



Notable growth

Opening-up seen as key engine for services trade's expansion

BUSINESS, PAGE 13

Hostilities raise fear of wider conflict

WORLD, PAGE 11

Rising star

Chinese player signs contract with NBA's Brooklyn franchise SPORTS, PAGE 20



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DRIVING REFORM

Xi: Step up rural vitalization efforts

Party, govt called on to bring tangible benefits to farmers

By LI LEI
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After decades of urbanization that have brought remarkable progress, propelling China to become the world's second-largest economy, the government is ramping up efforts to achieve more balanced, coordinated development to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas amid the nation's modernization drive.

On the eve of the seventh Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival, which fell on Sunday, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, reiterated the nation's commitment to building a more prosperous countryside.

He also extended festive greetings and sincere regards on behalf of the CPC Central Committee to farmers and comrades working on agricultural and rural fronts across the country.

Xi, who is also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called on Party committees and governments at various levels to make every effort to enhance the economic benefits of agriculture, increase farmers' incomes and inject greater vitality into the countryside, in order to bring tangible benefits to farmers.

Furthermore, he said it is imperative to persistently consolidate the foundation of agriculture and promote comprehensive rural vitalization to advance Chinese modernization, and he urged farmers and people from other sectors to take actions to transform the blueprint for rural vitalization into reality.

Despite the recent increase in rural income resulting from extensive poverty alleviation efforts, rural residents continue to lag economically.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the per capita disposable income of rural residents was 21,691 yuan (\$3,076) last year, approximately half the national average.

Wu Haitao, a researcher of poverty issues at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, said, "The



Farmers dry their produce in Shexian county, Anhui province, on Sunday, which was the seventh Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival. The festival, initiated in 2018, falls on the Autumn Equinox, one of the 24 solar terms on the Chinese lunar calendar. SHI YALEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

urban-rural disparity is also reflected in the access to various social welfare benefits."

Urban areas outperform rural regions in almost every aspect, including infrastructure, public services and social security provisions, such as elderly care and the pension fund system.

In August, authorities set a goal to increase the proportion of urban residents to 70 percent of China's population within the next five years, and to reform the two-track urban-rural household registration system as part of the country's "people-centered" urbanization initiative.

Without local household registration documents, known as *hukou*, tens of millions of rural migrants often face limited access to public services in the cities where they work.

The commitment to advance new urbanization was emphasized at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC, held in Beijing from July 15 to 18.

Traditionally pivotal in the decision-making of the CPC leadership, the third plenary sessions are considered to be "steering wheels" in China's economic reforms and serve as a crucial platform for adjusting top-level decisions and building consensus.

The communique from the recent third plenary session described the integration of urban and rural areas as essential to the country's modernization goals.

Jiang Quanbao, a professor of demography at Xi'an Jiaotong University, said the integration was proposed to narrow the gap in the living standards between urban and

rural areas while preserving the unique characteristics of rural regions during the merging process.

"This aims to enable residents in both areas to gradually lead a different but equal life," he said.

The communique emphasized the importance of aligning "new industrialization, new urbanization, and comprehensive rural vitalization", and it called for the enhancement of urban-rural planning, construction and governance integration.

It also stressed the necessity of equal resource exchanges and two-way flows between urban and rural areas to reduce disparities, foster common prosperity and promote development.

Jiang noted that barriers remain to establishing a unified national market, such as the enduring spatial

isolation between urban and rural areas, which obstructs the smooth two-way flow of resources.

"At the macro level, the State must eliminate institutional barriers and focus on breaking down the urban-rural binary structure," he said.

For a long time, cities have been drawing resources, particularly labor, away from rural areas. Wu, the researcher, said that instead of this one-way flow, capital, technology and management expertise from urban regions should also be directed toward rural areas.

"The purpose is to achieve optimal resource allocation and promote the overall coordinated development of the urban and rural economy and society," Wu said.

See *Agriculture*, page 3

Foreign firms urged to help pool wisdom for Shanghai

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Amid Shanghai's continued efforts to deepen international cooperation in terms of research and development, multinational companies should be better integrated into the city's innovation network, which would be conducive to the city's high-quality development, said officials and company executives.

They made the remarks on Sunday during the 36th International Business Leaders' Advisory Council for the Mayor of Shanghai.

Chen Jining, Party secretary of Shanghai, said that as technological innovation has been playing an increasingly important role in driving economic growth, Shanghai will expand its science and technology exchanges with other markets.

Efforts will be made to develop offshore technological innovation. Chen said, adding that a foundation to advance coordinated technological innovation at a global level will be built in Lin-gang Special Area of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone.

International organizations are also encouraged to set up branches in the city, and all these steps are aimed at nurturing an open, fair, just and nondiscriminatory environment for technological innovation, he said.

Shanghai Mayor Gong Zheng said the scientific research paradigm is undergoing profound changes amid the new round of technological and industrial revolution, and coordination and cooperation are crucial against this backdrop.

Shanghai will implement a global technology partner plan, and will also actively participate in, nurture and initiate international large-scale scientific projects, he said.

Multinational companies will be encouraged to set up international R&D centers and open innovation centers in the city, and will be deeply integrated into Shanghai's local innovation network, Gong added.

As of June, 985 multinational companies had set up their regional headquarters in Shanghai, and the number of foreign-funded R&D centers reached 575, according to the municipal government.

Severin Schwan, chairman of the board of directors of Swiss healthcare company Roche Group, said that openness, innovation and collaboration are important for Shanghai's high-quality development, particularly in the wake of geopolitical tensions and market uncertainties.

Multinational companies can tap into the sectors of healthcare, science and technology, and the digital economy more deeply, said Schwan, who is also chairman for this year's International Business Leaders' Advisory Council.

Dominic Barton, chairman of multinational mining company Rio Tinto, said the private sector has been contributing substantially to research projects, and this is a global trend.

Miguel Lopez, CEO of German industrial and engineering conglomerate Thyssenkrupp AG, suggested that Shanghai could place great importance on and fully utilize multinational companies' industrial expertise, global networks, international experience and innovative resources.

The International Business Leaders' Advisory Council was initiated in 1989 and has grown into a think tank for Shanghai mayors over time.

This year's meeting was attended by top executives of 34 multinational companies from 13 countries.

Tech meets culture



Visitors admire exhibits on Saturday as a machine sterilizes murals using the irradiation method at the 7th Silk Road (Dunhuang) International Cultural Expo in Dunhuang, Gansu province. The expo brought together more than 800 representatives from 50 countries, regions and international organizations. LI YALONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

US blasted for high subsidies to PV sector

By LIU YUKUN
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The China Photovoltaic Industry Association has expressed serious concerns about and strong opposition to the United States' distorting the global solar market by providing excessive subsidies to US companies and imposing high tariffs on imported solar products.

It said the US moves are hampering international cooperation in the fight against climate change.

The trade body said in a recent statement that the US has built high walls of protectionism by imposing multiple trade restrictions and continuously increasing tariff barriers on imported photovoltaic products. In May, for example, the US decided that the import tax on Chinese solar cells would rise from 25 percent to 50 percent.

The association also pointed out that the US implemented exclusive and discriminatory industrial policies through legislation such as the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and subsidized its own photovoltaic industry on a large scale.

"The Inflation Reduction Act, introduced in 2022, offers subsidies of an unprecedented \$369 billion to support investments and production in the clean energy sector, including domestic PV products, aiming to reconstruct the PV industry chain," said the trade body's statement.

On May 16, the US Department of Energy announced \$71 million investment to fund the Silicon Solar Manufacturing and Dual-Use Photovoltaics Incubator Program (\$27 million) and the

Advancing US Thin-Film Solar Photovoltaics Funding Program (\$44 million), aiming to close the gaps in PV supply chain manufacturing capabilities, the association added.

Such moves violated multilateral trade rules and severely distorted the market operations of the global supply chain of the PV industry, according to the statement.

Experts and business leaders said that while subsidies are common globally in the new energy industry, the US strategy of raising tariffs under anti-subsidy pretexts and financially backing domestic companies is a double standard, with the aim of hindering Chinese solar companies from capturing global market share.

See *PV*, page 3

ROBOTAXIS — ARRIVING AT A FUTURE NEAR YOU

Autonomous vehicles grow in popularity despite concerns over safety, reliability

By LI FUSHENG
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Self-driving vehicles are navigating from science fiction movies to the streets of large Chinese cities, overcoming obstacles and uncertainty as they enter everyday use.

The fast-evolving technology first made headlines in China almost a decade ago. In 2015,

Swedish carmaker Volvo organized a test of its hands-free vehicles traveling at 70 kilometers per hour on Beijing's Sixth Ring Road.

Chinese technology giant Baidu set up its intelligent driving group in 2017, unveiling its Apollo autonomous driving plan the same year. Pony.ai, founded by former Baidu

engineers, established its first autonomous driving research and development center in 2016.

By late February, more than 20 cities had put in place policies supporting autonomous driving tests, issuing licenses to over 60 companies.

See *Driverless*, page 2

INSIDE

Kunqu Opera enjoys growing appeal

Life, p17

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PAGE TWO

Driverless: Vehicles on road to viability



A journalist takes a photo while riding in an autonomous vehicle in Chongqing in October. LI HE / XINHUA

From page 1

Progress had been generally going smoothly until July, when a short video went viral on social media of one of Baidu's Apollo Go driverless vehicles hitting a scooter in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province.

Baidu was quick to explain that the accident was because the scooter driver had run a red light when the driverless vehicle started to move.

Despite the accident being a minor one, as shown in the footage, it ignited complaints from local drivers and residents.

Apollo Go's Chinese name is *Luo-bo Kuaipao*, which literally means "robots run fast". But in Wuhan they are called "dumb robots", as more footage emerged showing their mishaps.

One driverless vehicle is seen stopping on the road in front of an empty plastic bag, causing a traffic jam. In another video, two vehicles are seen braking to face each other, and not knowing what to do next.

Safety questioned

But safety is the real concern. When that vehicle in Wuhan failed to see the scooter, local residents started to doubt the safety and reliability of driverless vehicles, as manufacturers have long claimed they are safer than human drivers.

At an event in May, Baidu's vice-president, Wang Yunpeng, said the number of insurance claims of its Apollo Go vehicles over the past two years was one 14th of that for human drivers.

In the second quarter of this year, Baidu's Apollo Go provided about 899,000 rides for passengers, up 26 percent year-on-year. As of July 28, the cumulative rides provided to the public by Apollo Go surpassed 7 million, the company said in its latest financial results.

The safety level of autonomous driving is 10 times that of manned driving, according to Pony.ai vice-president, Zhang Ning. The company had conducted 3.5 million km of driverless testing globally as of May this year.

However, a robotaxi doesn't have a quick solution when an injured passenger or road user needs help and needs to wait until the fleet operator sends someone to the scene.

If the accident is a minor one, the insurance company can try to settle and offer a certain amount of money.

However, the issue becomes muddier in the case of a more severe accident that causes injury or death and entails prison time.

It is likely the fleet company will be held accountable, but it is unclear who would be sent to jail — the software engineer, the CEO, the company owner, or possibly more than one of them.

Fresh pickup lines

Taxi drivers are also complaining that robotaxi firms are stealing their customers by offering generous subsidies.

A receipt for a 28-km, 64-minute

robotaxi trip in Wuhan showed that the fare was just 26.52 yuan (\$3.65 yuan), much cheaper than a normal taxi fare. But a closer look revealed that it had a discount of 109.52 yuan.

Wuhan has over 3,300 km of roads eligible for robotaxis, the longest in China. Robotaxis booked 850,000 rides in the first half of this year, more than for the whole of 2023, according to a Hubei Daily report.

In July, an Apollo Go vehicle booked up to 20 rides in one day, the same amount as a regular taxi, according to Shanghai-based news portal Jiemian.

There are around 400 Apollo Go vehicles in Wuhan, said Baidu CEO Robin Li. "Our fleet accounts for just 1 percent of Wuhan's total taxi fleet. It may take quite some time, even many years, to grow (the proportion)," said Li.

William Li, founder and CEO of NEV startup Nio, has sided with the taxi drivers.

He said that the goal of technology such as smart driving is to alleviate the burden of driving, and not to steal jobs from low-income earners. "It is not a very inspiring story. We will never do robotaxis," he said.

Nio has been investing heavily in driving-assist functions, and is one of the first carmakers in the world to adopt the latest Nvidia chips made for such features.

Gu Dasong, executive director of the Southeast University's Research Center for Transportation Law and Development, said robotaxis might reduce the need for commercial drivers, such as taxi drivers and freight drivers, to some extent over the long term.

However, the move to robotaxis will profoundly transform the labor market, with new job opportunities arising from such services.

Congestion concern

Baidu insists that robotaxis, if applied at a city-level, can solve

A fleet of robotaxis goes through an on-road trial of autonomous vehicles in Ordos, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in July, 2023.

WANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A passenger gets on an autonomous driving minibus in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on May 22. HUANG ZONGZHI / XINHUA

problems such as traffic jams and road accidents.

However, as long as there are drivers and robotaxis on the road at the same time, reduced congestion and collision-free motoring will not happen, analysts said.

Robotaxis tend to be good at following traffic rules and staying alert, but human drivers sometimes cut lanes and don't always focus on road conditions, they added.

Zhang Xiang, an auto analyst at North China University of Technology, said it will take at least 10 years for large-scale business operations of robotaxis to come to fruition.

Besides technological glitches that need to be improved, robotaxis now in operation attract customers who are not in a hurry and who want to have a novel experience.

Unlike regular taxis, they pick up and drop off passengers at fixed stops. They also have more conservative rules about road safety, and operate slower than regular taxis.

Robotaxis may suit customers who want to be left alone. But they may not be attractive to out-of-town visitors who want recommendations about a city from the driver.

However, they remove the potential of a driver taking an unnecessary detour to charge more.

Business sense

Despite the teething problems, robotaxis will soon make sense commercially. Baidu said with decreasing hardware costs and increasing orders, Apollo Go is expected to become profitable by 2025.

Apollo Go loses almost \$11,000 a car annually in Wuhan, Haitong International Securities estimated. A lower-cost driverless model could enable per-vehicle annual profit of nearly \$16,000, the securities firm said.

Chen Zhuo, Apollo Go's general manager, said the firm would become "the world's first commercially profitable" autonomous-driving platform.

Pony.ai is confident about the sector's prospects as well. In a 160 square-km designated zone in Beijing's E-Town, a national-level economic-technological development area, the company operates nearly 100 robotaxis.

Compared to years ago, the rides are much smoother with no abrupt braking, and the vehicles run in a similar way to other taxi services.

Pony.ai aims to increase its single-city robotaxi fleet tenfold by 2025 or 2026, said the company's vice-presi-

dent, Zhang, in an interview with Xinhua.

"We've now come to the stage where it is possible to reduce costs on a larger scale of commercialization," he said. "As long as the robotaxi fleet reaches above 1,000 in one city, we will be able to break even in operation (terms)."

Pony.ai is teaming up with Japanese carmaker Toyota to roll out new-generation vehicles. They will have pre-installed autonomous driving technology, making production more efficient.

"Five or six years ago, most people doubted whether autonomous driving could take root in China. There are no such doubts now," Zhang said.

Attracting financing

Investor interest is also fueling the sector's progress.

Pony.ai has secured more than \$1.4 billion of financing from both domestic and foreign investors since 2017. The company was valued at \$8.5 billion as of October last year. The investment environment for the industry has been improving since last year, despite fluctuations in previous years, according to the company.

WeRide, based in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, plans to offer 6.45 million American depository shares at a price range of \$15.50 to \$18.50 in its upcoming initial public offering, according to a company filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission in August.

The company reported revenue of 401.8 million yuan in 2023. For the first six months of this year, its revenue was 150.3 million yuan, according to the filing.

WeRide generates most of its revenue from sales of its Level 4 autonomous driving vehicles, "primarily including robobuses, robotaxis and robosweepers, and related sensor suites; and ... the provision of L4 autonomous driving and advanced driver-assistance system services, including the provision of L4 operational and technical support services as well as ADAS research and development services", the filing said.

The Society of Automotive Engineers International defines six levels of automation from Level 0 to Level 5. Level 4 means the vehicle can operate itself in most circumstances, while L5, also known as full driving automation, requires no human participation.

All China's robotaxi companies are working on Level 4 vehicles.

World-leading growth

Global consulting firm McKinsey & Company has forecast that China will become the world's largest market for self-driving vehicles, with revenue from such vehicles and mobility services exceeding \$500 billion by 2030.

"We've seen an acceleration in China. There's certainly now a rapid pace of permits being issued," said Boston Consulting Group managing director Augustin Wegscheider. "The US has been a lot more gradual."

Alphabet's Waymo is the only United States firm operating unmanned robotaxis that collect fares.

The company has about 700 cars operating in San Francisco and Los Angeles in California, Phoenix in Arizona, and Austin, Texas, but not all of them are in service at all times.

Cruise, backed by General Motors, restarted testing in April after one of its vehicles hit a pedestrian last year. Cruise said it operates in three cities, with safety its core mission.

"There's a clear contrast between US and China" with robotaxi developers facing far more scrutiny and higher hurdles in the US, former Waymo CEO John Krafcik said in an interview with Reuters.

China will operate the world's largest robotaxi fleet of about 12 million self-driving vehicles by 2040, followed by the US with around 7 million, according to a report by research company BloombergNEF.

Li Hengyu, vice-president of Pony.ai and head of its robotruck business unit, said: "The central and local governments in China rank first in the world in terms of their openness and understanding of autonomous driving."

China has also been stepping up efforts to integrate vehicles, roads, and cloud computing, which is a crucial step to grow smart vehicles into smart cities.

In July, five ministries, including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Transport, issued a notice to identify 20 cities or city clusters, including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as pilot areas for the technology.



TOP NEWS

Over 100 Neolithic jade relics unearthed

Artifacts found in Inner Mongolia shed more light on Hongshan Culture

By FANG AIQING

in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, and YUAN HUI in Hohhot

Three jade dragons of different colors and sizes, and each around 5,000 years old, were among the more than 100 jade relics of the Hongshan Culture recently unearthed in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

The jade artifacts, found at the Yuanbaoshan archaeological site in Aohan Banner in the city of Chifeng during a four-month excavation work that began in May, include a palm-size, emerald green dragon that is the largest of its kind unearthed in northern China.

The biggest jade dragon among these artifacts is 15.8 centimeters long, 9.5 cm wide and 3 cm thick. It is slightly longer than the one previously unearthed about 150 kilometers away at the Niuheliang archaeological site in Chaoyang, Liaoning province.

The chubby, pig-headed dragons are iconic figures of the Hongshan Culture, which was an important part of the Neolithic period and encompassed present-day Inner Mongolia as well as Liaoning and Hebei provinces.

Dating back 5,000 to 6,500 years, Hongshan Culture sites help form a relatively comprehensive picture regarding the origins of Chinese civilization.

Dang Yu, research librarian at the Inner Mongolia Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, said the jade artifacts unearthed at Yuanbaoshan since May cover the majority of Hongshan Culture jade ware, including loops, discs and axes, as well as birds and insects such as cicadas and silkworms.

One jade headgear resembles another belonging to the Lingjiantan Culture, dating back 5,300 to 5,800 years in present-day Anhui province, indicating long-distance exchanges between the two cultures, she said.

Dang made the remarks on Sunday when addressing a seminar held in Chifeng to commemorate



Archaeologists work in July at a rubble mound tomb at the Yuanbaoshan site in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. It is the largest of its kind found in sites of Neolithic Hongshan Culture in Inner Mongolia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the 70th anniversary of the naming of the Hongshan Culture.

The relics of the Hongshan Culture have attracted the attention of Chinese and foreign scholars since the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, they focused mainly on sites in a hilly area in suburban Chifeng called Hongshan, which means "red mountains".

In 1954, archaeologist and historian Yin Da (1906-83) took the advice of archaeologist Liang Siyong (1904-54) and officially named this Neolithic culture after the area in his book on the Neolithic period in China.

So far, more than 1,100 Hongshan Culture sites have been discovered, mostly in the West Liaohe River basin in southeastern Inner Mongolia and western Liaoning.

Archaeological and research efforts spanning a century have unraveled some mysteries of the Hongshan Culture, represented by its sacrificial system. A well-laid ritual complex unearthed at the Niuheliang site, comprising an altar, a temple for a goddess and rubble mound tombs, as well as social stratification marked by the use of exquisite jade in sacrifice, showcased the system.

At the Yuanbaoshan site, which is around 5,000 to 5,100 years old, some of the unearthed jade relics were found inside and underneath the walls of a round rubble mound tomb, 23.5 meters in diameter, which is the largest discovered in Inner Mongolia to date.

Dang, from the Inner Mongolia Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, said they are conducting further paleoenvironmental studies, laboratory tests and other research methods to learn more about the topography of the area, date the relics and trace the sequence of construction.

Jia Xiaobing, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Archaeology, said the layout of the round rubble mound tomb at Yuanbaoshan and the tomb's surroundings show



Jade artifacts used in sacrifice are unearthed in July at the Yuanbaoshan archaeological site. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

similarities with tombs found at Niuheliang, dating back 5,000 to 5,500 years.

"Such consistency in an expanded area proves that a shared belief system existed among the Hongshan ancestors," he said.

Jia is currently leading a program aimed at bringing together

his Beijing-based institute and universities and archaeological institutions of Inner Mongolia, Liaoning and Hebei, in order to strengthen archaeological and research efforts on the Hongshan Culture.

Contact the writers at fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Political Lens

Xi stresses cultivating more officials for Xinjiang

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, has emphasized further cultivating loyal, upright, responsible and high-caliber officials for the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Xi, who is also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in an instruction upon the 70th anniversary of a training program for ethnic officials in Xinjiang under the Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

He pointed out that the training program has played an important role in strengthening the ranks of officials, boosting economic and social development, and promoting social stability and long-term security in Xinjiang over the past 70 years.

