access, eligibility for subsidies and incentives and approval procedures.

Chinese companies have complained about the EU's overemphasis on "economic security". They fear this may politicize normal business activities, according to the report.

About 94 percent of the companies surveyed feel that EU policies, including "economic security" and "de-risking", have negatively impacted their operations and undermined business confidence.

The EU's designation of Chinese companies such as Huawei as "high-risk vendors" has also triggered deep concerns. About 89 percent of the respondents say the politicization of data and cybersecurity issues in the EU has hurt their business operations.

EU's new Foreign Subsidies Regulation, which took effect this year, have sparked an outcry for unfairly targeting Chinese companies. More than 70 percent of the Chinese companies surveyed said they were negatively affected by the regulations.

According to the report, only half of the Chinese companies reported revenue growth, a sharp decline from 94 percent in the previous year.

Despite the mounting challenges, most Chinese companies still see potential in the EU market. About 55 percent of the Chinese companies remain optimistic about the medium- to long-term prospects for China-EU trade and economic relations.

The report offers some 300 recommendations that cover a wide range of areas from a fair and open market, and a more predictable business climate, to stopping the politicizing of business issues and including Chinese companies in the 6G research collaboration.

"Amid geopolitical shock waves, the EU and China remain important for each other," said Denis Depoux, Roland Berger's global managing director.

"We hope this report is useful for corporate leaders as well as policymakers on both sides to understand concerns and will drive the resolution of some issues through new strategies and rebalanced environments," he said.

Claus for help



Hundreds of motorcycle riders dressed as Santa Claus on their way to deliver Christmas gifts to young patients at a pediatric hospital in Krakow, Poland, on Sunday. The 'Moto Santa Claus' initiative, organized for the 19th consecutive year by the Motorcycle Association, delivers thousands of presents to children at a hospital in Prokocim, Krakow, while also raising funds to support the purchase of medical equipment for the hospital. ARTUR WIDAK VIA GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

TONGA PM resigns ahead of no-confidence motion

Tongan King Tupou VI has officially accepted the resignation of Hu'akavameiliku Sioasi Sovaleni as prime minister, a statement on the parliament's Facebook page said. The resignation came on Monday morning as the parliament was preparing to debate a motion for a vote of no confidence. In an address to the parliament, Hu'akavameiliku confirmed that he would step down from his position effective immediately, although he would continue to serve as a member of parliament. According to the Tongan Constitution, members of the Legislative Assembly will be given 14 days to decide on nominations for a new prime minister.

THE PHILIPPINES Volcano erupts, spews plume of ash and gas

The Kanlaon volcano in central Philippines erupted on Monday, spewing a column of ash and gas into the sky, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said. An explosive eruption occurred at the summit vent of the Kanlaon Volcano on Monday afternoon, the institute said in an alert-level bulletin. The bulletin added that the activity means a "magmatic eruption has begun that may progress to further explosive eruptions". The institute raised the alert level to three on a scale of five. The Kanlaon Volcano, one of the country's most active volcanoes, last erupted in June.

MIDDLE EAST Israel 'more optimistic' on Gaza hostage deal

Israel is now more optimistic about a possible hostage deal in Gaza, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Monday, amid reports that Hamas had asked for lists of all still held by militant groups in Gaza. He said indirect negotiations were underway for the return of about 100 hostages and that, while it was still too early to be sure, prospects had improved. A Palestinian official said Hamas had asked other factions to start listing the names of Israeli and foreign hostages in their custody. On Monday, Palestinian medical officials said that Israeli strikes in central Gaza killed at least six people.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

SAVE
1/3

We waste 1/3 of the food we produce

If we avoid wasting food, we'll also avoid wasting all the resources that go into producing it. Here is just some of what we can save every year if we Save 1/3.

250 trillion litres of freshwater
That's 30 years' drinking water for every person on Earth

11,113 TWh of energy
Enough to power over 1 billion homes for a whole year

18,919km² of forests
2.6 million football fields' worth of trees to slow global warming

Save 1/3 for a more sustainable tomorrow

Find out how at saveonethird.org

COMMENT

Editorials

Tariffs bad for business, bad for US firms and consumers, and bad for all trading partners

To those worrying about the uncertainties heralded by a new incoming United States administration and the president-elect's unpredictability, there is one thing at least that is predictable: He will continue wielding the baton of tariffs.

"I'm a big believer in tariffs. I think tariffs is the most beautiful word. I think they're beautiful," he told NBC in his latest interview. "It's going to make us rich."

Tariffs might be among the few things on which the former US president and now president-elect has aligned his words with deeds, and they may continue to serve as his foreign policy weapon of choice during his second stint in the White House.

Since he seems not to have become sufficiently aware of the negative impacts of the abusive use of tariffs on the United States during his first term, he may have a better chance to learn that this time around. Because as the accumulative effects of the tariffs he imposed in his first term and the subsequent ones that the Joe Biden administration has added show their actual weight on the US economy and US consumers, there is no way he will be left in the dark if he continues to rely on tariffs as a means to impose the US' will on other countries.

In fact, no assessment of the state of the US economy is credible without factoring in the role of tariffs. Any responsible analysis will find such excessive levying of tariffs to be against economic common sense, and potentially self-defeating. We have no clue as to how much the president-elect has been briefed about the current US administration's so-far unsuccessful struggle against inflation. But it certainly will be good for him and his country if he listens more broadly to what credible economists, the business community, and American consumers have to say.

At this point in time, the president-elect appears convinced those against his tariff strategy are overstating their concerns. On the campaign trail, he told US voters that tariffs would restore factory jobs, reduce government debt and allow his administration to subsidize childcare. As he said in the NBC interview, "They cost Americans nothing. They made a great economy for us". And, better still, he claimed to "have stopped wars with tariffs".

Yet asked whether he could guarantee that US consumers won't pay higher prices under those tariffs, he sounded less sure. He "doesn't believe" his tariffs will raise prices for families, but he hedged his bets by conceding, "I can't guarantee anything".

Of course he can't. But if he took a serious look at the actual consequences of the recent tariffs, he might think twice about the new ones he has proposed. There is ample evidence to let him see tariffs' nature as a "double-edged sword", which is particularly obvious in the trade war against China.

Trump's NBC interviewer, for one, reminded him that the tariffs he imposed during his first administration cost Americans \$80 billion in additional sales taxes. As US figures indicate, as a result of the trade war, US agricultural income dropped by \$27 billion in 2018 and 2019. Nor did tariffs on imported steel bring more jobs to US plants.

Protectionists love tariffs for their immediate effects in suppressing competitors. But there is always another side to the coin. When one levies higher taxes on producers, the latter will ask higher prices of the retailers who sell their products to offset the additional cost. And the retailers will then sell imported goods at higher prices to the end consumers to make up the price difference.

Multiple polls in the US have found the majority of Americans believe tariffs make domestic goods pricier. Economists generally project that cost to each American household is likely to be thousands of dollars a year.

The CEOs of such businesses as auto-parts company AutoZone, Columbia Sportswear, and Stanley Black & Decker, the world's largest tool company, have already decided to "pass those tariff costs back to the consumer", in AutoZone CEO's words, should the next administration enact the president-elect's tariff plan.

And large retail chains such as Target and Walmart are also expected to follow suit. After all, the planned tariffs will prove unaffordable to numerous retailers, large and small alike.

Firm confidence in prospects of economy

That China's consumer inflation fell to a five-month low in November, climbing 0.2 percent from a year ago, according to data the National Bureau of Statistics released on Monday, serves to show that it remains a challenge for the world's second-largest economy to effectively stimulate its weak domestic demand.

The mounting downward pressure on both the production and consumption ends of the economy, along with the consequential influences on employment, government debt and market confidence, is a direct reflection of the systemic and complicated challenges confronting the world economy as a whole.

That also explains the great attention paid to the "1+10" Dialogue Chinese Premier Li Qiang hosted in Beijing on Monday with the heads of 10 international economic organizations, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the Bank for International Settlements, under the theme of "Building Consensus on Development to Promote Global Common Prosperity".

These international economic organizations all play crucial roles in the global economic, financial and trade sectors. The meeting, aimed at coordinating international efforts to boost the global economy, provides the heads of these organizations with an opportunity to compare notes with each other, as well as to gain firsthand knowledge about the trajectory of the world's second-largest economy.

