

Global supermarket

Yiwu to launch new reforms to strengthen its position

GLOBAL LENS, PAGE 7



Beijing's pace in digital tech lauded by ASEAN states

WORLD, PAGE 10



Impressive collection

European masterpieces from Japan museum on display in Shanghai

LIFE SHANGHAI, PAGE 15

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 2025



Palestinians in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis cheer on Wednesday while watching a television broadcast announcing a ceasefire deal with Israel following 15 months of war. BASHAR TALEB / AFP

Implementation of Gaza ceasefire deal seen as key

Long-awaited agreement met with cautious optimism from leaders

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong, CUI HAIPEI in Dubai, UAE and ZHAO JIA in Beijing

The international community has welcomed a much-awaited ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel that involves the release of some hostages and an Israeli military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The deal, which will be implemented in three phases, will take effect on Sunday.

An agreement was reached on Wednesday following months of strenuous mediation by Qatar, Egypt and the United States. Though pending the approval of Israeli authorities, the deal is set to begin with an initial 42-day phase in which fighting will halt and the Israeli military will withdraw from populated areas to the outskirts of Gaza.

Humanitarian aid is expected to enter Gaza, with 600 trucks arriving daily to bring things including fuel to restore electricity, Israel's State-owned Kan TV news reported.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said in Beijing on Thursday that China welcomes the Gaza ceasefire-for-hostages deal

between Israel and Hamas.

China hopes that the agreement can be effectively implemented to achieve a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, Guo said at a regular daily news briefing.

Since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, China has consistently called for an immediate ceasefire to end the fighting and has worked to cool down the situation, protect civilians and carry out humanitarian relief efforts, Guo said.

"China supports the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and will continue to make active efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and support post-war reconstruction in Gaza," he added.

Many Palestinians in Gaza celebrated, hoping that the 15-month ordeal would soon be over.

"I'm having mixed feelings right now, because when you are trying to survive, you don't really feel grief and now that we are less stressed the grief starts," Fatma Jamal Muhaisen, a nutritionist at Al Helou International Hospital in Gaza City, told China Daily via WhatsApp. "But there were some tears of joy, thankfully. We can't believe it is over, we really can't believe it."

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa stressed that such an agreement must lead to the cessation of Israeli aggression and a guarantee that it would not be repeated. He made the remarks in a meeting with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store in Oslo.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held up a Cabinet vote on the ceasefire deal that was scheduled for Thursday, accusing Hamas of making last-minute demands. It was unclear what impact the delay would have on the deal. However, Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri was quoted by Al Jazeera as saying, "There is no basis to Netanyahu's claims about the movement backtracking from terms in the ceasefire agreement."

Meanwhile, Israel stepped up attacks on the Gaza Strip after the announcement, killing at least 73 Palestinians, according to Gaza authorities. Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside Israel's military headquarters in Tel Aviv, calling for the deal to be completed.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was among those who welcomed the ceasefire agreement, commending Egypt, Qatar and the US, and calling for all to "uphold

their commitments and ensure the full implementation of the deal".

In a post on X, Guterres urged the parties and relevant partners "to seize this opportunity to establish a credible political path to a better future for Palestinians, Israelis and the broader region".

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation also welcomed the deal, with Hissein Brahimi Taha, its secretary-general, saying the ceasefire should lead to a permanent cessation of Israeli aggression, the return of the displaced, the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces and the provision of unhindered humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip.

The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed in a statement the need to adhere to the agreement, saying that it hoped the deal "will permanently end this brutal Israeli war".

In a post on X, Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said, "Our work has not ended; this is merely a step forward."

He added that they would continue to work "until all terms of the agreement are applied, until we have achieved peace and are able to turn the last page of war".

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi called for accelerating the entry of urgent humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza "to confront the current catastrophic humanitarian situation, without any obstacles".

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said in a post on X that the ceasefire agreement is a valuable step for justice and humanity.

Contact the writers at jan@chinadailyapac.com

As demand grows, apps urged to improve content, services

By FAN FEIFEI fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese social media platforms should improve localized operations and optimize content and services to cater to the diversified needs of potential users in overseas markets, while complying with local laws and regulations, industry experts said.

Their comments came as United States users of TikTok, an overseas social media platform owned by Chinese tech company ByteDance, are migrating to Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, amid fears of an imminent ban on TikTok, propelling the Chinese lifestyle-sharing app to the top position on Apple's App Store in the US.

The sudden influx of self-proclaimed "TikTok refugees" has created a precious opportunity for Chinese social media platforms to expand their international footprint, the experts noted.

These platforms can boost brand awareness and influence on the global stage by providing customized content and leveraging artificial intelligence technology to enhance user loyalty abroad, they said.

Founded in 2013, Xiaohongshu — a comprehensive lifestyle platform with approximately 300 million monthly active users globally — is reportedly recruiting employees engaged in English content review and plans to roll out English-Chinese

translation functions amid the soaring demand from overseas users.

Lemon8, a social media app owned by Chinese tech company ByteDance, has taken the second spot on Apple's list of top free downloaded apps.

Meanwhile, a large number of videos have been uploaded on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, by users with internet protocol addresses based in countries such as the US, the United Kingdom and Thailand. However, Douyin has denied opening registration for overseas users and said it is cracking down on counterfeit accounts.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said that against the backdrop of globalization, it is inevitable that Chinese social media platforms are ramping up efforts to make forays into overseas markets for new profit-growth points.

"These companies should adopt localized strategies and continue to innovate in content and technologies, such as AI and big data, to lure new users overseas," Zhu said.

The companies should offer tailored content and services in accordance with the needs of users with diverse cultural backgrounds, usage habits and preferences, strengthen cooperation with their foreign counterparts, and establish effective management rules and content reviewing mechanisms, Zhu added.

See Apps, page 3

Back to school



A man hugs his son as students impacted by the California wildfires head back to class at a new school in Los Angeles on Wednesday. Students from two elementary schools that were gutted in the Palisades fire arrived on Wednesday for their first day of class at two other Los Angeles campuses where their classes are being held temporarily. DAVID CRANE / AP

WHEN DOGS BECOME THERAPISTS

A growing army of trained animals is helping people — from autistic children to the elderly — enjoy more fulfilling lives

By ZHOU HUIYING in Harbin, WANG XU in Shenzhen and DU JUAN in Beijing



Every time Wu Jingyi asks her dog Lucky if she wants to go to work, Lucky springs up eagerly and jumps for joy. Some might agree that's a decidedly non-human response — at least for many working people.

Work for the 5-year-old female border collie in Shanghai is special. Lucky finished her training to become a therapy dog in August, and now she just takes care of people — relying on her acute canine senses and an unbreakable bond of love for the two-legged creatures in her custody.

Those in Lucky's workplace

include not only disadvantaged groups and special care patients in nursing homes, but also people in schools and hospitals, where she helps teachers, students and health-care workers to simply relax.

In recent years, everyone has heard of police dogs and guide dogs. But now there are also therapy dogs, which have undergone careful training to help people with mental illnesses or autism, or an elderly person who may have cognitive impairments.

See Dogs, page 2



www.chinadailyglobal.com A member of ANN Asia News Network China Daily Global ©2025 All Rights Reserved

Trump's expansionist plans reek of diversionary tactics

Based on Donald Trump's commentaries during the United States presidential election campaign last year, there was a broad consensus that Trump 2.0 would be much different from the experience of Trump 1.0.

However, few could have predicted the types of issues that would become the front and center as the president-elect prepared for his inauguration scheduled on Jan 20.

An examination of Trump's remarks in which he highlighted his interest in gaining control of Greenland, retaking control of the Panama Canal, renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America", and annexing Canada as the 51st US state has sparked both surprise and shock in the US as well as among the country's traditional allies in Europe, North America and other regions.

With so many pressing global

WORLD WATCH By Denis Simon

issues on the table for the president-elect, why would he single out these as the key focus of his emerging foreign policy agenda? Even some of his domestic political supporters seem to have a difficult time figuring out where all of this is headed.

A cursory scan of the foreign policy challenges facing Trump 2.0 reveals a series of issues and problems that will necessarily require huge amounts of time and resources to ensure we are not brought to the precipice of World War III.

Even if we don't get overly consumed with the conflicts regarding Ukraine and Russia, across the Middle East, and the evolution of

the situation in the Korean Peninsula, the president-elect will still have his hands full.

In addition, Trump will have to face the growing problems engendered by a more acute stage of climate change, the possibility of another pandemic, the threat of rising inflation across the US and beyond, and the impact of new technologies such as artificial intelligence that could be a possible game changer in terms of management of economic and financial affairs, let alone military affairs.

In other words, why spend time and energy on issues that seemingly lack strategic significance and will likely only serve to exacerbate tensions with countries that do not threaten the US from a defense or any other perspective?

Is there rhyme or reason behind these remarks? On the surface, there are not many substantive foreign policy drivers for this kind of adventure, especially when there are so many other pressing issues to be addressed.

See Policy, page 3

PAGE TWO



Left: A dog from Paw for Heal works during a therapy interactive activity at an international school in Beijing on Dec 19. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Middle:** A therapy dog performs in response to the instructions of a guide during a community event in Beijing on Dec 22. **Right:** A therapy dog interacts with elderly people and a child during the event. PHOTOS BY WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Dogs: Interactions unleash healing bonds

From page 1

Paw for Heal, or PFH, is a volunteer therapy dog program founded by pet behavior expert Wu Qi in 2012. It aims to harness the social value of companion animals by training family pets to be capable of providing physical and emotional assistance to people.

"I started raising Lucky in early 2020 after adopting her from a stray dog shelter," said Wu Jingyi, the dog's owner, noting that she learned about PFH and Wu Qi through a WeChat group where people shared activities and information related to dogs.

A natural talent

Looking at the requirements for the animals, she thought Lucky was well-suited for the job, and she decided to have her tested in Shanghai. That was in February 2023, and Lucky performed exceptionally well, passing on the first attempt.

"At that time I wasn't clear about what a therapy dog was supposed to do," Wu said. "After participating in PFH's activities, I realized that many organizations and groups are in great need of mediators, and certain kinds of animals can fill the bill in ways that are quite different from human volunteers."

After passing the exam, Lucky was channeled into internships at various organizations in a sort of doggy graduate program using Wu Qi's system.

"I am happy to see her improvement," Wu Jingyi said.

During one visit to a nursing home, Lucky met an older woman who loved dogs but showed some fear around larger ones, such as this border collie.

"I could see the smile in her eyes, but she hesitated to come closer to Lucky," Wu Jingyi said. "So I asked Lucky to show the woman that she is safe and controllable. When someone gives Lucky food and I say no, for example, she will not eat it."

Wu asked the elderly woman to count down from five to one, after which Lucky would be allowed to eat. This made the woman very happy, Wu said.

"She went from being guarded and fearful at first to expressing a desire to try. We then asked if she would be willing to pet Lucky if she wasn't too afraid. And she agreed."

Wu brought Lucky a bit closer to the woman's knee, and after a little petting, the fear vanished.

"The whole process may not sound very complex, but I could see genuine joy," Wu said.

PFH collaborates with experts from domestic and international autism rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, neurology hospitals and special education programs to develop training programs for therapy dogs in China. It primarily serves elderly individuals with cognitive problems, children with autism and individuals with physical disabilities, anxiety disorders or depression.

"The program aims to help the elderly and children with special needs strengthen their interactions and communication with the external world. It enriches their lives through the assistance and companionship of the therapy dogs," Wu Qi said. "It also promotes the exploration of normal social interactions for children who have special needs through long-term therapy with the dogs. The animals can help these young people integrate into society."

The organization hopes to enhance public understanding of cognitive impairment, autism and other conditions to increase society's general acceptance and understanding, he said.



Top: A woman pets a therapy dog during a community event in Beijing on Dec 22. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY **Above left:** Doctor Song Dan from Peking Union Medical College Hospital holds one of the therapy dogs at a free clinic during Elderly Health Week in Beijing in July 2023. **Above right:** A guide gives instructions to a therapy dog at an international school in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“The program aims to help the elderly and children with special needs strengthen their interactions and communication with the external world. It enriches their lives through the assistance and companionship of the therapy dogs.”

Wu Qi, founder of Paw for Heal and pet behavior expert

Putting them to work

In early 2023, PFH initiated a national series of therapy dog public welfare activities that included four main tracks: a therapy dog evaluation conference, a therapy dog knowledge seminar, social welfare services and volunteer training.

"Unlike other working dogs, most therapy dogs come from ordinary pet-owning households and only work when called upon to provide physical, psychological or emotional support for people in need," Wu Qi said. "To become a certified therapy dog, the animal must undergo rigorous training, guidance and evaluation, after which a PFH professional qualification certificate is issued."

He said the general assessment of dogs includes four categories, even though internationally there are typically just three: obedience, socialization and desensitization.

Obedience tests the dog's ability to follow basic commands — for example, sit, lie down, wait and refuse food.

Socialization assesses the dog's adaptability to different people and environments. Trainers look for behaviors such as aggression or fear.

Desensitization evaluates how the dog reacts to physical touch, audible screams, exaggerated movements or dropped items to ensure that it will not exhibit erratic behavior when startled, such as going on the attack or experiencing extreme fear.

"We have added interactivity to our assessments in China to help the dogs integrate better into fields such as eldercare and physical rehabilitation. In those cases, therapy dogs can engage in interactions with individuals very effectively," Wu said. Such interactivity poses a higher level of difficulty for the dogs, he said.

"In August in 2023, our standards were officially released at the 25th Pet Fair Asia, which was held in Shanghai. Some of our assessment criteria surpassed those in Europe and America," Wu said. "After becoming an intern, a dog must participate in five public welfare service activities to qualify for full certification."

Therapy dogs are not selected

based on breed but on temperament, Wu said. They need to be gentle and enjoy interacting with people.

Xiao Ai, the owner of a 4-year-old female border collie, had been looking forward eagerly to participating in more practical activities after her dog, One-seven, passed the PFH test on Dec 7.

During the two-hour assessment at the Shenzhen World Convention and Exhibition Center in Guangdong province, only two dogs, One-seven and another dog, ultimately received certifications and became interns.

As volunteers and pet owners, people also need to undergo rigorous training, Xiao said. "Our main role is to work in conjunction with professional therapists to help our dogs quickly establish connections with the individuals who need assistance."

So far, around 300 therapy dogs have been certified by PFH in China, and some 6,000 volunteers are participating across the country.

Success with autistic child

Starting in 2022, at the beginning of each school semester, some autistic children at Huimin School in Shanghai's Fengxian district have participated in special classes. In one of those, the children had therapy dog partners and played games, guided by Wu Qi and some volunteers, who worked with the teachers to complete certain functional improvement training.

For example, the children learned to introduce themselves to the dogs,

after which they introduced the dogs to other classmates, thereby enhancing their language and communication abilities and gradually integrating into the group.

They also played fetch, cooperated in balancing yoga balls and focused on feeding, which helped develop sensory abilities, improve attention and teach the animals to follow instructions.

For children with more severe autism, petting the dogs was a good way to help stabilize emotions in many cases.

"The intervention of therapy dogs in the classroom had a direct impact on improving the emotions of some children," said Wu Huizhe, a teacher at the school.

She described a child with significant emotional disorders in her class who was initially restless and often abruptly ran out of the classroom.

"She also had very closed-off interpersonal interactions," Wu said. "But after attending four sessions with a therapy dog, she could sit quietly in the classroom for the entire 35-minute lesson and have simple conversations with classmates on the topic of small animals."

As one of the most populous countries in the world, China is getting older on average. It is projected that by 2035 the population of people aged 60 and above will surpass 400 million, creating some unique problems for individuals and society.

Over the past decade, the PFH team has stayed close to the elderly,

providing animal-assisted therapy — a form of non-drug treatment — to communities and nursing homes. The interactions with animals provide surprising physical and mental benefits.

While receiving basic medical care and other services, the elderly can relax, relieve stress, enhance social skills and find more joy in life by interacting with small animals.

Since participating in PFH's first activity in her community in March, Zhou Yuezhen, a 68-year-old resident of Shanghai, looks forward to every visit with the dogs.

"I had a dog about 20 years ago, but it died, which made me very sad," she said. "Because I was afraid of losing again, I never kept another one."

"So it is truly a joyful experience every time a different dog comes to our community to interact with us elderly people and play games," she said. "I also participate in other activities, like handicrafts. But the dogs provide other kinds of interactive experiences, which are very different from human ways."

Well-being enhanced study

In collaboration with Peking Union Medical College Hospital in 2022, PFH conducted a comprehensive animal therapy study that focused on the elderly population. In May last year, the PFH team launched an innovative project to establish a combination of community eldercare and pet therapy services.

"Through a series of rigorous experiments and data analysis, we found that regular interaction with animals can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety among the elderly, improving their quality of life and sense of happiness," Wu Qi said. "This outcome has not only gained widespread recognition in the scientific community but also provides strong evidence for promoting animal-assisted therapy nationwide."

During free clinics at nursing homes, Kang Lin, director of the geriatrics department at the hospital, witnessed the clear positive impact of animals on the elderly.

"Based on my years of clinical experience, physical rehabilitation is the greatest challenge because many elderly people lack the motivation to move," she said. "However, Wu Qi demonstrated that simply having them hold hula hoops for therapy dogs to leap through motivated people to get moving more."

Other tasks, such as grooming the animals or dressing them up with scarves or buttons, "can subtly enhance an elderly person's physical abilities," Kang said. "It can also impact their cognitive and emotional well-being."

She hopes to collaborate with Wu's team to standardize animal-assisted therapy for the elderly.

"We have drafted standards such as the use of large or small therapy dogs depending on the facility, duration and frequency of service and the interventions required," Kang said.

All of this serves as a way to explore best practices, which are crucial for the industry, she added.

In the future, the PFH team will focus on pet training, pet welfare, pet media, pet film and pet television advertisements.

"In 2025, we will promote adoptions through various channels to reduce the burden on organizations and help more stray animals find warm homes," Wu Qi said.

Contact the writers at zhouhuiying@chinadaily.com.cn

TOP NEWS

African nations push back against French military presence

By SHAO XINYING
shaoxinying@chinadaily.com.cn

The recent moves by two West African countries to end foreign military presence on their soil mark another blow to France's influence in the continent.

President of Cote d'Ivoire Alassane Ouattara, in his New Year address, announced that French forces would withdraw from the country in January.

Similarly, Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye declared that all foreign military bases in the country would be closed by 2025, an announcement observers said was essentially aimed at France. "There will soon be no more French soldiers in Senegal," Faye told French daily Le Monde in November.

Analysts attribute the current trend to a combination of Africa's growing demand for sovereignty, rising anti-West sentiment, and the shift in France's African strategy as its influence wanes.

"It mainly boils down to issues of sovereignty," said Fidel Amakye Owusu, CEO of DefSEC Analytics Africa, a security consultancy based in Accra, Ghana.

"The military presence of France is unpopular with the local people, given the vestiges of colonialism. The younger generation is not comfortable with it," he told China Daily.

Dai Zhixin, vice-dean of the Institute of French and Francophone Studies and research fellow at School of Global and Area Studies of Renmin University of China, said African nations are rethinking the continuity of foreign troops' presence, mainly out of national security considerations.

The security situation in the Sahel — a region south of the Sahara desert, stretching from Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east — has deteriorated in recent years, particularly after the chaos in Libya in 2011. The turmoil resulted in a proliferation of weapons being smuggled into the Sahel and empowering militant groups across the region, fueling conflicts.

France, along with international forces, has intervened to combat extremism in the continent. In 2013, it launched Operation Serval in Mali, replaced in 2014 by Operation Barkhane in partnership with the G5 Sahel countries, namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, an alliance that was largely diluted after the departures of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso in 2022 and 2023.

"Foreign forces can heighten insecurity and even provide a rallying point for extremist groups by strengthening their anti-colonial narrative," Dai said.

"While France's interventions in the Sahel have achieved some success in countering extremists, they have not translated into lasting peace, and long-term stability remains elusive," Dai said. "Meanwhile, dwindling French forces has created a security vacuum in the region," he added.