Emphasizing the need to fully and faithfully implement the Party's policy for the governance of Xinjiang, Xi called for efforts to foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation throughout the process of the training program.

It is important to strengthen research on the basic theories and key issues of ethnic affairs and improve the quality and effectiveness of the training program, he said.

Xi's instruction was read out by Chen Xi, president of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee and the National Academy of Governance, at a symposium held on Saturday to mark the training program's anniversary.

XINHUA

PV: Subsidies, tariffs signs of a US double standard

From page 1

They said that Chinese-made solar and wind power equipment has facilitated the widespread adoption of affordable renewable energy worldwide, contributing to a global shift toward green development, adding that collaboration among global economies is essential for mutual gains in the sector.

Cui Fan, an international trade professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said that policy interventions are necessary globally to address market flaws in advancing new energy. Solely relying on market forces could significantly delay global decarbonization progress by 20 to 30 years, which would be out of sync with the pace of global green initiatives, he added.

"However, in the WTO framework, subsidies must adhere to specific conditions, including avoiding unjust discrimination. The US' Inflation Reduction Act breaches this by favoring US products over Chinese imports," Cui said.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said that the US' high subsidies for its new energy industry, as well as its consistent raising of tariffs on Chinese goods under anti-subsidy pretexts, showcase a US double standard.

Song Hao, assistant vice-president at GCL Technology Holdings, said the US' contradictory actions of restricting imports under anti-subsidy pretexts while heavily supporting domestic solar industries were undermining fairness.

Lin said: "Although the US has continuously raised trade barriers, it has limited impact on the Chinese solar industry, as China's direct exports to the US are relatively small. Chinese companies have diversified investments globally, forging stronger ties with Europe, the Middle East and other regions to explore new opportunities."

The US was not among the top 10 markets for China's solar module exports in the first half of this year, while Europe and Asia collectively accounted for over 80 percent of these exports, according to the China Photovoltaic Industry Association. Solar modules accounted for 87 percent of China's total PV product exports in terms of value, it added.

Love is in the air



Couples pose for photos at a group wedding ceremony in Beijing on Sunday. Over 5,000 couples participated in the nationwide event, which was held ahead of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and served as an indicator of constructing a new and modern family view. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

Agriculture: Elimination of institutional barriers urged

From page 1

While migrant workers primarily work in cities, their needs for social support such as elderly care and child-rearing are predominantly rural concerns.

Jin Xiaoyi, a professor at Xi'an Jiaotong University's School of Public Policy and Administration, said the old approach had equated urbanization solely with urban construction.

"It neglected the transformation of rural migrants in aspects such as employment, social security and public services as they move from the countryside to the city," she said.

Jin highlighted the mismatch of two sets of figures.

Between 2006 and 2019, the annual growth of land in urban areas was about 1.7 times the growth of

permanent residents, which the professor said was proof that old-fashioned urbanization was more "land-centered".

While 63.89 percent of China's population were permanent urban residents in 2020, only 45.4 percent held urban hukou. This indicates that hundreds of millions of rural migrants have yet to receive equal treatment compared with urban residents.

The third plenary session held in July called for enhancing institutional mechanisms to advance new urbanization.

Jiang, the professor of demography, said: "The new urbanization model focuses on people and quality improvement. The key is to effectively address issues such as the education of children of rural migrant workers, housing and social security."

Misconduct led to Jiangxi fire, probe finds

By CHEN MEILING

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An investigation into a fire that killed 39 people and injured nine early this year at a building complex in Xinyu, Jiangxi province, has uncovered a trail of negligence and misconduct, leading to punitive action against the responsible parties.

The accident, which happened on the afternoon of Jan 24, also caused direct economic loss of more than 43.52 million yuan (\$6.17 million).

A joint investigation team was established after the fire by the Ministry of Emergency Management, the Ministry of Public Security, the National Fire and Rescue Administration, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the Jiangxi Provincial People's Government.

The fire was caused by illegal construction of a cold storage facility in the basement of the building complex, according to a report on the investigation released on Saturday.

During construction, the use of polyurethane foam sealant led to the emission of flammable gases, which gradually built up to hazardous levels, said the report, which was reviewed and approved at an executive meeting of the State Council, China's Cabinet.

Simultaneously, when plastic film was being placed on extruding polystyrene boards, the generation of static electricity triggered the igniting of the gases, the foam and other combustible substances. This chain of events resulted in the production of a significant volume of toxic smoke, according to the report.

With the lack of fire separation in the shared evacuation staircases between the basement and

the ground floor of the building complex, the smoke quickly spread to the second floor, where students and teachers were having classes organized by Boyi Education, a training institution. Because of security nets and advertising boards outside the classrooms, they were unable to escape in time, resulting in an increase in casualties.

The investigation team also found that the owner of the building had illegally rented out the basement floor, where construction of the cold storage facility was underway, and the building's fire prevention measures were insufficient.

Furthermore, the team found that the educational training institution and hotel were operating in violation of regulations, and relevant local authorities had failed to carry out their supervision duties.

In an interview with Xinhua News Agency, the team suggested enhancing the safety management of cold storage by regulating the planning, site selection and on-site construction of such facilities. It also asked for strengthened management of major places where multiple businesses operate.

Efforts should also be made to promote the installation of "one-click alarm" devices in crowded areas and near evacuation routes, enabling a single press to trigger building-wide alarms to enable prompt response by all occupants, the team said.

It also addressed issues such as congested evacuation routes, poorly maintained fire safety facilities, inadequate safety exits, and potential hazards such as unauthorized security nets and advertisement boards.

Several senior officials and others responsible for the fire have

been punished, according to authorities.

They include Ren Zhufeng, vice-governor of Jiangxi in charge of safe production and civil air defense work, who was given a disciplinary warning within the Communist Party of China for failing to supervise fire prevention in the basement where the blaze occurred.

Chen Min, secretary-general of the CPC Jiangxi Provincial Committee and former vice-governor of Jiangxi in charge of housing and urban-rural development, was given a severe disciplinary warning within the Party together with Sun Hongshan, vice-governor of Jiangxi in charge of education.

The results were submitted by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China.

Public security organs in Jiangxi have initiated investigations against 10 individuals suspected of serious accident liability crimes, including those in charge of construction of the cold storage facility and the educational institute.

The discipline inspection and supervision organs in Jiangxi have conducted serious accountability probes against 55 officials suspected of violating discipline and laws in the incident, China Central Television reported.

Three officials are under investigation for serious violations of discipline and laws as well as duty-related crimes. Two of those cases were transferred to procuratorial organs for review and prosecution.

Additionally, 52 officials in relevant departments who were linked to negligence and dereliction of duty in the incident were punished, with most being removed from their posts.

CHINA



Bumper catch

Fish leap out of the water as a fishing net is drawn in at Xianyu Lake in Xinyu, Jiangxi province, on Sunday, when over 50 metric tons of bighead carp and silver carp were caught. The fish were promptly sent to markets across the country, in provinces including Zhejiang, Fujian and Henan. ZHAO CHUNLIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Green action plan unveiled in Shanghai

Energy systems and technologies for carbon reduction are emphasized

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Shanghai is advancing toward greener development and high-quality growth, but further efforts are needed in energy supply, institutional arrangements and technological innovation, according to officials and experts.

Their comments followed the release of the city's action plan for a green and low-carbon transition between 2024 and 2027, which was announced by the municipal government recently.

Under the plan, Shanghai aims to have an installed photovoltaic capacity of 4.5 million kilowatts by the end of 2027 and will promote the construction of its first deep-sea wind power facilities. By 2027, 75 percent of transportation in the city's central area should be green, with buses and taxis transitioning to new energy vehicles by next year. Additionally, over half of new individual car purchases are expected to be NEVs by 2027.

Energy-saving renovations will cover an additional 20 million square meters of building space by 2027, supplementing the 30 million square meters slated for upgrades by the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

China Baowu Steel Group Corp's Shanghai production base aims to reuse more than 15 percent of steel scrap by next year as part of its carbon reduction efforts. Key materials promoting carbon neutrality will also be prioritized in Shanghai's chemical industrial parks.

To support these goals, the plan emphasizes the development of future-oriented energy systems and frontier technologies for carbon reduction.

Financial institutions are encouraged to expand green credit, bonds, insurance and other financing options, while the city's carbon trading mechanism will be further refined to spur innovation.

Huang Weiguang, a researcher at the Shanghai Advanced Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, noted that advancing the green transition is crucial for Shanghai's high-quality growth and addressing the resource and environmental constraints faced by the megacity. He called for top-down green design initiatives

“The key to that transition lies in building a new power supply system centered on new energies.”

Huang Zhen, head of the Research Institute of Carbon Neutrality at Shanghai Jiao Tong University

across buildings, industries and urban planning.

Huang Zhen, head of the Research Institute of Carbon Neutrality at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, stressed the importance of reducing coal dependency and shifting new energies from being alternative sources to primary energy supplies.

“The key to that transition lies in building a new power supply system centered on new energies,” he said.

Lin Han, vice-president of Shanghai Treasure Carbon New Energy Environmental Technology Co, said that Chinese export companies must now adhere to international green trade rules and carbon emissions disclosures, adding new costs but creating opportunities for third-party service providers.

Zheng Guanghong, an official at the Shanghai Science and Technology Commission, noted the city's recent advancements in clean energy, smart power grids, energy storage and hydrogen fuel cells. However, he emphasized the need for increased energy-related research to drive breakthrough technologies.

By mid-August, Shanghai's installed photovoltaic capacity had reached 3.48 million kilowatts, while wind power capacity stood at 1.07 million kilowatts, according to data from the Shanghai Municipal Development and Reform Commission. The city boasts 400 million square meters of green buildings, including 14 million square meters of ultra-low energy consumption structures. Over 1.41 million NEVs are in use in Shanghai, supported by nearly 840,000 charging stations.

Veteran actress honored with title of 'People's Artist'

By XU FAN
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Actress Tian Hua, 96, was awarded the national honorary title of People's Artist this month in an order signed by President Xi Jinping ahead of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The order also awarded national medals and honorary titles to 14 other individuals recognized for their outstanding contributions to the country's development.

Born into a poor family in Hebei province, Tian's life changed in 1940, when at the age of 12 she was captivated by a stage drama performed by an Eighth Route Army art troupe in the Jin-Cha-Ji border region, which now encompasses Beijing, the provinces of Shanxi and Hebei, and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

She joined the troupe and became an actress, touring with it to perform and boost the morale of residents and soldiers during the turbulence of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the War of Liberation (1946-49). She joined the Communist Party of China at age 16.

75 years on



Tian Hua

In 1949, Tian was given the role of Xi'er, the protagonist in *The White-Haired Girl*, the country's first revolutionary-themed blockbuster. The film was based on a well-known

folk tale depicting a tenant farmer's daughter being oppressed by a lecherous landlord, compelling her to flee and seek refuge in the mountains, a journey that leads to her hair turning white.

“It was a rainy day in late autumn when I learned that I had been selected to play the lead role,” Tian said in an interview with the television program *China Movie Report*. “It was my debut in film acting.”

Her poverty-stricken family background enabled Tian to deliver a compelling performance that garnered nationwide acclaim. That success paved the way for her to

star in more acclaimed films, including *Daughter of the Party* (1958), *Loyal Army Brave Hearts* (1963) and *In and Out of Court* (1980).

In the late 1980s, Tian worked as head of the performers' troupe at the August First Film Studio, showcasing her passion for both the stage and the silver screen. The veteran artist has always focused on staying connected with the people and immersing herself in their lives, considering it the key to delivering convincing performances in her films.

Pan Yilin, a TV anchor and director who has known Tian for 28 years, told China Daily, “She is a highly respected artist and is praised by almost everyone who knows or works with her.”

The host of the China Movie Channel talk-show program *Liu Jin Sui Yue (Gone the Golden Years)*, which was launched in 1996 to interview artists who featured in classic movies, Pan has had multiple interviews with Tian and said he has been impressed by her easygoing nature and remarkable memory.

“I recall years after our first interview, she warmly greeted me

by my birth name,” Pan said. “It made me feel that she is not just a big star but more like an old friend.”

He gave one example of Tian's dedication during the filming of *The White-Haired Girl*. Due to the primitive makeup techniques of the time, the makeup artist used a mixture of glue and white paint to color Tian's hair. The process of applying and removing it was time-consuming, and the pulling on the scalp was painful.

“Despite these challenges, she persisted through it all,” Pan said.

In 2017, Pan produced the documentary *Yan Yuan (Once Upon a Time)*, which chronicled the artistic careers and cinematic influence of the top 22 movie stars, including Tian, since the founding of New China. The list was selected by major studios based on a proposal by then premier Zhou Enlai in 1962.

Pan said the documentary sought to preserve the oral history of early Chinese cinema, because esteemed elderly artists like Tian could act as beacons, illuminating the path for future generations and inspiring young talent to pursue their dreams and passions.

Municipality makes life easier for foreign talent

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Shanghai issued 13 measures on Friday to improve services for overseas talent attracted to the city.

The measures, unveiled at the Fourth Shanghai Talent+ Summit, include streamlined procedures for obtaining visas, residence permits, permanent residency, work permits and financial services. For example, those who possess doctorates and others deemed to be outstanding foreign talent will benefit from streamlined procedures when applying for permanent residency.

An official surnamed Liu, who is

in charge of services for foreign experts at the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Talent Work, said that everyone from overseas who worked in Shanghai used to have to go to two different government departments to apply for a foreigner's work permit and a residence permit.

Liu said the two services were combined at one window several years ago for category A talent, and that will now be extended to all talent from overseas.

Category A talent includes those who are employed by world-leading companies and research institutions, laureates of international

prizes, those who possess innovative technological inventions or patents, and postdoctoral fellows below the age 40.

The new measures will also optimize services for expat talent in scientific research, innovation and entrepreneurship, medical care, travel and online and social integration.

At the summit, people from across Shanghai presented business plans in a contest designed to highlight their innovation and entrepreneurship. A section for expats was included for the first time this year.

“Shanghai is a role model in inspiring entrepreneurs from home and abroad to put their business

plans into reality in a positive and speedy way,” said Benoit Dubuis, president of the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences and also director of the Sino-Swiss Institute of Advanced Technology at Shanghai University, which is promoting the integration of some cutting-edge disciplines, including microelectronics, biomedicine and artificial intelligence.

“Many businesses launched by expats in Shanghai increase investment or invest in other entrepreneurial projects if they succeed,” Dubuis said. “This part is critical to the development of the local business environment.”

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BREAST DISEASE AWARENESS

EARLY DETECTION AND INTERVENTION CAN SAVE LIVES

VITAL FOR WOMEN

Surveys show that a high percentage of Chinese women suffer from breast disease, and the life-threatening condition is now being found in younger women.

Many breast cancer patients did not recognize the early symptoms of the disease, and thus often receive diagnosis and treatment late. Medical experts suggest women aged above 30 should conduct breast self-examinations monthly and contact their doctor if they notice anything unusual.

CHINA

Looking for work

Students participate in a job fair at Southeast University in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Saturday. More than 300 companies and institutions from across the country, including research institutes and enterprises engaged in industries such as information technology and intelligent manufacturing, attended the event and offered over 39,000 jobs. YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Digital publishing industry in China growing rapidly

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
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The digital publishing industry in China is experiencing rapid growth and high-quality productivity, as revealed in the 2023-2024 annual report on China's digital publishing industry.

The report was unveiled at the 14th China International Digital Publishing Expo, which kicked off in Haikou, Hainan province, on Saturday.

According to the report, China's digital publishing industry earned an estimated 1.6 trillion yuan (\$229 billion) in revenue last year, up 19 percent from 2022.

Internet advertising, online gaming, online education and digital music continue to lead the industry in terms of revenue. Last year, internet advertising saw 719 billion yuan in revenue, online gaming raked in 303 billion yuan, online education earned 288 billion yuan and digital music netted 191 billion yuan.

The report highlighted the growth of some digital publishing sectors, with internet periodicals, e-books and digital newspapers generating a combined revenue of 11.3 billion yuan in 2023, an 8.56 percent year-on-year increase.

Digital publishing offers a wealth of possibilities for vibrant storytelling and engaging readers in new ways, according to Wang Qing, chairman of the Central China Publishing and Media Investment Holding Group.

Wang noted that the process of digitization is shaping new content scenarios within the publishing industry. Compared to traditional publishers, digital platforms provide unique advantages in terms of content activation, user reach and fostering a return to reading.

"Publishing companies must capture data through their services and let this data empower them to provide even better services," he added.

Virginie Clayssen, president of the digital commission at the French Publishers Association, agreed that publishers should embrace digital transformation to become leading providers of high-quality digital books. She said that technology plays a vital role in "resurrecting" out-of-print books and making forgotten literary heritage accessible to a wider audience.

Zhou Qing, chairman of Sichuan Xinhua Publishing Group,

In the future, AI will serve as a tool for empowering the publishing industry, and the industry will also become a supplier of language data for artificial intelligence."

Zhou Qing, chairman of Sichuan Xinhua Publishing Group

said that in the era of artificial intelligence, the industry is evolving into a service industry centered around data, algorithms and computing power. With its vast accumulation of content resources over its long development, the traditional publishing industry is well-positioned to transform from content resources to digital products through the establishment of large models.

"In the future, AI will serve as a tool for empowering the publishing industry, and the industry will also become a supplier of language data for artificial intelligence," he said. "The two will form an economic community where technology and content are integrated, and input and output are mutually driving."

The publication of online literature in China is flourishing, the report said. In December, the number of online literature readers reached a record 537 million, and the number of online literary works exceeded 36 million, with over 24 million authors contributing content.

The emerging online animation sector also showed strong development momentum last year, achieving revenue of 36 billion yuan.

A focus on producing high-quality content, using premium resources and engaging in deep development efforts has led to the creation of top-notch animated works and the establishment of well-known brand systems.

"Through robust market research and clear user profiling, the industry has enhanced the targeting and applicability of its content, paving the way for the industrialization and high-quality development of online animation," the report said.

Chinese magnet sets world record

HEFEI — Chinese scientists used an independently developed resistive magnet on Sunday to produce a steady magnetic field of 42.02 tesla, equivalent to over 800,000 times the Earth's magnetic field, breaking a seven-year-old world record set by the United States.

The milestone achievement by the High Magnetic Field Laboratory at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Hefei Institutes of Physical Science is expected to drive scientific discoveries and applications in a wide range of technological fields.

The previous record of 41.4 tesla was set by the US' National High Magnetic Field Laboratory in 2017.

A steady high magnetic field is an extreme experimental condition that can serve as a powerful tool for scientific research. In the experimental environment of a high magnetic field, the properties of matter can be manipulated, which is conducive to scientists discovering new phenomena and exploring new laws of matter, experts said.

High magnetic fields can also spur applications in fields such as electromagnetism, metallurgy and chemical reaction synthesis, and especially in the widespread usage of nuclear magnetic resonance technology in medical science.

Due to its significant value in various fields such as physics, chemistry, material science and life science, a steady high magnetic field has been referred to as the "cradle" of the Nobel Prizes.

The new achievement results from nearly four years of efforts by the research team, which involved innovating magnetic structures and optimizing manufacturing processes, said Kuang Guangli, academic director of the High Magnetic Field Laboratory.

Kuang said the breakthrough could meet users' needs for a fast, regulated and stable high magnetic field, provide scientists with powerful experimental conditions, and lay a key technological foundation for China's construction of higher-field steady magnets.

There are three types of steady-state magnets: resistive magnets, superconducting magnets, and hybrid magnets that combine the other two types.

The Hefei laboratory produced a steady field of 45.22 tesla with a hybrid magnet in 2022, setting a world record for all working magnets.

"Resistive magnets and superconducting magnets are both 'singles masters', while a hybrid magnet is a 'mixed-doubles combination,'" Kuang said, making a comparison between magnet development and table tennis.

"In 2022, we won the mixed-doubles championship with comprehensive advantages. Today, we won the singles."

Experts hopeful after WorldSkills success

Achievements could alter negative perceptions about vocational path

By WANG MINGJIE in London
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China's dominance at the 47th WorldSkills Competition in Lyon, France, has reinforced its commitment to fostering skills-based careers and recognizing the value of vocational education, experts said.

Chinese participants took home 36 gold, nine silver and four bronze medals, along with eight medalions for excellence at the competition held earlier this month. With a delegation of 68 contestants, China had the largest number of entries across all 59 skill disciplines, highlighting its leadership in the global vocational skills arena.

One standout was Zhang Yupeng, who won the gold medal in the jewelry event.

He described the competition as the most challenging experience of his life, citing the intense pressure. Nevertheless, he was the only competitor to complete all assigned tasks, including creating a bird-themed hairpin featuring Chinese cultural elements.

Zhang, who teaches jewelry design and manufacturing at Beijing Arts & Design Technology Institute, said he found his passion by observing skilled artisans.

"There were several times when I thought about giving up due to unexpected difficulties. I worked for about five years, logging over 18,000 hours of practice," he said. "From knowing nothing to becoming a national-level expert, it feels like a dream. Truly, skills can change one's destiny, and success through skills is attainable."

Shawna Bourke, director of marketing and communications at WorldSkills International, praised China's systematic approach to developing skilled talent.

"China uses the WorldSkills Occupational Standards to skill up millions of young skilled people, creating a high level of talent and a

pipeline for success in international skills competitions," she said.

The competition has also played a key role in elevating the status of trade skills, according to Simon Field, an independent expert on skills and director of Skills Policy, a consultancy in London. Field pointed out the challenges many countries, including China, face in encouraging young people to pursue skilled trades rather than traditional academic paths.