Through their in-depth discussions with their host on such important topics as global economic growth, maintaining multilateralism and China's modernization, the guests should have well understood China's commitment to continuously contributing to a sustainable, balanced and inclusive world economy, its openness to sharing with the world its development dividends and opportunities, and its dedication to promoting fair global governance.

Also through their fact-finding trips in the country, the core policymaking circles of the world economy are expected to learn for themselves that claims of China's "economic coercion", "dumping of products", "stealing of other countries' IPR", "weaponizing of trade" and "bullying of foreign companies" are all politically motivated and weaponized smears originating from China hawks.

Except for the institutional challenges faced by the world economy, which should be tackled through systemic reforms, it is the protectionism and unilateralism adopted by some of the developed economies that call for collective vigilance and due actions to address.

These narrow-minded practices have negative influences on the world economy, and worse, if they are allowed to take center stage they can also lead to institutional designs that will only end in an economic Cold War.

Apart from gaining a clear understanding of the present state of the Chinese economy, Beijing hopes its guests will also have been left in no doubt about the Chinese economy's bright prospects as the country advances its high-standard opening-up and deepens reforms in key fields.

It is no coincidence that it was also on Monday that the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held a meeting to analyze and study the economic work of 2025, along with other subjects.

In the meeting, the central leadership required authorities at various levels to build a modern industrial system, implement more proactive macro policies, expand domestic demand, and effectively prevent and resolve risks in key areas.

In particular, it called for enriching and improving the policy toolbox, strengthening extraordinary countercyclical adjustments, and making good policy combinations to improve the forward-looking, well-targeted and effective nature of macroeconomic control.

Both the dialogue and the meeting of the central authorities should send a strong signal to the outside world that despite the headwinds China will continue to focus on doing its own things well while opening up further to the outside world and working together with all like-minded partners to steadfastly promote an inclusive and fair economic globalization, a balanced and sustainable world economic growth, and a just and equitable multilateral global governance system.

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

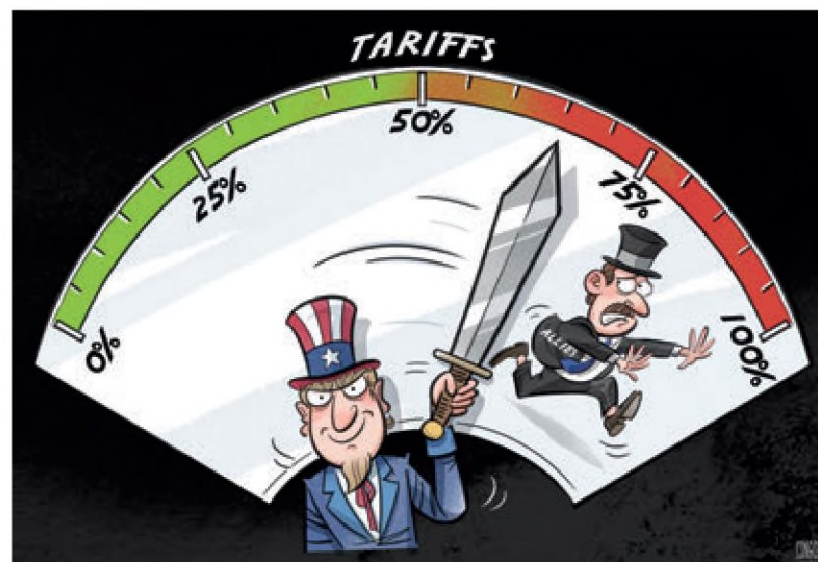
China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

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

Song Chen



Opinion Line

Notre-Dame rings changes on ways to keep historical monuments safe

The bells of the northern bell tower of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral chimed on Sunday, signaling completion of the major restoration work and reopening of the cathedral to the public, five years and eight months after a sudden fire destroyed the cathedral's spire and shocked the world on April 15, 2019.

The French government had set a goal to rebuild Notre-Dame within five years and now they have honored their words. According to reports, the restoration team used 2,400 oak trees to reconstruct the roof, while also meticulously restoring over 2,000 sculptures and decorations.

Equally noteworthy is that the restoration process saw ancient craftsmanship blending with cutting-edge technology. Design software giant Autodesk was invited to develop a digital model of Notre-Dame de Paris. Its CEO said it took them more than a year to create digital models of 12,000 objects, over 30,000 square

meters of stone walls, more than 3,900 square meters of lead roofing, and 186 church vaults. Design company Art Graphique & Patrimoine, which had made detailed digital scans of most of the cathedral's interiors before the fire, collaborated with Autodesk to rescan the site to understand what the fire had changed.

Latest technologies such as artificial intelligence played a significant part in the reconstruction, which is an example of the coming together of people's determination to restore an ancient building and modern technology.

One cannot exclude the role of VR technology that allows visitors to have a virtual tour of the cathedral online. While reconstruction will help visitors visit the place, a virtual tour will reduce the number of real visitors, thus ensuring better protection of the cathedral.

Notre-Dame de Paris' reconstruction

has also popularized the modern technology employed in the process. In recent years, many museums, such as China's Silk Road Online Museum that opened in June 2021, have used digital modeling and virtual tours. In 2020, a travel company, Expedia, invited artists to reconstruct the seven wonders of the world, restoring them to their original form and making graphics interchange format files allowing people to see how these wonders were built and destroyed.

Now, with the reconstructed Notre-Dame open to tourists and its virtual tour attracting more visitors than ever, the technology is famous all over and will rally wider support for their developers. More museums will hopefully embrace the technologies, thus minimizing risks of them disappearing because of some unforeseen mishap and granting more visitors the chance to appreciate their treasures across distances.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

SOE venture capital helps fund innovative development

The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council and the National Development and Reform Commission recently issued joint policy measures to promote the high-quality development of venture capital funds and support State-owned enterprises in establishing such funds.

The development of venture capital marks an important move to promote the virtuous development of science and technology, industries and finance. Without the support of venture capital, it would be difficult for influential innovative enterprises to have grown and developed rapidly. In China's venture capital market, State-owned capital holds the lion's share and plays a positive role in promoting its scientific and technological breakthroughs.

The healthy development of the venture capital industry requires a

long-term and stable source of funds, that is, patient capital. An enterprise has to go through hardships for which impatient capital cannot be a patient companion. To cultivate and develop patient capital, the "visible hand" should play an important role in promoting State-funded investment.

The latest move points out the direction for the further development of central enterprise venture capital funds. On the one hand, it makes clear that funds should be directed toward early-stage, small-scale, long-term investments and hard technology, and toward those in need rather than those already well-resourced. It also aims to resolve the problem of "where does money come from", that is, central State-owned enterprises will set up venture capital funds.

The latest policy measures are not aimed at pursuing short-term finan-

cial returns. Instead, they set a higher fault tolerance rate for the funds that focus on the seed stage and the initial stage projects.

After the establishment of central enterprise venture capital funds, how it handles the relationship with the market still needs to be taken into account. For example, how to cooperate with mature market-oriented investment institutions to jointly incubate and cultivate the growth of scientific and creative enterprises is a topic worth thinking about. It is hoped that all localities will actively explore an investment mechanism with multiple sources of funds, attract qualified social capital into the field of venture capital in an orderly manner, and promote the transformation and application of more scientific and technological achievements of great value.

—ECONOMIC DAILY

What They Say

Pandora's box opened as rebels lack common cause

Syria has an important strategic location and a complex internal ethnic and religious situation. The collapse of the Syrian government will not only cause turmoil in the country, but will also bring more instability to the entire Middle East, leading to further tensions in the region.

On the domestic level, there are multiple forces in Syria that have different ethnic and religious backgrounds and that are supported by different external forces. In the past, the various opposition groups cooperated to fight against the Bashar al-Assad government. But when this common goal disappears, whether the forces can continue to cooperate with each other is a question.

After the collapse of the Assad government, which originally controlled most of Syria's territory, the country's political landscape will become more

fragmented, and the possibility of conflicts among various forces for territory will increase.