On Jan 11, France handed over its second army base in Abeche, east Chad, following the first such move in mid-December. Chad, long regarded as a stable security partner, ended its military agreement with France in November, calling it "obsolete".

Li Yincai, an associate research fellow in African Studies at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of International Relations noted that France's influence in the region has noticeably declined in recent years.

"France has historically had the largest military presence in Africa, but

its power has diminished significantly over the past two decades," Li said.

Despite many African nations becoming independent from the 1950s onward, France maintained a strong military and political influence in the continent, with some arrangements seen as domineering. "Francophone Africa did not gain full independence" as France continued to exert a degree of political and economic control over its former colonies, including stationing military forces, holding foreign reserves of these nations in France, and wielding indirect influence over their natural resources, Owusu said.

French President Emmanuel Macron said in a speech on Jan 6 to French ambassadors that African countries had "forgotten to say thank you" to France for its decadelong military efforts in fighting extremists.

Chad's President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno hit back by saying that Macron is "in the wrong era". He added that he wanted to express his outrage at the remarks "which border on contempt for Africa and Africans".

Li of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences said Macron's comments signal France's broader sense of loss and humiliation, as it gradually exits the continent.

"France has invested over a century in the regions, pouring in substantial resources, only to be seen as a relic of the colonial era and ultimately forced to leave," Li said.

Owusu of DefSEC Analytics Africa said Macron's remarks were uncalled for. "While it is good to appreciate military cooperation (between Africa and France), it should not come across as France doing African states a favor," he said.

He said France has long exploited Africa's resources, with significant mining interests in countries such as Niger, Mali and Senegal. "These resources are often granted to France without fair competition due to post-colonial arrangements," Owusu said.

"Economic, political, cultural and historical factors have contributed to this new wave" of France withdrawing troops from the African continent, he added.

Owusu said African countries should unite on the global stage. "When there is regionalism, they can have a united front in bargaining with great powers in order to gain," he said.

Over the past decade, France has been forced out of over 70 percent of the African nations where it once maintained a military presence, news network France 24 reported.

"Budget constraints and shifting geopolitical priorities have driven the wave of France's withdrawal of military presence in Africa," Li said.

Despite continued counterterrorism efforts, the region has seen a rise in coups, including in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger — all former French colonies and the military leaders in these countries have asked French forces to leave.

In line with new realities, France has been devising a reconstructed Africa strategy. In November, Macron's special envoy for Africa, Jean-Marie Bockel, presented a report on the evolution of France's military role on the continent. In June 2024, it announced the creation of a command to reorganize its forces in Africa. In February 2023, Macron called for France to establish "a new, balanced relationship" with Africa.

"In the future, the West's approach toward Africa should prioritize mutual benefit," Dai of Renmin University of China said, adding that "Africa should focus on both internal reforms and regional integration to enhance autonomy, and find a development path that suits their needs".



Symbol of hope

The People's Liberation Army Navy hospital ship *Peace Ark* arrives at a port in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province, on Thursday morning. The ship completed its humanitarian medical mission in 13 countries across Asia and Africa during its Mission Harmony-2024 deployment.

GU JIANGBO / XINHUA

US allegations, reports of cyberattacks rejected

China raises concerns about targeted large-scale cyber espionage

By ZHANG YUNBI
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese diplomats on cyber affairs, in conversation with their United States counterparts, have firmly rejected US allegations of cyberattacks, sources said.

The allegations made by the US "lack evidence", the sources told China Daily.

The Chinese diplomats "have expressed concerns about the US targeting China by rolling out large-scale cyber espionage and moves jeopardizing critical information infrastructure", the sources added.

In recent months, some leading US media organizations, including The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post, have claimed that Chinese hackers, as part of a "Chinese government-affiliated group" or campaign that US investigators and researchers have dubbed "Salt Typhoon", intercepted phone calls of US political figures and collected audio recordings.

Even US government officials publicly joined the verbal attacks on China in this regard.

However, cyber affairs experts and policy observers in China pointed out that the US media reports, while falsely linking China to such alleged attacks, also

shed light on the scandalous side of US espionage missions by federal agencies, including massive wiretaps.

A report by The Washington Post on Oct 27 said the so-called "Salt Typhoon" group is thought to have targeted "the system that tracks lawful requests for wiretaps made by the federal government of carriers".

Beijing has made public rebuttals against Washington's similar allegations that label China as the perpetrator of cyberattacks against the US.

Shen Yi, a professor at Fudan University in Shanghai and a leading expert on cyberspace governance studies, said, "US intelligence agencies have a typical behavioral pattern in hyping cybersecurity governance and national security issues, which is fabricating facts using false and inaccurate information, and fabricating so-called cyberattacks by other countries."

The objective is to hype security threats and create anxiety, Shen added.

Earlier this month, the US Department of the Treasury sanctioned a Beijing-based cybersecurity company, accusing it of helping Chinese hackers infiltrate US telecommunication systems and conduct surveillance.

At a recent news conference, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said: "We urge the US to stop using the issue of cybersecurity to vilify and smear China. For quite some time, the US has been trumpeting so-called 'Chinese hacking' and even using it to impose illegal and unilateral sanctions on China."

Shen Yi, professor at Fudan University in Shanghai

shed light on the scandalous side of US espionage missions by federal agencies, including massive wiretaps.

A report by The Washington Post on Oct 27 said the so-called "Salt Typhoon" group is thought to have targeted "the system that tracks lawful requests for wiretaps made by the federal govern-

Policy: Cabinet nominations spark controversies

From page 1

One answer might be that these are superfluous topics and Trump's real intention is to divert both public and media attention from the hearings associated with his Cabinet nominations.

His choices are reflecting a preference for loyalty versus expertise, which is making many people in Congress, including some within his own Republican Party, somewhat nervous.

Three of his nominees seem to be in trouble from the moment they were announced: Kash Patel as FBI director, Pete Hegseth as defense secretary and Tulsi Gabbard as director of national intelligence. They have already sparked controversies due to their lack of relevant experience.

Two others — Robert Kennedy Jr as secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services and Mehmet Oz as administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services — have also attracted critical comments from both parties.

With their respective hearings already underway and their FBI background reports beginning to circulate, Trump may simply want to create a diversion to shift attention from the critical reviews that will occur soon.

Once Trump started speaking about annexing Greenland or making Canada the 51st state, the situation regarding his Cabinet nominations quickly disappeared from the headlines, especially after

what America wants" smacks of the country's 19th century adventure-some foreign policy. Trump's proposed actions are not akin to the ideas that underpinned Manifest Destiny, which resulted in the integration of the US from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Nor does the acquisition of Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million in 1867 align well. Even the so-called Louisiana Purchase in 1803 does not fit well with the things Trump has been discussing.

First, they were part of a different era, and second, at the time there were strong geographical philosophical and ideological imperatives underpinning the idea of building out the United States of America.

It should be clear that the president-elect's verbiage surrounding his very controversial proposals is meant to be provocative, and perhaps nothing more. Greenland, for example, already hosts a US military base under the auspices of the US Space Command. This base is tied to the North American Aerospace Defense Command's global network of sensors for defending against potential missile attacks. Denmark and Greenland have already shown willingness to entertain proposals for expanding the US presence if there is sufficient strategic rationale.

The Panama Canal is not under any kind of Chinese control or threat, political or otherwise, and thus the arguments offered by Trump about the security of the canal are simply unfounded.

And Canada has no interest in

the leaders of Greenland, Denmark and Canada began to respond to his proposals.

One thing's for sure, Trump knows how to utilize the media for his specific purposes; he is a master at directing and redirecting attention to where he wants it to go. This means we cannot discount the possibility that there is less geopolitical substance behind his ideas and more domestic political intrigue.

From a historical perspective, if Trump is indeed serious about his suggested actions vis-a-vis Greenland, Canada, the Panama Canal and the Gulf of Mexico, it would possibly portend a new era of US jingoism.

The notion that "America gets

becoming a part of the US for whatever reason. "The joke is over," Canadian Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc said. "It's a way for him, I think, to sow confusion, to agitate people, to create chaos knowing this will never happen."

The key point is that these ideas were for the most part never anticipated by anyone following the foreign policy and national security interests of the US going forward. They also set a bad precedent and may embolden other countries in actual or potential territorial seizures.

It is time to shift focus onto the real pressing issues that the US is facing and mobilize the minds of "the best and the brightest" to ameliorate existing conflicts regarding Ukraine and Israel, and prevent new conflicts in other regions.

The president-elect would be wise to avoid unnecessary provocations, especially toward traditional allies, so that the US can remain strong and credible and is able to play a constructive role in world affairs. Affairs that support the country's national interests and do not damage the security umbrella that has protected the US and its allies since the end of World War II.

The key point is that these ideas were for the most part never anticipated by anyone following the foreign policy and national security interests of the US going forward. They also set a bad precedent and may embolden other countries in actual or potential territorial seizures.

It is time to shift focus onto the real pressing issues that the US is facing and mobilize the minds of "the best and the brightest" to ameliorate existing conflicts regarding Ukraine and Israel, and prevent new conflicts in other regions.

The president-elect would be wise to avoid unnecessary provocations, especially toward traditional allies, so that the US can remain strong and credible and is able to play a constructive role in world affairs. Affairs that support the country's national interests and do not damage the security umbrella that has protected the US and its allies since the end of World War II.

The author is a nonresident fellow at Quincy Institute, a think tank based in Washington, DC, and a senior lecturer at the Asian Pacific Studies Institute of Duke University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10018

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8888

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

x.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 529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900

San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-6388

Fax: 415-348-6388

SEATTLE

600 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2666

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-959-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 20th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6B8

Tel: 416-481-9706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published

daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500

Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10018.

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 10018.

Vol. 38 - No. 1499

CHINA

Initiative to boost China, ASEAN city-level relations

By ZHANG LI in Nanning
zhangli@chinadaily.com.cn

Twelve mayors and their representatives from China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations called for deeper economic ties and enhanced connectivity to achieve common prosperity during the Global Mayors Dialogue on Thursday in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

The Nanning Initiative, issued at the forum, emphasizes city-level cooperation as a cornerstone for a more prosperous and connected China-ASEAN community.

The initiative was co-launched by representatives from cities across the eight participating countries: China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Themed "Building a China-ASEAN Community of Friendship: Urban Openness and Cooperation," the Global Mayors Dialogue began on Wednesday and will end on Saturday.

As the permanent host city of the China-ASEAN Expo, Nanning has become a vital platform for China's engagement with ASEAN. Since 2004, the city has hosted CAEXPO for 21 consecutive years, fostering what it calls the "Nanning Channel" for open cooperation.

"We sincerely hope that all parties will fully leverage the Nanning Channel to promote 'hard connectivity' in infrastructure, 'soft connectivity' in rules and standards and 'heart-to-heart connectivity' in people-to-people exchanges," said Nong Shengwen, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Committee and secretary of the CPC Nanning Committee, during his opening speech.



Guests participating in the ongoing Global Mayors Dialogue learn moves from the Yong Opera, a national intangible cultural heritage, under the guidance of an actress in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Wednesday. CHEN GUANYAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Nanning Mayor Hou Gang highlighted the burgeoning economic ties between China and ASEAN countries.

"We have established a 'four-hour economic circle' with ASEAN countries. You can have rice noodles for breakfast in Nanning, coffee in Hanoi and durian in Kuala Lumpur in the afternoon," the mayor said.

Nanning Airport has launched 15 international cargo routes, connecting 17 cities in 10 ASEAN and South Asian countries. Its international cargo and mail throughput is expected to exceed 100,000 metric tons in 2024.

Last year, the airport began offer-

ing flights to Vientiane, Laos, providing Chinese and Lao passengers with more convenient and efficient travel options.

Athsaphangthong Siphandone, mayor of Vientiane, expressed his wish for increased collaboration with Nanning, particularly in commerce, exhibitions, culture and tourism.

Nguyen Van Hanh, chairman of the People's Committee of Lang Son City, Vietnam, emphasized the responsibility of cities such as Lang Son, Mong Cai and Nanning to foster peace, prosperity and sustainable development through cooperation.

He said he hopes that cultural and festival exchanges, exhibitions and

other activities would create opportunities for people to meet, communicate and deepen mutual understanding.

The dialogue resulted in the signing of 14 projects worth over 3.3 billion yuan (\$450 million), encompassing sister-city partnerships, economic and trade collaborations, logistics, education and tourism initiatives across eight ASEAN nations.

Currently, Nanning boasts sister-city relationships with 31 cities worldwide, including 10 within ASEAN. The city has also become a first-choice destination for ASEAN students pursuing education in China.

Housing unit distribution in full swing

Authorities ramp up efforts to ensure well-being of earthquake survivors

By PALDEN NYIMA
and DAQIONG in Lhasa

The survivors of the earthquake in the Xizang autonomous region are being provided with transitional housing, according to Wei Jun, deputy director of the region's emergency management department. Wei spoke at a news conference in the regional capital, Lhasa, on Thursday.

Since the 6.8 magnitude earthquake, 13,000 sets of prefabricated houses have been collected. Of these, 6,135 have already been delivered to the disaster areas, and 5,152 have been set up and are now occupied. The remaining units are in transport, Wei reported.

The regional Party committee and government are focusing on ensuring the resettlement and safety of those affected by the disaster. Detailed inspections are underway to identify safety risks and protect the properties of those impacted.

Wei also noted that authorities have quickly assessed disaster losses and are taking measures to ensure the well-being of the community during the winter months.

To address the challenges posed by the high altitude and low temperatures in the earthquake-stricken areas, the region's earthquake relief headquarters has rapidly transported and distributed various relief materials.

The latest statistics from the department show that the donated supplies include 9,525 electric stoves, over 40,000 electric blankets, 759 metric tons of fuel, more than 259,700 blankets, over 180,000 cotton clothes, and 560 tons of reserved food and oil.

Relevant departments have acted swiftly to inspect safety risks in the disaster areas. The region's department of natural resources has completed emergency geologi-

cal hazard inspections in 76 towns across seven quake-affected counties: Dingri, Dinggye, Lhaze, Sa'kya, Ngamring, Gampa and Saga. These inspections revealed 1,851 geological hazard points.

Additionally, the region's housing and urban-rural development department organized 123 professional institutions with 557 experts and technicians to inspect and assess 30,057 rural and public buildings.

The fire and rescue corps has conducted 1,418 mobile fire inspections at resettlement sites, identifying 2,206 fire hazards. Workers have already rectified 1,901 of the problems, with the remaining hazards under correction.

Transportation units have inspected 900 bridges, 47 tunnels and 4,468 culverts, while patrolling 5,596 kilometers of roads. The region's water resources departments have inspected 14 reservoirs, five of which showed localized cracks and other issues.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the PLA and armed police rescue forces have recovered over 464,100 yuan (\$63,000) in cash, 1,640 valuable items and 29,466 other items. The region's public security department has salvaged more than 34,600 items and 2.25 million yuan in cash. Firefighters and rescue personnel have also cleared 750 post-earthquake debris sites, salvaging over 60,000 items and 3.24 million yuan in cash.

As of Wednesday, the region's civil affairs department reported that 1.64 billion yuan in donations had been received from various sectors of society, including 1.53 billion yuan in funds and other material donations.

Contact the writers at
palden_nyima@
chinadaily.com.cn

Star athletes fighting 'fandom culture' gain attention

By LI YINGXUE
liyngxue@chinadaily.com.cn

A growing movement among Chinese athletes has seen numerous sports stars take action against the disruptive influence of "fandom culture."

Prominent sports figures, including badminton players Wang Chang and Liang Weikeng, and gymnast Zhang Boheng, have disbanded their fan groups on Weibo in a stand against the invasive behavior of some supporters.

Their actions quickly gained attention online, with Paris Olympic table tennis champion Wang Chuqin's fan club dissolving its fan group on Sina Weibo becoming a trending topic on social media, amassing over 34 million views.

The growing backlash against fandom culture has caught the attention of China's sports authorities.

On Tuesday, the General Administration of Sport of China held a special meeting to address the issue. Gao Zhidan, head of the administration, stressed the importance of stronger regulations, public awareness campaigns and better risk prevention measures to safeguard athletes' rights and ensure the future

"I hope everyone can respect each other's privacy, maintain distance and allow me some personal space."

Wang Chuqin, the Paris Olympic table tennis champion

development of sports in China.

The rise of fandom culture has raised concerns about its impact on athletes' mental and physical well-being, their performance and the long-term sustainability of their careers.

In the world of table tennis, one of China's most beloved sports, athletes like Wang Chuqin and Fan Zhendong have become particularly affected by this trend.

In December, Wang Chuqin was surrounded by a crowd of fans at Beijing Capital International Airport, causing him visible frustration.

This followed a similar incident last October, when a video of Wang confronting a fan who kept follow-

ing him around with a camera went viral. Despite his requests for space, the fan ignored him.

Wang subsequently issued a statement on Weibo condemning "paid photographers" and urging fans to respect athletes' privacy.

"I don't want people waiting outside airports, training halls or hotels to follow and photograph us," Wang wrote. "This disrupts public order and severely affects our daily lives. On the court, I am an athlete; off the court, I am just an ordinary person. I hope everyone can respect each other's privacy, maintain distance and allow me some personal space. Thank you."

Fellow table tennis star Fan Zhendong has experienced similar disruptions, including chaotic airport scenes and overeager fans entering his hotel room. He has repeatedly called for a halt to invasive fandom practices.

During the first stage of the China Table Tennis Super League in December in Changsha, Hunan province, Fan addressed fans on Weibo, urging them to show their admiration in more appropriate ways.

"Thank you for your support, but there are better ways and moments to express it. Stay true to yourselves

and respect others. I sincerely ask for your understanding and respect," he wrote.

The backlash against fandom culture has also led to increased scrutiny of online discussions, with some social media users spreading false information, insulting athletes and coaches, or inciting conflict among fan groups.

In response, major platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Baidu, Tencent and Bilibili have removed thousands of posts containing such content. Weibo reported that it had deleted over 7,600 posts and penalized more than 700 accounts for inciting conflict, making insults or engaging in malicious sensationalism.

Efforts to combat the negative effects of fandom culture have gained traction. During the Paris Olympics in August, the Ministry of Public Security revealed it had handled four major cases involving illegal activities in sports fan circles, three of which concerned table tennis.

"The internet is not beyond the reach of the law," the ministry said, urging users to avoid spreading misinformation and engaging in personal attacks.

FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Team keeps locomotives in motion amid freezing cold

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

As Northeast China's Heilongjiang province enters its coldest period of the year, 26-year-old locomotive maintenance worker Wang Jiayi and her six teammates are working tirelessly in the maintenance shop at the Harbin locomotive depot.

The depot, the largest in the area under the China Railway Harbin Group, is responsible for maintaining nine types of locomotives — 206 in all — and handling train engines from cities including Qiqihar, Jiamusi and Mudanjiang.

Each day, at least 120 locomotives arrive for inspection, repair and maintenance before heading back out to haul trains on busy railway lines. The depot operates much like an automobile service center, with a familiar process of inspection, task determination, repair, quality checks and final delivery.

"With the Spring Festival travel rush starting on Tuesday, locomotives are in more frequent use," Wang said. "The harsh cold of Heilongjiang makes key components



Wang Jiayi conducts repair work on the top of a locomotive in January. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

such as braking systems and electrical circuits prone to freezing or becoming brittle, which can impact their performance."

The onset of the travel rush, which runs through Feb 22, has nearly doubled her team's workload. The team is tasked with maintaining at least three locomotives daily, compared to the one or two they usually do each day.

After graduating from Lanzhou Jiaotong University in 2021, Wang joined China Railway Harbin Group and chose to work at the locomotive depot, fulfilling a childhood dream.

"I was born in Mudanjiang and lived near a rail line," she said.

"Every day, I would see trains passing by my window and dream of working with locomotives someday."

The reality of the job was initially daunting. "When I first stood in front of a locomotive, I was shocked by its size," Wang said. "Even though I had studied theoretical knowledge in university, practical operations were completely different. I didn't know where to start."

With the guidance of an experienced worker, Wang spent a month observing, learning and practicing. Within months, she demonstrated strong organizational skills and technical expertise, earning her a leadership position overseeing a team of seven female workers with an average age of 24.