"One of the great achievements of WorldSkills is to enhance the status of trade skills by treating them as Olympic sports," he said. "I think China's achievements in WorldSkills should translate into a valuable enhanced view of vocational education and training in China."

Historically, fields such as law and finance have been seen as the most aspirational career paths for graduates in China. However, experts suggest China's recent success in vocational competitions could lead to a shift in this mindset.

Tom Harper, a China specialist at the University of East London, said that China's achievements at WorldSkills reflect the country's broader push toward technological development.

"China's recent success in the WorldSkills Competition can serve as an indication of the priorities for China's future development, which has placed a greater emphasis on technical skills and advanced technologies and less emphasis on more financial fields," he said. "As China evolves, more practical skills will gain greater traction among young Chinese."

He added that the competition mirrors the government's efforts to develop technological expertise, with the younger generation at the forefront of the transformation, moving away from traditional academic paths toward skills-based careers.

Cao Xuebing, a lecturer in human resource management at Keele University in Keele, England, said: "China's achievements at the Lyon competition will no doubt provide a unique experience in developing vocational education that can be shared by other countries."

"It's proof that the country's strategic investment into vocational education over the past few decades has paid off, and the success has far-reaching implications for socioeconomic development because skilled labor, which is central to developing human capital, is key for a country to gain a competitive advantage on the world stage."

Wang Qing, a professor of marketing and innovation at Warwick University in Coventry, England, echoed Cao's remarks.

"It's no surprise that China performed so well," she said. "The country has ample resources, experience and an efficient system for selecting and training outstanding candidates for international competitions like WorldSkills."

While Wang agrees that China's focus on vocational careers is gaining momentum, she cautions that more work is needed.

"The shift from an overemphasis on the highly competitive national higher education entrance exams to a more skills-based career approach is still in its early stages. This is a much-needed change for the sustainable development of China's economy," she said.

Wang emphasized that while the accolades from the WorldSkills Competition may inspire young people, changing the deep-rooted belief that university degrees are superior to vocational education will take time.

"These awards should have some positive impact on young people's career aspirations, but there is still a long way to go in terms of changing people's long-held beliefs about the value of universities versus vocational education and career paths," she added.



A child experiences writing with a Chinese calligraphy brush on a digital screen at the 14th China International Digital Publishing Expo in Hainan province on Saturday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Event marks one-year countdown to biosphere reserve congress

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou
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UNESCO's Fifth World Congress of Biosphere Reserves, to be held in China next year, will provide a model and an exemplar for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, experts and officials said at an event in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, over the weekend to mark the one-year countdown to the congress.

On the sidelines of the event held in the city's Lin'an district, Antonio Abreu, director of the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences in the Natural Sciences

Sector of UNESCO and Secretary of the MAB Programme, inspected the former Tianmushan Biosphere Reserve last year.

He said the experience gave him high expectations for next year's congress and council meeting.

"China is really expressing the relationship between man and nature," he said. "Here, we see the full dimensions of nature conservation, scientific understanding and knowledge, while also bringing together landscape concerns, water management, and integrating heritage and culture."

"It's impressive, both in terms of

the way things are being done and the strategic planning and conceptual approach involved."

The congresses, held every 10 years, are the largest international conferences in the Man and the Biosphere Programme.

The fifth congress — the first in the Asia-Pacific region — will take place in Hangzhou from Sept 22 to 27 next year.

The four previous congresses have been held in Minsk, Belarus; Seville and Madrid, Spain; and Lima, Peru.

"I am sure that it will be a landmark event for the Man and the Biosphere Programme, and I can-

not think of a better place to design and envision the future," Abreu said. "Led by UNESCO and China, all nations of the world can work together to shape the next 10-year strategy."

The Tianmushan Biosphere Reserve was designated by the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme in 1996, and was the first reserve in Zhejiang to be included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

In July, it was extended from 43 square kilometers to 547 sq km, and now incorporates the Qinglingfeng National Nature Reserve,

which also forms part of the Tianmu Mountain Range, and its name was changed accordingly.

The expansion will enhance the integrity of the reserve's ecosystem.

"Applying for expansion requires submitting a series of findings, including biodiversity characteristics, species status, and community planning, which typically involves a long process," said Han Qunli, a member of the advisory committee of the Chinese National Committee for the Man and the Biosphere Programme. "However, Lin'an achieved this in just two years."

CHINA

Vietnamese student fulfills Chinese dream

Postgraduate at Wuhan university hosts Mandarin courses online for parents and children from her home country

By ZHOU LIHUA, LIU KUN
in Wuhan and PENG CHIAO

Nguyen Thi Phuoc, a Vietnamese student at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law in Wuhan, Hubei province, will graduate next year, fulfilling her decade-long dream of earning a postgraduate degree in international Chinese language education.

Born and raised in Bac Ninh province, home to many large Chinese enterprises, Phuoc and her friends often met Chinese people. They shared photos of Chinese scenery and cuisine, which aroused their curiosity and led them to choose Chinese language as their major in university. "Mastering Mandarin often means more job opportunities," she said, noting that her cousins had also followed this path.

Upon graduating from Hanoi Open University in 2015, Phuoc initially planned to continue her studies in Chinese language. However, China Railway Sixth Group offered her a job as a translator, so she decided to start working first. At work, Phuoc witnessed most of the construction process of Vietnam's first light rail, from the piling stage to the final decoration. "This job was a bit challenging for me, as I'm not only dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary, but also with new things that have never appeared in Vietnam," she said.

At first, she couldn't tell "station hall" from "station platform," since both "hall" and "platform" in Vietnamese refer to public places where people wait. But they are completely different in the engineering budget sheet. "When the light rail was first introduced in Vietnam, the language



Nguyen Thi Phuoc

was not yet prepared for it. Therefore, experts from both China and Vietnam worked together to come up with Vietnamese translations to address this issue," Phuoc said.

Following the completion of the light rail line in 2021, Phuoc moved to Wuhan, where she established an online group to teach Mandarin to Vietnamese parents and their children, amid the growing interest in learning Mandarin among her fellow citizens.

The online group has grown to over 2,000 active members who regularly engage in daily language learning activities. They share nursery rhymes and graded readings, and

some have even formed sub-communities tailored to different age groups. The parents also share videos of their children practicing spoken Chinese with Phuoc, and ask for advice.

"It makes me feel so happy to see the children reading aloud with enthusiasm and vividness," she said.

To pursue further studies in Chinese language education, Phuoc applied for and received a Chinese government scholarship last year to study at Zhongnan University of Economics and Law.

Her family was hesitant to support her academic pursuits as extensive reading may further damage her already fragile eyesight.

"I was blind for about a year in my second year of junior high school," Phuoc said. "Fortunately, I was able to partially regain my vision through medication and adjustments."

Phuoc said the friendly exchanges between Vietnam and China are a growing trend, and she hopes to contribute to the development of Chinese-language teaching materials and curricula in Vietnam.

Starting this year, Chinese language has been included as a compulsory subject in the third and fourth grades in Vietnam, making it the fifth country to incorporate Chinese into its compulsory education.

While teaching Mandarin online to her fellow citizens, Phuoc often arranges a Q&A session where parents and children can ask her about China. "They are so curious about Chinese technology and customs that they would always come to me with questions after watching the videos about China that I shared on social media," she said.

Phuoc has also noticed a rise in the

number of Vietnamese companies setting up operations in Wuhan.

Last year, Phuoc also took up the study of the *guqin*, a traditional Chinese musical instrument she has long admired. Despite the initial challenges, the serene sounds of the *guqin* and the cultural narratives embedded in its music bring her peace.

Learning the *guqin* and Mandarin was difficult in the beginning, but with patience and faith, positive changes will happen over time, Phuoc said.

"It was like I initially thought Wuhan locals were quarrelsome, but later I realized it was the vivacity and assertiveness stemming from the city's dock culture," she added.

Contact the writers at pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn



Students play bamboo flutes at Yinsan ethnic primary school in Yuping county, Guizhou province, on Aug 7. HU PANXIE / XINHUA

Sound of bamboo flute imparts cultural legacy

GUIYANG — Each day after completing her homework during the summer vacation, Xia Meng, a student at Yinsan ethnic primary school, devotes most of her time to practicing the bamboo flute.

Just a month ago, her primary school introduced a distinctive interlude to the school day — a bamboo flute ensemble. Over 2,500 students, dressed in vibrant traditional attire, came together to perform a collective flute piece. As a novice, Xia found herself enchanted by the skill of her peers.

Xia's school is nestled in Yuping Dong autonomous county in Southwest China's Guizhou province. Known as the "hometown of the Chinese bamboo flute", the county is home to nearly 30 enterprises and workshops dedicated to the production of Yuping bamboo flutes.

According to local cultural experts, the county's tradition of crafting bamboo flutes dates back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Made from indigenous bamboo, each flute undergoes more than 30 meticulous processes, including selection, shaping, engraving, grinding and tuning, before it reaches its final form.

As an emblem of traditional handmade musical instruments, the Yuping bamboo flute earned the gold medal at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco in 1915. This achievement marked it as one of the first Chinese ethnic musical instruments to receive international acclaim.

In 2006, the techniques of making Yuping bamboo flutes were inscribed in the inaugural list of China's national intangible cultural heritages.

To better preserve and promote the craft and the rich ethnic culture it embodies, the county has been creating more opportunities for the younger generation to engage with this ancient art, from learning about the flutes to crafting and playing them.

Recently, students from Yuping Secondary Vocational School were invited to the county's flute museum to view its rich collection.

During their visit, Zheng Jincheng, the museum curator, shared the historical narratives

"The bamboo flute has inspired a growing number of youngsters like me to safeguard and carry forward this cultural legacy."

Yang Sitong, student from the Yuping Secondary Vocational School

and profound memories associated with the flutes, allowing the young visitors to appreciate their evolution and the allure of their ethnic culture.

The enthusiasm of the younger generation has also inspired young teachers to participate. In a bamboo flute class for sixth grade students at Yinsan ethnic primary school, 33-year-old Yao Sha taught the students how to perform a Chinese folk song on the bamboo flute.

Beyond a traditional musical instrument, the Yuping bamboo flute has also become an exquisite work of art. Artisans engrave dragons, phoenixes, landscapes and poetry onto the flutes. One local craftsman even inscribed *The Thousand Character Classic*, a Chinese poem used as a primer for teaching Chinese characters to children in ancient China, onto a single flute.

As a local training ground for artisans, the Yuping Secondary Vocational School boasts a specialized workshop for flute production and offers a range of courses on flute culture. This special curriculum has helped the students deepen their understanding of flute culture and keep performance skills alive — and relevant.

"When I visited the museum, I saw poems engraved on the flutes, which showcased the extensive and profound culture of the Yuping bamboo flute," said Yang Sitong, a student from the vocational school. "The bamboo flute has inspired a growing number of youngsters like me to safeguard and carry forward this cultural legacy."

XINHUA

Officer continues duties despite serious injuries

By LI PEIXUAN
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"If such a situation arises again, as a police officer, I will rush to handle it again," said Xu Donghua, who in March 2019 had his thumb sliced off and sustained serious injuries requiring over 100 stitches while trying to detain an individual with a knife who was out of control.

In September 2022, China's Ministry of Public Security awarded him the title of Second-Class Hero Model of the National Public Security System.

Xu, 36, currently serving as an instructor at Shazhouba Police Station of the Ruijin Public Security Bureau in Jiangxi province, hails from a family with a long military tradition.

His grandfather, a retired soldier, told him many times the moving stories of his great-grandfather, a martyr of the Red Army, who sacrificed his life during the fourth anti-encirclement campaign in Fujian province at age 35 in the early 1930s.

"From a young age, my dream was to become a soldier or a police officer

to protect my country," Xu said.

On March 20, 2019, Xu received a report that a man had stolen a boning knife from a meat stall at a market in Ruijin.

Immediately rushing to the scene, Xu and his colleague saw a man brandishing the knife. Xu requested reinforcements while decisively confronting the man.

Using a forked steel pole, Xu pinned the man against a wall, but slipped on the wet pavement. The man broke free, slashing wildly at Xu. Although his colleagues were able to control the man, Xu was severely injured.

"Xu was brought into the operating room covered in blood, with his thumb severed and multiple deep wounds on his face and hands," said Liu Yuanliang, deputy director of Ganzhou East Hand and Foot Surgical Hospital.

The surgery lasted nearly seven hours, requiring over 100 stitches. Before being wheeled into the operating room, Xu did not utter a single groan but repeatedly asked his colleagues if the man had been detained and if any civilians had



Police officer Xu Donghua. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

been hurt, according to Liu.

"My mind was filled with controlling the man at the time because he posed a significant threat to the surrounding people," Xu recalled.

Despite his serious injuries, Xu did not allow his colleagues to inform his wife, who is also a police officer, as she was still nursing their one-month-old child. "I was afraid to let her know," he said.

His wife, Feng Yuanyuan, learned about his injuries by chance

through a post on the Ruijin Public Security Bureau's WeChat account and rushed to the hospital. Seeing her husband covered in bandages, she said nothing, but wiped his body with a towel, tears streaming down her face. Even Xu couldn't hold back his tears when seeing his wife.

After more than six months, Xu said, most of wounds had healed but the psychological impact lingered. "In the past, when someone asked me about the accident, I couldn't talk about it or even utter any words about it."

As time went by, with the support of his colleagues and family, including his wife who studied psychology, Xu realized that he must move on, not only for himself but for his children. After more than half a year of adjustment, he was finally able to face the past and work as usual.

Since joining the force, Xu Donghua's outstanding performance has earned him numerous honors, including a first-class personal merit, a third-class personal merit and a third prize from the provincial government.



People stroll around a night market on the banks of the Yangtze River in Chongqing on Aug 13. HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Vibrant residents boost night economy in 'furnace city'

CHONGQING — Despite nighttime temperatures hovering above 30 C, the Nanping subdistrict in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality remains bustling, with hotpot restaurants, cafes and bars continuing to thrive.

"The Zhengjie and Houbao blocks in the subdistrict are renowned for their delicious food and diverse cultural activities, attracting people from all walks of life to unwind after work," said Li Bo, Party secretary of the Zhengjie block, adding that these two areas draw an average of 5,000 visitors daily.

Although the metropolis had issued several red alerts for heat, the highest level in the country's color-

coded alert system, people continued to ramble along the riverside, ate hotpot in air-raid shelters and stepped into bars and cafes to enjoy the vibrant nightlife.

This has further fueled the thriving night economy in this southwestern "furnace city".

Last year, Chongqing's total retail sales of consumer goods reached over 1.5 trillion yuan (\$211 billion), with 60 percent of consumption occurring at night.

For four consecutive years, the city has topped the list of China's top 10 cities with the most influential night economies.

In Jiangbei district alone, more than 15,000 shops had been set up in

the night markets as of June, with the nighttime economy reaching approximately 45 billion yuan.

When discussing Chongqing's night economy, night markets and midnight snacks often come to mind first. However, the success of Chongqing's thriving night economy is also due to its continuous transformation and enhancement, which integrates diverse cultural, tourism and entertainment elements into its nighttime leisure offerings.

"Nightlife is not just about dining. We are now working to create diverse consumption scenarios and enrich the overall consumer experience," said Liu Mengmeng, deputy director of the subdistrict

office of Guanyinqiao, a major shopping district in Chongqing.

For instance, night owls not only can enjoy gourmet food, fine drinks and live music, but can also quietly view exhibitions and spend time in a 24-hour library in the popular Jiujiu and Beicang blocks.

Zhang Yongwu, director of the municipal commission of commerce, said that Chongqing will continue to provide more high-quality and affordable consumption options, promote the development of its night economy and inject a steady stream of vitality to stimulate consumption.

XINHUA

Editor's note: China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's efforts to achieve carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals.

By HOU LIQIANG
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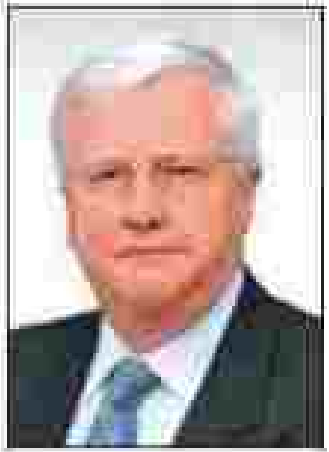
CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

Adaptability key to nation's environmental progress

Country's ability to swiftly change course has given it edge in green shift

Having engaged with China since 1980, international advocate for green development Martin Lees is a firsthand witness to how the country has transformed over the past 40 years, from being a place with very few high-rise buildings and few private cars to a strong nation seeking to lead the global charge against climate change.

Having traveled to China over 100 times, the former United Nations assistant secretary general possesses a profound understanding of the transformative processes at play when it comes to the environment, highlighting the nation's fundamental shift in economic mindset and how that holds promise for addressing the global climate crisis.



Martin Lees

China's extensive experiences in this transformation have positioned it as "absolutely central to having any chance of solving the problem", according to Lees. Its role is particularly crucial in guiding indebted developing nations toward environmentally sustainable development paths, he said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

When Lees first visited China, he was greeted by a scene that would seem like a distant memory in today's modern age in Beijing, which "is hard for young people to imagine".

Towering skyscrapers were few and far between. The streets teemed with a sea of bicycles and horses and carts, he recalled. The absence of private cars was conspicuous, with only a handful of official vehicles navigating the roads.

Back then, "China's priorities were unambiguously economic growth and employment", and "environmental damage was considered to be simply an inevitable cost of economic growth", he said.

Despite the country establishing the National Environmental Protection Agency for environmental governance in 1988, the body didn't have any great power or influence. "It was marginal," he said.

Environmental management was marginalized also because of the mindset around the development trajectory in Western countries, where they grew their economies and then only worried about the environment after they'd become rich.

But Lees gradually saw a consistent change in that way of thinking, as an over-a-decade-long debate continued on the global stage, in which he was personally involved. He tried to make it clear that, "you cannot achieve economic development if you wreck your environment".

"China has understood that, and is probably the first country to understand that," he said.

The country has understood very well that it is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and the interest of China in solving this problem is not just an international question, but very much a question that affects the success of the domestic economy, he said.

The gradual shift in thinking first saw China upgrade the NEPA to the State Environmental Protection

and put it into the environment ministry where of course there was no power to solve the problem," he said.

Lees described the significant leapfrog in the country's environmental industry following the shift in thinking.

When he proposed the development of an environmental industry to Chinese authorities in the 1990s, "they didn't understand what the hell I was talking about," he said.

But after he talked with officials from the State Environmental Protection Administration, the administration decided to convene a conference themed on this strange term, which resulted in an item in the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001-05) to start the process of building environmental industries in China, he said.

Over only a short period, he said solar and wind power, electric vehicles and environmental technologies have become major parts of China's economy.

"I just want to underline how thinking has evolved in China. That shows you that in a very short time, China moved from not understanding the need to do it, to doing it very successfully," he noted.

On the global stage, Lees sighed at the unfavorable developments regarding tackling climate change.

It's clear from a scientific point of view that, despite all the efforts that have been made worldwide, the world has not done much to solve the climate crisis. "We are still increasing the level of emissions, and we are still destabilizing the global climate," he said.

China's role will be essential against this backdrop, and, because climate and the environment are part of a bigger picture, there are very many things that China could do to help the international community to tackle these problems, he stressed.

As the largest user of coal, China is still contributing enormously to the problem in spite of its immense, successful efforts to limit emissions, he said, adding what China does is fundamentally important because of the scale of its impact on the global environment.

He also highlighted the potential role of China in supporting indebted developing nations in their fight to cope with the climate crisis.

The biggest problem now lies in the developing world, in terms of the scale of emissions and the needs of the poor, he said. Investment in green development in developing nations can produce a bigger payoff than the investment in rich countries.

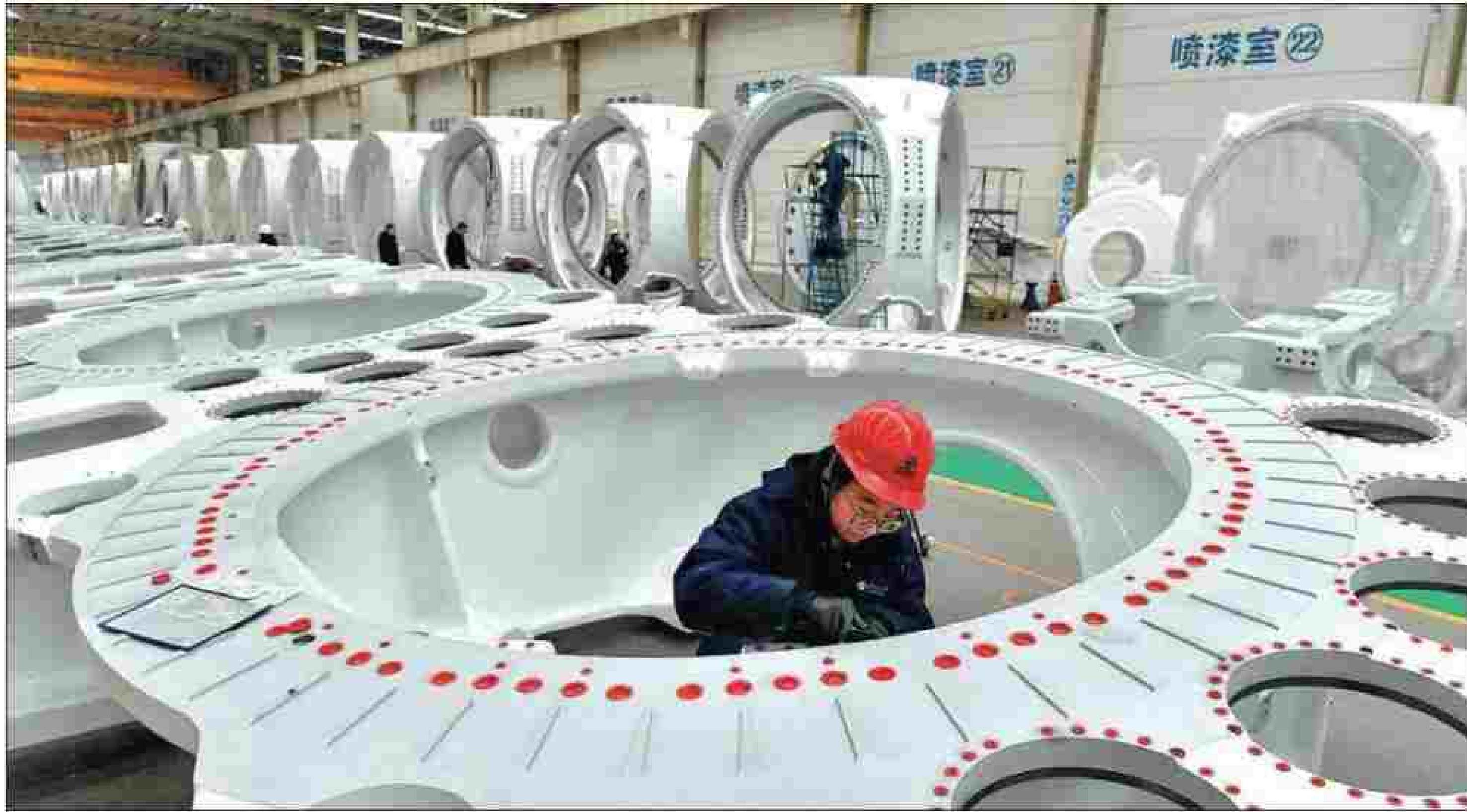
He said there's an opportunity for China, with its enormous experience, to collaborate to help developing states address these problems.