The main forces defeating the government forces consist of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Free Syrian Army supported by Turkey, and the Syrian Democratic Forces, which is a Kurdish-led coalition of United States-backed ethnic militias and rebel groups. If and how they will work with each other to run the war-torn country remains to be seen.

Therefore, the competition among major powers in Syria will make the future situation in Syria more complicated.

From a geopolitical perspective, the sudden change in Syria's political situation will have different impacts on regional powers. Syria is considered a member of the "resistance axis" led by Iran, and the collapse of

the Assad government will lead to the weakening of Iran's regional influence. Teheran may thus face more suppression from the US and the West in the future, and its historical foe, Israel, will be more proactive in the Middle East.

In addition, if the situation in Syria falls into chaos, which appears to be very likely, it will also have an impact on neighboring countries. A large number of Syrian refugees have already poured into neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. This will further aggravate the regional social and economic burden.

Meanwhile, extremist organizations such as the Islamic State may once again take advantage of the chaos to grow and become a major threat to regional security again.

—XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

COMMENT

Fan Ruoying

Shift to proactive debt-risk management

In the past month since the top legislator approved a resolution on Nov 8 to increase local government debt limits for swapping hidden liabilities, several provinces have recently adjusted their budgets intensively. This move, part of the nation's broader debt management strategy, is a direct and powerful response to financial pressures at the local level.

First, a new 6-trillion-yuan (\$825.28 billion) special debt-reduction quota has been allocated for the years 2024 to 2026, with 2 trillion yuan set for each year to help the local governments settle their hidden liabilities. Second, the restrictions on the use of special-purpose bonds have been relaxed, with 800 billion yuan a year allocated from 2024 to 2028. These funds will boost local governments' financial capacity, which will help them to focus on debt resolution and settling up to 4 trillion yuan in hidden liabilities. And third, 2 trillion yuan of hidden debt related to urban renewal projects maturing in 2029 and later will continue to be repaid according to their original contracts.

Since 2015, China has carried out four rounds of debt swaps. The first (2015-18) involved swapping 12.2 trillion yuan of non-government bond liabilities. The second (2019-2021) targeted restructuring debts at the county level in several provinces including Guizhou and Hunan, issuing 157.9 billion yuan in local swap bonds and 612.8 billion yuan in special refinancing bonds including Liaoning. The third (2021-22) focused on clearing implicit debts in key regions such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province, leading to the issuance of 453.9 billion yuan in special refinancing bonds. And the fourth (2023-24) introduced special refinancing and targeted bonds amounting to 2.76 trillion yuan.

But compared with the earlier efforts, the latest initiative is unprecedented in scale, timeframe and scope, marking a milestone in China's debt management strategy.

This initiative authorizes 10 trillion yuan exclusively through special bonds, reaffirming local governments as the primary agents of debt resolution. It also reflects a fundamental shift in approach — from reactive crisis management to proactive, systemic resolution. The focus, along with localized interventions, is on comprehensive risk mitigation, and transition from dual-track oversight of explicit and implicit debts to transparent and standardized management of all debts, while balancing risk management and promoting economic growth.

The debt management package is expected to yield tangible benefits, easing the financial burden of local govern-

ments and revitalizing economic development. And the total hidden debt at the local level is expected to decrease from 14.3 trillion yuan to 2.3 trillion yuan by 2028, with the average annual debt servicing burden likely to drop from 2.86 trillion yuan to 460 billion yuan, or 80 percent less.

This will save about 600 billion yuan in interest payments over five years, freeing up fiscal resources for economic development and public services. With reduced debt pressure, local governments can refocus on long-term growth strategies, including improving livelihoods, fostering innovation and stimulating consumption.

Besides, the initiative underscores the government's commitment to maintaining financial transparency and stability. And implicit debt levels have been officially quantified for the first time, reflecting progress in fiscal accountability. Such transparency is key to stabilizing market expectations and reinforcing investor confidence.

Moreover, the relief package addresses long-standing liquidity issues that have constrained local governments. Factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and a downturn in the real estate market have exacerbated payment delays to businesses. With debt pressures easing, financial flows to upstream and downstream enterprises are likely to improve, rejuvenating market activity and restoring corporate vitality.

While the debt swap initiative significantly lowers risks, it does not altogether eliminate them. The transformation of implicit debt into explicit liabilities underscores the need for systemic reforms in debt management.

There is a need therefore to establish a comprehensive oversight of local government debt, including improving risk monitoring, more strictly controlling new borrowing, and aligning debt levels with economic growth rates. This is important because a robust system of debt budgeting and capital allocation will ensure sustainable

financial management.

Also, local government financing vehicles should transition toward market-driven and standardized operations, while reforms should include optimizing governance structures, promoting innovation, integrating regional resources and attracting private capital to enhance competitiveness and efficiency.

It is also essential to delineate the responsibilities of governments and markets, ensuring that public resources are allocated effectively. This involves refining performance evaluation systems and fiscal assessment mechanisms, and making efforts to accelerate reforms in restructuring central-local fiscal relations, including shifting some expenditure responsibilities to the central and provincial-level governments to ease the financial burden on local governments.

The author is a researcher at Bank of China.

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



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Mahendra Subedi

Railway can drive Nepal's BRI programs to new height

With the signing of a memorandum of understanding on China-Nepal cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and the recent deal on BRI framework agreement for project implementation, Nepal is expected to make a major headway in the implementation of the initiative.

Amid several ups and downs including some obscurities, internal political instability and geopolitics, there was some delay in materializing of Belt and Road projects in Nepal, though the two sides agreed in 2018 to intensify the implementation of the MoU on BRI cooperation to enhance connectivity, encompassing vital components such as ports, roads, railways, aviation and communications within the overarching framework of Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network.

Facing huge infrastructure gaps, Nepal needs the support of neighboring countries, the international community and development partners to develop its infrastructure, and attracting foreign direct investment could be an apt way of achieving that goal. This is crucial because Nepal's aim is to upgrade its economic status from a least-developed country by 2026 and meet the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, Nepal hopes to attract Chinese investment and Chinese official grants in several sectors.



Only the countries in the region can offer the best solution to the challenges and clear the development bottlenecks.

Chinese investments are expected in infrastructure development, and the energy, information technology and hospitality sectors. As an immediate neighbor of China, Nepal has enjoyed historical and trouble-free ties with China for centuries and, therefore, Chinese businesses will invest in Nepal. Foreign direct investment in Nepal will contribute to the country's economy and help it become a prosperous and happy nation.

The BRI lies at the heart of China-Nepal cooperation, since intensive collaboration on Belt and Road projects will attract high-quality investment and build healthy trade relations between the two sides. More important, the advancement of BRI cooperation in Nepal will facilitate the development of

the Nepal-China railway. The development of a railway line between Nepal and China will not only transform landlocked Nepal into a land-linked country but also shift the development paradigm of the whole of South Asia.

Such a railway, which had been less discussed and criticized even before any formal announcement was made, is sure to benefit China and South Asian countries including densely populated India and Bangladesh. More investments in infrastructure mean more business, more funding, faster productivity growth, higher income for people, better connectivity, quality employment opportunities and sustainable development.

Here it is important to mention that other countries should not drag the BRI debate into the abyss of geopolitical maneuvering. Although India is not a Belt and Road partner country and is a bit reluctant, not a naysayer, it has been able to improve education, and people's mobility and livelihoods with funding from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank — one of the key financial institutions contributing financially to the BRI's advancement. Nepal, as a BRI signatory country, can explore the Silk Road Fund, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the China Construction Bank as well as the AIIB for funding, though the modality and project finalization remain a major task for the two countries. Pakistan and Sri Lanka are major beneficiaries of Belt

and Road cooperation.

The changing global context demands peace and development. Among the five priorities of BRI cooperation including policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties, connectivity of infrastructure demands more attention in the context of Nepal-China relations, because Nepal is aspiring to benefit from China's miraculous economic development.

To lift all the economic barriers in the region and to benefit almost 3 billion people in South Asia and China, the railway linking China and Nepal will reshape the development paradigm of the Himalayan region. But it is imperative that the parties involved are aware of the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of the peoples in the South Asian region. Only the countries in the region can offer the best solution to the challenges and clear the development bottlenecks.