Like their male counterparts, she and her team haul heavy tools, climb to the roofs of 5-meter-high locomotives and inspect ditches beneath the trains.

"We've never shown weakness in our physical strength," Wang said. "In fact, we're often more meticulous in detecting malfunctions."

One memorable challenge

involved a locomotive's air conditioning system, which stopped functioning without showing fault information on the electronic display. After a thorough inspection, the team identified an issue with the ventilation fan. Using diagnostic tools, they pinpointed abnormal resistance readings, replaced the faulty components and ensured the locomotive left on time.

Winter's freezing temperatures present additional hazards.

"When locomotives arrive at the depot, they frost over immediately, making the roofs dangerously slippery," Wang said. "We always remind ourselves to be cautious to avoid slipping or injuries."

The team's high level of education and hands-on experience has fostered a culture of innovation. Over the past few years, they have contributed to more than 10 projects, resulting in cost savings exceeding 600,000 yuan (\$81,838).

As Wang and her team navigate the intense demands of the Spring Festival rush, they continue to uphold their commitment to safety, precision and efficiency.

Popping the question



Hu Weitao, a police with the border control brigade of Aksu, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, proposes marriage to his now-fiancee Luo Yao during their routine patrol on Wednesday, which also happens to be his birthday, in the presence of fellow officers. The couple plans to marry in May. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Journalist group hosts Spring Festival event

By ZHAO YIMENG
zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn

The All-China Journalists Association hosted a Spring Festival reception Thursday night, for key figures from China's leading news organizations, domestic and foreign journalists, as well as foreign envoys.

Held in the association's news hall, the event featured cultural performances, including tea ceremonies and Chinese knot-making demonstrations.

He Ping, chairman of the ACJA, delivered a welcome speech.

Shin Kyung-Jin, chief correspondent of Beijing Bureau of Korea JoongAng Daily, said, "This year, my focus will be on China's economic developments and Sino-

US relations, especially with President-elect Donald Trump set to take office next week."

He also expressed interest in exploring the surge in Korean tourism to Shanghai.

Romanian journalist Daniel Tomozei, a correspondent with China Radio International, said he would closely watch the dynamics between China and the European Union, which he described as a bloc facing internal and external challenges.

As Chinese New Year draws near, Tomozei is preparing to cover the upcoming spring political sessions, which will outline China's economic and social trajectory for the year. "I will continue to be a voice for a more correct understanding of the real China," he said.

CHINA



People walk by the front entrance of the Zhaofeng Building in downtown Shanghai last month, after residents funded their own building's renovation project. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

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

Passersby would be forgiven for thinking the 24-story Zhaofeng Building on downtown Shanghai's Changning Road is a new apartment complex, with its shining paint and tidy entrance adorned with festive greetings.

However, the building was actually built in 1993.

In November, a project to renovate the building's exterior, spearheaded entirely by the residents themselves and lasting for half a year, was completed, leaving the more than 200 residents, young and old, with a safe and completely new living environment.

"All the 95 households in the building collectively raised 1 million yuan (\$137,000) for the renovation, showcasing a remarkable display of community initiative and cooperation. The community-driven efforts in achieving a common goal have also fostered a sense of unity and pride among the residents," said 41-year-old resident Liu Guanglei.

"The community initiative to renovate the building was spontaneously generated from within the resident community, and derived from people's pursuit of a better life in the new times. People want a pleasant environment not only within their homes but also the entire surroundings in their everyday life," he said.

Residents recalled that safety concerns regarding falling tiles from the building's facade began several years ago and became more frequent in 2020. The building's exterior of mosaic tiles was considered by some to be a symbol of style.

All the households in the building — with at least one individual representing each household — are members of a WeChat group for daily communication and information sharing. After some residents shared a case of falling tiles from a building's exterior that had taken people's lives, they became aware that they could not ignore such safety hazards anymore.

An obstacle was that government authorities could not provide funding due to the high-rise building's history, as the apartments were sold to those from outside the Chinese mainland in the first days. The residents had to come together to fund the much-needed renovation on their own.

Residents in Shanghai fund own building renovation

New-look complex freed of safety risks from falling facade tiles



Left: Maintenance worker Liu Shouliang displays tiles that had fallen off the Zhaofeng Building over the years. Right: Bao Lei (left), Party chief of the residential community where the building is located, and resident Liu Guanglei (right) share their insights on how the self-funded renovation project came into being.

For cost control, their first attempt in 2021 was to temporarily extend a steel wire mesh from the second floor. However, third-party evaluations later showed that the equipment was not strong enough to stop falling tiles.

At the building's property management office, maintenance worker Liu Shouliang filled a cardboard box with fallen tiles. On each of them, he recorded the date they fell and where from. There were tiles falling from both the lower and higher floors.

Some were quite fragmented, and others were as big as a laptop, he said. "Several pieces of tiles smashed into the cars parked downstairs," he said, recalling that one tile, according to the video surveillance, hit a drying rack while falling and cracked the sunroof of a car. The drying rack also fell and pierced the driver's window and seat.

"It was startling. That happened



The facade of the Zhaofeng Building.

not long after the owner of the car had gotten out. If there was someone in or around the vehicle at that time, it could have been an irreparable tragedy," he added.

In the WeChat group, safety hazards from falling tiles were one of the most frequently discussed topics among the residents. The initiative to carry out the renovation with collective funding from the residents gradually took shape.

Liu Guanglei was one of the residents who volunteered to lead the innovation project. He said that he hoped to eliminate safety hazards as he and four other family members, including his elderly mother and two children, live in the building.

"Having lived here for nearly a decade also gave me a sense of belonging. I want to do some real things for the neighbors," said resident Liu.

The renovation began in the latter half of 2022. A professional team

from a State-owned company in the construction design sector was invited to the apartment complex to introduce its renovation plan, including the detailed methods and processes of the face-lift. However, the 3-million-yuan quote for the project, had some residents concerned about the cost.

Most of the around 10 residents who expressed opposition were seniors. Their common view was to save money, said Bao Lei, secretary of the Party branch of the residential community where the building is located.

She said that some elderly residents suggested just fixing the places where safety hazards were found. But others disagreed, saying it would cause color variation on the facade and would not stand the test of time.

"Young and middle-aged residents usually showed support and were willing to spend more money. They hoped to pay for a better renovation plan although it might cost more," Bao said.

Residents proposed altogether four programs for the face-lift involving different processes. They reached a consensus to find a value-for-money, time-tested renovation plan that would prevent them from safety concerns for two decades.

All four programs were voted on by each household. The two with the highest votes went into another round of voting, which brought about the final renovation plan in October 2023.

Renovations of the building's facade and walkways were completed in September.

"The environment of the residential complex today is totally different from what it was. The new surrounding has opened a new page of life for all the residents here," said Wang Guanrong, 84, who has lived with his spouse in the building since 2007.

"It will be even more beautiful in spring when the vines will grow and climb up the walls," he said, adding that seeds were planted as part of a greenery program to respond to residents' requests for more greenery in the limited space of the residential complex.



Online
See more
by scanning
the code

Party role an essential component of grassroots governance

By ZHOU WENTING

Several residents of the Zhaofeng Building said their community-driven renovation in Shanghai was helped by the pivotal role of its grassroots Party.

They said that the grassroots Party organization has been open-minded in listening to residents' requirements and advice regarding improving their daily lives, for example, ideas regarding whether to add greenery and charging facilities for electric bikes in the residential compound.

"We always respond to the needs of the residents, which gradually builds mutual trust. And only in this way can we summon the resi-

dents together to work for a common goal when there is something critical going on," said Bao Lei, secretary of the Party branch of the residential community where the building is located.

Residents said there are not many communities like them where all the households in the building — with at least one individual representing a household — are in a WeChat group, and can talk directly to the secretary of the Party branch of the residential community.

"This really shows that the secretary is responsible. Because when anybody can speak to all in a group chat, such communication becomes transparent in front of

everybody's eyes, which can be a quite scary matter," said Liu Guanglei, a resident in the Zhaofeng Building.

"If someone mentions an issue in the group chat, many people may express similar concerns and vent emotions, and that may often make a small problem magnified," said Liu, 41.

Bao said: "We always face problems head-on, take the initiative to communicate with the residents, and find ways to solve problems. The sooner we step in to help solve problems, the smoother it will be."

In 2020, some residents proposed to build a multistory parking garage in the residential compound. Although the com-

ponent is small and it might cause trouble as some might oppose the idea, Bao said as the Party organization is at the grassroots level, they never reject residents' suggestions.

"As long as the residents have ideas, we must find ways to facilitate them and help them achieve their wishes," she said.

The renovation project that was completed in November involved meticulous planning and discussions within the community, with various viewpoints and concerns being addressed to ensure inclusiveness and transparency.

Despite initial skepticism and differing opinions among some residents, the community leaders,

including Bao, worked tirelessly to facilitate dialogue and decision-making.

For example, some residents said there must be corruption involved in such building renovation projects. Bao said whenever she saw someone saying anything inappropriate in the WeChat group, she and her colleagues would immediately communicate with him or her face to face.

"As a Party leader at the grassroots, I must pay attention to people's different voices. The more someone opposed the renovation project, the more we would listen to him or her," said Bao.

"If a resident could provide evidence for opposition, I would cer-

tainly call for a halt to the project. However, any opposition must be justified," she said.

Out of respect for the ideas of all the residents, all four renovation proposals were provided to each household for thorough discussions and voting.

"Throughout the entire process that involved extensive communication, we hoped that none of the residents thought their ideas were neglected," said Bao.

Residents said the process was a perfect example of advancing whole-process people's democracy.

"The more we participated in the discussion around the renovation plan, the closer we felt about our relation to it. And that promoted all the households to gradually reach a unity of thoughts," said Feng Jumei, a resident of the building.

CHINA

'Aerial school bus' prevents perilous trips

Remote village kids used to climb three hours to get to class

By LI YINGQING in Kunming and CHEN MEILING

For many schoolkids, just dragging themselves out of bed in the morning can be a near impossible challenge.

However, for the children of Nizhuhe village, located at the bottom of a steep and craggy canyon, getting out of bed used to be followed by a perilous more than three-hour ascent up the cliff face and across several rivers, before arriving at the classroom to the start the school day.

However, in the past couple of years that situation has all changed for the children of the village located in Southwest China's Yunnan province.

The development of the Nizhuhe Grand Canyon scenic area has meant that new infrastructure has been put in place, and kids now only need to take a 268-meter cliffside elevator, followed by a cable car and then a bus to reach their school at the top of the canyon. The three-hour obstacle course has now become a pleasant 30-minute scenic ride.

All in all, their journey from their village to Guanzhai Primary School takes them from an elevation of 1,100 meters to 1,650 meters.

With development of the scenic area beginning in 2017, this "aerial school bus" became available in 2022.

"In the past, there were many areas with no roads. My older son and I had to climb steep cliffs with slopes exceeding 70 degrees," said Zhao Suzhen, a villager and a mother of two boys in Nizhuhe.

"Villagers drilled holes in the cliff face so that they could get footholds and handgrips for climbing," she



The cable car is part of an "aerial school bus" for children living in Nizhuhe village in Xuanwei, Yunnan province. DU XING / FOR CHINA DAILY

said, adding they also used chains.

Her second son Lei Xin is also studying at the school. Zhao said Lei and his friends run to the elevator in excitement and enjoy watching the Nizhu River below them as the elevator ascends.

"I was a bit scared at first, but now I find it very fun," Lei said, adding that taking the elevator and cable car to school is much more convenient than climbing over rocks.

As Guanzhai Primary is a boarding school, every week, the children from Nizhuhe village commute using the "aerial school bus".

Yang Jie, Party secretary of Puli township, where the village is located, is proud of the local development.

"During ancient times, ancestors of the village moved deep down the mountains to hide from war. It's difficult to enter and leave, even for adults," she said.

"In the past, two to three men were required to escort the children to school."

Acknowledging that the situation was unacceptable, in 2014, Yang and her colleagues invited experts to conduct surveys and to establish a plan to create walkways from the village below to the school above, but no solution was feasible.

In 2015, they helped cut steps with electric saws, drive rivets into rock walls prone to falling and slippery boulders and install chains on the way for students.

In 2016, more safety facilities such as metal guardrails were built, along with laying new paths through the woods. "At the time, villagers told me it was already a big improvement," Yang said.

In late 2016, when the 565-meter Beipanjiang Bridge spanning the canyon was recognized as the tallest

bridge in the world by Guinness World Records, the canyon quickly won new fame.

As a result, in 2017, a company invested to develop the canyon into an attraction.

"Now the national 4A-level scenic spot is the children's home. And the most difficult path to school has been transformed into the happiest path of realizing dreams," said Yang.

Cai Xiong, 54, chairman of Xuanwei Yatuo Tourism Development, who invested 380 million yuan (\$51.8 million) into building the scenic area, was born in Puli township. He said when he was a child, he also needed to walk a long way to school.

He said the investment was for more than just business purposes, but also as an effort to improve the livelihoods of his fellow people.

More importantly, the "aerial school bus" is also a lifeline, he said.



Before Nizhuhe Grand Canyon was turned into a scenic area, children from Nizhuhe had to descend steep slopes to go home. LI ZHIGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

"This year, a child in the village fell from a roof and needed emergency treatment. Our workers were able to use the elevator and cable car to send the child to hospital," he said.

"Another man who had a heart attack was also saved by the elevator," Cai added that villagers can enjoy the service for free, and students have priority over tourists during peak travel times.

The canyon is a favored destination for enthusiasts of extreme sports such as paragliding, wingsuit

flying, skydiving, rafting and rock climbing. It received 260,000 tourist visits last year, according to local statistics.

Contact the writers at chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn



Online See more by scanning the code

ifaw 国际爱护动物基金会

AD

雪豹 Snow leopard

Between heaven and earth, together with other sentient beings, I live.

—Zhuangzi, philosopher, late fourth century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一

—《庄子·齐物论》

GLOBAL LENS



From left: International buyers in front of a shop of children's bikes in the Yiwu International Trade City, the largest wholesale market complex in China in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, on Jan 12. An Iraqi businessman negotiates with the Chinese shop owner in the market in Yiwu on Jan 12. PHOTOS BY SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY International buyers at a shop of cookwares in the market in Yiwu on Dec 11. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



International buyers at a shop of artificial flowers in the Yiwu International Trade City, the largest wholesale market complex in China, in Yiwu, East China's Zhejiang province, on Jan 12. SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY



Indian traders with their children play with a bubble machine in the market in Yiwu in June. SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY



International students learn live commerce at the cross-border e-commerce industrial park in Yiwu in April. SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY

The global supermarket

City of Yiwu burnishes credentials as a trader and as new home for entrepreneurs

By HOU CHENCHEN
houchenchen@chinadaily.com.cn

Ten years ago, Spanish young man Jesus Garcia used his university graduation scholarship to buy a plane ticket to China, set on winning the heart of a young Chinese woman, Yang Saijun.

That same year, 2014, the first China-Europe freight train departed from Yiwu — where Garcia made a home for himself — heading to Spain, connecting China's largest small commodity market with the Spanish capital, Madrid, Europe's largest such hub.

Today Garcia and Yang, now married, run an import business in Yiwu, using the rail link to carry Spanish wine and ham to China. At the start they were dispatching two or three containers a year to China, and that has since risen to 60 or 70.

With improved logistics provided by the rail link, Spanish products such as red wine, olive oil and ham, as well as Chinese staples, mechanical appliances and other equipment have gained easier access to both markets.

Yiwu, which enjoys its reputation as the world's supermarket and a key supplier for Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms, is now about to launch a new round of international trade reforms aimed at strengthening its role in global commerce.

The hub, promoting Belt and Road collaboration and high-quality development of the China-Europe freight train network, will further contribute to advancing China's dual circulation strategy, which integrates domestic and global markets and supports efforts to build China into a strong trading nation, according to the plan published last month.

Yiwu's Global Digital Trade Center, which draws on artificial intelligence and digital tools to improve core trade elements, such as supply chains, logistics and markets, is due to open its market section for trial operations in October 2025.

Millions of packages

The city now serves more than 200 countries and attracts nearly 600,000 international traders a year. Thirty million packages are shipped out every day on average,

supporting 2.1 million small and medium-sized businesses across China and creating 32 million jobs.

In the first 11 months of last year Yiwu's imports and exports were worth 614 billion yuan (\$84 billion), surpassing the total value of trade, 566 billion yuan, for all of 2023 and setting a record.

Today more than 21,000 merchants from more than 100 countries and regions live and work in Yiwu, which boasts more than 40 international restaurants owned by foreigners. One standout is Beyti Restaurant, a popular Arab establishment and said to have been the city's first foreign-owned eatery.

Mohanad Shalabi, a Jordanian who opened Beyti in 2002, says he has spent fewer than three months away from Yiwu since then, he thus considers the city his home, and, like Garcia, has a Chinese wife.

His restaurant, which started out as a 70-80 square meter space, has now expanded to 1,600 square meters, occupying a prime location in the heart of the city.

In 2012 the local government set up a one-stop international trade service center to handle all foreign-

related businesses, greatly improving the governance of these entities.

A few years later the local government began issuing foreign merchant cards to foreign business people in the city, an idea Shalabi says he had advocated. The card allows holders to enjoy the benefits that Chinese nationals in the city enjoy, including pensions, healthcare, children's education and other social services, according to People's Daily.

Shalabi says that Yiwu has allowed him to realize his Chinese dream, something he says is the right of everyone to pursue no matter where they are from, and that the Belt and Road Initiative is helping in the realization of that dream.

Beyti, an Arabic word meaning my home, symbolizes how Yiwu has become a new domicile for merchants from all over the world, Shalabi says.

"Yiwu is my home, and I want to do something for it." He sees the Chinese dream as a sweet flower, he says.

"When the flower blossoms, everyone can enjoy its lingering fragrance."

Agencies contributed to this story.



Chinese traders learn English and take notes near the Yiwu International Trade City in May. SHI KUANBING / FOR CHINA DAILY



A Turkish barber in Yiwu on Wednesday. SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: Arabian traders in Yiwu gather at a local cafe on Jan 15. An Egyptian restaurant in Yiwu on Jan 15. A Moroccan businessman at a cafe in Yiwu on Jan 15. PHOTOS BY SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

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

Ministry slams latest US trade restrictions

Washington's 'reliance on sanctions unlikely to impede China's progress'

By WANG KEJU
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

The Biden administration has recently resorted to a series of trade restrictions targeting China, which instead of slowing China's advancement, will only motivate the country to further strengthen its self-reliance and drive for technological innovation, officials and experts said.

Washington's heavy-handed approach to contain China's rise, despite pushbacks from US businesses and the international community, is short-sighted and will backfire, as it will only heighten tensions between the world's two largest economies and jeopardize global economic stability, they added.

"Over the past period, the Biden administration has intensively implemented an array of trade restriction measures against China, citing so-called national security concerns," a spokesperson with the Chinese Ministry of Commerce said on Wednesday, expressing "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition" to these US moves.

These actions include escalating export controls on semiconductors, restricting Chinese software and hardware in connected and autonomous vehicles in the US, and launching security probes into drone systems from China and other countries.

"The Biden administration's eleventh-hour crackdown on China seems to be driven by a desire to create a lasting anti-China policy framework that transcends party lines, hoping that the incoming Trump administration will maintain these suppressive measures," said Zhu Feng, dean of the School of International Studies at Nanjing University.

On Monday, president-elect Donald Trump is set to assume the US presidency for the second time.

The Biden administration's trade restriction measures have severely infringed upon the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises, disrupted market rules and the international economic and trade order, and threatened the stability of global industrial and supply chains, thereby harming the interests of businesses worldwide, including

US firms, the spokesperson added. In particular, a number of US companies and industry associations have voiced their opposition to the Biden administration's trade measures targeting China.

The Washington-based Semiconductor Industry Association said on Jan 6 in a statement regarding the Biden administration's plan to publish the "Export Control Framework for Artificial Intelligence Diffusion" that: "We respectfully caution against making such a swift and significant shift in policy during this transitional period, and without meaningful consultation with industry. We are, however, deeply concerned by the unprecedented scope and complexity of this potential regulation, which was developed without industry input and could significantly undercut US leadership and competitiveness in semiconductor technology and advanced AI systems."