"Frankly, it's essential that China takes a lead on these questions, because you have the knowledge, you have the capability and you have the resources to help," he noted.

"It means you have to combine your immediate economic advantage of selling cheap electric vehicles, such a short-term, immediate trade advantage... with what I would call a longer-term strategic view of solidarity to build a stable world in which human activities can be matched with the capacity of nature to observe our impacts," he said.

"This is an opportunity for China to look beyond immediate issues and map out a strategy, he underscored.

"In this respect, you don't just help the developing countries, you help the whole world," he said.



Workers paint the base of a wind turbine in Binzhou, Shandong province, in January. GUO XULEI / XINHUA



Electricians inspect a lake-based photovoltaic array in Chuzhou, Anhui province, last month. SONG WEIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY



An oil rig in the Wushi 23-5 oilfield operates in the Beibu Gulf off Leizhou, Guangdong province, in June. The project is an example of a greener exploitation of oil, as it produces no wastewater. HUANG GUOBAO / XINHUA

Administration, "which was a big step-up, but still not as powerful as a ministry", he said.

However, the country was to roll out a lot more measures in the years to come, according to Lees.

"When the issue ever emerged, China took decisions which were, I don't say necessarily unique, but which were very different from the way this problem was handled in other countries," he said.

"Therefore, it was very successful in my opinion, in tackling the climate change question."

Recognizing confronting climate change as an issue that should be built into the whole strategy for eco-

economic growth, he said, China has adopted an all-of-government mechanism in which a premier-headed leading group consisting of all ministries concerned was established.

The leading group Lees mentioned was launched in 2007 with 30 ministries and commissions as its members. Its remit is to respond to climate change, conserve energy and reduce emissions. Similar leading groups were also set up in all provincial regions across the country.

"So they put the climate issue right at the core of government strategy... I think that was very different from most countries who considered climate to be an environment problem

Altay explores renewable energy storage solutions

By ZHAO YIMENG in Altay, Xinjiang
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Altay prefecture in the northern part of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is taking advantage of its natural resources to develop renewable energy, and is fast becoming a hub for wind and solar projects.

While the region is traditionally known for livestock farming, with cattle and sheep roaming its vast grasslands, Altay's rise to prominence as a leader in clean energy is contributing to the region's economic development.

Figures released by Altay show that it ranks third in Xinjiang for hydropower, with a capacity of 4.84 million kilowatts, and fourth for both wind energy, with a potential capacity of 39.5 million kilowatts, and solar power, which can generate up to 505.5 million kilowatts.

Wang Shaojie, deputy director of the prefecture's development and reform bureau, said that as of July, Altay's total power generation reached 7.78 billion kilowatt-hours,

with green electricity making up 92.7 percent of the output. Half of the energy produced in Altay is exported to other parts of the country, he said.

Therein lies an issue for the prefecture, in that due to its sparse population and lack of industrial demand, it produces more green energy than it needs. As a result, renewable projects in the prefecture are pursuing ways of better storing electricity, more efficiently exporting electricity to places outside the prefecture and smart management in power generation.

China General Nuclear Power Corporation's Jeminay Integrated Energy Project in Altay is looking into new ways to address the issues around solar and wind energy's intermittence and unpredictability by developing smart grid management, storage and load distribution solutions.

Xu Yong, deputy director of operations at CGN New Energy's Xinjiang branch, said power grids in China operate mainly on a "supply-

follows-demand" model, where the power supply increases as demand grows. However, this model has struggled to cope with the fluctuating nature of wind energy.

"Our integrated system aims to ensure better alignment between supply and demand while maximizing the use of clean energy. It helps mitigate the volatility of renewable energy production, ensuring a more stable and efficient power grid," Xu said.

The project's construction scale is 400,000 kilowatts, with 390,000 kilowatts coming from wind power and 10,000 kilowatts from solar power. It began construction in August 2022 and was connected to the grid at the end of last year.

Once fully operational, the project is expected to generate 1.26 billion kilowatt-hours of clean energy annually, equivalent to reducing standard coal consumption by approximately 380,000 tons and carbon dioxide emissions by 1.25 million tons, he added.

Pumped storage has become a



Wind power is generated on the mountains of Altay, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. ZHAO YIMENG / CHINA DAILY

good method for managing excess clean energy in Altay, as water can be pumped to a higher reservoir while there is low electricity demand and released to generate power during peak times.

Zuo Xingcheng, project manager of a pumped storage power station in Burqin, said that using water and gravity is an effective storage solution. "The project acts like a giant power bank, storing green electrici-

ty generated from wind and sunlight for peak times of consumption," he said.

Once operational next year, it will significantly enhance the regional power grid's capacity and facilitate the consumption of renewable energy, saving approximately 727,000 tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by about 2.19 million tons annually, Zuo said.

The region plans to support key enterprises and industrial parks in increasing their green energy consumption ratios, while attracting high-energy load industries regarding big data and computing infrastructure to enhance clean energy absorption, he said.

Excess renewable energy is being used to support the recent increase in tourism to Altay on the back of the popular TV series *To the Wonder*, which is set in the prefecture.

Jilin New Village in Habahe county, where an iconic scene of the series takes place, has seen a significant increase in tourists since the show's debut in May. The State Grid's power supply company in the county has taken steps to ensure safe and reliable electricity for the village's guesthouses.

Hasarjan Ahmetnur's local homestay has been upgraded so that it can accommodate up to 150 guests per day. "Clean energy is powering the region," he said.

The State Grid's power supply company in Altay is ramping up investments in electricity facilities for attractions such as Koktokay Ski Resort to ensure that the infrastructure can support the thriving and ever-increasing green tourism.

In Kanas and Hemu scenic areas in Burqin county, heating and cooking facilities have been made electric, and electric-powered shuttle buses and boats are now operational, according to an employee of the company.

Zhang Guohua, head of the Hemu power supply station, said over 1,000 households solely use green energy following a switch from coal in 2020. "Green power has injected strong momentum into the growth of Hemu village," he said.

Given Altay's sparse population and few large industrial users, maximizing clean energy consumption remains a challenge. The key lies in effectively storing and utilizing wind and solar energy, which are plentiful but intermittent, Xu said.

COMMENT

Editorials

Quad summit highlights divide-and-rule strategy has not gained expected traction

US President Joe Biden hosted Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan in Wilmington, Delaware, for the fourth Quad Leaders' Summit on Saturday.

The Biden administration went to great lengths to explain how the Quad has delivered on the priorities of its "Indo-Pacific" partners — ranging from addressing pandemics and disease and investing in critical and emerging technologies to strengthening their maritime domain awareness and maritime security — and how the Quad is meant to be a "global force for good". But that failed to disguise the Quad's role as a geopolitical tool of the US.

Although neither the joint statement of the four leaders nor the fact sheet of their summit issued by the White House mentions China at all, the country was mentioned at least 20 times in the half-hour news conference held by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan after the conclusion of the summit.

Although the US blames the rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific on China, all regional countries, including the other three members of the Quad, are well aware that the main cause is the US taking the initiative to try and implement a divide-and-rule strategy in the region by taking all possible means to sow discord between China and its neighbors.

In the process, Washington has realized that the Quad cannot glue the other three member countries to it nor appeal to other regional countries, as they all have close and comprehensive trade, economic and cultural connections with China. That explains why the Biden administration has taken the latest meeting of the Quad leaders as the opportunity to transform the Quad from just a security mechanism to a comprehensive one to "ensure its endurance for the long term".

The aim is to provide public goods and services to the Asia-Pacific to better counter China's influence. In the near future, the Quad is likely to be docked with the US' "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity". Replacing its dual security-economy model with a more integrated and comprehensive one is a significant change to the Biden administration's China-containment strategy in its last few months.

In so doing, the Biden administration is trying to replace the region's long-term game rules featuring mutual respect, noninterference, equity and win-win cooperation with its "value diplomacy", which can support its discourse of aggression on upholding the "rules-based order" and a "free and open 'Indo-Pacific'".

It is notable that the US is discarding its initial promise of generous funding support under the Quad framework. Now it is asking the other three countries to foot the bill for the US' China-containment strategy, with each Quad government committed to working through their respective budgetary processes "to secure robust funding for Quad priorities".

That represents another big change in the funding rules for the US' China game, with the go-Dutch model of the Quad being transplanted to the IPEF. The change actually did not come as a surprise, as it happened shortly after the Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 50 basis points last week, indicating the Fed's judgment that the US' economy is showing signs of recession under its exorbitant national debt pressure.

When Biden hosted a NATO summit in Washington in July, it was aimed at demonstrating his leadership capabilities ahead of his reelection campaign. Having been forced to withdraw as presidential election candidate afterwards, as that summit only served to raise more doubts about his competence, the US president has sought to use the Quad summit to carry out some remedial measures to sustain his signature alliance-leveraged China-containment strategy as a hallmark diplomatic achievement of his time in office.

Yet the summit has failed to cover up the embarrassing truth that it is not China that has been isolated but the US under his administration.

Israel caught in self-made vicious cycle

The resumption of cross-border attacks between Israel and Hezbollah after pager and walkie-talkie explosions that have already killed at least 37 and injured more than 3,000 people in Lebanon may trigger a war between the two sides. This may be what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is gambling on in order to prolong his stay in power.

Cross-border fighting between Israel and Hezbollah has resulted in the evacuation of about 6,000 Israeli residents from the northern part of Israel. When they will be able to return to their homes remains a question, although the Israeli government has set their returning to their homes one of the objectives of its military action.

But the pager explosions and the air strikes that followed against Hezbollah have only escalated tensions in the border areas with Lebanon, which has made it even more unlikely the displaced residents will be able to return to their homes anytime soon.

What Israel has done in Gaza and its repeated attacks on Hezbollah targets as well as its military actions in the West Bank have created a vicious cycle. The more actions it takes, the deeper Israel becomes mired in conflict with various military organizations around itself. The irony is the more intent the Netanyahu government is on military action, the more it is undermining the security of Israel.

Israel could have made concessions in talks with Hamas that would have realized a cease-fire and helped promote the negotiated return of the hostages held by Hamas, but it did not. Netanyahu's insistence on continuing Israel's military action has only resulted in the prolonged conflicts both in Gaza and Lebanon.

Israel's military carried out raids and air strikes in multiple parts of the occupied West Bank in late August, which means military conflicts between Israel and Hamas as well as other Palestinian organizations will continue. Netanyahu is trying to prolong his own political life at the expense of not only tens of thousands of innocent lives, but also at the cost of regional peace as well as the future of Israel.

It is not difficult to conclude that an end to the current conflict could easily result in the Israeli prime minister being swept away from office — especially once investigations are concluded into how Israel ignored evidence of the Oct 7 attack by Hamas in 2023 that killed about 1,200 Israelis, and how slowly Israel's defense forces responded.

And while Israel had the sympathy of the international community on its side after Hamas' attack on Oct 7, it has now lost the support of most countries because of its brutal persecution of the Palestinians and its reckless broadening of its war aims.

The Netanyahu government has turned a blind eye to the fact that tens of thousands of civilians have lost their lives in Gaza as a result of the military action it has launched and many more are struggling to survive amid the worsening humanitarian situation in the Palestinian enclave.

The pager explosions in Lebanon last week have reinforced the image of the Netanyahu government being beyond all restraint. Yet in terms of military resources, Israel has been overstretching itself and it is reliant on the support of the United States.

The only way to stop the vicious cycle of violence Netanyahu is so single-mindedly fixated on is for the US to unequivocally and unconditionally stop speculating on his monomania by enabling it.

The International Court of Justice has made it clear that Israel's actions violate international law. It is therefore not an option but a legal obligation for Israel to cease those actions and for the US to stop being complicit in them.

Song Chen



Opinion Line

Balanced growth of global economy high on working group's agenda

The China-US Economic Working Group held its fifth meeting in Beijing last week. The regular and frequent exchanges between the economic departments of the two countries have sent positive signals that the two sides seek to stabilize their economic relations.

In particular, the two sides discussed the issue of imbalanced growth of the global economy. The United States has long made false accusations against China on that. The global economic imbalance originates from some countries' inability to balance the inflow and outflow of funds. Take the US economy as an example. The US is a consumer country with relatively little production, which leads to an imbalance in its capital flows. At the same time, as the US dollar is a global currency, the US needs to export dollars through trade or bonds to supply global transactions, which has complex impacts on the flow of funds in the

country. In general, the global economic imbalance is caused by low savings and insufficient production in the US, and its high debt to support high spending. This is the US' own problem, but it is trying to pass the buck to China by hyping up issues such as China's so-called economic imbalance and overcapacity. China does not accept these irresponsible and false accusations.

The various tariff barriers established by the US against China cause a sharp rise in consumer prices in the US, and are likely to form a chain reaction around the world. The tariffs are also likely to boost a rebound of the inflation in the US.

The Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 50 basis points last week, indicating its judgment that the US economy is already at risk of recession, which will produce marked spillover effects in the world.

In addition to these topics, the two sides discussed the debt problem of some

developing countries. In terms of debt relief, China has actively participated in the discussions in the G20, and has taken many practical actions in that regard. As the largest contributor to the G20 debt relief initiative, China accounts for more than 40 percent of the total global debt relief under the G20 framework.

In contrast, the largest creditors of many African countries are US lenders. Their already-high interest rates were further raised after the Fed's interest rate hike, plunging many less-developed economies deeper into a US-made debt trap. The Fed's interest rate cut also adds to the risks and uncertainties to their economy with the inflow of speculative funds in a short time. The US needs to do more to ease the debt problem of developing countries to help them smoothly weather fluctuations and risks.

— CHINA MEDIA GROUP

Regulators put brakes on fast and furious e-bikes

Relevant central departments started soliciting public opinions on the newly revised "Electric Bicycle Safety Technical Specifications" last week. The draft national standard for e-bikes aims to prevent e-bike modifications that often involve increasing the rated power and maximum speed.

While the speed of some modified e-bikes can reach 160 kilometers per hour, the draft standard clarifies that the maximum design speed should not exceed 25 km/h. Apart from traffic accidents caused by speeding e-bikers — which account for about 70 percent of traffic accidents in some places — about 25,000 fires a year

nationwide are attributable to the charging of problematic e-bike batteries. The new standard makes the use of flame retardant in e-bike's nonmetallic materials compulsory, and also limits the proportion of plastic parts that can be used in e-bikes.

There are also some amendments responding to consumer demands. For example, the weight limit of e-bikes using lead-acid batteries will be raised from 55 kilograms to 63 kg, and pedal riding devices will no longer be mandatory.

There are about 350 million e-bikes on Chinese roads now. The introduction of the new standard is expected to become

an important opportunity for the upgrading of China's e-bike industry.

The manufacturers, retailers and market and industry supervisory departments need to strengthen their coordination and fulfill their respective duties to ensure strict implementation of the new standard once it is introduced.

Notably the authorities will give a six-month transition period for the manufacturers to produce new e-bikes according to the new standard, and an additional three months for the e-bike dealers to digest their inventory of old e-bikes.

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

Peaceful and prosperous future is within reach

Editor's Note: Foreign Minister Wang Yi is attending the United Nations Summit of the Future and the general debate of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly from Sunday to the following Saturday. The Foreign Ministry released the Position Paper of the People's Republic of China for the Summit of the Future and the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly last week. The following are excerpts of the paper:

The goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity; the pathway is promoting global governance that features extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit; the guiding principle is to apply the common values of humanity; the basic underpinning lies in building a new type of international relations; the strategic guidance comes from the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative; and the platform for action is high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

On this basis, China will work with countries of the world to meet challenges, achieve prosperity for all and facilitate the move toward a brighter future of peace, security, prosperity

and progress in the world. With the future in mind, China is committed to being a staunch force for the safeguarding of world peace and stability. The country firmly chooses peace over war, and will work with all countries to implement the GSI following the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

China is committed to providing impetus for common development, and pursues a mutually beneficial strategy of opening-up. It strives to create new opportunities for the world with its own development and to play its part in building an open global economy that delivers greater benefits to all peoples.

China is committed to advancing interactions among civilizations for their greater progress. It advocates that all countries champion humanity's common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom, jointly implement the GCI, respect the diversity of civilizations, value the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutu-

al learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority for the further progress of civilizations.

China is committed to playing a constructive role in the development and reform of global governance. It advocates an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. It believes in equality between countries big or small, and opposes hegemonism and power politics.

China is committed to harnessing the power of science, technology and innovation for the benefit of all humanity. The progress and development of science and technology should enrich the denotations and connotations of the concept of international peace and security.

China stands ready to work with all countries to deliver on the GDI, the GSI and the GCI together, and realize an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization to usher in a brighter tomorrow in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

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VIEWS



China and the World Roundtable | 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China

Editor's note: This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. After achieving the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, China began a new journey toward realizing the goal of building a modern socialist country in all respects. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Li Feng

Consultations facilitate good governance

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Over the past decades, the CPPCC has played a significant role in promoting sound decision-making in China, bringing together wisdom from various sectors, both within and outside the Communist Party of China.

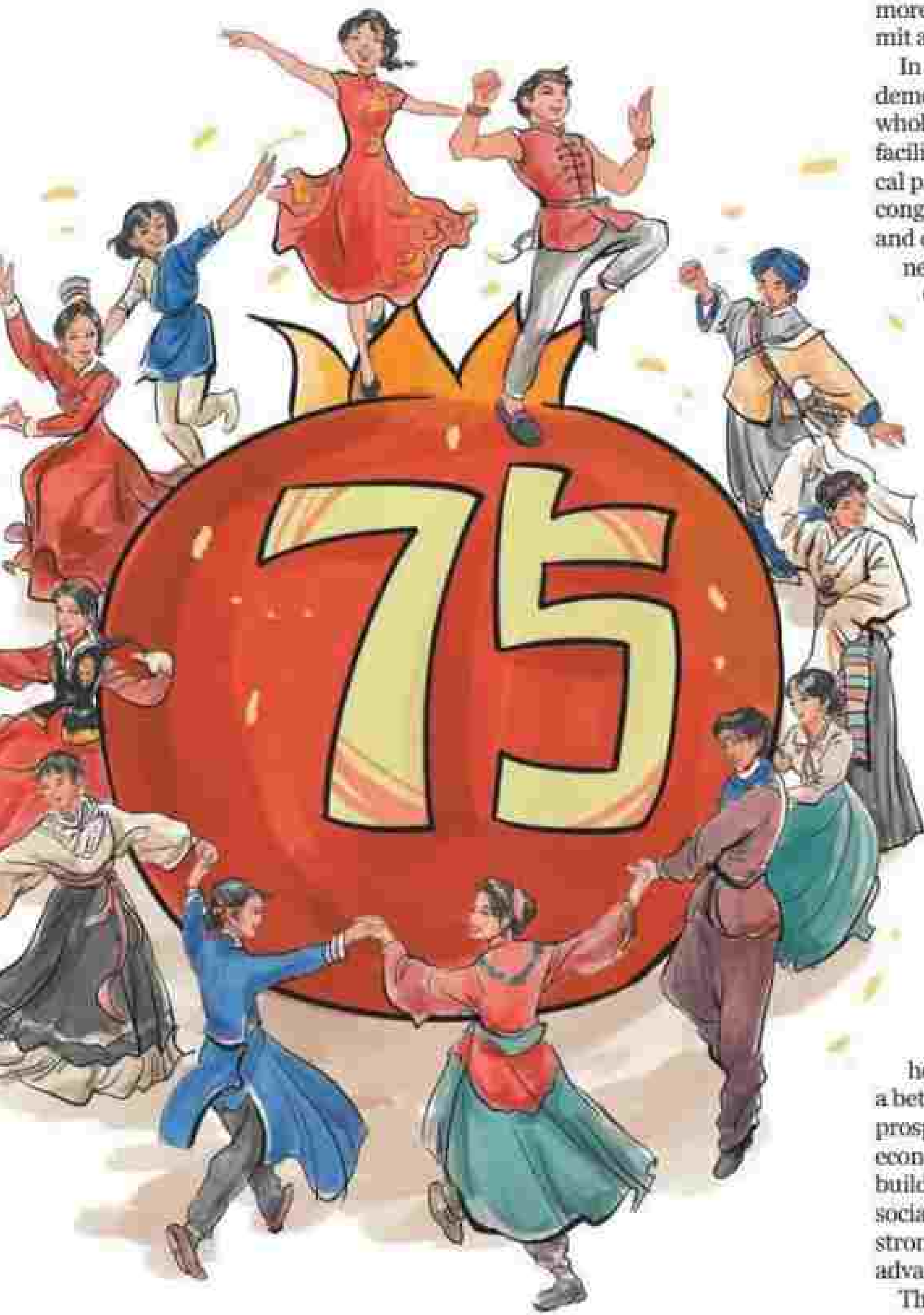
Consultative democracy is a form, and the strength of, socialist democracy, and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference is a special consultative body and an important channel for promoting socialist consultative democracy, which in turn promotes whole-process people's democracy.