In short, the Belt and Road Initiative is sure to create immense opportunities for South Asian countries and help them diversify their economic and trade partnerships while minimizing the financial risks in order to achieve sustainable development. But for this, they have to keep geopolitics at bay.

The author is a Nepal-based journalist. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

The author is former deputy editor-in-chief of China Daily. kangbing@chinadaily.com.cn

A strong, capable govt revitalizes post-quake Wenchuan

I was dozing off on a bus full of other tourists when our guide told us that we were driving past Wenchuan, a county in Sichuan province that was all but wiped out in the deadly earthquake of 2008. The mention of Wenchuan jolted me awake, and a traffic jam on that section of the road allowed me to see a new Wenchuan county.

I was traveling with a tour group to enjoy the natural scenic spots at 3,000-5,000 meters above sea level in the mountainous northwestern part of Sichuan without realizing the areas on our itinerary included the 2008 quake-hit region. By September that year, more than 69,220 people were killed and 370,000 injured in the magnitude 8 earthquake, with over 17,900 missing.

With its epicenter in Wenchuan, the deadliest earthquake in China in a century impacted people and resources across an area of 500,000 square kilometers (the size of Spain) and rendered 19.93 million people homeless.

During the next couple of days, we covered about 800 km in Wenchuan and its neighboring counties. I was impressed by the scale and modern planning and architecture of their towns, and the hundreds of multi-story houses owned by villagers, many of whom are Tibetans, Qiangs or Huis and have converted part of their houses into restaurants or homestays. The most impressive aspect of the towns is that all the buildings there were built after 2008. The only traces of the earthquake were a few collapsed buildings, which the authorities have preserved as a reminder of the tragic quake.

The new buildings were built at a feverish pace to enable the quake-affected towns and counties to recover from the disaster as soon as possible. While the central authorities poured in huge amounts of money to rebuild infrastructure in order to help the survivors overcome the impacts of the quake, half of the Communist Party of China members across the nation, including me, donated various amounts of money to bolster the post-quake relief and rebuilding efforts, with many donating up to one month's salary.

Such an achievement would not have been possible without the government's determination to improve the lives of the quake-hit people.

Within one month of the quake, the central government released plans to rebuild both infrastructure and people's lives. The aim was to help the affected areas so people could raise local growth to the pre-quake development level within three years and a higher level within five years.

More important, the central authorities urged 19 better-off provinces to help with the post-quake reconstruction in a few dozen seriously-hit counties. For the next three years, the affected areas turned into huge construction sites with the better-off provinces contributing funds, construction material and skilled workers to build schools, apartments and houses for the villagers. As a result, all the rebuilding, recovery and revitalization targets were reached before the deadline.

Talking with the local people, I found they became gloomy when recalling the tragic quake but lit up when talking about the rescuers and relief providers, as well as the government's rebuilding efforts. "I bet that no other government in the world could have done as much as the Chinese government has done for so many quake survivors in such a short time," the owner of my guesthouse claimed.

About 41,130 rebuilding projects were completed within three years, and by the end of 2018, a decade after the devastating quake, the GDP of the 39 worst-hit counties had risen by three times from the pre-quake period. Such an achievement would not have been possible without the government's determination to improve the lives of the quake-hit people.

For example, the opening of the 80-km-long government-built highway between Dujiangyan and Wenchuan has made it possible to reach Wenchuan and its neighboring counties in an hour from the provincial capital of Chengdu. With half of its length passing through tunnels, the highway is called "the road to prosperity" by locals.

My urge to witness firsthand how the people of Wenchuan have dealt with the aftereffects of the quake 16 years ago prevented me from being frustrated by the frequent traffic jams during my trip to the region. When millions of tourists spend time and money each year to see a new Wenchuan and its neighboring counties, the quake survivors can expect to lead a good life.

GLOBAL VIEWS

ISHIDA RYUJI

Southern exposure

The global challenges humanity faces today show that the Western development model has had its day

The Western world, including Japan, has a strong tendency to view the unity and development of the BRICS countries and the Global South as a challenge to the existing international order and system. It is based on the viewpoint of Western developed countries when considering the history of global development in modern times, and it overlooks the reality that the political-economic systems originating from Western Europe are experiencing dysfunction. If we examine such a perspective within the context of world history, the Global South's efforts and progress will be seen differently. That is, in response to the development challenges faced by the world, including the Western developed countries that have led modernization, the Global South countries are not only "sincerely" addressing these issues but also forging brand-new paths.



The modernization originating from Western Europe has brought unprecedented prosperity. Particularly after World War II, both Western Europe and Japan experienced what was regarded as miraculous economic growth. However, it must be pointed out that such a miracle was achieved, to a great extent, through the military or economic colonization of some Global South countries. Moreover, developed countries themselves have faced unforeseen challenges from the early 1970s.

The global economic recession triggered by the oil crisis made people realize that high economic growth won't last indefinitely. People began to notice environmental issues such as air and water pollution, which had been produced by economic growth and not been dealt with. In addition, the recession in some developed countries also led to a reduction in development aid to the Global South, further widening the North-South gap. Within the Global South itself, the gap between resource-rich countries and non-resource-rich countries, emerging industrial and non-industrial nations, or the South-South gap, also widened.

Western countries, despite some adjustments in reality, still can't find any other new approach for addressing challenges brought

about by Western modernization.

Developed countries, especially the G7 nations, prioritize economic and financial globalization to extend the life span of their development model, rather than addressing the global crises their development model has caused. The result of permeating market fundamentalism into every corner of the world is that while multinational corporations from the developed countries reap huge profits, they also exacerbate economic disparities both within countries and globally. The progress of globalization in the late 1990s coincided with a period of significant economic growth of some Global South countries, led by China.

The Global South has not been indifferent to the global economic disparities and environmental damage that results from the developed countries' development model. They have been actively addressing these global issues with full effort, seeking a new model for economic growth while addressing environmental issues and wealth disparities.

In other words, the efforts of developing countries, which have been in a subordinate position during the Western modernization, are not aimed at reversing their backward status while maintaining the development model established by the West. They are confronting global challenges that neither the advantaged nor the disadvantaged parties in such a structure can avoid and exploring a new development pattern.

China is one of the countries actively taking measures to tackle the aforementioned predicaments. The Chinese path to modernization is aimed at overcoming and innovatively solving the global challenges brought about by Western modernization.

The Global South that has made tremendous sacrifices to the Western development model has begun the exploration of a new pattern needed by many developing countries and regions. If developed countries can work with them, they will surely drive human progress.

At the 31st APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in November, Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated: "China welcomes all parties to continue riding the 'express train' of its development and grow together with the Chinese economy so that

we can all contribute to the modernization of all countries featuring peaceful development, mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity." This statement should be viewed in such a broader context.

However, Western developed countries have always regarded the initiatives proposed and efforts made by China and other Global South countries as "challenges" or "threats".

Since all people on the planet are facing common issues such as climate change, if developed countries can't transcend the South-North gap, they may decay prior to the establishment of a new development model. China is advocating win-win cooperation, equality and mutual benefits to deal with worldwide problems, sharing the wisdom and experience of its development with the rest of the world. However, the Western world is still unable to imagine a diplomatic policy that never seeks hegemony and a development path that does not sacrifice the interests of others, ignoring the achievements of China's peaceful development over the past 75 years and the hope it has brought to human society.

No matter how the G7 opposes China and tries to provoke estrangement between China and other Global South countries, it can't stop the momentum of the collective rise of the Global South. We should be clear that our understanding and thinking about the current situation itself are formed within the framework of Western modernization. It is urgent to reform the global system to endow the new development model pursued by the Global South with greater effect.

The urgent task is to create a new knowledge system, to explore a peaceful economic model and a peaceful international relations model that do not take exploitation and the seizure of hegemony as a premise, and to develop a new theory of peace studies based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

The author is an associate researcher at the School of Humanities at Shanghai Jiaotong University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

YU HONGYUAN AND ZHANG XIAORAN

Global ecological governance boost

Greater G20 cooperation in green technology research is essential to narrow the North-South technological divide and promote global sustainability

The global energy transition is pivotal to addressing climate change, mitigating pollution and achieving sustainable development. Reducing reliance on fossil fuels and advancing renewable energy are central to this effort. At the forefront of this transition, the G20 and the 29th session of the



Yu Hongyuan



Zhang Xiaoran

Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) have made significant strides in securing climate finance. Since 2008, G20 summits have made numerous commitments related to climate change and energy, with the prioritization of these issues steadily increasing in recent years. The 2024 G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration underlines the importance of international cooperation in tackling global challenges. It advocates for technological neutrality and inclusivity in the energy transition while highlighting the critical role of sustainable development in driving economic, social and environmental progress.