The MOC spokesperson said that the Biden administration's rhetoric and actions seem to be counterproductive, as its reliance on sanctions, containment and suppression measures are unlikely to impede China's forward progress. Instead, these tactics are likely to reinforce China's confidence and capabilities in achieving self-reliance and technological innovation.

China will take necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its own sovereignty, security and development interests in the face of US suppression efforts, the spokesperson added.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Zhongguancun Modern Information Consumer Application Industry Technology Alliance, a telecom industry association, said that the two consecutive US administrations' waging trade and technology wars against China since 2016 have failed to deliver the desired outcomes.

The US should abandon its efforts to turn economic and technological issues into political weapons and instead respect market forces to maintain the security and stability of global industrial chains, which would better serve the common interests of China, the US and the world at large, Xiang said.



Employees work on a production line of a foreign-funded lithium battery plant in Nantong, Jiangsu province. GU HUAXIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

High-tech sectors to attract more FDI

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Fueled by advancements in high-tech manufacturing, green energy and consumer goods industries, foreign direct investment (FDI) into China will continue to recover this year, market watchers and business executives said.

Despite challenges like disruptions in global supply chains, escalating geopolitical tensions and a slow economic recovery in several regions, multinational corporations have shifted their investment focus from building factories to fostering innovation, developing supply chains and advancing green industries in China, they said.

A total of 52,379 new foreign-invested enterprises were established across China in January-November, representing a year-on-year growth of 8.9 percent. This marks the highest level ever for the same time frame, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

FDI in actual use in the Chinese mainland climbed 6 percent year-on-year in November from the same period the previous year, in a sign of growing foreign investor confidence in the nation's market potential and the effectiveness of policies supporting foreign investment.

"The immense opportunities for investing in China are not only found in new technologies and emerging fields, but also in the continuously upgraded and evolving modern industrial system," said Wan Zhe, a professor at the Belt and Road School of Beijing Normal University.

Since last year, China has removed all market access restrictions for foreign investors in the

manufacturing sector, and has continuously relaxed market access in industries such as telecommunications and healthcare.

Foreign investments in China are increasingly concentrated in high-tech sectors, accelerating integration into the high-quality development framework, Wan said.

Henkel, a German industrial and consumer goods company, has been heading in that direction. The company's new plant, built with an investment of 900 million yuan (\$122.75 million), is expected to begin test production in Yantai, Shandong province, in early 2025, strengthening its ability to supply high-end adhesives for industries such as electronics and automotive.

"We are also planning to launch our new inspiration center for adhesive technologies in Shanghai this year, boosting our innovation capabilities for industrial businesses across China and the broader Asia-Pacific region," said Anna An, president of Henkel Greater China.

An said that Henkel is optimistic about the long-term potential of the Chinese market, driven by the country's economic resilience and commitment to innovation and opening-up.

"The tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference held in December emphasized technological innovation and the promotion of consumption, creating significant opportunities for multinational companies like Henkel," she added.

Also upbeat about the Chinese market, Treasury Wine Estates, Australia's largest winemaker by sales revenue and the parent company of Australian wine brand Penfolds, announced last month that it

had entered into an agreement to acquire a 75 percent equity stake in Ningxia Stone & Moon Winery Co Ltd in Ningxia Hui autonomous region for 130 million yuan.

"This acquisition aligns with our vision to grow our presence in luxury wines in key international markets while strengthening our commitment and investment in China's wine industry," said Tim Ford, CEO of TWE, noting that the transaction will be completed in the first half of this year.

The national commerce work conference, held in Beijing over the weekend, highlighted the government's commitment to enhancing efforts to attract foreign investment, reducing restrictions in the negative list, improving business environment and steadily advancing institutional openness this year.

Through comprehensive efforts, China has steadily expanded the scope of international cooperation, inviting more global partners to share in the benefits, said Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor at Central University of Finance and Economics in Beijing.

China has decided to abolish the terms of a previous circular in 2011 and lift restrictions on foreign companies using domestic loans to carry out equity investments to encourage multinational companies in establishing headquarters-type institutions in the country, the Ministry of Commerce announced last week.

The scale of reinvestment by foreign-funded companies in China has continued to grow in recent years, and some foreign businesses have expressed hope for the removal of restrictions to address their capital needs for reinvestment through domestic loans.

Nation attractive investment choice

By ZHOU LANXU
zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Swiss Re continues to see China as an attractive investment destination, as the country is still on track of robust economic growth by global standards despite rising external uncertainties, said Jerome Jean Haegeli, group chief economist of the international reinsurance provider.

"We remain committed to being here (in China) for the long term, and we view the business as highly strategic. Likewise, we do asset-liability matching and have reasonable investments in China. And there's no reason for making any changes about our plans," Haegeli said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

China's economy is projected to grow 4.6 percent in 2025, Haegeli said, as per Swiss Re's baseline scenario forecast in which the United States imposes additional tariffs of 10-30 percent on the nation's exports and selective tariffs of up to 10 percent on other countries, even as China takes modest retaliatory measures.

Haegeli added that a significant increase in US tariffs on Chinese exports, of about 60 percent, is unlikely given its adverse impact on the US economy while US inflation remains above target.

Albeit down from 2024, a growth rate of 4.6 percent will still be notable by global standards, a rate that "you wouldn't even dream of" in developed economies such as the United States and many European economies, Haegeli said.

Underpinning Swiss Re's commitment to the Chinese market, Haegeli said, are the broad development opportunities in its insurance sector, where the penetration rate remains relatively low compared to other global markets.

He said opportunities for insurers and reinsurers are particularly attractive as Chinese policymakers have shown clear determination to enhance the protection role of the insurance industry for society, viewing it as a key pillar to strengthen economic resilience and address economic shocks.

"I have no doubt that they will fulfill those ambitions," Haegeli said, noting that China's economic governance is characterized by long-term thinking with great consistency and determination, which provides a unique comparative advantage in achieving its long-term goals.

In the first three quarters of 2024, insurance companies operating in China recorded primary insurance premium income of 4.79 trillion yuan (\$653.3 billion), up 7.2 percent year-on-year. Assets of reinsurance companies were at 823.1 billion yuan as of end-September, up 10.2 percent from the beginning of the year, the National Financial Regulatory Administration said.

Nevertheless, Haegeli said China's economic growth has clearly slowed compared to its historical performance.

"I wouldn't be concerned about lower growth if the economic structure improves toward a more sustainable growth model," Haegeli said, citing the importance of enhancing consumption's role as a growth driver for China.

He said China has the policy scope for more easing measures to protect the economy from downward pressure, especially by strengthening the social security system to unleash more savings into the real economy.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said on Monday that the country will intensify macroeconomic policy adjustments to correct the trajectory of economic growth, adding that China's economy likely achieved its annual growth target of around 5 percent for 2024.

Taking policy measures to resolve debt issues in the real estate sector is essential for a more robust economic recovery, while deepening reforms at State-owned enterprises would also be important for boosting productivity by strengthening market forces, Haegeli added.

Dong Yilang contributed to this story.

Sweet success



Farmers in Zigui county, Central China's Hubei province, prepare to transport freshly harvested navel oranges to markets around the country. The county is a major navel orange producer and the period before Spring Festival is the peak sales season.

ZHENG JIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Chinese mainland shares close higher

Chinese mainland stocks closed higher on Thursday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index up 0.28 percent to 3,236.03 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 0.41 percent higher at 10,101.1 points. The combined turnover covered by the two indexes stood at 1.27 trillion yuan (\$173.22 billion), up from 1.19 trillion yuan on the previous trading day.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 2 pips to 7.1881 against the US dollar on Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. The yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Global talent dynamics shifting at an unprecedented rapidity

By CHENG YU
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Over the past five years, China has surged ahead to become a global leader of high-level technology talent while the United States has experienced an apparent decline, underscoring a seismic shift in the global innovation landscape between two of the world's largest economies, according to a report.

Released by Dongbi Data, a Chinese technology and data firm founded by a group of young scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the report analyzed 392,202 scientific papers published between 2020 and 2024 across 129 top academic journals.

According to the report, the number of high-level technology experts from the US fell from 36,599 in 2020 to 31,781 in 2024, with the country's global share shrinking from 32.8 percent to 27.3 percent.

By contrast, China's top scientific minds expanded from 18,805 to 32,511 over the same period, pushing its global share from 16.9 percent to 27.9 percent.

"Global talent dynamics are shifting at an unprecedented pace.

The race for technological supremacy will increasingly hinge on how nations attract, nurture and retain their brightest minds," said Wu Dengsheng, founder of Dongbi Data. "China's rise is a testament to its sustained investment in education, research and innovation infrastructure. Meanwhile, the US faces challenges in maintaining its dominance in terms of high-level technology talent amid shifting global dynamics."

The report also highlighted contrasting trends in Europe and other parts of the world. Germany maintained a stable position, with minimal changes in its share of high-level talent, while the United Kingdom and France saw declines in both absolute numbers and global share.

Italy emerged as a bright spot in Europe, experiencing growth in its pool of high-level scientists. Elsewhere, Japan and Australia reported contractions in both their talent numbers and global market share, signaling challenges in retaining competitive advantages.

Notably, active high-level technology talent, defined as those with significant contributions in recent years, showed a similar pattern.

With 25,887 active experts,

accounting for 33.5 percent of the global total, the US held the lead in that segment, followed by China with 16,968, or 22 percent. Germany, the UK and Italy rounded out the top contributors, each holding shares of over 2 percent.

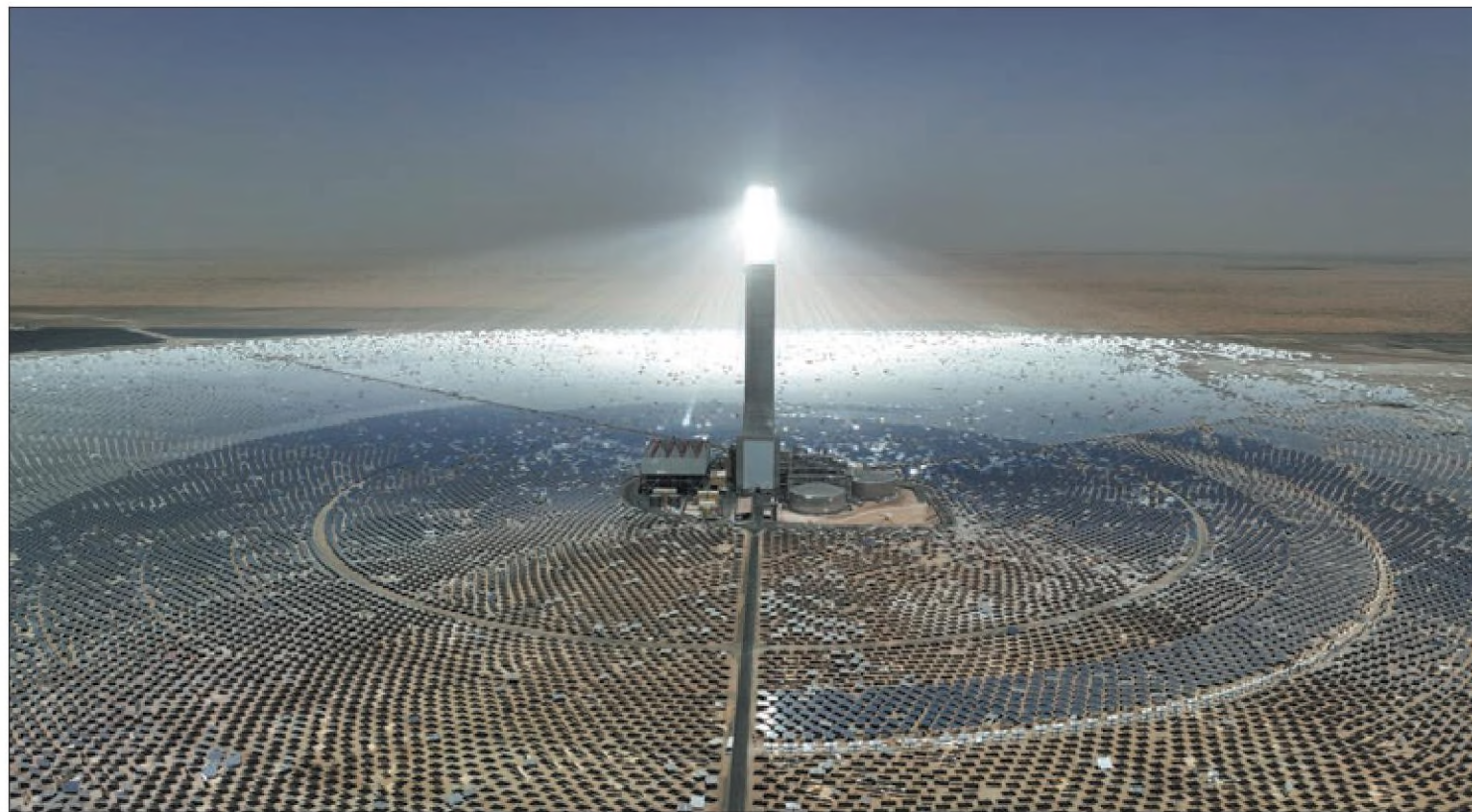
At the institutional level, the Chinese Academy of Sciences took the top spot globally, with 3,615 high-level scientists, or 2.9 percent of the total. Harvard University and Stanford University followed, with 1,683 and 1,208 experts, respectively.

The report also noted that China's talent are concentrated in eastern coastal regions and major metropolitan hubs such as Beijing and Shanghai, where top-tier universities and research institutions thrive.

In the US, the states of California and Massachusetts remain magnets for innovation, supported by their leading universities and research centers.

"Both nations showcase a unique competitive edge. China's rapid expansion highlighted its ability to mobilize resources and attract talent, while the US continues to lead in fostering interdisciplinary and international collaboration," Wu said.

BUSINESSFOCUS



A view of the Chinese-built Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, in September. XINHUA

Chinese technology helps drive UAE's transition to clean energy

Large-scale solar, wind power projects generate electricity, reduce emissions

DUBAI — When you drive south from Dubai toward the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, a dazzling light sphere resembling an artificial sun comes into view across the desert from over 20 kilometers away.

This extraordinary sight is the 263-meter-high solar power tower, the world's tallest of its kind, built by Shanghai Electric Group as part of a concentrated solar power and photovoltaic project.

"We are light gatherers, building a tower from grains of sand, turning hopes into rivers of energy, and capturing the sun to illuminate countless homes at night" is how workers at the site poetically describe their mission.

China is harnessing solar energy through advanced technology to meet the clean energy needs of the United Arab Emirates.

Despite its vast oil reserves, the UAE has remained committed to optimizing its energy structure and advancing a clean energy transition. UAE Energy Strategy 2050 aims for carbon neutrality by mid-century, necessitating significant investments in renewable energy sources like solar and wind power. As a global leader in renewable energy technology, China has

become a natural partner in this ambitious endeavor.

In recent years, Chinese companies have played a pivotal role in the UAE's clean energy development, helping optimize its energy mix and serving as a model of China-UAE green collaboration. From large-scale solar projects rising in the desert to the first wind power demonstration projects, Chinese technology and expertise have been integral to the UAE's ongoing energy transition.

One of the flagship achievements is the CSP-PV hybrid project undertaken by Shanghai Electric Group in the Dubai desert. Fully operational since December 2023, the project has already generated over 3.6 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity, providing stable green power for 320,000 local households and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by more than 1.6 million metric tons annually.

The project showcases the technological strengths of CSP. Unlike traditional PV plants, which cannot generate power under low sunlight conditions, CSP uses advanced thermal storage systems to enable power generation round the clock.

Another landmark project is the Al Dhafra Solar PV Plant in Abu



A trough collector is seen at a solar thermal photovoltaic integrated power generation project in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, in September. DUAN MINFU / XINHUA

Dhabi, built by China Machinery Engineering Corp. Covering 21 square kilometers, this facility is the world's largest single-site solar PV plant, with an installed capacity of 2.1 gigawatts. Operational since June 2023, it generates enough electricity to power 200,000 households annually while reducing carbon emissions by 2.4 million tons each year. During its construction, the plant created over 5,000 local jobs.

Project manager Che Ming'an highlighted the plant's use of cutting-edge PV technology, with solar

panel mounts capable of tracking the sun's trajectory to maximize energy conversion. Nearly all equipment, from PV modules to cleaning robots and unattended substations, was sourced from China, exemplifying successful green energy collaboration under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Beyond solar, Chinese enterprises are also venturing into wind power in the UAE. In May 2023, PowerChina completed the UAE's first wind power demonstration project.

The project, which spans complex terrain including islands,

deserts and mountains, covers a distance of over 700 km. The project generates enough electricity annually to meet the needs of over 23,000 households while reducing carbon emissions by 120,000 tons.

Peng Gang, general manager of PowerChina's Middle East and North Africa regional headquarters, said that the wind power demonstration project proved the economic feasibility of wind energy in the UAE, highlighting China's leading position in the field.

These clean energy initiatives mirror deepening cooperation between China and the UAE in energy transition and sustainable development. Leveraging their technological, equipment and management expertise, Chinese companies are pivotal to the UAE's energy ambition, while offering Chinese solutions to global climate challenges.

"Promoting energy conservation and emissions reduction is not only a corporate social responsibility, but also a shared mission for humanity," said Zhao Hui, project manager of Shanghai Electric's Dubai CSP-PV project. "Chinese enterprises will continue to drive clean energy development through multilateral collaboration, offering more possibilities for global carbon neutrality."

XINHUA

Success of sand control methods in Hobq Desert

HOHHOT — In the freezing winter, on the fringes of the Kubuqi Desert in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region, dedicated sand control workers are busy mending and reinforcing defenses in the form of straw checkerboards — straw placed in a checkerboard pattern on the desert surface to secure dunes.

The workers are racing against time to complete their tasks before the spring winds arrive to once again test the success of their efforts. Farmer Zhang Yong, 50, is one of these workers. He meticulously arranges wheat straw along pre-marked square lines on the sandy ground, before firmly tamping them down with a shovel.

"Straw checkerboards serve as a method to prevent wind erosion and retain moisture. By repairing them each winter, we ensure they can firmly hold the shifting sand in the coming spring," Zhang said.

The Kubuqi Desert, China's seventh-largest desert also known as the Hobq Desert, spans an area of more than 14,000 square kilometers. For Urgan, another local who grew up deep within the desert, his childhood memories are dominated by a single color — yellow. "There was an endless supply of sand on our stoves and cabinets, and all we saw outside were sand dunes," Urgan recalled.

In the 1950s and 1960s, with strong government support, Inner Mongolia began constructing sand control stations and initiated afforestation efforts along the northern edge of the Kubuqi. Since then, Urgan's hometown has gradually turned green.

"Back then, people treated afforestation in the Kubuqi as a sacred mission," Urgan said.

Inner Mongolia, as one of the regions in China most severely affected by desertification and sandification, has long prioritized sand control as a key task in combating these threats. It has continuously implemented the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program and promoted other ecological projects including afforestation and enforcement of grazing bans.

According to the third session of the 14th People's Congress of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, which opened on Tuesday, the region exceeded its annual targets for desert control, afforestation and grass planting in 2024, completing 113 percent, 220 percent and 148 percent of its goals, respectively.

Today, Inner Mongolia boasts the largest forest area in the country, at some 23.8 million hectares, while its grassland vegetation coverage has reached 45 percent, the best level since 1990, local authorities said.

In Hunshandake sandy land in the region's Xilin Gol League, herder Wangjil's more than 666-hectare pasture is now a sea of green, with shrubs covering the ground. Occasionally, a series of slender, angular footprints can be seen on the ground — tracks probably left by roe deer, said Wangjil.

Starting in 1998, Wangjil began planting grass and trees in the sandy sections of his pasture. Through relentless experimentation, he managed to establish sand barriers on shifting dunes, while planting drought-resistant vegetation on fixed dunes.

The herdsman said sand control is a long-term endeavor that requires great perseverance. Over the past 27 years, he has planted greenery on more than 153 hectares of dunes and sandpits, with plants including over 22,000 drought-resistant saplings.