In its resolution on "Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization", the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China vowed to advance whole-process people's democracy and introduce measures to improve the mechanisms for consultative democracy.

First, consultative democracy plays a significant role in public policy formulation and implementation. Theoretically, making consultation a part of the public policymaking process will increase administrative costs. But mistakes and repetitive efforts can be avoided, and making scientific decisions will become easier if all stakeholders' opinions and needs are taken into consideration in the beginning.

A practical, socialist consultative democracy can facilitate innovative decision-making. Consultative democracy follows the principle of conducting consultations before and during policymaking. Consultations help policymakers to better understand the needs and opinions of different groups of people, reduce social conflicts and build social consensus. Consultations can also help policymakers reach the greatest common ground based on the wishes and needs of the people, modernizing the national governance system and governance capacity in the process.

Socialist consultative democracy stresses that since citizens are affected by public policies, they have the right to participate in the decision-making process. Their participation in the process allows groups with different interests to voice their opinions and give their suggestions, so as to help



MA XUEJING/CHINA DAILY

the policymakers make better informed and balanced decisions.

Second, socialist consultative democracy with Chinese characteristics in the new era pursues self-improvement to build a virtuous circle of a sound system design, technological innovation and effective governance, and integrate the whole-process democratic mechanism and high-efficiency governance tools.

For example, socialist consultative democracy can meet the needs of cyber-politics and introduce



The author is an associate professor of politics and law at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

new technologies in public works. The Party and the government adhere to a people-centric philosophy, put people first, and introduce innovative technologies such as online governance service platforms, "internet+e-government" and online surveys to promote consultative democracy in the realm of cyberspace.

Third, socialist consultative democracy reflects the feasibility, effectiveness and efficiency of whole-process people's democracy, and can help solve many real-life problems, and

more effectively and efficiently transmit and collect information.

In fact, socialist consultative democracy is a manifestation of whole-process people's democracy. It facilitates consultations among political parties, different levels of people's congresses, government departments, and different committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and social organizations. China practices whole-process people's democracy through a combination of elections, consultations, decision-making, management and oversight, that is, it covers all aspects of democracy and sectors of society. And that is precisely why it is people-centric and effective.

This institutionalized arrangement of socialist consultative democracy ensures orderly consultations while making the consultation results public. Consultative democracy has a unique advantage and function in the development of whole-process people's democracy, not least because it upholds the Party leadership, ensures law-based governance, and follows socialism with Chinese characteristics.

This form of democracy can help meet the people's need to lead a better life, by pursuing common prosperity, promoting high-quality economic development, and helping build China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful.

Therefore, more efforts should be made to strengthen the Party's leadership in the consultation process, because the Party's leadership is the most essential attribute of socialism with Chinese characteristics and a guarantee for the development of socialist consultative democracy.

So it is essential to improve the mechanism of consultative democracy and facilitate consultations among political parties, and people's congresses and the CPPCC at different levels, and ensure the consultations are more efficient and result-oriented, as well as introduce rules and policies to provide an institutional guarantee for the development of socialist consultative democracy.

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

Jiao Yang

An exemplary journey in eradicating poverty, realizing economic goals

Over the past four decades, China has lifted more than 800 million people out of extreme poverty, thus accounting for about 75 percent of global poverty reduction between 1981 and 2020.

In 2021, China declared "complete victory" in the fight against absolute poverty based on its national standards, achieving the poverty reduction goal set by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a full decade before the deadline. The speed and scale of China's poverty reduction are unparalleled in world history.

China's success in alleviating absolute poverty is driven by the country's comprehensive economic reform and tailored poverty eradication work.

Since the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978, China has experienced several decades of rapid economic growth. The benefits of reform and opening-up have been intrinsically linked to poverty reduction. In fact, there is a high correlation between GDP growth and the eradication of absolute poverty.

First, agricultural development played a crucial role in China's poverty reduction work in the early stages, given that poverty in the country was mainly concentrated in rural areas. China's economic reforms significantly improved agricultural labor productivity, facilitated the transition of labor from agriculture to higher productivity manufacturing and service sectors, and raised total factor productivity. Apart from raising the incomes of farmers, improvements in productivity have also facilitated the release of surplus labor to other sectors and urban areas, thus diversifying income sources for households.

Second, urbanization, too, benefited poverty reduction work in multiple ways. China's rapid economic growth has been accompanied by substantial urbanization. The urban population in China increased from 190 million in 1980 to 933 million in 2023, while the urbanization rate increased from 19.4 percent to 66.2 percent during the same period. Urbanization directly contributed to poverty reduction by providing higher-paying jobs for migrant workers and lifting their standards of living.

Additionally, urbanization indirectly alleviated poverty in rural areas by providing better-paying jobs for migrant workers and thus enabling them to send remittances to their parents in the countryside, and by offering a bigger market for farmers' produce.

And third, the process of industrialization has benefited poverty reduction work. China's rapid industrialization has not only created employment opportunities for the rural population but also has benefited from the supply of low-cost labor from rural areas. From 1992 to 2023, the proportion of secondary industry's contribution to GDP increased from 22 percent to 38 percent, accompanied by significant improvements in total factor productivity.

The Chinese government introduced four major poverty reduction plans in 1986, 1994, 2001 and 2011. In the mid-1980s, the government proposed the policy of letting some areas and people get rich first. Subsequently, the State Council, China's Cabinet, established the Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development to identify 331 impoverished counties based on per capita income at the county level. Key support for the move was provided by the allocation of development funds, subsidized loans and relief programs.

The Priority Poverty Alleviation Program (1994-2000) was aimed at addressing the food and clothing needs of 80 million impoverished people within seven years. It revised the criteria for classifying impoverished counties, increasing the number of designated impoverished counties to 592.

The Outline of Development-driven Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas (2001-2010) focused on areas with high impoverished populations, including regions with large ethnic minority populations, old revolutionary base areas, border areas, and severely impoverished regions in central and western China.

And the 2011-2020 outline sharpened its focus on Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Program by identifying some counties and 14 contiguous impoverished areas. Targeted poverty alleviation efforts continued after 2013, emphasizing the need to precisely identify and provide effective assistance to impoverished people through scientific and rational means.

A combination of different measures, including relief-type poverty alleviation program, development-oriented policies, social security system reform and targeted interventions has proven effective in China's battle against poverty.

Moreover, the Chinese authorities have acknowledged that poverty alleviation is much more than about simply raising the incomes of impoverished people. Substantial investments in infrastructure and healthcare, as well as the expansion of social services have not only yielded direct benefits but also produced significant positive externalities, thereby contributing to the improvement of overall living standards.

Eradicating poverty in a country as large as China, which has significant regional and demographic disparities, is a monumental task. China's achievement in eradicating poverty is an example of its people-centric development philosophy, and its experience offers valuable insights for other developing countries.

While eradicating poverty has paved the way for China's modernization, it is not the country's final goal. China has a new objective of making substantial progress toward common prosperity by 2035. Therefore, in the face of global economic fragmentation and significant domestic economic challenges, the Chinese authorities must continue to implement dynamically adjusted, targeted poverty alleviation policies and remain vigilant against the risk of people slipping back into poverty.

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



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Hussein Askary

China's ship sails steadily toward its destination

"China can only do well when the world is doing well. When China does well, the world will get even better," President Xi Jinping said in his keynote speech at the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2023.

The 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China conjures the image of a gigantic ship with 14 billion passengers sailing in stormy weather at times and calm waters at others, with the captain steadfastly keeping the compass needle in the direction of the destination.

The destination, in this case, is the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic.

While the ship will continue its journey from there on to new and more fascinating destinations, its journey till now is already a remarkable achievement with no precedent in history. It is fascinating for me as someone living in a small country like Sweden with less than 11 million people to think how a country as large as China with a massive population could move steadily in one direction.

The outcome of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China showed how the country's leadership has managed, especially since the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978, to maneuver the ship of the State from one destination to another, while overcoming challenges and

making remarkable achievements on the way to building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Along the way, many internal problems including air, water and soil pollution, and unbalanced urban and rural development have emerged. On the international front, major crises like the global financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the global inflation crisis have been severe headwinds that the ship has had to endure. But it never veered from its course.

Equally amazing is the fact that China has risen to such global prominence economically and politically without waging wars on its neighbors or even those who consider the country a threat and a rival. In contrast, China's rise has contributed to global stability.

In the past centuries, modernization and industrialization in Europe, and the West generally, but even in Japan, although great and beneficial to humankind in many ways, have been associated with colonization, imperialism, destructive wars and the rule of the jungle. China is a great exception, because it has not used any of the dubious means of the West to achieve its unprecedented development.

The world today is in dire need of a peaceful mechanism for not only



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resolving crises but also to ensure countries coexist peacefully. And China's success in diplomatically bridging the gap between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023 is a shining example of such a potential. Its success in bringing 14 different Palestinian factions together on a unified policy and calling for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing tragedy in the Gaza Strip in accordance with international law is another example.

The world benefits from the Chinese philosophy of harmonizing and creating a holistic structure within which a multitude of diverse issues can be resolved. Chinese leaders reiterated recently that the country must pursue an independent and peaceful foreign policy, help build a community with a shared future for mankind, respect human values, and promote the Belt and Road Initiative along with the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

The world, especially the major Western powers, has tried to resolve most of the strategic challenges and threats using security and military means. Not only has method failed to resolve any of the issues but also it made things even worse, leading to the loss of more lives and resources.

The US-led NATO's 20-year occupation of Afghanistan is a stark reminder of the futility of this approach. Neglecting socioeconomic development is a fatal error, which China has been warning against, and leading by example to show that security issues are entangled with economic, social and even cultural development.

Economic cooperation and cultural exchanges, including people-to-people exchanges, must become the beacon guiding countries toward security and peace as they sail in stormy waters. The recently concluded Summit of the China-Africa Forum on Cooperation was a reminder of the effectiveness of Chinese diplomacy through economic cooperation. The FOCAC Summit also showed what is meant by a community with a shared future. Many mistake it for mere rhetoric, but in reality it is a notion of common prosperity and common good.

China is acutely aware that its current and future prosperity depends on the prosperity of other countries, including African countries, but equally importantly on global peace and stability. China has advanced rapidly in recent decades, but to continue moving forward, it needs to be joined by the rest of the world. It was in this sense that President Xi recently invoked an African proverb: If you want to go fast, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together.

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WORLD IN FOCUS



An aerial view of sandbanks on the Madeira River, in front of the city of Humaita, Amazonas state, northern Brazil, on Sept 4. MICHAEL DANTAS / AFP



Children push a cart on a sandbank of the Madeira River in the Paraizinho community on Sept 7. MICHAEL DANTAS / AFP



An aerial view of people carrying drinking water along a sandbank of the Madeira River in the Paraizinho community, in Humaita, Amazonas state, northern Brazil, on Sept 7. MICHAEL DANTAS / AFP



Farmer Reis Santos Vieira, 69, talks next to a canoe on the dry bed of the Madeira River on Sept 7. MICHAEL DANTAS / AFP



People carry buckets of drinking water along a sandbank of the Madeira River in the Paraizinho community on Sept 7. MICHAEL DANTAS / AFP

Only the youngest and strongest villagers now brave the crossing of a vast, blistering stretch of sand where, in normal times, the waters of the mighty Madeira River flow in the Brazilian Amazon.

Residents of the village of Paraizinho — or “Little Paradise” — usually cross the river by canoe to reach the larger city of Humaita, a vital link to buy food and water, access healthcare and send their children to school.

In drier times, this typically involves a short walk along a beach that appears as water levels drop.

But as Brazil grapples with its worst drought in 70 years, the waters have continued to shrink, leaving a stretch of almost a kilometer of sand baking under temperatures of about 40 C.

“Every year it is worse. Last year more than half (of the river) dried up. This year it has dried up almost to the other side,” Reis Santos Vieira, a 69-year-old farmer, told AFP.

“And it is expected to get worse,” he said.

The Madeira River, a major tributary of the Amazon River that stretches for 3,300 km over Brazil and Bolivia, reached its lowest level this month since monitoring began in 1967, according to the Brazilian geological service.

‘Difficult time’

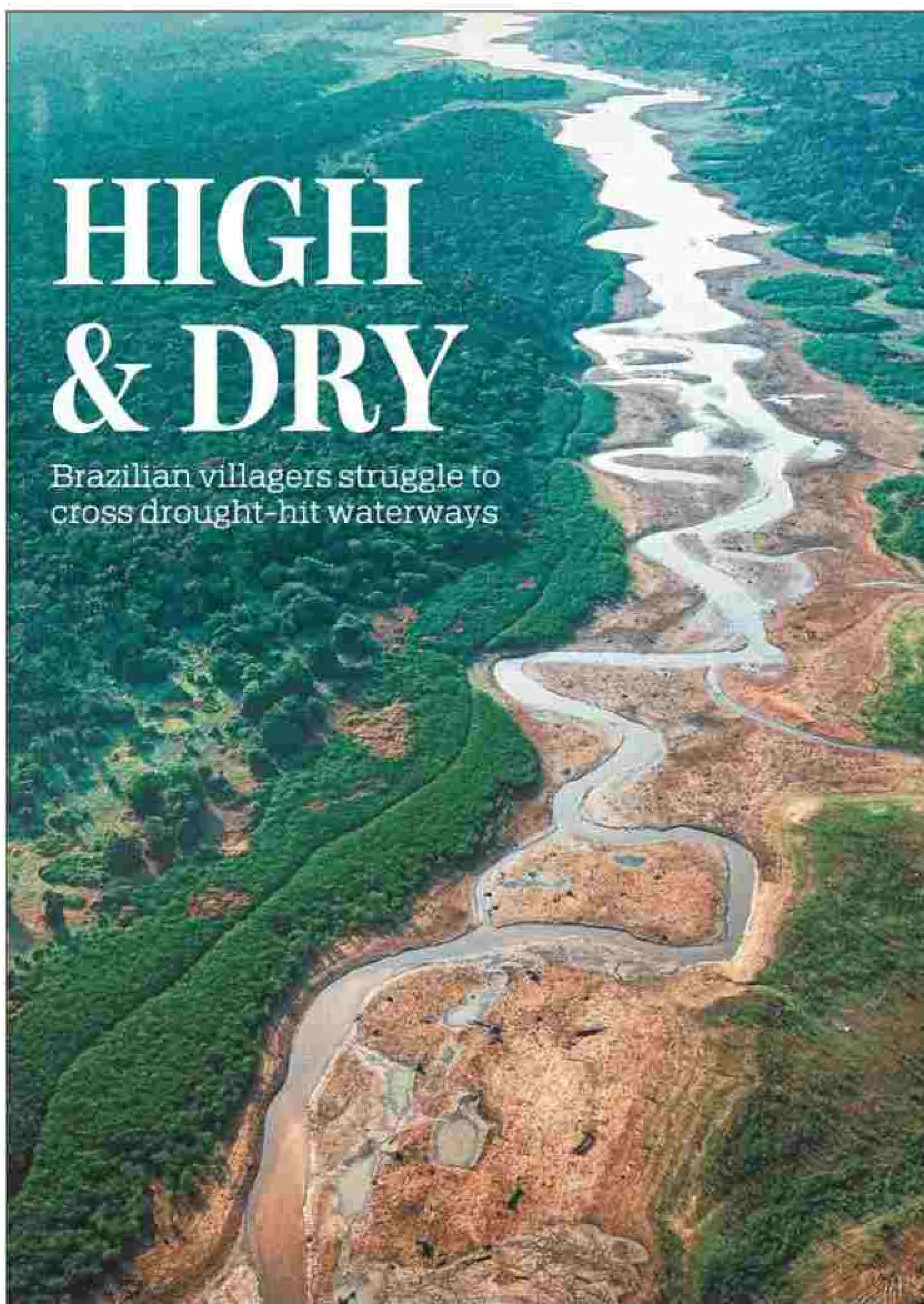
Experts link Brazil’s historic drought to climate change. The parched conditions have fueled wildfires in the Amazon and elsewhere in the country that have clouded major cities in smoke pollution.

For much of the day, the dry riverbed becomes an inferno underfoot.

The roughly 100 residents of Paraizinho “are tackling that beach on foot to transport the food and water we need here. It’s a very difficult time”, local resident Sandra Gomes Vieira said.

Last year, which also saw drought conditions, one of her daughters burned her foot crossing the riverbed. She has refused to go to school since the sand appeared this year.

“My sister is undergoing treatment for cancer and can’t go to the city. Health personnel go to her house. I’m not very healthy either, but I still



An aerial view shows low water levels at the Jaquiri River in Manaquiri of Amazonas state, northern Brazil, on Sept 10. BRAZILIAN PRESIDENCY VIA AFP

HIGH & DRY

Brazilian villagers struggle to cross drought-hit waterways

manage to get there,” Gomes said.

Five community volunteers recently carried containers of drinking water barefoot from Humaita to Paraizinho that used to be easily transported on canoes across the river.

“Here, we only have the help of these people,” said Francisca de Chaga da Silva, one of the water recipients.

Community leader Joao Ferreira explained that the water goes to “the most vulnerable families, who have patients with high blood pressure and diabetes”.

Faced with the water shortage, residents treat river water with chlorine to bathe and wash dishes or clothes.

‘More smoke’

The prolonged drought is also impacting economic activities in Paraizinho, mainly fishing and the sale of agricultural products.

“The beach has grown a lot,” Ferreira said. Before, drought would last “only two or three months” but “now we are going for four, five months”.

Communities along the banks of the Madeira River — an important route for the trade of soybeans, fish and fuel — are struggling. Some areas which also rely on Humaita have it worse than Paraizinho, residents of the village said, as they are even farther away. Intense fires elsewhere in the Amazon have also brought a haze of smoke to the village and surrounding area.

The authorities have blamed human activity for most of the country’s recent fires, which are often linked to clearing land for agriculture.

The weather “is hotter this year. There is also more smoke”, local resident Gomes said.

One of her daughters “has been feeling chest pains from the smoke. Before, she didn’t suffer from this problem”.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva announced measures to tackle the effects of the drought in the Amazon during a visit to the city of Manaus on Sept 10, including dredging the Amazon and Solimoes rivers to maintain navigability, ensure supply flow and mitigate drought effects.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Motorists drive down roads covered with smoke from a fire affecting Brazil’s Brasilia National Park on Sept 16. EVARISTO SA / AFP



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (front) looks at the Jaquiri River during a visit to Manaquiri in northern Brazil on Sept 10. AFP



An aerial view of smoke billowing from a forest fire affecting Brasilia National Park in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, on Sept 16. EVARISTO SA / AFP



Residents near Brazil’s Brasilia National Park fill buckets with water to contain a forest fire on Sept 15. EVARISTO SA / AFP



A man stands in front of a fire in a sugarcane plantation near the Dumont urban area in Brazil on Aug 24. JOEL SILVA / REUTERS

WORLD

California leaders hail 75 years of China's progress

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco and RENALI in Los Angeles

Officials and community leaders in the San Francisco Bay Area gathered to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, highlighting the nation's remarkable achievements and emphasizing the importance of people-to-people exchanges between the United States and China.

Chinese Consul-General in San Francisco Zhang Jianmin addressed guests at a reception held at the Chinese Consulate General on Thursday night, praising China's progress over the past 75 years.

"The Chinese people have achieved two miracles: rapid economic growth and long-term social stability, making a historic leap from poverty to prosperity," Zhang said.

This year also marks the 45th anniversary of China-US diplomatic relations. Despite challenges, the relationship has progressed, benefiting both nations and contributing to global peace and prosperity, said Zhang.

The summit between the leaders of the two countries in San Francisco last November established a "San Francisco Vision" for the future of bilateral relations, Zhang said, emphasizing the need to promote people-to-people exchanges and strengthen subnational cooperation to "inject vitality into China-US relations".

California Governor Gavin Newsom sent a congratulatory letter, reflecting on his visit to China last October. He expressed gratitude for the ongoing partnership in addressing climate change and advancing people-to-people exchanges.

"California and China have enjoyed a meaningful relationship built on shared goals as well as our shared past. As we mark this year's National Day, may the bonds between our peoples and cultures continue to endure and prosper," said Newsom in the letter.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed also sent a congratulatory letter, expressing gratitude to Consul-General Zhang and his wife for their support of San Francisco's Chinese community. Breed noted the city's celebration of its 45-year sister-city relationship with Shanghai, which has deepened economic, cultural, and educational ties.

Paul McEntire, board member and CFO of the Global Green

Development Alliance, shared his insights from his recent five-week trip to China. "The infrastructure development is pretty amazing, particularly the high-speed rail. It was quite different from my first visit there, which was 30 years ago," he told China Daily.