This year's summit underscored the pivotal role of the Global South and the significance of sustainable development.

As the G20 chair this year and incoming chair of both BRICS and COP30 in 2025, Brazil has committed to enhancing the voice of the Global South, advancing sustainable development and driving global governance reforms. Brazil, together with India and South Africa, has formed the "G20 trika", which aims to advance the agenda of Global South nations on key issues such as energy transition, digital economy and climate governance. Additionally, Brazil pursues a policy of "active non-alignment", aiming to foster global consensus through pragmatic and balanced cooperation.

The 2024 G20 summit emphasized the need to scale up climate

finance from billions to trillions of dollars, acknowledging the urgency of mobilizing funds for the green transition. This was further reinforced at COP29, which highlighted the urgent need for accelerated just energy transitions in the Global South and emphasized greater ambition to address climate change. Dubbed the "climate finance COP", the summit concluded on Nov 24 with a landmark agreement to triple the current financial goal, committing nations to raise annual climate finance from \$100 billion to \$300 billion by 2035. This pledge, although a significant step forward, still fell short of the \$1.3 trillion required for effective climate action, as experts estimated.

During the summit, President Xi Jinping emphasized that "countries should promote more inclusive, equitable and resilient global development". He also announced China's implementation of eight global development initiatives, including the joint construction of a high-quality Belt and Road Initiative.

China proposed further improving global ecological governance and building an eco-friendly global economy. It emphasized that the global green development transition must "uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and provide support to developing countries in terms of funding, technology and capacity-building".

China has demonstrated its commitment to addressing global climate and energy challenges. The following recommendations are proposed to further advance the global green transition and sustainable development.

First, G20 members must play a critical international role in energy and sustainable development. As the world's largest energy consumer, China holds significant potential to drive the green economy forward by aligning the BRI with the G20 framework, fostering global collaboration on sustainable development and climate goals. By addressing major issues such as energy security and climate change, China can play a leading role, mediate between emerging markets and developing countries, and drive the global energy transition.

Second, as the world's largest energy consumer, China can play a pivotal role in advocating for reduced barriers to G20 discussions, promoting equitable participation among all member states. Strengthening the clarity and fairness of working group recommendations, particularly by defining the decision-making roles of mechanisms such as Business 20 (B20) and Civil Society 20 (C20), would also enhance the continuity and inclusivity of global collaboration efforts. Strengthening transparency and accountability within these mechanisms will ensure more effective implementation of agenda items.

Third, stronger G20 cooperation in green technology research, development and application is essential for narrowing the North-South technological divide and promoting global sustainability. Establishing a knowledge-sharing platform, encouraging climate finance and technology transfers, and creating robust institutional frameworks and evaluation mechanisms will ensure policy continuity and alignment with sustainable goals.

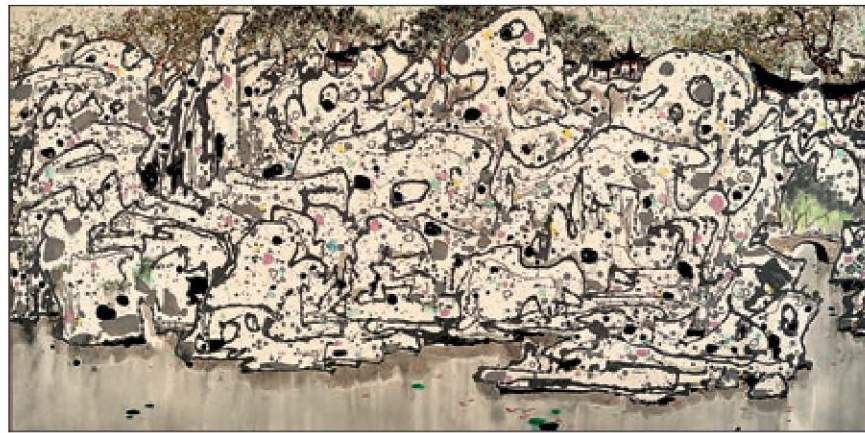
Fourth, fostering sustainable infrastructure development is key to enhancing global resilience to risks. Efforts should focus on aligning public service infrastructure projects with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in sectors such as education and agriculture in developing countries. Climate finance must also be more closely tied to the objectives of the Paris Agreement, emphasizing climate adaptation in vulnerable regions. Additionally, leadership in the low-carbon sector should be maintained to drive the global green transition and support sustainable economic growth and social development worldwide.

Yu Hongyuan is a professor and director of the Institute for Public Policy and Innovation at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies. Zhang Xiaoran is a doctoral candidate at the Law School at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics. 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.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

CULTURE



Left: *Upright*, by Lin Fengmian. Middle: *Lion Grove Garden*, by Wu Guanzhong. Right: *Pipa and Fair Lady*, also by Lin. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Memories of a master

Exhibition sheds light on late artist paying tribute to the man who guided him on the odyssey, **Lin Qi** reports.

In an article written to commemorate the death of Lin Fengmian (1900-91), painter Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010) recounted the events of a trip to Hong Kong in 1989, when he attempted to call the former teacher.

Lin had been Wu's headmaster at the Hangzhou National College of Art, today's China Academy of Art, in Zhejiang province.

Lin didn't answer, so Wu left a message with the number of where he was staying, and then waited and waited for the rest of the day.

"At midnight, the telephone rang. I asked who it was. At the other end of the line was a voice, saying, 'Feng-ming, I didn't recognize the name until the man continued. 'This is Lin Fengmian! I was surprised and delighted.

"My former teacher said he had spent the day in the suburbs. Fearing that I would leave the following day, he called as soon as he returned home and heard my message. My tears wet the telephone."

It was Lin's use of his given name in the phone call, an indication in Chinese culture of the closeness that he felt for Wu, that had touched the latter's heart so deeply, moving him to tears. Also, they hadn't seen for years, and each experienced turbulences in life.

Wu sorrowfully recounted this meeting with Lin in an article written on Aug 13, 1991, a day after his former teacher died, at 91, in Hong Kong.

At the end of it, Wu wrote, "I was sleepless last night (after hearing about Lin's death). As I'm writing now, it is early in the morning. I'm in the woods and sitting on a stone. Birds are singing on the trees. May all the birds make their singing be heard by the world!"

The last sentence included a homophonic play on Lin's birth name, *fengming*, which means "the chirping of a phoenix."

The original manuscript of this touching tribute is currently on display at *The Road to China Modern Art*, an exhibition of paintings, photos and documents running until Jan 3 at the Tsinghua University Art Museum. It juxtaposes the lives and careers of Lin and Wu, who are recognized as courageous, experimental and dedicated leading fig-



Visitors to *The Road to China Modern Art*, an exhibition at Tsinghua University Art Museum in Beijing running until Jan 3. The exhibition displays paintings by Chinese art masters Lin Fengmian and Wu Guanzhong.



From left: Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010) and his teacher, Lin Fengmian (1900-91).

ures in modern Chinese art, and celebrates a lifelong attachment despite the distance between them, Lin having moved to Hong Kong in 1977 and Wu living in Beijing.

Their bond was born in 1936 when Wu enrolled at the school where Lin was teaching.

Wu, born in Yixing, Jiangsu province, studied electrical engineering for a year at a school that has now become part of Zhejiang University before meeting Chu Teh-chun, one of Lin's students, during a campus activity in one summer vacation. A visit to Chu's college changed Wu's life. He discovered a passion for fine arts, quit engineering against

his family's will, and re-enrolled as an art student at the college where Lin was teaching.

Lin was in the midst of forging a new path for Chinese art in the face of opposition from conservatives. In 1919, he had gone to France on a work-study program and attended several art schools, including the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He returned in 1925, first to head the National School of Fine Arts, today's Central Academy of Fine Arts, in Beijing, and three years later, to oversee the establishment of the Hangzhou National College of Art, becoming its first principal.