It is through many years of persistent efforts of both local residents and the government that Hunshandake managed to achieve a historic transformation, with 252,000 hectares of sand land controlled in 2024.

"During sand control efforts, China has contributed its wisdom to the global endeavor of sand control," said Lu Qi, chief scientist at the Chinese Academy of Forestry.

Currently, Inner Mongolia's desert control methods, technologies and achievements have been replicated in other Chinese regions like the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Xizang autonomous region, Qinghai province and Gansu province, and are promoted to countries like Saudi Arabia and Mongolia.

XINHUA

China's Blue Sky Projects help Iraq's oil-rich Basra clear the air

BASRA — Hussein takes a deep breath as he rolls down his car window during his morning commute, an unthinkable act just a few years ago when black smoke dominated the skyline in this oil-rich Iraqi city.

"The air in Basra is much better now," said Hussein, a petroleum engineer who, like many locals, has witnessed a remarkable transformation in this industrial hub's environment. Even on this crisp winter morning, the difference is palpable.

For decades, Iraq's economic lifeline — the oil and gas sector — came at a steep environmental cost. The practice of gas flaring, where associated gas from oil production was burned off into the atmosphere, cast a shadow, both literal and figurative, over cities like Basra, where residents had long suffered the consequences of industrial pollution.

But a series of ambitious environmental projects, led by Chinese enterprises and dubbed the "Blue Sky Projects" by locals, are helping Iraq turn a corner in its battle against pollution while addressing chronic energy shortages.

At the heart of this transforma-

tion is the Basra Natural Gas Liquids project, a facility that captures and processes associated gas from three major oilfields. The project, built by China Petroleum Engineering and Construction Corp, stands as a testament to what's possible when modern technology meets environmental consciousness.

"Every cubic meter of gas we process is one that won't be directly flared into Basra's skies," said Sun Baojun, the project manager, whose facility now produces enough dry gas to power nearby communities that have long struggled with electricity shortages. The numbers are impressive: 4.4 million cubic meters of dry gas and 2,600 metric tons of liquefied petroleum gas daily.

In the sprawling Rumaila oilfield, where antiquated flare stacks once spewed black smoke into the air, change is visible. New low-pressure flaring systems are replacing the old "candlestick" flares, part of an upgrade project scheduled for completion by February 2025.

"By then, Basra's skies will be bluer, and the air even cleaner," said Wang Jingyang, who manages the

upgrade project. His optimism reflects the broader mood of transformation in the region.

The initiative extends beyond gas processing. In a country blessed with abundant sunlight, Chinese engineers are helping Iraq harness solar power. A new one-megawatt solar station in the Rumaila oilfield, complete with energy storage systems, represents Iraq's steps toward renewable energy. The facility is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1,600 tons annually, a small but significant step in the country's environmental journey.

Wang Xianghui, senior vice-president of CPECC Middle East Branch, emphasized that embracing green development is a fundamental social responsibility for companies contributing to the high-quality advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative. "We aim to play our part in building a 'Green Silk Road,'" he said.

For Iraqi officials, these developments signal a new chapter in the nation's industrial development. At the inauguration ceremony of the BNLG project, Oil Minister Hayan Abdul-Ghani emphasized how these projects are not just environ-



Employees inspect the Basra Natural Gas Liquids project built by China Petroleum Engineering and Construction Corporation in Basra, Iraq, in December. DUAN MINFU / XINHUA

mental victories, but also economic ones, improving both livelihoods and air quality.

The World Bank estimated that Iraq wasted approximately 17 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually through flaring, a stark reminder of both the challenges and opportunities ahead. However, for residents like Hussein, the

impact of these changes is measured in everyday moments: the simple pleasure of breathing cleaner air during a morning commute, a small but significant sign of progress in a city working to balance industrial might with environmental responsibility.

XINHUA

WORLD

Beijing's pace in digital tech appreciated

ASEAN members call for cooperation to unlock growth opportunities in region

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok
yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

The ASEAN member states and officials applauded China's achievements in digital technology and the economy, and called for support to help advance the region's digital infrastructure, nurture digital talent and align regulatory frameworks to enhance cross-border e-commerce and unlock new growth opportunities.

With groundbreaking advances in artificial intelligence, or AI, and quantum computing, the rapid development of the digital economy has positioned China as a leading force in digital innovation, said Kao Kim Hourn, secretary-general of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN.

Speaking at the ASEAN-China Digital Ecosystem Cooperation Forum in Bangkok on Wednesday, he emphasized that ASEAN-China relations have evolved with the times, growing into one of the region's most adaptive and forward-looking partnerships. And the technological momentum creates significant opportunities for deeper ASEAN-China collaboration in emerging technologies.

"This robust economic relationship is now being further strengthened by our shared resolve to drive the wave of digital transformation, unlocking new opportunities for innovation, connectivity and sustainable growth," Kao said.

Kao said the region's priority is to enhance digital connectivity infrastructure in terms of quality, accessibility, affordability and capacity in digital skills.

He also said the ethics and governance of AI should be addressed. And the region should also focus on bridging the digital divide to ensure truly inclusive digital transformation.

"We look forward to collaborating with China to build robust frameworks for the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies. Also, as e-commerce continues to be a cornerstone of our digital cooperation, ASEAN's dynamic market presents opportunities for both regions to leverage their respective strengths," Kao said.

Organized by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, or CAICT, the Wednesday forum gathered officials and enterprises from China and ASEAN member states, includ-

ing Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia.

In a panel discussion centered on the opportunities and challenges of emerging digital technologies, business leaders and researchers exchanged insights from their experiences in international markets, particularly in Southeast Asia.

In his keynote speech, China's Vice-Minister of Industry and Information Technology Zhang Yunming called for more cross-border cooperation in digital infrastructure projects, the application of digital technology innovation and the training of talent.

New forms

"We should accelerate the digital transformation and develop new business forms such as industrial internet cultivation, intelligent manufacturing and service-oriented manufacturing, empowering economic growth and sustainable development," Zhang said.

"We should adhere to the principles of openness, cooperation and sharing, helping the small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the vulnerable groups in developing countries to catch up with the digital trend," he stressed, adding that countries should also enhance digital policy coordination to create an open and fair environment for digital businesses.

Statistics from ASEAN show that the region now has more than 480 million active internet users. Of them, 80 percent are digital consumers, and the region is poised for significant digital expansion. It is estimated that about \$2 trillion will be unlocked in the region's digital economy by 2030.

Prasert Jantararungtong, Thailand's deputy prime minister and minister of digital economy and society, emphasized the importance of digital transformation and the role of technology in promoting economic growth.

In his opening remarks, Prasert praised the partnership between ASEAN and China, and called for collective efforts to empower people in the region through digital technology and promote economic growth.

The event concluded with thanks to all parties involved for their contributions to making the conference possible and for taking meaningful steps toward a more innovative and digitally empowered future.



Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College (UIC) officially inaugurates the UIC Boston Center on Thursday at the Harvard Club of Boston. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese college opens hub in Boston for global collaboration

By MINLUZHANG in Boston
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

In Boston, the US' most dynamic education hub, Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College (UIC) launched a new center on Thursday.

The occasion signaled another people-to-people effort to foster educational and academic exchange amid ongoing tension between China and the United States.

The UIC Boston Center, which houses the Institute of Life and Art, the Whitehead Research Center, and the UIC American Alumni Association, aims to enhance academic exchange, research collaboration, and student opportunities between UIC and institutions in the US, according to a UIC news release.

"Boston is an academic center with a rich intellectual history," Chen Zhi, president of UIC, said during the opening ceremony. "This center will enable UIC to build stronger ties with institutions here and provide more opportunities for students and faculty to engage in academic collaborations."

Founded in 2005, UIC is the first college on the Chinese mainland to focus on liberal arts education. It is also the first higher education institution co-founded by the mainland and Hong Kong. Its main campus is located in Zhuhai, in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, US-China higher education exchanges have seen significant shifts.

According to the 2023 Open Door Report, the number of Chinese students in the US dropped from a peak of 372,532 in 2019-2020, to 289,525 in 2022-2023.

The drop in the number of American students in China has been even more pronounced, plummeting from 11,639 in 2018-19 to just 211



One of our goals is to attract top scholars — both established and emerging talents with experience in the US — to join our institution."

Chen Zhi, president of United International College

by 2021-22, largely due to pandemic restrictions and geopolitical tensions.

The US embassy in China now reports a slight recovery, with approximately 700 American students currently studying there.

There are indeed some misunderstandings and obstacles between China and the US, said Chen. "However, this makes initiatives like ours even more significant. Academic research and higher education exchanges play a crucial role in eliminating unnecessary misunderstandings," Chen told China Daily.

He noted that UIC is highly international. "We have many foreign faculty members, with a significant portion coming from the US. Many of them earned their degrees or worked in the US before joining us."

"This background greatly facilitates mutual understanding, academic exchange, and higher education collaboration. One of our goals is to attract top scholars — both established and emerging talents with experience in the US — to join our institution," he said. "At the same time, we hope to enroll more students from the US to study with us."

Eugene Wang, a Rockefeller professor of Asian art at Harvard University and the co-director of UIC's

Boston Center, said he hopes to move beyond bilateral thinking toward a global exchange of ideas.

"It's not just about the US and China. At the end of the day, it's about civilization as a whole — about our entire world. Any national boundary is limiting," he told China Daily.

"Rather than seeing this center simply as a platform for US-China dialogue, I see it as a third space — one that is not beholden to either system but has a life of its own. It aims to transcend national boundaries and pursue art, science and truth in ways that are universally meaningful," Wang said. "Naturally, when something aspires to speak to all of humanity rather than being confined by national divisions, its significance becomes clear to both sides."

Yu Yougen, education counselor for the Chinese Consulate General in New York, sent his congratulations to the center.

"Boston, as a global hub of higher education, attracts top faculty, researchers and students, making it the ideal location for this center — not just for its space but also for its rich academic and human resources," Yu said.

"I believe you have chosen the best place to establish this center, which will serve as a vital link between universities and higher education communities in mainland China, Hong Kong, and the United States."

The opening also saw the signing of memorandums of understanding with two prominent US universities in the area — Northeastern University in Boston, and Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts.

The agreements will facilitate academic exchange, joint research projects and internships, strengthening ties between UIC and these institutions.

S. Korea's Yoon avoids questioning after arrest

SEOUL — South Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol refused to appear for fresh questioning by investigators on Thursday, a day after his arrest over a failed martial law declaration.

The Constitutional Court also opened its second hearing in a trial that will decide whether to uphold Yoon's impeachment, following the dawn raid that made him the country's first-ever sitting president to be detained.

The former star prosecutor, who faces charges of insurrection, was questioned for hours on Wednesday but exercised his right to remain silent before being moved to a detention center.

Investigators from the Corruption Investigation Office, or CIO, resumed Yoon's questioning on Thursday afternoon, but he did not attend.

"President Yoon Suk-yeol's representatives informed the CIO through his legal counsel around 1:50 pm that there is 'no change in his position,' indicating his intent not to appear," the CIO said in a statement before the questioning.

Yoon's lawyer confirmed to AFP the leader would not attend, without specifying the reason, but told the Yonhap news agency it was for health reasons.

"President Yoon is not well and fully explained his position yesterday, so there is nothing more to be interrogated about," Yoon Kab-keun, the lawyer, told Yonhap, an apparent reference to his decision not to answer questions on Wednesday.

Wednesday's arrest saw a hundreds-strong force of police and investigators bypass bus barricades, cut barbed wire and scale ladders to get inside the compound where Yoon was surrounded by hundreds of guards.

Yoon said he complied with investigators to avoid "bloodshed" but did not accept the legality of the investigation.

Meanwhile, officials were trying to secure a new warrant that could hold him for longer than 48 hours.

If investigators successfully obtain that warrant, they are expected to be given a 20-day extension to the leader's detention to allow time to formalize an indictment against him.

South Korea's opposition Democratic Party celebrated Yoon's detention, while the parliament speaker said it was time to stabilize the country after weeks of turmoil.

However, Yoon's lawyers have filed for a review of the warrant used to arrest him.

Experts say Yoon's legal team appears to be trying to drag out the arrest process to his benefit.

Opinion polls show a majority of South Koreans support impeaching Yoon, but the attempts to arrest him appear to have rallied his hardcore supporters.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Trudeau outlines retaliatory measures



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks during a news conference following a meeting of provincial and territorial leaders in Ottawa, on Wednesday. BLAIR GABLE / REUTERS

OTTAWA — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and regional leaders said on Wednesday all options were on the table to respond to possible US tariffs while still holding out hope of avoiding a trade war.

After meeting with provincial and territorial leaders in Ottawa, Trudeau highlighted that more than \$1 billion had been earmarked for new border security measures to clamp down on the illicit drug trade and human trafficking, in hopes of placating Trump, who has vowed to slap 25 percent tariffs on Canadian imports.

A source familiar with the matter said on Wednesday the worth of Canada's countermeasures could be up to \$105 billion. The Toronto Star was the first to report the proposed countermeasures.

"If the US administration chooses to still implement tariffs, we will respond purposefully, forcefully and

resolutely," he said. "Everything is on the table as potential responses."

A government source told AFP that Ottawa could impose retaliatory tariffs on hundreds of US-made goods, including steel products, ceramics, and Florida orange juice.

Provincial and opposition leaders also called for blocking exports of Canadian oil, electricity and critical minerals in what could devolve into a trade war.

However, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith pushed back against any disruption of the more than 3 million barrels of oil shipped daily from her province to the United States —

showing cracks in Canada's unified response.

Doug Ford, the premier of Ontario, the nation's most populous province and its economic engine, bristled at her remarks, telling reporters: "When Donald Trump comes at us ... he's coming full tilt at Canadians as a whole."

"Protect your jurisdiction but (the) country comes first," he said.

Nearly 77 percent of Canadian exports go to the United States, which in 2023 represented about \$382 billion worth of goods.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Efforts in Kenya's development hailed

By WANG XIAODONG in Nairobi, Kenya
wangxiaodong@chinadaily.com.cn

Senior officials in Kenya have hailed the critical role China has played in developing manufacturing in the East African country and expressed a willingness for continued international cooperation for Kenya's industrial upgrading.

While visiting Yocean Group, a Chinese-invested electrical equipment manufacturer in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, on Wednesday, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Energy and Petroleum Opiyo Wandayi said Chinese-invested companies have made great contributions to creating jobs, stimulating economic growth, reducing reliance on imports, and building a sustainable future in Kenya.

Stressing the importance of manufacturing to Kenya, Wandayi also promised more measures to improve the business environment for foreign investors.

"The Ministry of Energy is committed to removing barriers and streamlining policies to ensure manufacturers like Yocean Group can thrive," he said.

Kenya's energy and manufacturing sectors are central to the nation's Vision 2030 development agenda, which emphasizes local manufacturing solutions.

The manufacturing sector, which currently contributes 7.6 percent to Kenya's GDP, is expected to account for 20 percent of the country's GDP by 2030, as outlined in Vision 2030.

Tobias Alando, CEO of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, acknowledged the contributions of Chinese companies to technological transformation.

"When we prioritize local production, we promote job creation and economic growth while addressing systemic challenges in the energy sector. This is a pathway to unlocking Kenya's industrial potential," he said.

Jeremiah Kiplagat, director of the Institute of Energy Studies & Research in Kenya, highlighted the successful localization efforts of Chinese companies such as Yocean in creating opportunities for young people.

Yu Yang, managing director of Yocean, said he is proud to say that today the Kenyan team handles 100 percent of the produc-

tion line in the company.

"We believe that innovation is the key to building a sustainable energy future in Kenya," he said.

Kenya has also made significant strides in renewable energy, with approximately 90 percent of its electricity derived from hydro, solar, wind, and geothermal sources, according to a report published by Kenya's Ministry of Energy and Petroleum.

Wandayi noted ongoing initiatives to expand renewable energy infrastructure in Kenya, highlighting that collaboration with Chinese companies can help address the country's growing energy demand.

These national efforts are further bolstered by the 2024 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Summit's Action Plan, which outlines a comprehensive road map for energy infrastructure development across Africa. A key feature of this plan is the implementation of 30 clean energy projects. These initiatives aim to reduce Africa's dependence on fossil fuels, address the climate crisis, and align with global sustainability goals.

Zhang Mingxiao contributed to this story.

COMMENT

Editorials

Biden administration trying to straitjacket its successor into carrying on its China policy

In an apparent move to dictate to its successor how to handle China relations, the Joe Biden administration has markedly intensified its China-targeted measures during its last week in office.

After imposing sweeping restrictions on the export of advanced computer chips used for the development of artificial intelligence on Monday, the Biden administration banned sales and imports of connected vehicle hardware and software systems, as well as completed connected vehicles from China and Russia on Tuesday, on the pretext of ensuring US automotive supply chains "are resilient and secure from foreign adversary cyber threats".

Also on Tuesday, the Biden administration claimed China uses unfair policies and practices to dominate the global maritime, logistics and shipbuilding sectors, which could presage the next administration imposing tariffs or port fees on Chinese-built vessels.

One day later, the Biden administration sanctioned more than 150 companies and individuals, including dozens of Chinese entities, accusing them of bypassing the US' sanctions against Russia.

Some senior officials of the administration, including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, have made it clear that the intention is to make trouble for not only China but also the incoming administration.

"Obviously it's going to be up to them how they want to proceed, and they may have internal debates the same way we had internal debates about exactly how to calibrate the rule," Sullivan told the media. "But I would be surprised sitting here today if, after 120 days, they looked at the landscape as we've looked at it, and said, 'You know, we really don't need this at all.'"

By making these measures seem as if they are the necessary means to maintain US leadership in high technology and protect the US' "national security", the Biden administration is trying to hijack the China policy of its successor.

The latest measures, along with others targeting China in various trade, high-tech and industry fields, are invariably criticized by relevant US companies and industry organizations and the affected ones in the third party countries as irrational, absurd, immature politicized moves that disturb the stability of the global industry and supply chains and leave no party unscathed.

In an apparent response to the latest moves, Beijing announced on Thursday relevant strategic resources had been added to its export control list and it will further strengthen export controls soon; it has also initiated an antidumping investigation on imports of copolymer polyoxymethylene originating in the US, the European Union, Japan and the island of Taiwan; and anti-subsidy and antidumping probes into mature process chips from the US, and it is mulling putting the US' PVH Group on its Entity List for its "improper moves" related to the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

There has not been and will not be any winner in such tit-for-tat fight between two major economies. Even US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo in a recent interview criticized the Biden administration's advanced semiconductor export controls targeting China, saying they are merely "speed bumps" and that "trying to hold China back is a fool's errand".

Intensively rolling out such measures in its waning days to straitjacket the incoming administration and pass the burden of paying for the cost of its own erroneous policymaking to its successor is an abuse of power.

The astounding speed with which the Biden administration has rolled out its series of anti-China measures after the Democrats lost the presidential election in November shows its intent is to lock its successor in the policy cage it has made.

Notably many of these China-targeted measures, including the AI curbs, have a several-month comment period or so. Although the Biden administration, as Sullivan pointed out, thinks that is a favor it has done for the next administration, leaving time and space for it to maneuver as it sees fit, the Biden administration is acting like a traffic police officer who before his retirement the next morning tries to wheel lock every car parked on the roadside after midnight under the pretext of trying to gift the town a good traffic order as his farewell present. But that only leaves the town in a mess, forcing the next officer to handle the uproar from residents.

Ceasefire raises hopes of permanent end to war

China has consistently expressed its deep concern about the humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip and called for a release of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas, a comprehensive and unconditional ceasefire to end the fighting, and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The tentative ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas that has been announced on Wednesday offers hope that these objectives may now be realized. The deal is three-phase, with implementation of the first phase set to begin on Sunday with a hostage-prisoner exchange and a 42-day halt to the fighting. Israeli forces are to withdraw from all the populated areas of Gaza.

Whether the deal leads to a permanent end to the fighting remains to be seen. But Israel bombed Gaza claiming about 80 lives, according to local sources, shortly after the ceasefire deal was announced. It is to be sincerely hoped that the ceasefire will hold and the deal will be faithfully implemented by both sides. The joy on people's faces in Gaza and Israel captured in photos published on some news websites show how people on both sides have been longing for an end to the conflict.