McEntire's organization has been collaborating with Chinese counterparts on green development and "smart village" projects, aimed at assisting poorer rural areas in China in deploying green technologies.

Steve Harnsberger, the founder of People-to-People-Exchange, a nonprofit organization, emphasized the importance of "cultural diplomacy".

With over 20 years of experience leading cultural exchange programs in China, Harnsberger highlighted the significance of individual efforts in fostering friendship and peace between nations.

At another reception in Los Angeles on Wednesday, Chinese Consul-General in LA Guo Shaochun said that California and China have deepened their exchanges and fostered greater mutual understanding through a variety of initiatives and collaborations over the past year.

Significant events such as the China-California Business Forum, the return of China's giant pandas Yun Chuan and Xin Bao to the San Diego Zoo, and the establishment of green shipping corridors between the Port of Shanghai and the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach showcase the tangible achievements of the cooperative efforts, noted the envoy.

Leticia Perez, a member of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, noted that US perceptions of China are often simplistic.

"Americans' view about China still tend to be based on a black-and-white thinking, a colorless thinking about our number one global trade partner," she told the gathering.

Robert Hertzberg, former speaker of the California State Assembly and former majority leader of the California State Senate, who recently joined the 2024 Legislators Forum for Friendly Exchanges in Shanghai, said: "It's crucial for both sides to collaborate in building understanding and getting along, grounded in trust and respect during these difficult times."

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Clean sweep



Volunteers collect trash as part of the World Cleanup Day at a beach in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, on Sunday. The program is aimed at combating the solid waste problem. CHAIDEER MAHYUDDIN / AFP

Private sector injects impetus into FOCAC cooperation

By NDUMISO MLILO in Johannesburg, South Africa For China Daily

The private sector, including people-to-people exchanges, has become an increasingly important part of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation over the past 24 years since its establishment, injecting new impetus into China-Africa relations, according to experts.

"FOCAC is maturing and evolving, what started as a state-to-state engagement is now decentralized to include nonstate actors," said Philani Mthembu, executive director at the Institute for Global Dialogue, a South Africa-based think tank.

"We are seeing some increase in the Chinese private sector, not only in the foreign direct investment, but also making financing commitments toward Africa. We are seeing small and medium enterprises from Africa looking to have access to funding their enterprises from

China. We are seeing an evolution of the relationship which started at a state-to-state level."

Mthembu made these remarks during an interview with China Daily on the sidelines of a seminar organized by the Institute for Global Dialogue, the Chinese embassy in South Africa and the University of Johannesburg on Thursday.

He said that FOCAC, since its founding in 2000, has helped strengthen people-to-people relations, with its spread reaching universities, think tanks and academics.

Many students from different African countries have received scholarships from the Chinese government to study in China while many infrastructure projects have been completed by Chinese companies in Africa.

The Chinese enterprises have constructed or refurbished parliaments in Liberia, Mozambique, Seychelles, Guinea and Zimbabwe.

Mthembu said that in the past



Casting vote

Voters wait in line outside a polling station to vote in the presidential election in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Saturday. Election commission data on Sunday show that Anura Kumara Dissanayake, leader of the National People's Power, won the election. The commission said on its website that Dissanayake, 55, won the presidency with 42.31 percent of the votes. Sajith Premadasa of the Samagi Jana Balawega took the second place with 32.76 percent.

GABRIELLE FONSECA JOHNSON / REUTERS

Hezbollah, Israel exchange fire

Fears raised over wider conflict in region as tensions simmer in Lebanon's south

BEIRUT/HAIFA — Israel and Hezbollah exchanged heavy fire on Sunday, with Israeli warplanes carrying out the most intense bombardment in almost a year of conflict across Lebanon's south and Hezbollah firing rockets deep into northern Israel.

The attacks come less than 48 hours after an Israeli airstrike targeting Hezbollah commanders in a suburb of the Lebanese capital. The death toll from that strike had risen to 45, the Lebanese health ministry said on Sunday.

The Israeli military said it struck around 290 targets on Saturday, including thousands of Hezbollah rocket launcher barrels, and said it would continue to hit more targets.

Israel closed schools and restricted gatherings in many northern areas and ordered hospitals there to transfer their operations to facilities with extra protection from rocket and missile fire.

There were no government directives from Lebanon on Sunday morning, Reuters reported.

Israel's military said on Sunday that a barrage of approximately 150 rockets, cruise missiles and drones were launched overnight toward Israeli soil.

Sirens sounded across Israel all night as multiple rockets and missiles were fired, most of which were intercepted by Israeli aerial defense systems, the military said.

Several buildings were struck, including a house badly damaged near the Israeli city of Haifa. Rescue teams treated the wounded but there were no reports of deaths. Residents had been instructed to stay near bomb shelters and safe rooms.

Hezbollah said it targeted Israel's Ramat David Airbase with successive barrages of missiles, in the deepest strikes it has claimed since hostilities began.

The UN special coordinator in Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, said in a post on X that "with the region on the brink of an imminent catastrophe, it cannot be overstated enough: there is NO military solution that will make either side safer".

The US State Department on Saturday urged its citizens in Lebanon to leave the country while commercial options remain available over fears of a wider conflict.

In Friday's attack, Hezbollah said 16 members, including senior leader Ibrahim Aqil and another commander Ahmed Wahbi, were among those killed.

Israel's army said it hit an underground gathering of Aqil and leaders of Hezbollah's Radwan forces, and had almost completely dismantled its military chain of command.

The attack leveled a multistory residential building in the crowded suburb and damaged a nursery next door, a security source said. At least three children and seven women were among those killed, according to the health ministry.

Friday's strike inflicted another blow on Hezbollah after two days of attacks last week, in which pagers and walkie-talkies used by its members exploded.

The death toll in those attacks, widely believed to have been carried out by Israel, has risen to 39 with more than 3,000 injured. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement.

In what it said was the initial retaliation for the attacks with the exploding devices, Hezbollah posted on its Telegram channel on Sunday that it had launched rockets at Israeli military-industry facilities.

Israel quickly responded, striking Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, the military said in a statement.

The developments marked the escalation of the conflict on the Israel-Lebanon border that began on Oct 8, when Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel in solidarity with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, prompting Israel's retaliatory artillery fire and airstrikes into southeastern Lebanon.

Hezbollah says it will keep fighting until Israel agrees to a truce in Gaza.

An Israeli strike on a school in northern Gaza on Saturday killed at least 22 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, while the Israeli army said it targeted a Hamas command center in what used to be a school.

Another 30 were wounded in the strike on the school in the Zeitoun area of Gaza City, the ministry said in a statement.

AGENCIES-XINHUA

Argentina's local economy gets Chinese investment boost

By JIMENA ESTEBAN in Buenos Aires, Argentina For China Daily

China's strong relationship with Argentina is increasingly felt locally, particularly in the more underdeveloped provinces, boosting the local economies, experts said.

Northern provinces like Salta, Jujuy, Catamarca, and Tucuman, are on the periphery of Argentina's national economy. To address this problem, Argentina's northern provinces have been particularly active in engaging directly with China, aware that Chinese investment represents crucial support.

"The northern provinces have been lagging behind the central provinces of the country. They often have fragile primary production structures," said Stella Juste, a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina.

"However, they have found a point of complementarity with China's interests in the region," she said. "This is extremely relevant for the future of bilateral relations and especially for the economic development of these provinces."

These relationships and connected investments are often fueled by China's Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI has played a key role in extending the depth of China's relationships in Latin America.

Direct efforts by provinces to ramp up their links to China have seen some success. Many have secured Chinese backing for projects, including the Cauchari Solar Park in Jujuy, the largest in Latin America, and the Cafayate Solar Park.

Catamarca and San Juan leveraged their links to China to develop wind farms, said Sebastian Schulz, a researcher at Argentina's National University of La Plata.

"These projects have been accompanied by the creation of genuine jobs, the construction of connectivity networks, and the influx of essential foreign currency for the country," said Schulz, an expert on Chinese studies.

Schulz also linked the growth in renewable energy projects in Argentina's northern provinces to China's new development concepts, which include internationalization and the promotion of low-carbon industries for the next three decades.

Since participating in the BRI in February 2022, the membership has helped Argentina strengthen its relationship with China and has benefited individual provinces.

Such projects have allowed Jujuy to diversify its production base and become a net producer of renewable energy. This is partly a result of the province's connection with PowerChina, a developer of power stations around the globe, helping to build

and operate the Cauchari Solar Park. Meanwhile, Argentina is the fourth-largest lithium producer globally, with up to a third of the value it derives from lithium coming from exports to China.

Jujuy, Salta, and Catamarca provinces are the centers of the country's lithium industry. Last year, more than 40 percent of Argentina's lithium exports went to China, compared to 9 percent to the US, reported El Pais.

Between 2020 and 2023, Chinese companies invested \$3.2 billion in mining projects in Argentina, including seven lithium projects, it said, citing government data.

"China's actions in Argentina, and Latin America in general, are complex and marked by a diverse presence on the ground. This is a notable characteristic of the relationship," Juste said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Snow time



Local residents build a snowman on a snow-covered sports field in Warden, Free State Province, South Africa, on Saturday. Heavy snowfall caused major disruption on South Africa's roads on Saturday with people still stranded at midday after spending the night stuck in their vehicles. WINUS DE WET / AFP

there were big infrastructure projects linking African countries, but now Africans are witnessing projects linking rural and urban areas. There are now investments in small infrastructure, including energy projects, in rural areas, Mthembu said.

Speaking during the seminar on Thursday, Wu Peng, Chinese ambassador to South Africa, said the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was successful with "pragmatic" outcomes. He said that China will expand vocational training for African countries in various skills to create jobs. China will continue to build industrial parks and support Africa's industrialization for sustainable development of the continent, said Wu.

Mandira Bagwandeem, lecturer at the Stellenbosch University in South Africa, said the deals signed with South Africa will immensely benefit the country.

She said, "The elevation of relations with China to strategic relations

demonstrates how far China values the region in geopolitics. FOCAC has evolved as relations have evolved."

Bagwandeem said Africa should consider cooperating with China on the next-generation technologies which will have a huge impact on the development of African countries. She said African countries should leverage China's expertise in artificial intelligence, big data, and digital industrialization.

Speaking to the media on Friday in Pretoria, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, South African minister in the Presidency, said the Cabinet has noted the FOCAC decisions and outcomes of the state visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to China during the FOCAC summit.

She said the two countries reached cooperation agreements in a wide range of areas, including trade, electric vehicles and renewable energy.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

WORLD

Military might



Iran holds a military parade in Teheran on Saturday. During the event, Iran unveiled its latest homegrown precision strike long-range ballistic missile and kamikaze drone, the semi-official Fars news agency reported. It marked the beginning of the Sacred Defense Week, commemorating the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the report said. SHADATI / XINHUA

US tariffs on China may backfire, experts warn

'Counterproductive' measures isolate itself and add to consumers' burden

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

The high tariffs imposed by the United States on China have been isolating itself on trade-related issues, experts say.

"At the end of the day, the US will, in the long term, hurt itself," said Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington. "The tariffs will isolate the US on trade-related issues."

On Sept 13, the US Trade Representative confirmed that tariffs on hundreds of products, including electric vehicles and EV batteries, semiconductors and solar cells, would be raised following proposals from the White House and a review by the representative under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.

The tariff on Chinese EVs will be increased from 25 percent to 100 percent within two weeks, and a 25 percent tariff will be imposed on Chinese EV batteries, the representative said. Reuters reported that Lael Brainard, the top White House economic adviser, said the decision was made to ensure the US EV industry diversifies away from China's dominant supply chain.

Gupta said the charge that China takes part in unfair competition is "a false argument." The US is not a competitive player in this industry and is seeking to incubate a domestic EV sector dominated by US players rather than Chinese ones, he said. "And that is the reason these tariffs have been imposed."

Tariffs are counterproductive to boosting the competitiveness of US EVs in the global market, he added.

"To become the most competitive player in EVs, you need to create the most competitive marketplace. By blocking out the most competitive cars, which are Chinese cars, from its marketplace, the US is hurting itself in the long term."

China, he said, will produce EVs both domestically and internationally, making it "super competitive globally." In contrast, the US is

relying on "these protectionist measures" to ensure that US EV makers dominate the domestic market, which will leave them uncompetitive internationally.

In the latest action, Chinese lithium-ion batteries not used for EVs will face a 25 percent tariff from 2026. Solar cells and semiconductors will incur a 50 percent tariff starting in 2025 and 2026, respectively.

Gupta said the US is already lagging behind China in the solar and photovoltaic sectors. Similar to the EV industry, the US has imposed high tariffs to give the domestic manufacturers some breathing room to capture a portion of the market. However, he said it will "never" be able to compete internationally.

In sectors such as semiconductors, these tariffs mostly relate to legacy products, he said.

"Because at the high end, at the competitive end, the American strategy is through export controls rather than tariffs," he said. "The way to do that is through export controls to deny China the chance to catch up with it."

Domestic capacity

He explained that most areas where tariffs are imposed are those in which the US is not as competitive as China. By imposing tariffs, the US hopes to create domestic manufacturing capacity in these industries.

Chris Pereira, founder and CEO of iMPact, a communications and business consulting group, said these tariffs defy market principles, contradict economic wisdom and negatively affect the US market and consumers.

"The US should maintain its openness and competitive edge to preserve its long-term global influence. History has shown that the world still moves on when a country closes its doors," Pereira said.

Chinese companies, with their long-term vision, see opportunities worldwide, he said.

"Mexico and Indonesia each have one-third of the US popula-

tion, and the total population of South American countries exceeds that of the US, proving that the US is not the only market," he said.

"Don't let policy hinder the way of progress."

Gupta said US businesses and industries understand the value of competitive marketplaces, with most understanding that tariffs effectively turn out to be a tax ultimately paid by consumers. As a result, they have opposed tariffs for a long time, viewing them as a form of deadweight that does not stimulate investment or enhance competitiveness.

He said a fair amount of academic work has emerged demonstrating the ineffectiveness of tariffs since former US president Donald Trump imposed them.

For example, the concept of "friend-shoring," proposed by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in 2022, is said to build more resilient supply chains by using tariffs to limit networks to allies and friendly countries.

"What has happened is that the supply chain has just gotten lengthened," Gupta said. "Instead of the product being produced in China and exported to the US, the final product is now assembled, maybe in Vietnam or Mexico, but it still involves Chinese inputs."

Consequently, the supply chain has become less resilient, not more, he said.

In addition, increased US tariffs targeting China are actually leading to a "virtuous process" for Chinese manufacturers, pushing them to invest abroad and learn how to set up factories overseas, he said, emphasizing that it is the trend that China's share of global goods is on the rise.

"These tariffs are coming back to hurt the US in a very big way, both in the medium and long term. They are making the US an uncompetitive producer and adding to consumers' costs," he said.

These measures complicate business decision-making and, in the long run, will enable China to diversify its foreign direct investment while strengthening ties with European countries, he said.

France gets new govt after deadlock

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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French President Emmanuel Macron named a new right-leaning government on Saturday, led by Prime Minister Michel Barnier, nearly three months after the inconclusive elections in which a left-wing alliance won the most seats.

The 39-member cabinet is mainly composed of ministers from Macron's centrist alliance and the conservative Republicans party.

Despite the poor performance of Barnier's Republicans party in the elections, Macron appointed the 73-year-old former chief negotiator for the European Union on Brexit as prime minister earlier this month. The new cabinet, approved by Macron, was put together by Barnier after difficult negotiations.

Tough talks on the distribution of cabinet posts continued right until Saturday's official announcement, marked by moments of high tension between Macron and Barnier, French news outlet France 24 reported.

In the June-July snap elections, which Macron called in the wake of a far-right victory in the European Parliament elections, the left-wing alliance, called the New Popular Front, won the most seats but failed to secure a majority and was

denied a chance to form a minority government.

On Saturday, Jean-Luc Melancon, leader of the New Popular Front, called the new cabinet "a government of the general election losers." He said France should "get rid" of the new government "as soon as possible".

Even before the announcement, thousands of people took to the streets of Paris and other French cities on Saturday in a left-wing protest to denounce what they called a denial of July's election results.

Olivier Faure, head of the Socialist Party, described the new cabinet as "a reactionary government that gives Democracy the finger".

The far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen has no seats in the new cabinet.

Jordan Bardella, the new leader of the National Rally, condemned the new government shortly after the announcement.

The new government marks "a return to Macronism" and has "no future whatsoever", he said.

Jean-Noel Barrot, 41, has been named the new foreign minister, after serving as junior minister for European affairs since February and before that as Macron's minister for digital affairs.

His father Jacques Barrot, a prominent French politician, served

in various ministerial posts and also as a European commissioner.

"Good with a new French foreign minister with a deep background in both European and digital affairs," Carl Bildt, co-chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations and a former Swedish prime minister, wrote on X.

Antoine Armand, 33, who is former member of the National Assembly, will be the new minister for economy, finance and industrial and digital sovereignty. He is the youngest to hold the position in the country's recent history.

Sebastien Lecornu, 38, a close ally of Macron, has kept his job as defense minister.

No confidence threat

Barnier's hard-won new government faced pressure from day one on Sunday as threats of a no-confidence motion in parliament multiplied.

To pass, a no-confidence motion needs an absolute majority in parliament, which would then force the government to step down immediately — currently an unlikely scenario as the far right and the leftist bloc, sworn enemies, would have to vote in unison.

The first major challenge for Barnier will be on Oct 1, when he is expected to deliver his general policy speech before the parliament. He is also expected to soon submit a 2025 budget plan to address the country's dire financial situation.

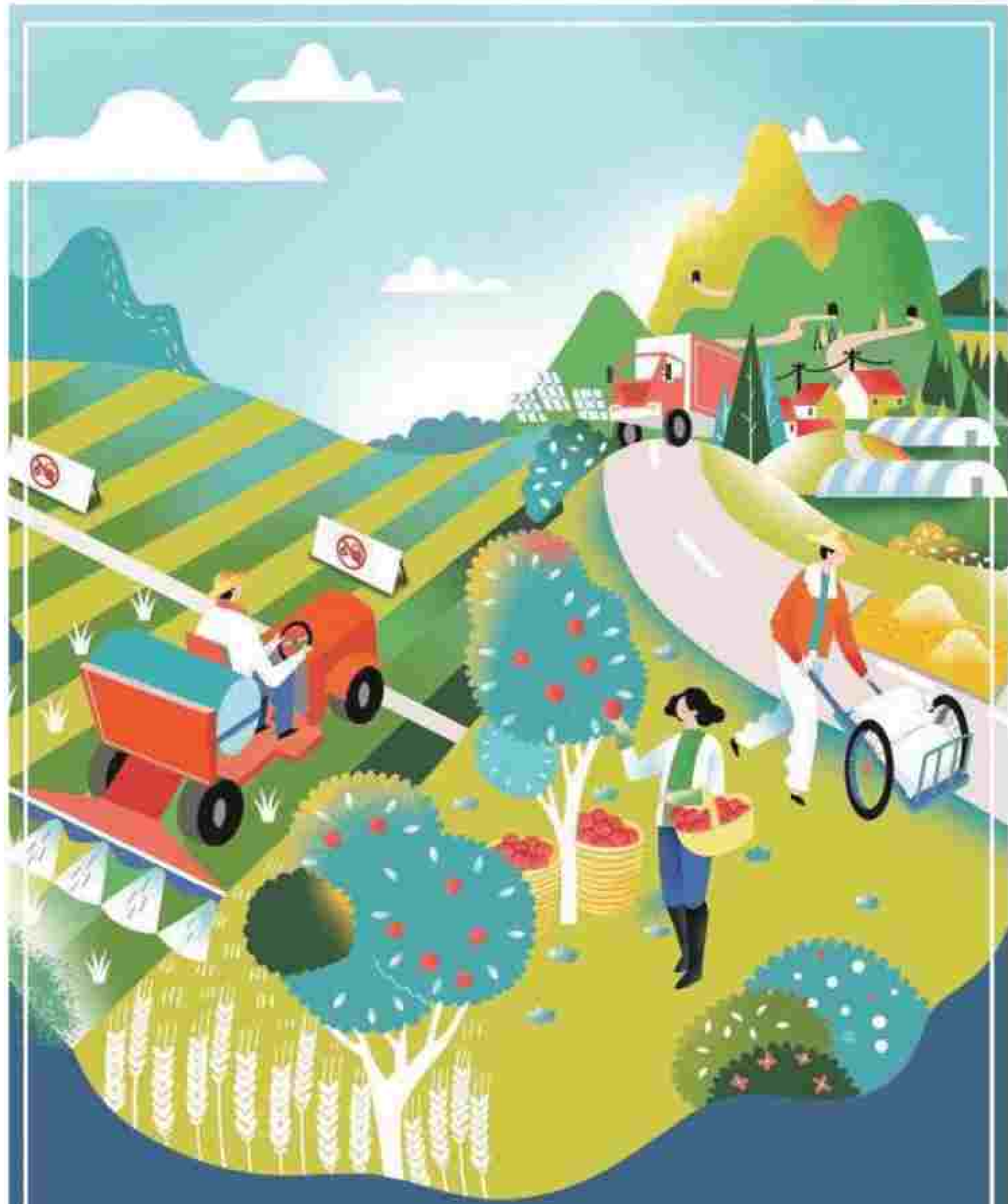
Last week, Barnier called the situation "very serious", clearly referring to the public sector deficit that is projected to hit 5.6 percent of GDP this year and go even higher next year, also beyond the EU's limit.

"After the left won the elections, French citizens end up with the most far-right, unqualified, and conservative government ever nominated," Julien Migozzi, a research fellow at Oxford University, said on X. "This coup, decided by Macron, will further damage trust in electoral processes and democratic institutions, all for Le Pen's benefits."