While in France, Lin was introduced to modern art. Upon his return, he dove into an ambitious venture to integrate Western art, a vanguard, free spirit, and Chinese culture, as a way of reforming Chinese art.

Lin shared his endeavors with his students in the hopes they would create pieces that addressed emerging social issues, and use art to nurture hearts and minds.

Wu was one of those motivated

to follow suit, and in the decades that followed, he dedicated himself to the task. In 1947, he was granted a government scholarship to continue his studies at Lin's alma mater in Paris.

Today, Wu is referred to as one of Lin's three most influential students, alongside Chu and Zao Wou-ki. The three have gained recognition in China and internationally and were all members of the French Academy of Fine Arts (Académie des Beaux-Arts).

Standing at the crossroads of the East and the West, they each blazed trails that took modern Chinese art to new realms.

Xu Hong, a co-curator of the exhibition, says whether it is Chinese ink paintings or oils, Lin's work reveals the solid training he received in France, while demonstrating the "serene mood and deep spiritual resonance that are essential to Eastern art."

The soft luster and smooth silhouettes of Chinese porcelain, the diverse folk culture and court paintings of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) greatly interested Lin

and were the three main sources of inspiration that defined his work.

"He tried to re-create the gentle glaze of ceramics with his strokes. His depictions of young women from ancient times embody the same elegant curves of a porcelain vase, and he would sometimes draw such a vase beside the female figure in the painting," Xu says. "He was able to present a classical beauty that is grounded on his understanding of Chinese and European cultures."

She says the recurring motifs in Lin's paintings, like woodlands, lush trees, Chinese opera performers, beautiful historical women and vases of flowers, display a vigor within backdrops that convey expansiveness and quiet. "It is a beauty that transcends time and space, the beauty of modern art."

Lin was a master of color. "He once joked that he was a 'slave' of color. He had experienced too much. The ups and downs of life, and the sadness and happiness had turned into these colors of brightness and darkness in his paintings," Wu once

remarked of his teacher's work.

Wu himself was pursuing what he saw as the ultimate beauty of form, and the varied combinations of geometric structures, lines and dots define work in which he melded Western abstraction with Chinese minimalism and symbolism.

One famous example on show is the *Shizilin*, or *Lion Grove Garden*, a colored ink painting done in 1983, that is nearly 3 meters in length.

Currently part of the collection of Shanghai's China Art Museum, the painting depicts *jiashan*, or a faux mountain, an important part of classical Chinese gardens that are piled with hollow rocks of varying sizes, shapes and textures. The "mountain" occupies over four-fifths of the whole composition. In a departure from the traditional way of depicting gardens, Wu used ink lines and colored dots to represent the rocks and the rock mountain, and it is this bold, new style that distinguishes the painting as a brilliant example of the depiction of the classical private gardens of Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

Wu followed in Lin's footsteps becoming an educator. He taught first at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and then at the Central Academy of Arts and Design, today's Academy of Arts and Design, at Tsinghua University, before retiring in 1985.

"What he taught was not knowledge, but how to imagine, create and express beauty in boundless forms," says Liu Jude, head of the Wu Guanzhong Art Research Center at Tsinghua University.

Xu says Lin and Wu's work is a glimpse of the expansive nature of modern Chinese art. "As it absorbed elements of Western art, it didn't forget its own cultural traditions ... which inspired artists to explore and create, and became a foundation on which new forms of art thrived," she says.

Wu once said: "Tradition is ... like a big river.

"It flows upstream against currents, experiencing collisions along the way, constantly transforming itself in the process."

Contact the writer at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

ISTANBUL — Li Xintong's journey with Ebru, the ancient Turkish art of paper marbling, began in 2007 when she moved from the northwestern Chinese city of Xi'an in Shaanxi province to Istanbul, Turkey.

Captivated by its beauty after first seeing it on TV, she decided to pursue the art and enrolled in lessons in Turkey. After seven years of dedicated study, Li earned her master's certificate in Ebru and started incorporating Chinese elements, such as traditional clothing and characters, into her work, creating a unique fusion of both cultures.

"As you delve deeper into the art, you realize it is far more complex than it first appears," Li explains during an interview in her atelier.

To create an Ebru, artists, in the first step, carefully sprinkle and brush natural pigments onto oily water to produce vibrant and swirling patterns and then transfer the patterns onto paper or fabric.

Yavuz Tiryaki, a renowned Turkish Ebru master and writer, says that mastering this ancient craft requires years of study, training and a deep connection to traditional methods. He explains that the intricate pat-

Bringing a Chinese touch to Turkish paper art



Left: Li Xintong in the process of creating a painting of Ebru, the ancient Turkish art of paper marbling, at her home in Istanbul, Turkey. She practices following the instruction of her teacher Erol Caglar, an expert in Ebru with over 20 years of experience. PHOTOS BY LIU LEI / XINHUA

terns of Ebru art can only be created using natural materials, such as ox-gall obtained from the gall bladder of an animal, which has been used for nearly 500 years. Also, Li says that "the preparation

and viscosity of the aqueous solution, along with the mixing and brewing of the pigments — which account for 70 to 80 percent of this craft — are particularly challenging". Historians believe Ebru originat-



ed in the East and was brought to Turkey via the ancient Silk Road during the Ottoman era. It has been passed down through generations and is officially listed as a UNESCO world intangible cultural heritage.

After mastering the art in Turkey, Li frequently travels back to China, offering workshops and online classes to Chinese enthusiasts, fostering cultural exchanges and sharing her expertise.

The growing interest in her works has also drawn the attention of Turkish media. Li has been invited to showcase her unique creations to the Turkish public.

"I made several adjustments, incorporating elements such as a Chinese silk fan, a delicate silk scarf, a small parasol, and a miniature paper umbrella," she says, adding that "Turkish audiences found these Chinese elements charming and beautiful, often calling in to express their admiration".

Li's dedication to the art form has been recognized by her teacher, Erol Caglar, a leading expert in Ebru with over 20 years of experience, who has witnessed her passion and commitment over the years.

"I have students from China and other countries, and I can say that the most dedicated are my Chinese students," Caglar says.

"Li's deep fascination with Ebru is evident in her unwavering dedication over the years. She has remained passionately committed to mastering and evolving the art," he adds.

XINHUA

LIFE

CULTURAL JOURNEY



Museum creations spark frenzy

As the younger generation learns more of China's history, replicas of iconic relics let them take home a little piece of the past, **Deng Zhangyu** reports.

Above: Middle school students from Beijing visited the National Museum of China on Dec 3. The museum has seen a rise in student visits and the sale of cultural products in recent years. **Below:** Hundreds of visitors to the museum queue in long lines at the exhibition hall to buy phoenix crown-shaped fridge magnets. Thousands of the items are sold every day. PHOTOS BY WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

On a cold December morning, the queue to enter the National Museum of China in Beijing winds hundreds of meters around the landmark. Most are eagerly waiting to buy a refrigerator magnet shaped like a phoenix coronet, a popular item in the museum's collection.

Liu Kan is one of the hopeful buyers lining up in the cold wind. To ensure she could get one of the 3,000 magnets sold each day, the 28-year-old tourist from Shanghai arrived at the museum at 6:30 am. After entering at 9, she bought both the metal and wood versions of the phoenix coronet and excitedly took photos of her new purchases.

"The crown magnet is very popular. Before arriving, I found many tips online on how to buy it easily. It's very beautiful," says Liu.

Since October, passionate visitors like Liu have formed long lines outside the museum every day before it opens. Within three months, more than 530,000 of these magnets have been sold, making it the museum's most sought-after product in nearly two decades.

"The popularity of the crown magnets is beyond our expectations. It has become a must-buy item," says Liao Fei, who is in charge of cultural and creative products at the National Museum of China.

With the country's "museum fever" rising, the trend of attending exhibitions, purchasing cultural and creative items, and immersing in the grandeur of Chinese civilization is gaining traction. Experts note that visitors flock to exhibitions or hope to acquire cultural and creative products, explaining the immense popularity of the coronet-shaped magnets.