Details of the second and third phases, though understood to be agreed to in principle, are still to be negotiated. The negotiations to reach the second phase of the deal, which is intended to permanently end the fighting, will begin on the 16th day of the implementation of the first phase of the deal. The entire world should hope that the talks produce agreement so that the war can end as soon as possible.

Major world powers, especially the United States which has unconditionally supported Israel's military operations, should do all they can to ensure the negotiations proceed and reach agreement on how to realize that objective.

Washington should use its leverage over Israel to make sure that the ceasefire will be implemented to the letter by the Israeli side, and other major powers and relevant parties should do the same with Hamas. It is crucial that the commitments agreed to are fully honored by both parties.

If the pause in the fighting does take effect on Sunday, it is imperative that the long-delayed humanitarian aid reaches those desperately in need as soon as possible.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is the fundamental guarantee for that but it is not yet clear if Israel will continue with its plans to ban the UNRWA — the UN agency for Palestinian refugees — at the end of January, something that would severely curtail the ability to deliver aid to Palestinians in Gaza.

China firmly opposes Israel's smearing and suppression of the UNRWA, and is gravely concerned about the relevant Knesset bills targeting the agency. It has repeatedly urged Israel to stop weaponizing humanitarian assistance, lift the blockade of Gaza and the restrictions on humanitarian access, and cooperate fully with the UN and other humanitarian agencies.

The agreement in principle that has been reached has multiple stages that if broken could result in a resumption of fighting. But, looking ahead, if the ceasefire holds, there is still the question of who will govern postwar Gaza.

Hamas wants the complete and total withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. While Israel insists on maintaining a military presence in the Palestinian enclave. And there is currently no sign of any agreement on a third party to administer Gaza.

Looking even further ahead, the two-state solution, with each state recognizing the right of the other to exist, is the prerequisite for lasting peace.

That explains why China has consistently called on Israel to put an immediate end to its intensified settlement activities and violence in the West Bank, which are a de-facto obliteration of the foundation of the two-state solution.

The ceasefire deal is welcome, but it is only a first step toward lasting peace. There is still much that needs to be done.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huijin Dongjie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8365
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 6270
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

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Common development of Global South reinvigorated

China's foreign relations got off to a good start in the new year. Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently set off on a week-long four-nation trip to Africa, continuing the 35-year tradition of the Chinese foreign minister choosing an African country as the first destination in the new year.

On Monday, China's top leader met with visiting Grenadian Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, expressing willingness to work with Grenada to enhance the synergy of the development strategies of the two countries, push for more fruits of China-Grenada cooperation and bring more benefits to the two peoples. He said China supports Grenada in independently exploring a development path suited to its national conditions and is willing to provide assistance for Grenada's economic and social development within the framework of South-South cooperation.

On Wednesday, the top leader held

talks with visiting Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, saying China will actively support Sri Lanka's economic development, advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, enhance collaboration in modern agriculture, the digital economy and the marine economy, and create new highlights in bilateral cooperation. The same day the top leader had a phone conversation with General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee To Lam, expressing the desire to maintain close high-level exchanges with Vietnam, push for more outcomes of bilateral cooperation, and promote people-to-people exchanges.

All these are not only a reflection of China's determination to fulfill its responsibilities as a major power, but also bring benefits to itself and the rest of the world. According to a recent survey of 51,000 people in 46 countries conducted by Global

Times, nearly 70 percent of the respondents said that they expect China to play a greater role in international affairs. China's ever-expanding "circle of friends" will surely help it promote high-quality development, advance its high-level opening-up, and make greater contributions to world economic growth.

At the recent ceremony of the handover of presidency of the Group of 77 and China coalition, China's permanent representative to the UN Fu Cong said that no matter how the international situation changes, China's commitment to supporting the development and revitalization of the Global South will remain undiminished. China always matches its words with deeds. As the world's second-largest economy, China will stay true to its original aspiration to support countries in the Global South.

— WU YUXUE, CHINA DAILY

Spring Festival model for promoting Chinese culture

When people mark Chinese New Year on January 29 it will be the first time after the festival and social practices of the Chinese people in celebration of the traditional New Year were included on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

The State Council issued a notice on Monday declaring further optimization of tourism policies, including the orderly expansion of the visa-exempt countries list. During the recent New Year holiday, the number of foreign nationals entering China increased by nearly 34 percent compared to last year. A travel platform even predicted that during this year's Spring Festival, the number of travel orders from foreign tourists to China will increase by 203 percent over last year.

China can use the favorable visa policies to showcase the intangible cultural connotations of Spring Festival with the world, enhancing the economic vitality of the festival.

The reason why Spring Festival has become such a notable representative of Chinese culture is because of the rich cultural connotations and widespread public participation. The evolution from ancient practices to today's Chinese New Year reflects how Chinese traditions are passed on from generation to generation. But it is not only a unique festival for the Chinese people, it has also been gradually accepted and celebrated around the world, becoming a global cultural event.

Over time, Spring Festival has been innovating itself while preserv-

ing traditions. Spring Festival's connotations and functions are rich and diverse. Apart from participating in the various activities related to Spring Festival, young people should also share knowledge about the festival with others.

As a large number of foreign tourists pour in, this year's Spring Festival could see increased footfall at museums and cultural heritage sites. Also, with the integration of culture and tourism and the empowerment of digitalization, people may use technologies such as blockchain to create digital assets to send as blessings. We look forward to this year's Spring Festival becoming a model for inheriting and promoting China's intangible cultural heritage and culture.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Xiaohongshu may be next in line to feel the heat

Many TikTok users in the United States have registered on the Chinese social media app Xiaohongshu recently amid wide concern that TikTok may be blocked soon.

The US Supreme Court is due to rule on Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act that stipulates TikTok must be divested from its Chinese parent company ByteDance by Sunday or face a ban in the US on the pretext of "national security" concerns.

The influx of US users to the app, which is called "China's answer to Instagram", has grabbed global attention and brought a huge flow of data from the US to the Shanghai-headquartered platform, which combines e-commerce, short video and posting functions. But the Chinese company whose major market has been on the Chinese mainland since its founding in 2013 might not have found that good news as it may only prove a matter of time before it is tar-

geted by the US authorities the same way as they did with TikTok.

Even if US president-elect Donald Trump has signaled some opposition to the divest-or-ban law and promised to "save TikTok" on the campaign trail, and said he would "take a look" whether he would seek to prevent the Supreme Court's ban from taking effect after his meeting with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew in his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida last month, he has never specified how he plans to protect the app.

Trump's change of heart toward TikTok, a target during his first administration, has originated from his acute need to woo young voters during his presidential election campaign. Whether he will stick to that position after he takes office on Monday remains to be seen, as he will face mounting bipartisan pressure to return to his tough stance on the Chinese app, particularly as some of the China hawks in his proposed Cabinet

have been behind the witch hunt of TikTok from day one.

TikTok has gone to great lengths to try and retain its US market these years, ranging from localizing its data storage and processing in the country to its efficient response to the lawsuit and Congress' inquisition. It is more difficult for Xiaohongshu to achieve TikTok's success in the US for not only it has US competitors in the same market niche but also that TikTok realized its fast development in the US before it was targeted by the US government.

So those comparing the app to a new platform that can deepen people-to-people exchanges between the two countries have to bear in mind that the company will have to weigh its opportunity cost and marginal benefit, amid mounting uncertainties, to try and prevent its highlight moment in the US from becoming a flash in the pan.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

John Queripel

China's green sector drives global climate fight

With the return of climate skeptic Donald Trump to the White House — especially his threat to withdraw the United States from all climate treaties including the Paris Agreement, which is central to the battle against climate change and keeping global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius — the heavy lifting on the climate front may be left to China. What is and will happen in China represent the only hope for the world to not reach the disastrous projections on climate and the Earth's future.

Fortunately, China is leading the green energy drive globally — it has by far the highest installed capacity for solar and wind power generation, and is a global leader in electric vehicles and reforestation.

China, along with the US, made possible the 2015 Paris Agreement to cap global temperature rise at 1.5 C. It has also vowed to peak its carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. In fact, so rapid has been China's use of clean energy technologies that its carbon emissions could peak before the targeted year.

Surprisingly, China has made the achievements while realizing healthy economic growth. It is not only the largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity but also leads the world in the production of goods normally associated with high carbon emissions. China's total electricity generation is twice that of the US, steel and cement produc-



Changed policies, however, are showing that continued industrialization does not have to be at the expense of the natural environment.

tion 10 and 20 times that of the US, respectively.

China's high-speed growth and industrialization since the launch of reform and opening-up in the late 1970s has contributed much to global emissions, but the Chinese government, realizing the dangers of climate change, has changed its development policy in the past decade.

China's renewable energy boom has already exceeded its 2030 growth targets for wind and solar energy. In 2023 and 2024, China installed the highest solar photovoltaic capacity in the world — 260 of the global 459 gigawatts in 2023, and 334 of 593 gigawatts in 2024.

Chinese factories produced 80 percent of the world's solar panels in 2024, which caused prices to dip and thus encouraged

other countries to purchase solar panels from China. As a matter of fact, China's renewable capacity is growing faster than the overall demand for electricity, meaning fossil fuel use is declining.

Thanks to its solar and wind power generation, the Global Energy Monitor has highlighted that China's contribution to reducing emissions is twice that of the rest of the world, with 180 GW of solar and 159 GW of wind energy projects under construction.

"Wind and solar now account for 37 percent of the total power capacity in the country, an 8 percent increase from 2022, and widely expected to surpass coal capacity, which is 39 percent of the total right now, in 2024," the Global Energy Monitor said.

By continuing its solar and wind electricity growth, China will generate 3,500 GW of renewable energy by 2030. By 2035 that figure could increase to 5,000 GW, and 65 percent of the total energy mix. These advances will see China reduce its carbon emissions by 30 percent by 2030 from the 2023 level.

To reach these goals, China needs to ensure 60 percent of its auto sales comprise EVs and plug-in hybrids, which it can easily realize because the current figure is 50 percent.

In EV production and sales China has topped the world for the past eight years — EVs are estimated to have reduced 50 million tons of carbon emissions in 2023.

Furthermore, China has to raise the share of railway freight to 25 percent,

which is quite possible given the country's fast-growing rail network, currently at 162,000 kilometers, and reduce its industrial emissions by 25 percent by 2035 from the 2023 levels — including 45 percent in steel. China's nationwide emissions trading system, which includes steel, aluminum and cement, will make that possible.

The drawdown in CO2 is also being helped by China's massive reforestation program. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, China leads the rest of the world in reforestation, adding 1,937,000 hectares every year to the country's green cover (2010-20), with Australia being a distant second one.

One can easily see the extensive tree cover even in Chinese cities. This has not only reduced emissions but also cooled down the temperature. Adding 10 percent more green cover to cities and towns could potentially reduce the surface temperature of the area by 2.2 C.

China has worn much opprobrium for CO2 increase during its rapid industrialization. Changed policies, however, are showing that continued industrialization does not have to be at the expense of the natural environment. As President Xi Jinping recently said, "Protect the ecological environment, and it will reward you."

The author is a Newcastle-based Australian social commentator and historian. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

The author is chief of China Daily EU Bureau based in Brussels. chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Biden leaves behind legacy of a divided world

US President Joe Biden's foreign policy speech at the State Department on Monday reflects his typical style of self-congratulation — evident in almost everything he has said, from official remarks to postings on social media X (formerly Twitter), during the past years.

Such excessive bragging has exposed his extreme anxiety. A Gallup poll released on Tuesday showed that most Americans think the US has lost ground during the last four years in areas ranging from federal debt, immigration, crime control, the rich-poor gap and the economy to the US' position in the world.

Biden's approval rating was only 39 percent in December, showing a steady decline from his first days in office in 2021, according to Gallup.

An AP-NORC poll unveiled on Jan 10 showed that 47 percent Americans rated Biden's presidency as "poor or terrible" while 28 percent graded him "average". Only 25 percent said his term was "good or great".

Right after his foreign policy speech, the two foreign policy experts CNN anchor Isa Soares invited to comment lambasted Biden's foreign policy legacy.

Fawaz Gerges, a professor of international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, said Biden "will be remembered as one of the worst presidents in foreign policy: naïve, gullible, morally senile". Gerges, a Lebanese-American, held Biden responsible for forcing the world to face "one of the most dangerous moments" since the end of World War II. He said Biden has played a major role in "militarizing the world" and termed the Israel-Palestine conflict "Biden's war".

But apart from peddling more US arms to the allies, Biden has not made the EU's economy stronger.

Ravi Agrawal, editor of the Foreign Policy magazine, agreed with Gerges, lamenting that the US "has lost enormous amount of soft power and public opinion" during the last four years.

To me, Biden's policy over the Gaza crisis cancels out any foreign policy achievements he may have made. The fact that he has never mentioned the number of Palestinians killed by US-supplied weapons has shocked the entire world, including many in his Democratic Party. It is also seen as a reason for Democrats' loss in the 2024 presidential election.

A temporary cease-fire deal in Gaza, which was reached on Wednesday, will not change Biden's legacy. Many experts have credited incoming US president Donald Trump for the breakthrough.

The Biden presidency started with the chaotic withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan only to leave the country to the Taliban 20 years after the US launched a full-scale invasion of Afghanistan to topple the Taliban government.

Biden praised himself for the role the US has played in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. However, the fact that the US and its NATO allies have failed to subdue Russia after nearly three years of proxy war is simply a failure of the US. That NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte told the European Parliament on Monday that Ukraine cannot "at this moment negotiate from a position of strength" is proof that the conflict is not going in the US-NATO's favor.

Biden claimed that he has made US allies stronger. But apart from peddling more US arms to the allies, Biden has not made the EU's economy stronger. The fact is, the EU now lags further behind in economy and technology from the US.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the much-touted "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework" the US launched with 13 other economies in 2022 has barely achieved anything.

Biden has indeed succeeded in coercing allies, from the Netherlands to Japan to the Republic of Korea, to restrict the exports of semiconductors and chip-making equipment to China, but the move has inflicted colossal damage on those countries and their companies as well as many US tech firms.

In his Feb 4, 2021, foreign policy speech at the State Department, Biden had told the world that "America is back". He has constantly trashed his predecessor Trump during the last four years. But with Trump's second term starting on Jan 20, Biden's words will fade quickly.

Biden said on Monday that he is leaving Trump "with a very strong hand to play". But what he is leaving behind is a world that is the most divided and chaotic in decades and more closer to a third world war and even a nuclear war.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Chen Guiqing

Taiwan's new office in India a rash provocative move

As there are warming signs of improving relations between the two largest developing nations, India should exercise caution to avoid any provocations that might challenge China's bottom line.

The inauguration of the "Taipei economic and cultural center" in Mumbai on Oct 16 as the Taiwan's third representative office in India is a provocative move by Taiwan as it is a step toward seeking "independence" under the guise of promoting economic and cultural exchanges. Beijing has condemned the move and urged New Delhi to adhere to the one-China principle and handle with utmost care issues related to Taiwan to avoid hindering the progress in China-India relations.

There is only one China, and Taiwan is an inseparable part of China, and the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing all of China, including Taiwan. Recognized by the international community, the one-China principle serves as the political foundation for China's diplomatic ties with all the countries.

As a nation with diplomatic ties with China, India should strictly adhere to the one-China principle, while refraining from conducting any form of official exchanges with the Chinese island, including the establishment of representative offices.

Under the pretext of promoting education, culture and trade, Taiwan's establishment of a representative office in India's financial capital of Mumbai is a

These developments are all the more alarming because India has not reaffirmed its adherence to the one-China principle in its joint statements with China for years, with its stance becoming increasingly ambiguous.

clear violation of the one-China principle. On Oct 1, 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded, becoming the successor to the Republic of China, and the Central People's Government became the only legitimate government of the whole of China. And United Nations Resolution 2758, adopted in 1971, restored the People's Republic of China's seat as the sole representative of China, including Taiwan, in the UN. Taiwan's status as an integral part of China has not changed, and will not change.

Since the consulates general of People's Republic of China serve Chinese people, including Taiwan residents living in Mumbai, Taiwan's office in Mumbai is not only unnecessary, but also lacks legal basis.

Taiwan is a part of China, and the Taiwan question is China's internal affair, touching upon its sovereignty and core interests. India was the first non-socialist country to recognize the People's Repub-

lic of China — in December 1949, India withdrew its recognition of the Chinese government which had retreated to Taiwan and recognized the People's Republic of China. On April 1, 1950, China and India formally established diplomatic relations. And India's support for UN Resolution 2758 was instrumental in restoring the People's Republic's legitimate UN seat in 1971.

Although China-India relations have faced many ups and downs since then, India has remained committed to the one-China principle, recognizing the People's Republic as the sole legitimate government of China.

China-India trade has been thriving. According to the Global Trade Research Initiative, China was India's largest trading partner in the 2023-24 fiscal year, with bilateral trade reaching \$118.4 billion. On the border disputes, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said on Oct 22 last year, both sides have reached an agreement on relevant issues, creating the ground for restoring peace along the border.

History tells us that stable bilateral relations benefit the long-term interests of both countries and contribute to regional peace and prosperity. As two ancient civilizations and major developing countries, China and India should view each other as partners, develop mutual understanding and deepen cooperation.

More important, India should understand that the Taiwan question is a red line that it should not cross. Missteps will inevitably harm bilateral relations,

impacting India's own interests.

Since the Democratic Progressive Party took power on the island in 2016, the Taiwan authorities has aligned with the United States in the hope of seeking "Taiwan independence" with the help of foreign forces. In an attempt to gain India's support, Taiwan authorities have made India a focus of its "new southbound policy".

Under DPP's lobbying, India's Taiwan policy is backsliding, revealing an inclination to play the "Taiwan card" along with the US. Some Indian think tanks advocate for deeper relations with Taiwan by breaking "diplomatic taboos". Certain Indian media outlets have even aired interviews with prominent "Taiwan independence" figures, promoting the idea that "Taiwan is a country", not part of China.

These developments are all the more alarming because India has not reaffirmed its adherence to the one-China principle in its joint statements with China for years, with its stance becoming increasingly ambiguous.

India must realize that by continuing to collaborate with "Taiwan independence" forces, it risks not only disrupting peace and stability across the Strait but also harming its own interests, ultimately "lifting a rock only to drop it on its own foot".

The author is a researcher at the Institute of Taiwan Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



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

KONSTANTINOS GRIVAS

Anxiety attacks

Plagued by fear and self-loathing, the West is trying to identify itself as a bright force in relation to dark others

The return of Donald Trump to the White House places the United States on a new geopolitical path.

Although it is still too early to draw conclusions with certainty, it is likely that Trump's re-election will reinforce the trend of the US slipping into an irrational high strategy, which is based on the hidden but



real foundations of geopolitical behavior derived from fundamentalist interpretations of Western Christianity, given that a large

percentage of his voters come from the most religious sections of US society.

When commenting on the competition between the US and China, the notorious "Thucydides Trap", shifts in power balances and a range of other geopolitical factors are often mentioned, which are said to intensify competition between the West and China, leading us toward a perilous future.

However, there are some other factors contributing to the tension between the West and China, which are difficult to identify as they lie hidden within the geopolitical foundations of the West.

An underestimated factor that influences the geopolitical behavior of countries is the fundamental worldviews that originate from their cultural core. However, this is not perceived in the West because the fundamental worldviews that affect Western geopolitical behavior stem from Western Christianity, and since the era of modernity the West believes it has fully secularized and is no longer connected to its Christian foundations. This, however, is not the case. In reality, the fundamental Christian-derived worldview has passed almost unchanged into the Western cul-



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

ture of modernity, integrated with in a superficially secular shell but nearly unchanged at the core.

Thus, Western geopolitical behavior is plagued by strong, albeit hidden, Manichaean, millenarian, deterministic and eschatological elements. These result in the Western tendency to seek out demonized geopolitical adversaries. These forces influence the behavior of the West irrationally.

As John Gray writes in his book *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*, the decline of Christianity in the West and the rise of humanism led to the replacement of God in the collective consciousness of people with faith in

the capabilities of human beings themselves. In other words, the worldview of man-god was created, as described by Fyodor Dostoevsky in his book *The Possessed*.