People march during a demonstration against the "Macron-Barnier" government in Paris on Saturday. DIMITAR DILKOFF / AFP

Agencies contributed to this story.



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Briefly

IRAN Coal mine blast leaves 51 dead

A gas explosion in a coal mine in eastern Iran has killed at least 51 people and injured 20, state media reported on Sunday. The accident was caused by a methane gas explosion in the mine run by the Madanjoo company, state media said. Ali Akbar Rahimi, governor of South Khorasan Province, told state TV that this region supplies 76 percent of the country's coal and is home to about 8 to 10 major companies, including Madanjoo. The explosion occurred at 9 pm on Saturday, state media said. President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed condolences to the victims' families. "I spoke with ministers and we will do our best to

follow up," Pezeshkian said in televised comments.

UNITED STATES 4 killed in Alabama late night shooting

A mass shooting involving several assailants has left at least four people dead and dozens wounded in Birmingham, Alabama, police said on Saturday. "We believe that multiple shooters fired multiple shots on a group of people" in the Five Points South district just after 11 pm, police officer Truman Fitzgerald told local media. Officers found two men and one woman on the sidewalk suffering from gunshot wounds, Fitzgerald said. All three were pronounced dead at the scene. A fourth victim died at a local hospital, he added.

Trump rejects 2nd debate against Harris

Donald Trump on Saturday rejected a second debate against Kamala Harris before the Nov 5 election, saying it was "too late" with early voting already underway in some states. Earlier in the day, Harris' campaign said she had accepted an invitation from CNN to participate in a debate on Oct 23. It would have been the candidates' second debate after the Sept 10 encounter. Trump stuck to his previous position that there would not be another debate before voters go to the polls in November. "It's just too late. Voting has already started," he said at a campaign rally in the battleground state of North Carolina.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Trade in services experiencing exponential growth

Confidence in China's economic development and increasing openness rising

By ZHONG NAN
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For Koh Poh-Yian, senior vice-president of FedEx Express and president of FedEx China, 2024 is undoubtedly shaping up to be a busy year.

The United States-based logistics service provider launched two new flights to the US from Qingdao, Shandong province, and Xiamen, Fujian province, in June, and expanded its fast cross-border shipping services for parcels heading to the US and Europe from China in July.

"This year also marks the 40th anniversary of our operations in China," said Koh. "Since 1984, FedEx has been committed to expanding its logistics network and service portfolio to support the growth of China's supply chain and trade in services."

In contrast to goods trade, trade in services refers to the sales and delivery of intangible services like transportation, tourism, telecommunications, advertising, education, computing and accounting.

With multinational corporations such as FedEx, Denmark's Maersk Line and France's CMA CGM Group all expanding their logistics capabilities in China this year, their expansion is reflective of a broader trend in China's trade in services, a sector that has experienced exponential growth.

In 1982, during the early stages of reform and opening-up, China's services trade had a total value of just over \$4 billion. By 2023, this figure had jumped to \$933.1 billion, a 233-fold increase, data from the Ministry of Commerce show.

As global value chains undergo restructuring, market watchers said that both Chinese and foreign companies are positioning themselves to capitalize on growing demand for services such as innovation, finance, logistics, marketing and branding.

Wang Xiaohong, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said China's continued efforts to expand its opening-up will position trade in services as a key engine for sustaining economic growth and cultivating new competitive advantages in the coming years.

China's dedication to enhancing the quality of its manufacturing sector is anticipated to boost demand for services in areas such as innovation, equipment maintenance, technical expertise, information, professional support and design, said Wang.

This will stimulate the development of new business models, industries and operational approaches, both domestically and globally, she added.

Shenyang North Aircraft Maintenance Co Ltd, a subsidiary of State-owned China Southern Airlines, is a typical example of a company benefiting from China's service trade growth, leveraging its expertise in auxiliary power unit maintenance



Visitors check out a colored lantern at the Sichuan province exhibition stand during the 2024 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing on Sept 12. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY



Left: A visitor takes pictures of an artificial intelligence orthopedic surgery robot during the 2024 CIPTIS in Beijing on Sept 12. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY



Right: A visitor experiences a passenger-carrying autonomous aerial vehicle during the 2024 CIPTIS in Beijing on Sept 13. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

75 years on

to tap into new markets.

The Shenyang, Liaoning province-based aircraft parts maintenance and overhaul service provider saw its sales revenue from aircraft APU maintenance surge 15.9 percent year-on-year to 438 million yuan (\$62.06 million) in the first eight months, marking five consecutive years of rapid growth, said Shenyang Customs.

"With a capacity to repair 245 APU units annually, we are able to provide services for six types of APUs, including those for Airbus A320 series aircraft and Boeing 737NG planes," said Wang Lulu, a senior engineer at Shenyang North Aircraft Maintenance. "Since 2022, we have serviced 36 APUs from countries and regions

including Europe, the US and Southeast Asia, generating sales revenue of 123 million yuan. Our overseas maintenance services have emerged as a new growth driver for the company."

The value of China's trade in services grew by 10 percent year-on-year to 6.57 trillion yuan in 2023, said the Ministry of Commerce.

This momentum has continued in the first seven months, with China's total value of services trade growing 14.7 percent on a yearly basis to 4.23 trillion yuan.

To further open up its services sector and facilitate convenient cross-border flow of various innovation elements, the State Council, China's Cabinet, released a policy document in early September regarding promotion of the development of trade in services through high-standard opening-up. They are crucial to supporting the expansion of companies like

FedEx and Shenyang North Aircraft Maintenance.

The guideline addressed key points in supporting the development of trade in services and is expected to encourage an innovative environment for the growth of the sector.

Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has been fulfilling its commitments, accelerating the opening-up of its services sector to the outside world, and successfully boosting trade in services, said Tang Wenhong, assistant minister of commerce.

Tang said that the government will fully implement the negative list for cross-border services trade, establish and improve the management system for the list, and strengthen links between various administrative approvals, licenses, filings and negative list adjustments.

A negative list refers to specific

areas of industry where foreign investors are not allowed to operate. They can operate in areas not appearing on the list.

"Since China's manufacturing investment and goods trade have remained at a high level, trade in services plays an even more important role to drive high-quality economic growth and new quality productive forces," said Jiang Hao, a partner at global management consultancy Roland Berger.

New quality productive forces are advanced productivity freed from traditional economic growth modes and productivity development paths, featuring high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and are in line with the new development philosophy.

Jiang noted that the top three categories of China's trade in services are tourism, transportation and other business services. They account for 60 percent of the

nation's total services trade, while most developed countries' trade in services focuses on knowledge and technology-based areas.

"This means China has a lot of potential to expand services trade, particularly as more Chinese companies are going overseas and seeking high-end services to go along with them," he said, adding that as China continues promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and contributing to the growth of the Global South, services trade will be even more critical to help domestic firms achieve their goals.

Similar views were expressed by Mohammed al Ajlan, deputy chairman of Ajlan & Bros Group, a Saudi Arabia-based conglomerate. "Since entering the Chinese market, we have witnessed tremendous change and maintain long-term confidence in China's high-quality economic development and increasing openness, especially in the areas of trade in services and technology growth," he said.

With closer China-Saudi political and business ties, the deep integration of the BRI and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 program between Saudi and Chinese companies will deepen and solidify, said al Ajlan.

"We aim to facilitate the implementation of advanced concepts, technologies, products and services in Saudi Arabia through platforms such as the China International Fair for Trade in Services," he said. Al Ajlan is also chairman of the Saudi-Chinese Business Council.

China and Belarus also signed a trade agreement in services and investment in August, said the Ministry of Commerce. The agreement is poised to further unlock the potential for cooperation in these fields and support high-quality development of the BRI.

Attracted by China's high-level opening-up, culture and quality education service, Duke Kunshan University, a joint venture of Duke University in the US, Wuhan University in Hubei province and Kunshan, a city in Jiangsu province, witnessed its largest undergraduate class this year, up 25 percent from the previous year and doubling the size of its inaugural undergraduate class in 2018.

About 350 students are from China, with about 150 being international — a 50 percent increase over the previous year, doubling the size of its inaugural undergraduate class in 2018.

This year, the university received the highest number of international applications, with over 4,700 applicants from 123 countries competing for 150 spots. About half of these applicants were from the US, according to John Quelch, executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University.

"I believe that DKU will help me achieve my goals by not only immersing myself in Chinese culture, but also broadening my perspective through other students, faculty and courses," said Sara Salazar, a class of 2028 student from Texas, the US.

From 2013 to 2023, the average annual growth rate of global services exports reached 4.9 percent, which doubled the average growth rate for the world's goods exports, said the World Trade Organization.

Nation's evolving outbound tourism market

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhong Nan

In early March, my college classmate, who now works at a foreign trade company in Cixi, Zhejiang province, booked a two-night stay at a hotel in Singapore to attend a Taylor Swift concert.

It wasn't just the people sitting in the same row of the plane who were headed to the concert at the Southeast Asian country's national stadium. She quickly noticed that many passengers on her flight were also going to watch the show, as they all talked about the same topic on board.

Many of them bought sequin dresses in China before the depart-

ture and made friendship bracelets. Young people also joined with fans from other parts of the world to attend pre-concert meetups, tailgating events or hanging out at nearby restaurants and bars to share the excitement.

This highlights a broader trend within China's rapidly growing trade in services sector, particularly in areas like tourism and cultural experiences.

As disposable incomes rise and the demand for international events and services increases, more Chinese consumers are traveling abroad, not only for business, but also for leisure activities.

This surge in outbound tourism reflects the broader expansion of China's services sector. It has seen significant growth in areas like tourism, logistics and professional services, becoming an integral part of the

nation's economic transformation.

China's travel services continued to grow at a high rate in the first seven months of 2024, with revenue in the sector reaching 1.14 trillion yuan (\$161.5 billion), an increase of 48.5 percent year-on-year. This made it the largest sector in China's trade in services, statistics from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

The rapid growth of China's travel services sector, driven by rising disposable incomes and increasing demand for international events, brings significant benefits to the global economy.

As more Chinese consumers travel abroad for leisure, such as outdoor activities and cultural events, they contribute to the economies of the destination countries.

The influx of Chinese tourists can boost local businesses, including hospitality, retail, aviation,

cruises and entertainment events, driving demand for various products and creating job opportunities.

Moreover, Chinese outbound tourism fosters cross-cultural exchanges and strengthens global economic ties, particularly in countries heavily reliant on tourism revenue. Destinations in Southeast Asia, Europe and North America, in particular, benefit from increased spending on accommodation, dining and shopping by Chinese tourists.

The surge in international travel also highlights the importance of global cooperation in catering businesses, logistics and infrastructure, as it demands efficient transportation networks and cross-border services.

For example, Chinese companies such as State-owned China Railway

Construction Corp and China Communications Construction Co have all undertaken railroad and airport construction projects in numerous countries in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

As China expands its trade in services, this deeper integration into the global economy strengthens trade partnerships, drives growth in related industries and contributes to the overall development of a more interconnected global services market.

Based on these facts, the next growth stage of China's outbound tourism market could be characterized by increased demand for more personalized, high-quality travel experiences, as well as a shift toward niche segments such as eco-tourism, adventure travel, sport tourism and cultural exploration.

As Chinese consumers become more affluent and sophisticated, they are seeking unique and immersive experiences rather than standard group tours. This transition is

likely to drive the development of luxury travel, high-end food and wine tasting, wellness tourism and specialized services tailored to individual preferences, providing opportunities for destinations and service providers to cater to this evolving market.

Another key trend in the next phase of China's outbound tourism will be the expansion into lesser-known and visa-free destinations, beyond the traditional hotspots in Southeast Asia and Europe. Chinese tourists will increasingly explore regions like Africa, the Middle East, South America and Central Asia, offering these emerging markets the chance to tap into a lucrative source of tourism revenue.

For the global economy, this evolution in China's outbound tourism means increased demand for diversified services that will spur investment in infrastructure, technology and sustainable initiatives in tourism-heavy regions.

BUSINESS



Employees from various businesses work at a workspace operated by Switzerland-based International Workplace Group in Shanghai in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

IWG bullish on nation's evolving work environment

Swiss company operates over 130 office sites across 35 cities in China

By ZHONG NAN
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International Workplace Group, a Switzerland-based provider of hybrid working solutions, will expand its service network to more than 2,000 locations across China over the next decade, said a senior executive.

Currently operating over 130 workspace locations across 35 cities in China, primarily in first and second-tier cities, IWG has recently begun expanding into smaller urban areas. The London-listed company aims to accelerate its establishment of locations in cities such as Changzhou, Jiangsu province; Tongxiang, Zhejiang province; Shangrao, Jiangxi province; Weihai, Shandong province; and Mianyang, Sichuan province.

Hybrid working solutions refer to a group of workers that are distributed across various locations, from traditional offices and factory spaces to remote locations, including within employees' homes themselves. Such a model offers employees flexibility and choice, and has driven new approaches to agility, collaboration and ways of working

over the past two decades.

Global office market trends have garnered significant attention. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies have started to reassess their office layout strategies, increasingly favoring flexible working models, including remote and distributed work.

These trends have led to declining occupancy rates, rising vacancy rates and downward-trending rents in prime business districts, a phenomenon observed not only in China, but also in major cities abroad like New York and London, said Edward Hu, general manager of IWG China.

"In response to these trends, we recognize that the future office market will feature more new formats and demands. Therefore, our development plans and the concept for new centers are based on an understanding of future office market trends and a focus on new working styles," said Hu.

With over 30 years of experience and currently operating more than 4,000 locations throughout the world, IWG has conducted in-depth big data analysis and assessments of the space requirements for each location.

"Typically, we establish each point in a center across one or two standard floors. The area sizes range from as small as 800 square meters to as large as 6,000 sq m, usually covering two floors," he said, adding a layout spanning two floors and measuring between 1,500 and 2,000 sq m is considered the ideal size.

Believing that China's service sector represents a major industry with significant demand for office space services, Hu said that the manufacturing sector may have ample space locally, but in other regions, it could still require office space solutions for employees at sales units, marketing and service teams.

"Additionally, in high-end service industries such as consulting, human resources and finance, demand for our services is even stronger," he said. "These industries tend to be more capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive, leading to high demand for premium office spaces within office buildings."

Having entered the Chinese market three decades ago, IWG, with the support of over 10,000 employees worldwide, now operates more than 4,000 workspaces in over 120 countries.

Vladimir Kazbekov, vice-president and chief operating officer of Shanghai-based New Development Bank, said China has made

notable strides in liberalizing its services sector, creating new opportunities for further advancement and attracting foreign investment.

For example, the Ministry of Commerce announced earlier this month that China plans to allow wholly owned foreign hospitals in Beijing, Shanghai and seven other cities or regions.

Echoing that sentiment, Wang Bo, deputy director-general of the department of trade in services and commercial services at the Ministry of Commerce, said China's dedication to expanding market access, aligning its compliance mechanisms with international standards and implementing a negative list for cross-border trade in services underscores its strong commitment to this process.

A negative list specifies industries where foreign investors are prohibited from operating. They are permitted to operate in any sectors not included on the list.

A recent Harvard Business Review article listed four key strengths of China's economy, namely its innovation ecosystem, investment in the Global South, ultra-competitive markets and 1.4 billion consumers, and suggested that leaders of multinational corporations seize opportunities in China.

CIFTIS successfully showcases green firms

BELJING — The 2024 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing served not only as a platform to showcase innovation in new quality productive forces, but also empowers enterprises to embrace a green and low-carbon future in the Chinese market.

Held from Sept 12 to 16, the fair showcased advancements in green and intelligent services. China's "dual carbon" goals have infused new energy into the green transition across various sectors, including construction, transportation, education, healthcare, sports and finance, among others.

The environmental services exhibition hall at this year's fair covered approximately 12,000 square meters, featuring multiple zones dedicated to green energy, carbon neutrality technologies and the circular economy. Multiple cutting-edge technologies from both domestic and international enterprises made their debuts, positioning CIFTIS as the premier stage for global green innovation.

IQAir, a Swiss company providing air purification and air quality monitoring services, participated in CIFTIS for the first time this year. It introduced its latest IQAir Web Dashboard, which integrates big data monitoring, air pollution control and data visualization with hardware systems to help control indoor air pollution and improve air quality in workspaces.

China has introduced numerous measures to ease market access, particularly in the field of green development, which will benefit countries worldwide. International companies are eager to integrate into China's framework for high-quality development, said Frank Christian Hammes, global CEO of IQAir.

At the "Global Green Economy Development Forum" held during the fair, participants heaped praise on China for creating a major platform for global collaboration and exchange in the emerging areas of green economy.

Green competitiveness, characterized by low-carbon practices, is reshaping global supply chains and international trade rules. To drive high-quality and sustainable economic development, it is essential to strengthen energy-saving and emission reduction management, build a carbon footprint reduction system and promote the green, low-carbon transformation of industrial and energy structures, said Sha Zukang, honorary president of the International Green Economy Association, when addressing the event.

At the fair, many impressive achievements highlighting new industries, business models and practices in the green, low-carbon sector, were on display. Breakthrough technologies, such as recycled PET materials and biomass heating, were presented by several green economy companies.

Making its debut at the fair, Optics Valley Bluefire from Wuhan, Hubei province, attracted visitors' attention with a model demonstrating the conversion of biomass energy from agricultural and forestry waste, such as rice husks, wood scraps and crop straw, into thermal energy. This technology has already been implemented in various regions across China, placing it at the forefront of the domestic green-agri sector.

"We hope to bring our 'blue fire' to thousands of households through CIFTIS," said Xiong Jian, chairman of the company, who believes that China's biomass heating sector holds vast potential, and CIFTIS, with its focus on green economy, offers a major platform for companies to integrate into the global development landscape.

In recent years, China has vigorously promoted high-level opening up, leading to steady growth in the scale of services trade, and an accelerated pace of opening-up in various services sectors. Earlier this month, China unveiled a set of guidelines to promote high-quality development of trade in services, committed to fully constructing the management system of the negative list for cross-border trade in services and improving the standardization level of services.

In March, China unveiled a program to promote large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins.

Liu Ling, president of Philips Greater China, stated that in response to this plan, the company showcased its initiative designed to offer tailored solutions for technology upgrades and equipment renewals in medical institutions, aiming to enhance the quality and efficiency of healthcare services and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces in the industry.


This year's CIFTIS also saw the launch of several initiatives aimed at bolstering the stability and growth of supply chains, earning high praise from participating businesses.

At the booth of Wilo Group, one of the world's leading providers of pumps and pumping systems, a skid-mounted hydraulic module featuring functions such as fire protection, air conditioning, monitoring and cooling water filtration caught the attention of visitors.

The equipment was fully assembled and tested at Wilo's factories. Once delivered to the project site, it only required water and electricity connections to function properly. It is widely applicable in commercial, industrial, data centers and heating sectors, reducing on-site installation time by 80 percent and lowering failure rates by 60 percent.

XINHUA

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国际爱护动物基金会

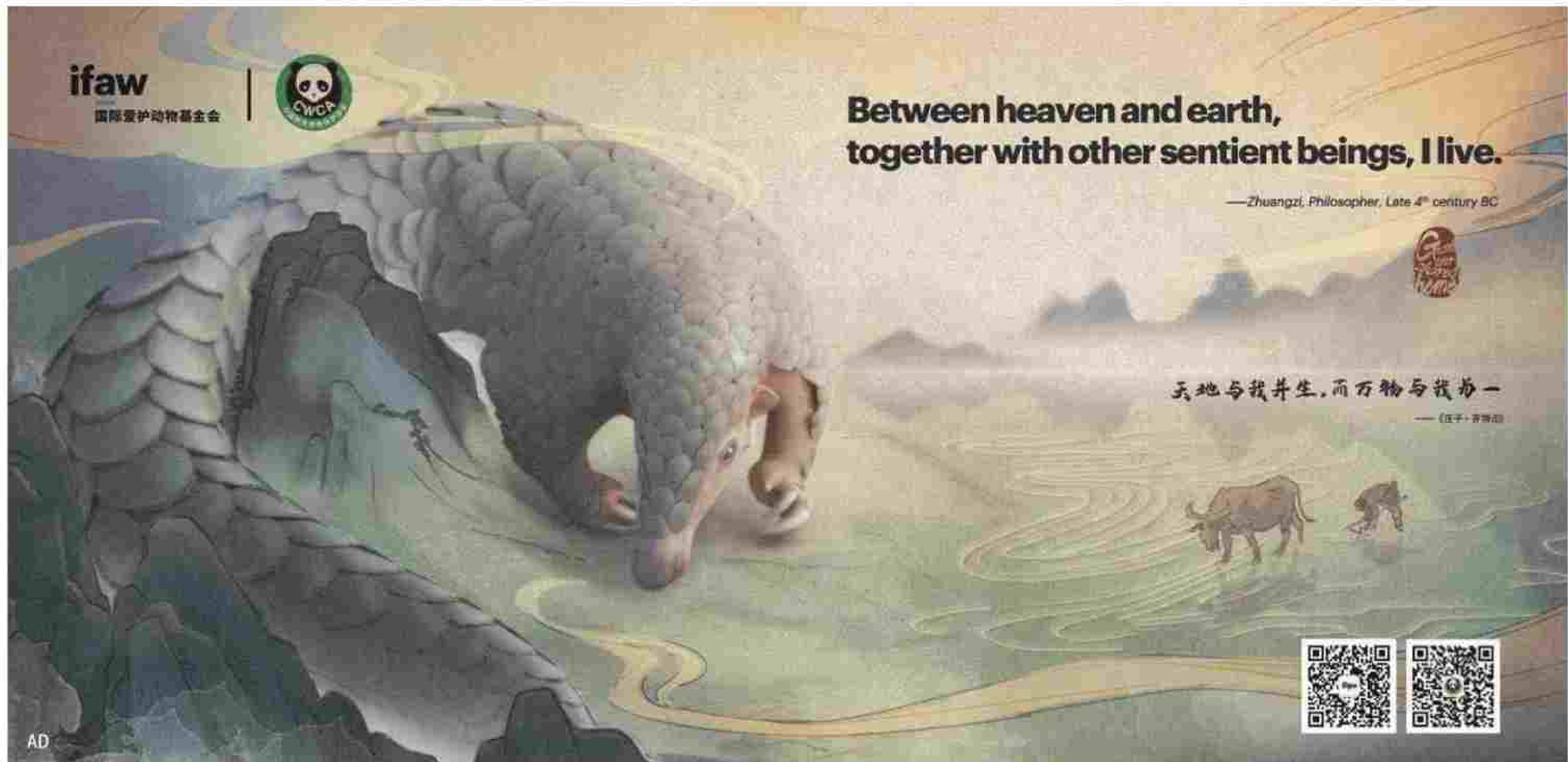




**Between heaven and earth,
together with other sentient beings, I live.**

— Zhuangzi, Philosopher, Late 4th century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一

——《庄子·齐物论》



AD

BUSINESSINSIGHT



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Long-term rise of yuan intact despite challenges

MAIN STREET

By Massimiliano Castelli

Despite near-term challenges over growth and geopolitics, the RMB is likely to increase its share in global forex reserves over the long-term.