The crown magnet is designed after a coronet worn by Empress Xiaoduan of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). This exquisitely crafted coronet is adorned with over 500 rubies and sapphires and more than a thousand pearls, representing the pinnacle of ancient craftsmanship. It also features unique techniques, such as *diancui*, which involves delicately attaching dyed bird feathers to metal works.

Liao says that since this year, because so many people want to see the coronet and take photos, the museum has set up a separate space for it and requires visitors to queue up to take photos with the crown one at a time. In the summer, the line of people waiting to see the coronet reached hundreds of meters and extended across several exhibition halls.



Left: The phoenix coronet worn by Empress Xiaoduan of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) at the National Museum of China is the inspiration for the crown magnet. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY
Right: The museum has developed a series of cultural products inspired by the coronet, including ice cream. DENG ZHANGYU / CHINA DAILY

As of Nov 28, the National Museum of China has amassed 6.3 million visitor reservations, with over 20,000 visitors daily, representing a 10 percent increase from the previous year.

"Interesting cultural and creative products can attract more people to museums. When people see our crown magnets online, they want to see the artifact and learn about its story," says Liao.

In addition to offering 3,000 crown magnets daily in a special section of the museum hall, the museum also sells limited quantities online. Each day, there are 1,000 metal items and 500 wooden items available on their online Tmall and JD flagship stores.

Due to high demand, Liao explains that the factory now operates at full capacity. The production line for wooden items has grown

from 10 workers to over 40 and the line for metal items has expanded from 15 workers to 65.

Having worked in the museum for two decades, Liao says he has witnessed great changes in the development of museums' cultural and creative products.

In the early 2000s, museums in China replicated their relics. In 2012, they began learning about displaying original relics from their

international counterparts, such as the Louvre in France, the British Museum in Britain and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the United States.

"Now, cultural and creative products from our domestic museums surpass those from abroad in variety and quantity. With the continuous development of our manufacturing industry and advancements in technology, I believe this will greatly enhance the designs of the products," Liao says, adding that many product molds are made using 3D printing technology, which wasn't available five years ago.

According to the museum, among the 6.3 million visitors they received this year, over 60 percent were under 35 and approximately 59 percent were female.

Liao says they have focused the designs of products to meet female visitors' demands this year. Five months before their show *The Countless Aspects of Beauty in Ancient Art* featuring beautiful antiques from the collection of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, Liao and his team began designing cultural products from the show. When the show opened in early November, many products were sold out within the first two days.

"Visitors want beautiful products, especially as they become more confident and familiar with their culture," he says.

Fu Zicheng, a 12-year-old student from a Beijing middle school, brought the crown magnet he bought from the museum's online shop to the museum with his classmates in early December.

He was first attracted by the cultural products and wanted to see the real piece. After doing some online research, he decided to visit the museum to see the relics. Fu says that he feels China's long history through the exhibits displayed in the museum.

As a volunteer guide at the museum for 10 years, Zhang Changshun notices more people doing research before visiting the museum. After viewing the exhibitions, they often buy one or two cultural products to take home. The museum has two stores on different floors that are always packed with visitors.

"More young people are visiting our museum and since the implementation of the 144-hour visa-free policy, there is an increase in foreign visitors who love to buy our cultural products, too," says Zhang.

Contact the writer at dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese microbots inch closer to reality

Thanks to a Chinese team's innovation, the colony of microbots from Disney's animated feature *Big Hero 6* is inching closer to reality.

At a laboratory in Beijing, a nimble, tiny bionic robot effortlessly weaves through its surroundings. Finding itself in a tight "cul-de-sac", the insect-scale machine swiftly backs out in several small steps.

Professor Yan Xiaojun and his colleagues from Beihang University crafted the 2-cm-long robot insect, which weighs less than 2 grams and boasts a vertical projection area about the size of two fingernails.

Scaling down a robot to the size of an insect is more challenging than constructing their larger counterparts, as machines the size of bees cannot be equipped with conventional motors. Therefore, the search for a miniature power system has long been a difficult quest for global researchers.

"Cutting ties with an external power source means integrating batteries and circuit boards into the robot. However, the additional load rendered it immobile," says Liu Zhiwei, a previous doctoral student of Yan's and now an associate professor at Beihang University.

In 2009, Yan noticed a fascinating occurrence — beyond a certain threshold, direct current voltage elicited sustained vibrations, a phenomenon typically associated with alternating current. That moment kept replaying in his mind, hinting at a potential application, such as the wings of a tiny drone.

It wasn't until 2017 that Yan embarked on designing an insect-sized robot capable of movement without an external power supply. However, over the following three years, his team explored dozens of body designs and fine-tuned parameters extensively, yet the robot remained stubbornly rooted.

To initiate the movement of his robotic insect, Yan scrutinized the gaits of beetles, grasshoppers, wild horses and rabbits.

It was the leopard's bounding and running that ultimately sparked inspiration and the team designed a new generation of biomimetic robotic insects "BHMbot" capable of ultrafast untethered running faster than cockroaches and with better agility.

In a study published last month in the journal *Science Advances*, they reported an updated version of the robot that is capable of swift forward and backward movements and can execute intricate running paths under wireless control.

A good invention typically arises from a flash of inspiration followed by a great deal of deep investigation. It has been 15 years since Yan began his research into tiny robots but his efforts paid off.

In an experiment, BHMbot can go through narrow spaces and reach specified locations to execute special tasks.

Via a commercial MEMS (Micro Electro Mechanical Systems) microphone, it can successfully collect the SOS sound signals of a Bluetooth speaker buried by building blocks. The sound data is then transmitted to a computer and converted to real sound, according to Liu.

The BHMbot can also go through narrow passages between two stator blades of a civil turbofan engine and the tailbone of a turbojet engine. Mounted with micro cameras at a millimeter scale, it might capture internal images of aero engines in the future.

These micro robots have promising applications in areas like disaster search and rescue, as well as in inspecting mechanical equipment structures, says Yan.

The robotic insects are also poised for takeoff. "Our ultimate goal is to develop flapping-wing micro-drones that can fly like bees," Yan adds.

XINHUA

LIFE

When I was 8, a doctor predicted that I wouldn't live past 20. But now I'm here, at 29, happy with my life," says Ma Jun, the youngest laureate of this year's Junma Awards for Ethnic Literature in the prose category. Ma is not only talented but determined and has overcome many obstacles in his life.

Ma, who uses a wheelchair, was born in 1995 in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region. His winning piece is his debut prose collection, *Qing Bai Shijie* (The Green and White Stone Steps), which he wrote under the pen name Liu Kexing. The book is divided into five parts, depicting his life experiences: growing up, daily life, love and aspirations, emotions and reflections.

The opening chapter, also titled *Qing Bai Shijie*, delves into Ma's childhood memories. At birth, his parents noticed something unusual — his limbs were weak, and he couldn't move or stand without help. His health condition isolated him from other children. While his peers ran and played, Ma could only sit on the stone steps, watching in frustration and sadness. This vivid memory has stayed with him, and it became the title of his first officially published prose piece and the entire book.

The title also holds symbolic meaning. In Chinese, *qing bai* suggests purity and innocence. Throughout his life, Ma faced hurtful bias. Some people cruelly suggested his lack of mobility was "divine punishment" for supposed wrongdoings. Through his writing, Ma hopes to counter such prejudice, showing that he is no different from anyone else.

Ma's writing journey began in 2016, the year he passed his college entrance exams but chose not to enroll in university. His family's financial circumstances and his health conditions forced him to make a difficult decision: If he went to college, his younger brother would have to drop out of school. For years, Ma's parents carried him on their backs to school, braving wind and rain. They ran a shop to earn a living. If Ma went to college, one of them must accompany him. With limited resources, they couldn't manage both sons' education. Ma made the selfless decision to stay home, sacrificing his own opportunity to give his brother a chance to continue studying. "My brother was too little, fluffy and cute. I couldn't bear to see him upset," Ma recalls.

Although his decision was rooted in love and sacrifice, it plunged Ma into despair. He longed to experience university life and prove he could achieve success despite his condition. Instead, he found himself confined to bed, overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness, even contemplating, in the darkest hours, taking his life.