Thus, faith emerged in the omnipotence of science, as an applied function of the powerful human mind, which would lead to the domination and control of the world.

So, modernity was marked by the self-deification of Western man. However, the optimism and self-admiration did not last long. Over the course of history, Western man has gradually realized that the foundational element of the informal reli-

gion of modernity, namely faith in the control of his own destiny, was an illusion. Two world wars and later the terror of the nuclear age dealt a devastating blow to Western man's belief that he can control his own destiny.

Moreover, man has ceased to be the measure of all things. Rather than believing that the world was created for them, people have begun to see themselves as invaders, and destroyers of some kind of "natural order".

In other words, postmodern Western man no longer believes he can control his fate, does not look forward to a bright future or a continuous path of improvement, and

most importantly, no longer worships himself. In fact, he doesn't even like himself. He fears and hates himself.

However, because it is very painful and exhausting to hate oneself, Western man defines his existence positively as the opposite of a dark image.

This reality constitutes one of the foundations of the emerging international system, pushing toward the development of a new bipolarity, not only because this arises from "material" geopolitical causes, but also because it represents a psychological need for the West to define and tolerate itself. That is, the West is trying to acquire a new identity

and a new mission by creating and demonizing a dark "other" or "others", against whom it can identify itself as a bright force. At the geopolitical level, one of these "others" today is China.

In conclusion, it seems that we are at the end of a long historical period. Christianity and ancient Greece offered Europeans the fundamental worldviews and self-perceptions that allowed them to dominate the world. Then, in the West, a self-deification of man was attempted, which ended in deadlock. Thus, the optimism of modernity has been replaced by postmodern pessimism, and human self-admiration has turned into self-hatred. However, this hatred cannot perpetually turn inward, so it seeks targets. This is expected to be a factor of significant importance on international affairs in the coming decades.

At this point, the role of Greece is potentially significant. More specifically, the Hellenic civilization is to a great extent the creator of European civilization. Thus, Greece, as a living carrier of the core of Western culture, can function as a factor of cooperation and creative dialogue with the Chinese civilization, by highlighting and promoting the cooperative elements of these two ancient cultures, and shape a new geo-cultural framework that will lead Europe and China into a mutually beneficial productive relationship, free from pathologies originating from hidden cultural factors.

The author is a professor of geopolitics and the director of the War Theory and Analysis Sector at the Hellenic Military Academy in Greece. 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.

STEPHEN NDEGWA

Together despite US narrative

The China-Africa partnership's success will depend on its ability to transcend external interference and deliver concrete results that improve the lives of millions

As Donald Trump is to assume his second term in office on Jan 20, the global geopolitical landscape is increasingly being defined by great power competition. Africa has become a significant arena for this rivalry, particularly in the contest between the United States and



China. Central to this dynamic is the enduring partnership between China and Africa — a relationship that has weathered sustained external criticism and pressure, particularly during Trump's first term. Moving forward, both China and Africa must navigate an intensified environment of competition, leveraging their shared history, comprehensive strategies and mutual benefits to strengthen their partnership and achieve common goals.

Trump's first term brought a mercantilist approach to US foreign policy, marked by sporadic engagement with Africa. His administration frequently cast China's presence on the continent in a negative light, advancing narratives of "debt-trap" diplomacy and alleged exploitation of African resources. These claims were amplified by Western media and policy circles, portraying Chinese investments as predatory rather than constructive.

However, these critiques ignore the substantial benefits that Chinese partnerships have brought to Africa. Unlike Western aid, which is often tied to conditional strings regarding governance or political reforms, China's model emphasizes respect for sovereignty and aligns with Africa's own development priorities.

Far from the "debt trap" claims, Chinese loans and investments have helped address Africa's longstanding infrastructure deficits. Projects such as Kenya's Standard Gauge Railway, Ethiopia's industrial parks and Nigeria's hydropower facilities have created vital economic lifelines. Studies by organizations such as the Jubilee Debt Campaign have debunked the idea that Chinese loans dominate African debt burdens. In most cases, African debt crises stem from Eurobond markets and domestic financial mismanagement rather than Chinese financing. Furthermore, China has shown flexibility, restructuring or forgiving loans when needed, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic when it provided debt relief to several African nations.

Washington is likely to ramp up its efforts to frame Chinese influence as a challenge to Western values and African sovereignty. For African nations, this competition presents risks of polarization and external interference. Yet, it also offers an opportunity to leverage the rivalry for greater investments and favorable terms. The key lies in maintaining agency, ensuring that partnerships with either power align with Africa's long-term development goals.

China's ability to sustain its strong ties with Africa will depend on its continued focus on initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative. These frameworks address Africa's most pressing challenges, such as poverty eradication, peace and security, and cultural exchanges. The Global Development Initiative, for example, complements Africa's Agenda 2063 by

prioritizing industrialization, food security and poverty reduction. The Global Security Initiative's focus on peacebuilding is particularly relevant in conflict-prone regions such as the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa, while the Global Civilization Initiative fosters deeper people-to-people connections, reinforcing the cultural and diplomatic foundations of partnerships.

The accusation of Chinese "debt traps" is not the only myth that needs debunking. Critics have also painted China as an economic colonizer, a narrative that fails to recognize the transformative impact of Chinese investments on local economies. For example, Chinese-funded infrastructure projects often involve significant local labor and capacity-building components, creating jobs and transferring skills to African workers. Initiatives such as the Luban Workshop, a project named after an ancient Chinese master craftsman that provides vocational skills training for African youth, exemplify China's commitment to empowering local communities.

This non-prescriptive approach to development resonates deeply with African leaders. Unlike Western models, which frequently impose governance reforms or ideological frameworks, China respects the sovereignty of its African partners. This respect is not synonymous with indifference, however. African leaders have highlighted their ability to negotiate terms that meet their national priorities, ensuring that the benefits of partnership are mutually shared. For example, Ethiopia has leveraged Chinese investments to develop industrial parks that align with

its manufacturing-led development strategy, while Rwanda has utilized Chinese technology to enhance its e-governance systems.

At the same time, Africa has much to gain by replicating aspects of China's development trajectory. Over the past four decades, China has lifted over 800 million people out of abject poverty through a strategic focus on infrastructure, education and agricultural modernization. These experiences offer valuable insights for African countries seeking to address poverty, inequality and underdevelopment. Adapting these strategies to local contexts can help African nations accelerate their progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Beyond infrastructure and economic development, China and Africa must collaborate on emerging challenges such as climate change, digital transformation and public health. Africa's vulnerability to climate change necessitates investments in renewable energy and sustainable agriculture — areas where China has significant expertise. Similarly, bridging the digital divide through investments in information and communications technology infrastructure can position Africa as a competitive player in the global digital economy. The COVID-19 pandemic also underscored the importance of health cooperation. China's support for vaccine distribution and the establishment of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention highlights the potential for deeper collaboration in strengthening healthcare systems.

Trump's second term poses a test for the resilience of China-Africa relations. The intensified geopoliti-



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

cal rivalry will require both partners to navigate external pressures while staying focused on their shared objectives. African nations must resist being drawn into binary alignments, leveraging their partnerships with China and the US to secure the best outcomes for their people. For China, the focus must continue to remain on delivering tangible benefits, addressing misconceptions, and deepening its commitment to mutual respect and shared prosperity.

The China-Africa partnership has demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of challenges. Its foundation lies in the principles of mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty and a shared vision for development. By building on these principles, addressing emerging challenges and remaining adaptable to changing global dynamics, China and Africa can continue to strengthen their partnership, setting an example of constructive engagement in an increasingly polarized world.

In the coming years, the partnership's success will depend on its ability to transcend external narratives and deliver concrete results that improve the lives of millions. It is a strategic alliance rooted in shared aspirations and a commitment to a more equitable global order. As great power competition reshapes the international landscape, China and Africa have the opportunity to demonstrate that cooperation, not confrontation, is the path to a brighter future. By doing so, they can not only navigate the complexities of Trump's second term but also lay the groundwork for a new era of global collaboration.

The author is executive director of South-South Dialogues, a Nairobi-based communications development think tank. 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.

Tacheng emerges as model of strength

By YUAN SHENGAO

Tacheng prefecture, one of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region's most diverse settlements of ethnic groups, continues to achieve greater standards in overall construction thanks to its unwavering commitment to national unity.

Families encompassing members of different ethnic groups are common in Tacheng, and their stories are a testament to harmony and cultural fusion.

"Our family is a big household that has members from several ethnic groups. When it comes to festivals, children and relatives come from different places, and everyone shows their strengths by making a full table of traditional dishes, which is especially grand," said resident Bai Zhijun.

Bai, 49, who lives in the Haldun community of Tacheng, has a large family consisting of five ethnic groups: Uyghur, Tatar, Hui, Han and Uzbek. The community is home to 1,510 households and 3,821 residents, including 14 ethnic groups. The proportion of ethnic minorities in the population is 66.69 percent.

"During traditional festivals, our community organizes ethnic unity and friendship activities. Through activities such as talent shows, discussions and interactive games, people from different ethnic groups engage in multilevel and diverse interactions," said Bahargul, Party secretary of the Haldun community. "Like pomegranate seeds tightly held together, people from various ethnic groups embrace each other closely, conveying the concept of ethnic unity to a wider audience through laughter and joy."

Since ancient times, people of various ethnic groups in Tacheng have lived in harmony, shared joy and sorrow and nurtured a spirit of patriotism passed down through generations of long-term production and life activities. The prefecture has been recognized by the country and autonomous region with 59 exemplary collective units



People from different ethnic groups gather to perform onstage at the fourth Xinjiang Tacheng International Accordion Culture and Art Festival in 2024. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and 111 exemplary person-times for ethnic unity and progress. It has gained seven demonstration units at the national level for ethnic unity and progress, and 40 demonstration units at the autonomous region level.

Moreover, the prefecture's county-level cities of Tacheng and Wusu as well as Emin county, Hoboksar Mongolian autonomous county and Tuoli county have been designated as national demonstration counties and cities for ethnic unity and progress.

In recent years, Tacheng prefecture has prioritized the improvement of people's livelihoods and the cohesion of all ethnic groups as the starting point and goal for the region's social and economic development. To that end, at least 70 percent of the general public budget spending and more than 80 percent of funds aiding Xinjiang have been allocated to safeguarding and



Residents from ethnic groups in the Haldun community of Tacheng dance at a social gathering.

improving the livelihood of residents.

Since the start of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), Tacheng prefecture has completed renovations

of 107 old residential areas for 18,500 households and 3,897 residential units. There are now nine air routes connecting 12 cities in and outside Xinjiang, and the

transportation of both passengers and freight on Karamay-Tacheng Railway has steadily increased. All counties are now accessible by expressways, and construction of gas and electricity infrastructure in Tacheng has been accelerated.

The prefecture's ecological environment has likewise been dramatically upgraded, and people of all ethnic groups live and work in peace and prosperity, making the foundation for development more solid. The sense of gain, happiness and security has continued to improve, local officials said.

In addition, Tacheng has gone the extra mile to build a spiritual home shared by all ethnic groups.

Efforts have been made to conduct relevant research and promotional activities for the sense of national unity, including the cultures of different ethnic groups and integrating Chinese culture into daily life. For example, for the last

Mid-Autumn Festival, the Hoboksar Mongolian autonomous county organized a series of cultural events that brought people together through diverse forms of art such as poetry recitation and dance to foster a spirit of ethnic unity.

"The festival became even more unforgettable because of the community activities. We sang and danced together, and I felt very warm. People from all ethnic groups united and got along harmoniously. I believe that life in the future will become better and better," said Su Busheng, a resident of Hoboksar.

In recent years, Tacheng prefecture has jointly created an open and inclusive multicultural environment, relying on traditional Chinese holidays such as the Spring Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival to promote the protection, inheritance and utilization of intangible cultural heritage projects of ethnic groups such as Nowruz Festival and Saban Festival.

In 2023, Tacheng gathered 4,528 people from 18 ethnic groups to jointly play *My Motherland and Me* on accordion using a combination of online and offline methods, setting a new national record. Additionally, the heroic epic *Dehangar* has been listed in the first batch of national-level intangible cultural heritage list. It displays the rich and diverse charm and inclusive qualities of traditional Chinese culture.

Other activities to foster ethnic unity include the joint efforts of the county-level city of Wusu and a local military division, along with primary schools in Emin county, to organize friendship activities.

"Tacheng will continue to fully leverage the powerful role of a united front in rallying people and gathering strength, consolidating the achievements of being designated as a national model for ethnic unity and progress while leading the prefecture in strengthening the awareness of the Chinese national community," said Zhou Guangmin, deputy director of Tacheng's united front work department.

Regional authorities taking the lead through launch of livelihood projects

By ZHANG LINWAN

zhanglinwan@chinadaily.com.cn

Residents of Tacheng prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, enjoy a strong sense of gain, happiness and security, thanks to an array of livelihood projects launched by local governments in recent years.

Spanning about 105,000 square kilometers, Tacheng prefecture consists of three county-level cities of Tacheng, Wusu and Shawan, as well as Emin, Tuoli and Yumin counties and Hoboksar Mongolian autonomous county. There are about 1.11 million permanent residents from 29 ethnic groups in the area.

According to official data, in 2024, about 70 percent of the prefecture's general public budget expenditure and over 80 percent of its aid money were allocated for people's livelihoods. In 2024, the per capita disposable income of urban residents in Tacheng prefecture was 37,050 yuan (\$5,050), up 6 percent year-on-year, while that of the rural residents stood at 25,442 yuan, growing by 7.5 percent over the previous year.

Adhering to people-centered development, Tacheng has made sustained efforts to address livelihood issues and improve people's well-being, local officials said.

Qiaxia township in Tacheng city installed 30 solar insecticidal lamps in 2024, each capable of covering a field of 33.33-66.67 hectares. The lamp is a new eco-friendly agricultural device that stores solar-generated electric power in the daytime and induces pests to be eliminated at night, said Liu Wenqiang, a researcher from the agricultural and animal husbandry development center of Qiaxia township. It is a favorable livelihood project for residents, while fostering the healthy development of agriculture, Liu said.

"Our village has set up 10 insecticidal lamps. These help us reduce the use of chemical pesticides, raise crop yields and quality and increase income," said Zhao Hui, Party secretary of Qiaxia village in Qiaxia township.

New roads

At the end of October, construction of the Bayinaowa-Dongduhaergate pastoral road in Hoboksar Mongolian autonomous county was completed. The 5.1-kilometer route has brought great convenience to Bayinaowa and Chaganakule townships as well as several pastures, facilitating herders' travel and livestock migration, according to local authorities.

Den Arqeh, a herdsman from the

Bostan pasture in the county, said: "The road is the essential path for seasonal livestock migration. In the past, we had to take a detour and spend 500-700 yuan on transportation. With the new road, we can save lots of transportation costs."

Meanwhile, the city of Wusu invested 34.18 million yuan in building and renovating 63.17 km of roads in 2024. All were in operation by August, benefiting more than 17,300 households in six townships across the city.

To date, the total mileage of rural roads in Tacheng prefecture has reached 10,217.94 km, including 1,305.79 km of county roads, 3,661.69 km of township roads, and 5,250.46 km of village roads.

In addition to road construction, townships and villages initiated many infrastructure projects last year to improve people's livelihoods. For example, Wulanwusu township installed 660 new solar streetlights in its nine villages, and all residents in Kottag village now have access to modern toilets due to the sewage pipes laid in September.

Healthcare services

Founded in 1951, Yumin County People's Hospital is the only secondary comprehensive hospital in the county. It currently has 500 pieces of large and medium-sized medical equipment and 145 beds in use, as well as 17 clinical departments, four medical technology departments and 14 functional departments.

To meet growing demand for healthcare services, the hospital started construction of a comprehensive building in June 2023, with 41 million yuan in aid money from Northeast China's Liaoning province. The new building, with a floor area of 10,000 square meters, is expected to provide 110 additional hospital beds and expand the area of departments such as the hemodialysis unit, intensive care unit and laboratory.

The hospital's overall capabilities will be enhanced with the new building, and patients will receive more effective diagnoses and treatments, said Wang Yuping, chief physician of the internal medicine department of the hospital.



From left: A view of a commodity market in Baketu Port in Tacheng prefecture, which features Silk Road culture and helps boost the local economy. Staff members of Xinjiang Tengfei Fruit Industry are busy packaging products. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Pilot zone reforms help to bring in investment

By WANG YUCHEN

wangyuchen@chinadaily.com.cn

Through a series of innovative measures, the key pilot zone for development and opening-up in Tacheng, Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, has made remarkable progress in creating an investor-friendly environment over the past year.

From January to November 2024, the pilot zone attracted 37 new enterprises and implemented 44 projects, representing a total investment of 6.6 billion yuan (\$900.5 million). To date, the zone has welcomed 120 enterprises and initiated 77 fixed asset investment projects. Major infrastructure developments include the construction of 14 main roads spanning 44 kilometers, 44.75 km of water pipelines, 32.72 km of drainage pipelines and 460,000 square meters of factory buildings. Those efforts have brought cumulative investment to 9.04 billion yuan, according to official data.

Since 2024, the pilot zone has continued to deepen its administrative reforms by rolling out innovative mechanisms for increasing approval efficiency for businesses. For instance, approval times for government-funded projects and general social investment projects have been shortened to within 45 days and 36 days respectively. As well, a service for business registration was launched, which helped boost the number of companies from 63 in 2023 to 120 in 2024.

Xinjiang Zhongyi New Materials Technology, a subsidiary of Oket Group, which established operations in the zone in March 2024, has

invested some 60 million yuan in a project. According to the company, it completed its first production line by July after beginning operation in May, setting record speeds in construction, equipment commissioning and production among the group's subsidiaries.

"Tacheng prefecture has a superior location and abundant resources, and the pilot zone boasts preferential policies and a sound business environment, which has great development potential," said Sun Xianjie, chairman of Zhongyi New Materials. "Our company has the fastest construction speed among the more than 10 factories under the group, with the quickest installation and commissioning, and the fastest project production, all made possible by the strong support of the Party committees and governments at all levels in Tacheng," Sun said.

In 2024, the pilot zone began construction of functional industrial areas for border trade and modern logistics, international agricultural product processing, advanced equipment manufacturing and modern service. Currently, seven companies of advanced equipment and agricultural product processing have started production.

Xinjiang Tengfei Fruit Industry, founded in January 2024 in the zone, specializes in processing nuts and dried fruits, selling edible agricultural products, trade agency services and logistics.

"The climate in Uzbekistan is particularly good, and the quality of the fruits produced there is excellent, which is very popular in China. Combined with the border trade policy

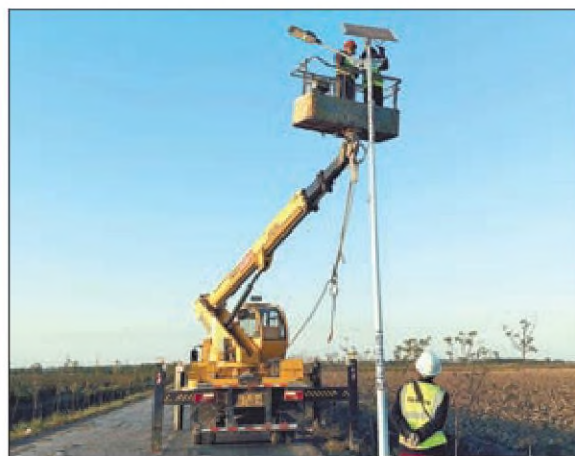
implemented in Tacheng last year, our confidence in investing in the construction of a factory in the pilot zone has been strengthened," said Lyu Yingping, factory director of Tengfei.

In addition, the pilot zone has adopted a rail-road intermodal transportation system to enhance trade efficiency. On Oct 27, 2024, the first shipment of household appliances worth 300,000 yuan departed from the Tacheng cross-border international highway port, marking the establishment of the railway and multimodal transport business model for exporting goods from Tacheng.

Railway and multimodal transport is a new type of customs declaration model that can save time and cost. It can save two to three days of shipping time and reduce the transportation cost of each cargo by approximately 10,000 yuan, said Ban Yin'an, manager for the Russian market at Xinjiang Zhonghangxing International Logistics.