The turning point came when a friend gave him a book, Shi Tiesheng's best-seller *Wo Yu Ditian* (I and the Temple of Earth). Shi, a renowned writer who also uses a



Ma Jun, 29, who won the Junma Awards for Ethnic Literature last month for his debut prose collection, *Qing Bai Shijie*, relaxes in his room, holding the book *Wo Yu Ditian* written by renowned author Shi Tiesheng, which inspired him to write. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Doing the 'write' thing

Courage, talent and determination help award-winning author to overcome challenges

wheelchair, had transformed his struggles into profound literature.

At first, Ma had no interest in the book — he had lost passion for everything. But one word caught his eye: "wheelchair". He thought this writer might have encountered the same situation as him, so he decided to open the book. As he read, Ma felt a spark of light illuminating his world. Shi's vivid observations and unwavering hope inspired Ma deeply. He was struck by the realization that someone with similar struggles could find meaning and joy in life.

Shi inspired Ma, who had found a path for the rest of his life: literature. He started to think about following Shi's spirit: He could gather the courage to do something meaningful, like writing, instead of staying in bed letting life pass him by.

He embarked on a three-year odyssey of writing the book by recording his own life, pouring his heart and soul into the words.

However, when the book was fin-



Ma basks in the sunlight in a park in his hometown.

ished, Ma faced yet another seemingly daunting obstacle: publishing. Without fame or financial resources, he couldn't afford the costs of self-publishing. Just as despair began to creep in again, he learned of an opportunity. In January 2023, the China Writers Association launched the "Stars of Literature by Chinese Ethnic Writers" project, seeking submissions from ethnic writers. Meeting the criteria, Ma submitted his collection of prose, though with little hope of success.

In June 2023, Ma received unexpected good news: His book was one of 10 selected for publication through the project, allowing him to bypass the financial barrier. This achievement marked a significant milestone in his literary journey.

Then, the Junma Awards for Ethnic Literature, one of China's four major national literary prizes held every four years, began the selection process this year. Encouraged by his recent success and qualification for

the selection, Ma enrolled, again without high expectations.

The moment he received notification of winning the award, Ma was sitting under a willow, reading a book, resting. Overcome with joy, he let out a loud scream, startling his family. When they learned of Ma's win, everyone laughed with excitement and congratulated him.

Traveling to Nanning, the provincial capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, for the Junma Awards gala in November marked a unique experience for Ma, who had previously only left his hometown for medical consultations. For most of his life, his condition had remained undiagnosed. His parents tirelessly sought answers, consulting numerous doctors, but none could identify the cause. It wasn't until Ma came across information online about spinal muscular atrophy that he finally found clarity at the age of 27.

SMA is a genetic condition that causes worsening muscle weakness. Fortunately, since 2021, a crucial medication for SMA has been included in China's national medical insurance program, making treatment affordable. Ma now undergoes lumbar punctures and intraspinal injections every four months, which help manage the disease.

Fighting against the illness for many years, Ma never defines himself as a man to be pitied. "I don't think my experiences are tragic. Nowadays, many people face mental health challenges, especially young people. Sometimes they just feel lost and underachieved, and trapped in anxiety. This kind of situation is becoming normal, and we could also say this is trauma for these people. Everyone in this world suffers from something. For me, it's physical; for some others, it's emotional. We're all fighting our own battles," he says.

Ma has firmly established his own daily routine. He breaks one day into three separate parts and will follow them for the rest of his life, he vows.

In the morning, he exercises to wake his body up and get it functioning.

Afternoon is the best time to read, and he will embark on his own journey of words.

Shi has given him the courage to write, and there are many good writers for him to explore, he says.

When night falls, he will sit at the desk and throw himself into the creation of words. Ma is currently working on a novel. Having shared his own story in *Qing Bai Shijie*, he now seeks to create fictional narratives that explore other people's lives.

Ma writes this line in the profile for his personal social media account: "Be a faithful writer." It is now his life motto. Writing is not just a profession for Ma — it's a lifeline, a way to connect with the world and leave behind a legacy of courage, sincerity and hope.

Tu Jiayin contributed to this story.

CHINA DAILY

Exhibition highlights artifacts from key heritage sites

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou
chenye@chinadaily.com.cn

An exhibition in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, showcases artifacts from three world-class heritage sites, marking a significant milestone in cultural exchange.

The Starting Point of the East: A Cross-Time and Space Dialogue Exhibition between Ningbo and Xi'an on the Maritime and Overland Silk Roads, opened at the Ningbo Museum in late November. The exhibition brings together 481 pieces and sets of exhibits from 39 museums and cultural institutions across the country. It is also the first domestic exhibition to showcase the combined cultural relics of the Silk Road, the Maritime Silk Road, and the Grand Canal, all of which are world heritage sites.

Shan Jixiang, former curator of the Palace Museum, noted during his visit to the exhibition that the collaboration with major museums across the country enriched its content.

"Many of the exhibits are rare and precious artifacts, some of which are even national-level cultural relics. This demonstrates that our museum system is like a big family," said Shan.

Zhang Liang, the director of Ningbo Museum, recalled the inception of this exhibition amid the 10th anniversary celebrations of the UNESCO World Heritage status of the "Silk Roads: the Routes Network



From left: Painted ceramic horse and groom, relics from the collection of the Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology; the exhibition, titled *The Starting Point of the East — A Cross-Time and Space Dialogue Exhibition between Ningbo and Xi'an on the Maritime and Overland Silk Roads*, is on at the Ningbo Museum; and an ivory vessel with a two-bird pattern facing the sun, unveiled at the Hemudu Site in Ningbo, Zhejiang province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor" and the "Grand Canal".

Zhang said that the Ningbo Museum has long sought partnerships with cultural institutions in central and western China to enable audiences of the Yangtze River Delta region to appreciate national treasures at their doorstep.

Xi'an, Shaanxi province, is the starting point of the overland Silk Road, while Ningbo serves as a critical hub of the Maritime Silk Road. The two cities were closely connect-



ed through the Grand Canal and the Eastern Zhejiang Canal. Based on this shared history, the exhibition uses Ningbo and Xi'an as dual focal points.

However, curating an exhibition of this scale came with significant challenges.

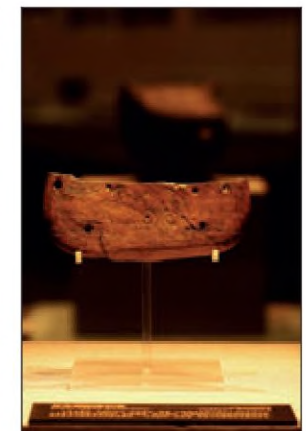
"We wanted to create something rich and comprehensive, but that also meant setting ourselves an enormous task," said Zhang.

The museum had to borrow an unprecedented 481 artifacts — mak-

ing it the largest and most high-profile temporary exhibition in Ningbo's history.

Transporting these invaluable artifacts was a daunting undertaking. Each route required a team of security personnel and workers to ensure the items' safe delivery, with lending institutions often sending staff to oversee the process.

"During those weeks, our team crisscrossed the country tirelessly. Some were on the road for as long as two weeks, and we were constantly



worried about the safety of both the artifacts and our staff," Zhang recounted. All the artifacts arrived safely at the museum a week before the opening.

But time constraints also added to the pressure. Each artifact had to be meticulously positioned, with adjustments to lighting, placement, and overall presentation made to ensure a cohesive narrative. These fine details required countless rounds of refinement.

Zhang emphasized that the pur-

pose of showcasing history is not just to reflect on the past but inspire the present and future. Recognizing the interests of young audiences, the exhibition incorporates modern elements such as interactive installations and LED displays. These features bring a sense of movement and life to the exhibition, while digital panels and videos delve into the stories behind the artifacts.

Spanning 2,200 square meters, the exhibition is divided into five sections, each representing a different stage in the cultural and historical development of the Silk Roads and the Grand Canal.

The exhibition begins with an exploration of the early connections between cultures in the Neolithic period. It moves on to the flourishing trade routes of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) and the interplay of overland and sea networks during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It also highlights the dynamic evolution of maritime commerce from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) to the Opium Wars in the mid-19th century, before concluding with a look at how the Belt and Road Initiative continues this legacy in the modern era.

"Visiting an exhibition is like watching a play — different people may have different interpretations. Our goal is to present history in its most authentic and engaging form, inviting every visitor to discover their own connection to the past," Zhang said.