On Nov 8, the Chongqing-Baketu-Moscow inaugural rail-road intermodal freight train was launched at the railway freight yard in Tacheng Station, transporting 232 passenger cars through Kazakhstan to Moscow. The new railway and multimodal transport business model simplifies customs procedures and reduces logistical costs by using the same container throughout the journey, allowing companies to reduce expenditures and avoid additional handling or repacking.

"The launch of the intermodal freight project is a milestone in the pilot zone's development. It not only demonstrates our strength in logistics and trade, but also provides a foundation for expanding international markets and driving high-quality regional economic development," said Yu Wei, deputy director of the Tacheng pilot zone's administrative committee.



Engineering workers install street lamps powered by solar panels in a village in Tacheng prefecture. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

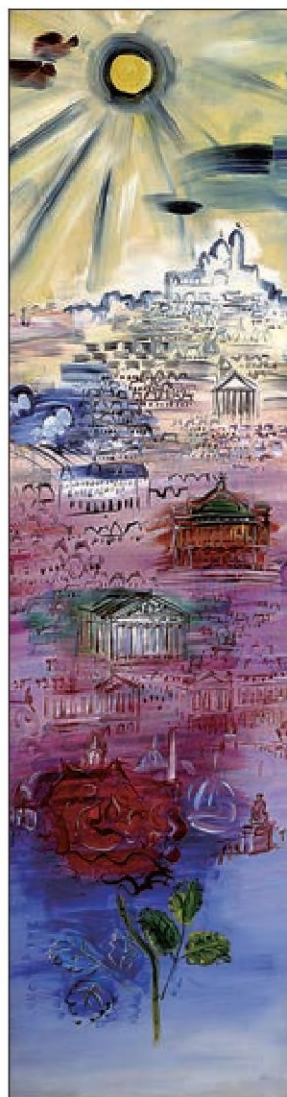
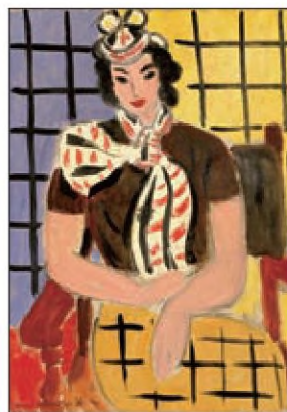
ADVERTORIAL

LIFESHANGHAI



Museum's collection is quite 'Impressionist'

From Monet and Van Gogh to Picasso and Matisse, masterpieces of this genre highlight its continued influence on the Asian art scene, **Zhang Kun** reports.



While unboxing the painting *The Gleize Bridge Over the Vigueirat Canal* by Vincent van Gogh in the presence of journalists on Monday, Shanghai Museum East announced the opening of ticket sales for its upcoming exhibition *Masterpieces of the Pola Museum of Art: From Impressionism to Contemporary Art*, which will run from Jan 22 to April 21.

The Pola Museum of Art, located in Hakone-machi of the Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan, is home to an exclusive private collection of Western art distinguished by its quality and quantity.

Its collection was founded by Tsuneshi Suzuki, son of the founder of the Pola Group, a cosmetics company. Suzuki loved painting and Chinese ceramics and began acquiring distinguished collections in the 1960s. He passed away in 2000, two years before the Pola Museum opened.

The upcoming exhibition at Shanghai Museum East is the first time the Pola exhibits its collection in China, and is hailed as "the most ambitious overseas exhibition to date," according to Hiroko Noguchi, director of the Pola Museum.

The 69 paintings selected from the core collection of the Pola Museum encapsulate the pivotal era of the late 19th to mid-20th centuries in Western art history, Noguchi says. They span from seminal works of early French Impressionists such as Claude Monet and Pierre Auguste Renoir and the masterpieces of groundbreaking post-Impressionists such as Paul Cezanne, Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, who were revered as trailblazers by latter-day painters, to the epochal creations of 20th-century masters such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Henri Matisse.

Although Shanghai Museum has showcased several Impressionist masterpieces in its past exhibi-



Staff members of Shanghai Museum unpack *The Gleize Bridge Over the Vigueirat Canal*, a painting by Vincent van Gogh. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

tions, this will be the first time the institution presents a comprehensive, systematic and panoramic exhibition of the art form, which, arguably, had the most extensive impact on Chinese and Asian art, says Chu Xiaobo, director of the Shanghai Museum.

Curated by the Shanghai Museum's team, the exhibition will consist of six chapters — the prologue features *Realism, the Barbizon School and the Prelude to Impressionism*; the second and third chapters *Center Stage: The Birth of Impressionism Through its Exhibition and More Brilliance: The Emergence of Neo-Impressionism and Post-Impressionism Showcase* will bring together works by some of the most celebrated masters, including six Monet paintings selected out of 19 in the Pola Museum collection.

The fourth chapter *Legacy of Light: Modern Art After Impressionism* consists of works by Matisse, Picasso and Braque, showing the emergence of Fauvism, Cubism and the colorful Modernism art scene.

The fifth chapter *Echoes: Western-style Painting in the East* brings

together paintings by Asian artists reflecting how they were influenced and inspired by Impressionism.

Aside from works from the Pola Museum's collection, the Shanghai Museum has borrowed artworks from the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, the Anhui Museum and the Liu Haisu Art Museum

in Shanghai. These paintings by Liu Haisu, Pan Yuliang and others will be displayed alongside paintings created in the 20th century by Japanese and other Asian artists that show how Western art, art education and artistic ideas influenced Asia's art scene.

The sixth chapter *Epilogue: Light and Space in Contemporary Art* will be presented at Gallery 3, showing Pola's recent acquisitions of contemporary art, offering insights into the creativity of today's artists through photos, videos and installations, showing the artists' love for nature and their pursuit of more powerful expressions of light and color.

The exhibition marks the fifth installment of "A Dialogue With the World Series" of exhibitions at the Shanghai Museum, Chu says. Compared to past exhibitions of Impressionist art in China that featured artworks from Western institutions such as the Musée Marmottan Monet and the Bemberg Foundation in France, the exhibition at the Shanghai Museum is marked by its distinctive Asian perspective, starting from the rise and development of Impressionism to its continuous influence.

The exhibition will "take audiences on a textbook-style journey through the universal charm of Impressionism and its unique resonance in Asia," says Shen Yubing, a professor at Fudan University.

Chu says the exhibition will also serve as part of the celebration of the first China-Japan-South Korea Cultural Exchange Year, which will take place in 2025 and 2026.

"About 3 percent of the visitors to the Pola Museum are from China. I hope that we will have more visitors after this exhibition," says Keiko Imai, chief curator of the Pola Museum.

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn



Clockwise from top left: *The Port of Hong Kong*, oil on canvas by Chen Baoyi, from the collection of the National Art Museum of China. *Houses of Parliament*, *Symphony in Rose*, by Claude Monet. *Bridge at Auxerre*, oil on canvas by Paul Signac. *Pair of Swallows in Flight*, oil on canvas by Wang Yuezhi, from the collection of the National Art Museum of China. *Girl in a Lace Hat*, oil on canvas by Pierre Auguste Renoir. *Paris-2*, oil painting by Raoul Dufy. *Woman With a Scarf*, oil on canvas by Henri Matisse. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Exhibition honors one of China's key 20th-century talents

By ZHANG KUN

An exhibition opened at the China Art Museum, Shanghai (Shanghai Art Museum) on New Year's Eve to commemorate the 180th anniversary of Wu Changshuo's birth.

Wu (1844-1927), a key Chinese artist of the 20th century born in today's Anji county in Huzhou of Zhejiang province, was a painter, calligrapher and seal carver. He is widely recognized as a leading figure of the Shanghai School of Art, or *haipai*, an artistic style and character typical of Shanghai during the early 20th century.

He began learning seal engraving at age 14 with the help of his father and "never spent a day without it through the rest of his life," according to Wu's official biography compiled by Anji county.

Wang Qisen, artistic director of the exhibition, chose to focus the exhibition on Wu's creations from 1912 when the artist moved to Shanghai and settled in the city until his death in 1927.

"Coinciding with Wu's settlement in Shanghai in 1912, the city's art

scene entered a flourishing period when prominent artists emerged and great talents gathered in the city," Wang says.

The year 1912 saw an important turning point in Chinese history when the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was overthrown by the Republic of China and Sun Yat-sen took office as the first president. A number of former high-ranking officials and renowned scholars moved to Shanghai, joining the city's art community.

It was during his later years when Wu achieved his most significant breakthrough as an artist, Wang believes.

"His calligraphy was inspired by the inscriptions on ancient rock drums, bronze cauldrons and rock steles in the Han (206 BC-AD 220) and Jin (265-420) dynasties," Wang says. "His later works were even bolder, sharper and more magnificent — he integrated classical calligraphic strokes into his paintings and developed a distinctive style deriving from traditional techniques fused with the refined literati aesthetics and values for righteous-



The exhibition to commemorate the 180th birth anniversary of artist Wu Changshuo is being held at the China Art Museum, Shanghai, from Dec 31 to March 31. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

ness and inner strength.

"Wu brought out an unprecedented new look in Chinese ink art and his style continues to have wide and enduring impact today."

Wu traveled extensively in the Yangtze Delta region as a young

man, learning calligraphy and seal engraving while building a strong network with fellow artists and intellectuals.

He played a leading role in Shanghai's art community, serving as the founding director of the

Changshuo had a great love for Pudong and Shanghai where he achieved his artistic peak, inspired and influenced by the city.

"The city nurtured him, turning him into a leading figure in the establishment and development of the Shanghai School of Art," he continues. "He also taught many excellent students, such as Pan Tianshou and Liu Haisu, and influenced important artists such as Qi Baishi and Mei Lanfang. Several of these people became cultural pillars of our country."

Wang Yichuan, executive director of the China Art Museum, Shanghai, says the exhibition aims to "not only look back at the glorious history of previous masters and show the cultural heritage of the city but also draw attention to their pursuit for innovation while keeping faith in tradition."

"I believe their approach and principles can still inspire new generations in search of creativity and innovation," Wang Yichuan says.

The exhibition runs until March 31.

LIFE

Government officials, scholars and experts exchanged notes on ways of stimulating cultural innovation and creative vitality at the Forum on International Cultural Industries in Beijing on Saturday.

This year is the final year of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and a critical year for developing the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), says Xiang Yong, head of Peking University's Institute for Cultural Industries, the forum's host.

"This forum aims to not only summarize the experiences and measures of the past year and assess the overall progress of the 14th Five-Year Plan, but also provide insight and forecasts for the upcoming cultural system reform and development of cultural heritage and the cultural industry," Xiang adds.

The forum focused on a wide range of topics, including cultural creativity empowerment by artificial intelligence, integration of culture and tourism with rural vitalization, and effective mechanisms for the integration of culture and technology.

Zhang Xu, president of the World Tourism Alliance, says that the government has introduced a series of policies to deepen cultural system reforms and promote the healthy development of the cultural sector.

"Among these, the integration of culture and tourism has seen significant achievements," Zhang says.

In the first three quarters of 2024, the number of domestic trips reached 4.2 billion, an increase of 563 million compared to the same period of the previous year, representing year-on-year growth of 15.3 percent. Spending by domestic tourists amounted to 4.35 trillion yuan (\$593.3 billion), an increase of 665 billion yuan year-on-year.

The development of new formats featuring the integration of tourism with cultural heritage, museums, performing arts, and film and television has played a crucial role in stimulating domestic demand, promoting employment, activating the market, and boosting confidence, Zhang says.

In 2023, the added value of cultural and associated industries reached 5.94 trillion yuan, accounting for 4.59 percent of GDP, the National Bureau of Statistics of China reported. The added value of tourism and associated industries in China reached 5.48 trillion yuan the same year, accounting for 4.24 percent of GDP.

"We expect that by 2024, the combined contribution of these two industries to GDP will exceed 9 percent. The culture and tourism industries have increasingly played a vital role in stabilizing growth, expanding consumption, promoting employment and improving livelihoods," says Miao Muyang, director of the Industrial Development Department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

According to Miao, the ministry will focus on promoting spending and increasing the supply of cul-



Culture on the agenda

Forum in Beijing discusses importance of sectors to domestic economy and their wider ramifications, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



Clockwise from top left: An artist introduces a piece of artwork from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region during the Forum on International Cultural Industries in Beijing. Experts and scholars unveil an artificial intelligence aesthetic content creator capable of producing texts and photos at the forum. The range of creative practices in the arts industry was one of the main topics explored. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ture and tourism products, and introduce a package of policies to promote the prosperity of cultural and tourism spending.

"By fully leveraging the advantages of China's massive market, we will track and analyze changes in social consumption psychology, align with the upgrading of consumption and growing individual demand," Miao says.

"We will organize a variety of promotional activities to optimize the consumption environment, enhance the consumer experience, and produce innovative scenarios. This will effectively drive secondary and derivative consumption, fueling its potential," he adds.

The ministry will continue to

"The culture and tourism industries have increasingly played a vital role in stabilizing growth, expanding consumption, promoting employment and improving livelihoods."

Miao Muyang, director of the Industrial Development Department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism

promote the integration of culture and tourism with sectors like agriculture, commerce, sports, film and television, low-altitude aviation, aerospace, and traditional Chinese medicine. More effort will go into expanding urban, rural, online, nighttime, and international consumption spaces to

allow the culture and tourism industries to contribute to rural vitalization and urban renewal.

Miao says the ministry will also enhance the industrial chain and drive transformation through technological innovation.

"We will actively explore effective mechanisms for the integra-

tion of culture and technology, promote the digital transformation of traditional cultural industries, and increase the supply of high-quality products," Miao says.

Fu Caiwu, head of the National Institute of Cultural Development, Wuhan University, based in Hubei province, emphasizes the importance of identifying and presenting the culture of the Yangtze River.

"The reason why China has been able to reach where it is today, presenting its current form, lies in the foundational presence of the Yangtze River and Yellow River civilizations. The existence of these two civilizations has made China distinctive, and has laid the foundation for our cultur-

al strength as a nation," Fu says.

He says that the Yangtze River is not merely a geographical space but also a historical and cultural one.

"Through this river, we have constructed the collective memory of China. This memory has been passed down through four key channels across generations: history, literature, art and religion," Fu explains.

The rice farming that originated in the Yangtze River basin made a huge contribution to the world, serving as one of the most important resources for the development of society in Asia, while the success of water management in the Yangtze River region contributed to the development of the early social structures and functions, he adds.

The water-centered social structure and ethos formed around water management, such as the philosophy of *shangshan ruoshui* ("the highest good is like water"), are symbols of the culture of Jiangnan (the region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River), and constitute its essence, Fu says.

Huang Changyong, president of the Shanghai Theatre Academy, calls attention to rural culture and civilization in China's modernization process and urges understanding of rural changes from the perspectives of environment, culture, and structure.

"I believe there are some fundamental differences between the modernization processes of China and the West. From a certain perspective, China is more deeply rooted in an agrarian social foundation or a civilization centered around mountains and rivers," Huang says.

Huang adds that many outstanding works of literature are set in villages.

"Therefore, I believe that while focusing on the development of urban cultural industries, we must also place great emphasis on the countryside, as cultural development in rural areas is even more crucial," Huang says.

Li Xiangmin, a senior official from the Nanjing University of the Arts based in Jiangsu province, believes the process of Chinese modernization has global significance.

In its pursuit of modernization, China should emphasize its cultural foundations and establish a development path with distinctive Chinese characteristics, he says.

China's traditional culture, guided by core principles such as benevolence, prioritizing the needs of the people, upholding integrity, advocating justice, valuing harmony, and pursuing universal unity, facilitates the coordinated development of spiritual and material civilizations, while the humanistic economic philosophy of Chinese-style modernization provides new perspectives and solutions to global challenges, reflecting its essential value in addressing universal human issues, Li adds.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Winter brings ice fishing to China's northeast

CHANGCHUN/HARBIN — A school of large fish thrashed about in a mile-long fish seine (a type of fishing net which hangs vertically in the water with floats at the top and weights at the bottom), hauled from the frozen Chagan Lake in Northeast China, as cheering crowds watched.

This spectacle was part of the millennium-old tradition of ice fishing, which has gained modern popularity as part of the country's booming winter tourism sector.

Shamilev Raschid, an international student from Germany, was among the onlookers at the fishing event in Jilin province. He also had the chance to try his hand at the ancient craft, learning how to haul the net through ice holes.

Raschid, who was part of a group of international students from Jilin University, says he finds ice fishing and the harmony between people and nature in the province impressive.

The tradition has emerged as the latest winter attraction in Jilin and neighboring Heilongjiang province, with the two-month season expected to last until mid-February.

In addition to the excitement,

fresh fish soup is a visitor favorite. "Northeastern Chinese cuisine is full of flavor, and I'm impressed by the warm hospitality," says Allahverdiyeva Nazrin, an Azerbaijani student.

Ice fishing at Chagan Lake dates back to the Liao Dynasty (916-1125) and was recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2008. The recent surge in tourism has breathed new life into the ancient practice.

Since the first seasonal haul on Dec 18, 2024, fishermen have landed several "red nets" — single catches exceeding 50,000 kilograms — which not only sparked cheers from spectators but also attracted millions of viewers through livestreaming.

During last year's snow season, Chagan Lake had 1.4 million visits, a remarkable year-on-year increase of 229.9 percent, generating record-breaking tourism revenue of 1.25 billion yuan (\$173.87 million).

In December, China relaxed its visa-free transit policy, extending the permitted stay for eligible foreign travelers from 72 or 144 hours to 240 hours, and this is expected to attract more international tourists

"Northeastern Chinese cuisine is full of flavor, and I'm impressed by the warm hospitality."

Allahverdiyeva Nazrin, Azerbaijani student

to the ice fishing season.

The visa-free transit policy allows international visitors to explore beyond famous sites and experience new cultures, Raschid says, adding that his friends and family plan to join him in Northeast China for winter tourism.

At Lianhuan Lake in the Mongolian autonomous county of Dorbod, Heilongjiang, a crowd cheered as a plentiful catch was hauled in during the annual ice fishing event.

The first haul yielded 175,000 kg of fish, which were sold at auction. Locally, the first winter catch is considered a symbol of good fortune.

During the ice fishing season, tourists can enjoy freshly prepared

authentic dishes to the soothing sound of horsehead fiddles and traditional dances, while enjoying the fishing and hunting culture.

The ice fishing season on Lianhuan Lake, which runs until Feb 14, has transformed the remote lake into a hub, drawing crowds of anglers and tourists to its icy shores. Local authorities expect to welcome 200,000 visitors and generate 200 million yuan in revenue this season.

China has plans to make its winter economy a new growth sector worth 1.2 trillion yuan by 2027 and 1.5 trillion yuan by 2030, according to guidelines issued by the General Office of the State Council in November.

Heilongjiang has unleashed the potential of traditional ice fishing to boost the local fishery industry by expanding its industrial chain.

The province boasts over 6.5 million *mu* (about 433,333 hectares) of aquaculture ventures raising 100 fish species. Several cities have successfully integrated the development of aquaculture with tourism.

Huso dauricus, a large predatory sturgeon that was once a critically endangered species listed on the International Union for Conserva-



A tourist poses with fish caught during the 23rd Ice and Snow Fishing and Hunting Cultural Tourism Festival, which opened on Dec 28 in Songyuan city, Jilin province. ZHANG YAO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

tion of Nature Red List of Threatened Species, has been bred and farmed artificially in lakes here.

"*Huso dauricus* has become a signature specialty of Tongjiang. We plan to develop the entire chain, from gourmet products and cosmetics to health supplements," says Wang Lin, mayor of Tongjiang city.

Lyu Hang, deputy mayor of Daqing city, says that a partnership has been formed with the Heilongjiang River Fisheries Research Institute to

set breeding guidelines and artificial breeding regulations.

Heilongjiang produced 643,000 metric tons of fish in the first three quarters of 2024, a 5 percent increase on the previous year, with the value of its fisheries rising to 13.17 billion yuan, a 5.8 percent year-on-year growth, according to the provincial agriculture and rural affairs department.

XINHUA