When the renminbi was included in the special drawing rights basket in 2015, expectations for a rapid rise of the Chinese currency — also known as the yuan — in the global financial architecture were high. In fact, over the following years, the RMB's share within global foreign exchange reserves more than doubled to 2.8 percent in 2021, according to IMF's Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves data.

The widespread assumption at that time was that the RMB would eventually challenge the dominant role of the US dollar. However, the pace of growth of the RMB's share of forex reserves has been hindered by several factors in recent years. According to the IMF, its share fell slightly to around 2.3 percent by the end of 2023.

UBS Asset Management carries out an annual survey of central bankers ahead of its Reserve Management Seminar in June. In its 2024 survey, the RMB's average long-term target allocation among reserve managers stood at 5 percent, a slight drop from 5.2 percent in the 2023 survey. However, looking at the year ahead, central banks are planning to further add to their RMB positions. Overall, 70 percent of survey respondents answered that they had already invested, or were considering investing, in the Chinese currency.

The pause in the march of the RMB to global reserve currency status is due to multiple factors.

First of all, the rise in US interest rates that began in 2022 to fight inflation has moved the interest rate differential in favor of the greenback, leading to reserve managers taking advantage of higher yields in the US Treasury market.

Next, international investor sentiment toward China, including reserve managers, is currently weak due to the country's ongoing economic challenges.

Finally, geopolitical tensions and the risk of sanctions have somewhat dented the appetite of central banks for onshore yuan assets. Following the start of the conflict in Ukraine, the US and its allies targeted reserves held by the central bank of Russia, raising concerns among central banks about sanction risks stemming from forex reserves, and whether they can continue to be perceived as "safe" assets. The increase in direct and indirect sanction risks has undoubtedly impacted demand for the Chinese currency among reserve managers.

What is the outlook for the RMB and can it resume its growth in global reserves?

The US-China interest rate differential is expected to fall going forward as the Fed starts easing interest rates. Should the US economy slow down significantly or even fall into recession, the interest rate differential could disappear. This would make RMB fixed income assets more attractive going forward.

The challenges faced by the Chinese real estate sector are on track to eventually get resolved as the Chinese government continues implementing targeted policy measures. This may also have a positive impact on household consumption and growth.

What about geopolitics? According to the latest UBS RMS survey, when asked which reserve currencies are most likely to benefit from macroeconomic and geopolitical shifts over the next five years, the greenback and the yuan were the two currencies most often mentioned, followed by the yen and the euro. When asked specifically about the impact of US-China tensions on the internationalization of the renminbi, 47 percent of respondents said that it had no impact, 39 percent believed it had slowed it down and 14 percent thought it has accelerated it.

Demand for diversification of reserves away from the US dollar remains strong globally, driven by geopolitical, economic and financial dynamics. So far, this process has been slow as the US economy and its currency have outperformed expectations. We believe the dollar is and will remain for the foreseeable future the main store of value for global investors, including reserve managers. However, currency diversification is set to continue in the future as the world gradually moves toward a multipolar system. The RMB looks set to continue its steady rise in global forex reserves, in particular if it is supported by an improvement in the Chinese economy, the ongoing rise in the use of yuan in cross-border payments and the more widespread use of the digital RMB.

The writer is head of strategy for official institutions, UBS Asset Management. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Keys to achieving China's annual economic growth target of 5%

Expansionary fiscal and monetary policies needed to alleviate deflationary pressures

EAGLE EYE

By Yu Yongding

To assess whether we can reach the annual economic growth target, we first need a reasonable analytical framework. Using the simplest expenditure method to analyze the possibility of achieving around 5 percent GDP growth in 2024, we must consider the three main components of economic growth: final consumption, capital formation, and net exports. We also need to make reasonable assumptions about the growth rates of these components.

In 2023, China's final consumption grew by about 8 percent, contributing 82 percent to the 5.2 percent GDP growth. This high consumption growth was mainly due to the base effect. Assuming that consumption growth will drop to around 5 percent in 2024 and that the trade surplus holds flat, we can conclude that to achieve around 5 percent annual GDP growth, the required growth rate for capital formation should hit 5.3 percent, higher than the 3.5 percent growth in 2023.

During the January-April period, China's retail sales, a key measurement of consumer spending, grew by 4.1 percent year-on-year. This indicates that to reach the annual growth target, capital formation growth in 2024 will need to exceed the initially set 5.3 percent.

The growth in property investment in the first half of the year was weaker than expected. However, the manufacturing sector exceeded expectations due to the rapid growth of industries like new energy vehicles. In the first quarter, manufacturing investment growth reached 9.9 percent, somewhat offsetting the negative impacts of low consumption growth and the declining real estate sector on GDP growth. Nonetheless, it is clear that infrastructure investment growth in the second half of the year should be significantly higher than initially assumed. Only then can China likely achieve its annual GDP growth target for the year.

For a long time, China's producer price index, which gauges factory-gate prices, has registered negative growth. Meanwhile, the growth of China's consumer

price index, the main gauge of inflation, has fluctuated around 2 percent, even experiencing negative growth at times. In this context, it is necessary to implement expansionary fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate economic growth and alleviate deflationary pressures.

In light of weak expectations and a lack of willingness to invest among enterprises, we must increase infrastructure investment. It is crucial to emphasize that we refer to a broad definition of infrastructure, which includes areas like "new infrastructure", healthcare, elderly housing, cultural education facilities, and R&D — investments that typically lack profits and are unlikely to attract private enterprises.

I fully agree with the view that the fundamental reason for current low price levels lies in insufficient demand and supply-demand imbalances, rather than inadequate monetary supply. The main issue is the inadequate total demand. Although some policies aimed at stimulating consumption and the real estate market were introduced in the first half of the year, their effects have not been significant, possibly due to late implementation or insufficient intensity to effectively address current economic challenges. Therefore, the government needs to continue to strengthen expansionary macroeconomic policies, particularly fiscal policies, while ensuring these policies are effectively implemented.

If the expansionary policies prove effective and China successfully achieves the around 5 percent annual growth target this year, we can maintain economic growth above 5 percent by 2025. However, we cannot rule out the possibility of external shocks or policy missteps leading to a sudden rise in inflation before achieving potential growth rates. Thus, we must seize the current opportunity and strive to reach the around 5 percent annual economic growth target.

When it comes to the question of whether capital formation growth in 2024 can exceed that of 2023, it depends on whether infrastructure growth can significantly surpass that of 2023. Infrastructure investment growth is influenced by several factors, including project reserves, local government incentives, and the availability of funds and costs.

In the first half of the year, the government's issuance actions of ultra-long-term

special treasury bonds were relatively slow, possibly due to concerns about the potential crowding-out effects and market volatility from excessive bond issuance, or due to inflation fears.

With further issuance of treasury bonds, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, is expected to intensify open market operations. The central bank should coordinate with the Ministry of Finance to increase bond purchases to mitigate the "crowding-out effect", lower interest rates, and stimulate economic growth.

When it comes to the question of "how to solve China's high savings rate problem", China currently needs to focus on increasing total demand rather than on the high savings rates. Increasing total demand essentially means boosting consumption, investment, and net export demand. Supporting exports is necessary in the current context, but relying on exports for economic growth is not sustainable. Local governments should avoid stimulating exports through measures like tax rebates and instead focus on helping enterprises transform and upgrade while exploring domestic markets. Stimulating consumption is also essential, with localized strategies based on actual conditions. In the medium to long term, the government should work on reforms in the tax system and social security to increase income equality and enhance overall consumption propensity.

For a long time, China's producer price index has registered negative growth. Meanwhile, the growth of China's consumer price index has fluctuated around 2 percent, even experiencing negative growth at times. In this context, it is necessary to implement expansionary fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate economic growth and alleviate deflationary pressures.

While China's savings rate is relatively high, several countries, especially in Asia and Northern Europe, have savings rates comparable to or higher than China's, such as Singapore. As long as high savings are voluntary rather than forced, they are not necessarily a bad thing. The government should focus on transforming savings into investments rather than simply lowering the savings rate.

In the current situation, since consumption is a function of income, income expectations, and wealth, residents will not increase consumption without growth in income, improvement in income expectations, or rising asset prices. Even if the government provides residents with cash, they are likely to save it for emergencies. Therefore, the government should concentrate on using controllable methods, such as infrastructure investment, to kick-start economic growth. Infrastructure investment not only directly creates demand, but also generates a "crowding-in effect", stimulating investment in other sectors and promoting overall economic growth. As the economy grows, residents' incomes will rise, leading to increased consumer spending.

In 2024, the government should aggressively issue treasury bonds to support infrastructure investment, ensuring that we can smoothly achieve around 5 percent economic growth in 2025.

The economic outlook for the second half of 2024 remains challenging, but we still have a time window to realize the annual growth target. Currently, inflation remains at historically low levels, allowing plenty of room for implementing expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. In contrast, the US faces greater economic pressure, balancing inflation, growth, and international payments. China, however, only needs to focus on economic growth.

Overall, I believe that the economic situation in the US has limited impact on China. The key is for us to manage our own affairs well. As 2024 is already more than halfway through, adopting a wait-and-see approach is not advisable. We must adopt a resolute spirit to achieve the around 5 percent annual economic growth target and reverse the declining trend in economic growth that has persisted since 2010.

The writer is a member of the Academic Divisions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

MOTORING

Range-extended EVs outstrip competition with fast growth

Once overlooked technology back in spotlight as buyers snap up such models

By CAO YINGYING
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Sales of range-extended electric vehicles are growing much faster than pure electric ones, prompting more automakers to focus on developing such models.

REEVs feature an electric powertrain for propulsion and a small internal combustion engine to charge the vehicle's battery, extending the driving range and tackling driver anxiety over range.

Data show that in 2023, sales of REEVs reached 640,000 units, jumping 181 percent year-on-year. In the first half of this year, nearly 470,000 units of REEV were sold, up 124 percent.

In July, sales of pure EVs reached 505,000 units, a slight increase of 0.9 percent year-on-year. Sales of plug-in hybrids were about 318,000 units, up 73 percent year-on-year. Meanwhile, sales of REEVs soared 115 percent to 122,000 units, according to data from the China Passenger Car Association.

These figures indicate that REEVs are the fastest-growing segment among new energy vehicles, which primarily include pure electric, plug-in hybrid and range-extended vehicles. Despite their relatively small volume, REEVs hold significant potential for growth.

Such models from brands like Li Auto and Aito, which focus on REEVs, have been well-received by consumers and become profitable.

Even automakers dedicated to pure EVs, such as Leapmotor, Deepal, Neta and Voyah, have launched or are about to launch such models, despite initial controversy surrounding the technology.

Recently, more automakers have announced their entry into the REEV segment. Xpeng, for instance, is developing its first REEV model, which will be a large SUV and is expected to start mass production in



Visitors inspect the Aito M9 at the Chengdu auto show in late August. The SUV is available in range-extended and pure electric variants. CAO YINGYING / CHINA DAILY

the second half of 2025, according to a news report.

Similarly, SAIC's premium EV arm, IM Motor, will launch a range-extended SUV to compete with Li Auto's L7 in the first quarter of 2025. Geely's Zeekr also plans to launch models with such technology.

On Aug 21, Changan's premium NEV brand, Avatr, launched its Kunlun range-extended technology in Shanghai, claiming it will deliver a driving experience almost identical to that of pure EVs.

Globally, Hyundai, Ford and Stellantis are showing interest in the REEV approach, especially amid the slowdown in EV demand in Europe.

In late August, Hyundai announced it plans to start mass production of new REEVs in both North America and China by the end of 2026, with sales beginning in early 2027.

Hyundai is targeting a range of up to 900 kilometers for its future REEVs.

The automaker views the technology as a bridge to full EV adoption before the necessary charging

infrastructure is built and battery costs fall.

The emergence of range-extended technology is being driven by consumer demand, although the technology was overlooked due to its simple structure, which limited its ability to offer multiple driving modes, said industry experts.

Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association, said that compared with pure EVs, range-extended cars do not require large batteries, saving costs and space. They have a simpler structure than plug-in hybrids and their generators reduce collision risks, enabling them to better meet consumer needs.

Regarding the market prospects for REEVs, products typically exceed 4.9 meters in length, classified as mid to large sized high-end vehicles, said Zhu Xiehan, a special expert of the China Society of Automotive Engineers and a professor at Tongji University.

Zhu noted that compared to plug-in hybrids, range-extended vehicles have larger batteries, longer electric

ranges and can host more advanced digital configurations due to their size.

Some experts believe that, despite being labeled a transitional technology, REEVs could become a mainstream option in the near future.

Ouyang Minggao, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a professor at Tsinghua University, stated that within five to 10 years, the share of REEVs and plug-in hybrids in the overall NEV market is expected to increase to 30-40 percent.

Range-extended technology remains controversial among some automakers. BMW CEO Oliver Zipse has criticized range-extended vehicles for their limitations, such as outdated technology, high maintenance costs, poor energy conversion rates, high prices and limited model options.

Mercedes-Benz once developed and tested an EQS range-extended prototype but reportedly halted the project, citing high production costs and unsustainable advantages.

Thailand emerging as strategic market for Chinese automakers

By LI FUSHENG

Avatr entered the Thai vehicle market last week, becoming the latest on a long list of Chinese vehicle makers to explore the Southeast Asian country.

The startup unveiled the Avatr 11, an SUV coupe in Bangkok, which also marks its parent company Changan's fourth model in Thailand, following the launches of the Deepal L07 and S07 in 2023 and the Lumin L earlier this year.

Southeast Asia, with Thailand as its core, is emerging as a hub for Chinese carmakers, especially those which produce new energy vehicles, serving as a springboard for them to explore more overseas markets.

"We are confident in our ability to make Thailand a strategic market for our global business," said Avatr President Chen Zhuo.

Chinese brands have taken a leading position in Thailand's nascent but booming NEV market, thanks to the cutting-edge features available in their vehicles.

About 76,000 EVs were sold in Thailand in 2023, with about 80 percent of them Chinese models, according to Thai authorities.

The Thai government is ambitious about the EV sector. As a regional automotive manufacturing and export hub, it aims to convert 30 percent of its annual auto production into EVs by 2030.

The goals are attracting Chinese companies to not only ship more vehicles into the country but also to produce vehicles locally.

According to the Board of Investment of Thailand, many Chinese EV makers have agreed to the government's request to use auto parts made by Thai companies.

Great Wall Motor, for instance, would source 80 to 90 percent of its EV components from local materials.

Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy Piraporn Salirathavibhaga highlighted the

importance of investments from Chinese carmakers in stimulating the economy and aiding the development of Thailand's industrial sector.

Last year, Changan announced an investment of 8.86 billion baht (\$268 million) to build its first overseas EV production plant in the country, which is scheduled to start operation in 2025 with an initial capacity of 100,000 units per year.

BYD kicked off operations at its Thai plant in early July, with an annual production capacity of 150,000 vehicles.

The plant is also BYD's first factory in Southeast Asia, a fast-growing regional EV market where it has become the dominant player.

Besides BYD, companies including Neta and Aion have established plants in the region.

Aion's manufacturing facility in Thailand started production in July, with an initial annual production capacity of 50,000 units. It is also building a plant in Indonesia, which is expected to start production around the end of the year.

Neta's two plants, one in Thailand and the other in Indonesia, have already started vehicle production.

In Southeast Asia, Neta comes second only to BYD in terms of EV sales, according to the China Insights Consultancy.

"We welcome Chinese companies with new quality productive forces to set up their factories and even regional headquarters in Thailand. In return, Thailand will release more incentive measures to support their development," said Thailand's Minister of Industry Pimphattra Wichai-kul, at a recent forum.

Pimphattra noted the important role the EV industry will play in the country to achieve its sustainable development goals. "This will not only benefit us, but also future generations," she said.

After-sales service of gasoline cars better, says report

By LI FUSHENG
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Gasoline vehicle manufacturers are improving their after-sales service to retain customers amid fierce competition in the Chinese vehicle market, according to a J.D. Power study.

The J.D. Power 2024 China Customer Service Index Study, released on Thursday, showed that customer service satisfaction in China hit 773 on a 1,000-point scale in 2024, a 14-point increase from 2023.

Specifically, satisfaction among owners of premium brands increased 11 points to 796. Land Rover ranked first with a score of 805, followed by Mercedes-Benz with a score of 802 and Cadillac at 801.

Scores for mass-market brands and Chinese carmakers stood at 767 and 765 respectively, each seeing an increase of 14 points from 2023.

Of mass-market brands, GAC Honda ranked highest on the list with a score of 792. Geely was highest among Chinese domestic brands

with a score of 786. Chery and GAC Trumpchi ranked second in a tie among Chinese domestic brands, each with a score of 780.

The study, now in its 24th year, measures satisfaction with after-sales service at authorized dealers in the past 12 months among owners of 1 to 4-year-old vehicles.

The 2024 study is based on responses from 33,298 vehicle owners of 43 automotive brands in 81 major cities who purchased their new internal combustion engine vehicle between January 2020 and June 2023. The study was run from February to July 2024.

J.D. Power said the improvements in scores in 2024 indicate that automakers are placing more emphasis on after-sales service.

Of the six factors measured in the study, service quality has seen the highest increase, improving 16 points from 2023.

Ann Xie, general manager of the digital retail consulting practice at J.D. Power China, said as NEV mak-

ers' direct sales models and digital communication channels are becoming trendy, those who purchase internal combustion engine vehicles are now expecting that same service efficiency.

"Automakers need to actively adapt to market changes by building efficient digital service systems that reduce costs while also enhancing the customer experience. Striking the right balance between cost control and customer satisfaction will be crucial," she said.

The 2024 study showed that carmakers are seeing their efforts work best for new car owners.

Of the respondents, the satisfaction of those who have owned their vehicle for one to two years improved 25 points compared with the previous study. Meanwhile, satisfaction among those who have owned their new vehicle for three to four years fell 16 points.

Another finding is that service transparency has a great effect on satisfaction.

The study showed that customers' satisfaction is 77 points higher when they are shown live footage or video of their vehicles being serviced than those who are not. That gap was only 30 points in 2023. Car owners' satisfaction is 91 points higher when all service charges are communicated in advance, the study said.

Satisfaction and loyalty are higher among customers who have installed the app from their vehicle maker.

They are found to be more likely to go to the authorized dealerships instead of roadside mechanics for repair and maintenance, which is 8 percentage points higher than non-app users.

Such customers tend to spend more on after-sales services, with an average expenditure of 2,331 yuan (\$330), 718 yuan higher than those of non-app users.

The study also found that customers who are offered free benefits by the automakers are more likely to purchase other benefits.

Short Torque

EU seeking solution with China over vehicle tariffs

The European Union is looking to find a "mutually agreeable solution" with China regarding the EU's imposition of tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China, said EU Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis on Thursday. "Both sides reaffirmed their political will to pursue and intensify efforts in finding a mutually agreeable solution, which would need to be effective in addressing the problem, enforceable, monitorable, as well as WTO-compatible," he said. "The two sides agreed to take a renewed look at price undertakings. The principals agreed to instruct their respective teams to put maximum effort to work toward a mutually agreeable solution," he added.

Europe suffers major slump in auto sales

New car sales in the European Union fell 18.3 percent in August to their lowest in three years, dragged by double-digit losses in major markets, data from Europe's auto industry body showed on Thursday. Sales of pure EVs slumped 43.9 percent in August, falling for the fourth consecutive month. The bloc's biggest EV markets, Germany and France, recorded drops of 68.8 percent and 33.1 percent respectively, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association said. Car sales in Europe have dropped well below pre-COVID-19 levels, with carmakers such as Volkswagen warning that the trend might not change in the foreseeable future.

Outsourcing talks by Waymo and Hyundai

Alphabet's Waymo is in talks with Hyundai Motor to outsource manufacturing of its self-driving vehicles, a South Korean newspaper reported. Officials at Waymo and Hyundai have met more than three times to discuss a plan to use Hyundai's Ioniq 5 electric vehicles for Waymo's sixth-generation self-driving technology, the report said. It added that the plan includes replacing offerings from Geely's Zeekr with the Ioniq 5 SUV. Waymo said in a statement: "We will decline to comment on speculation, but I can share that we are hard at work validating the sixth-generation Waymo Driver on the Zeekr platform and intend to introduce it into our fleet when ready."

Denza joint venture now fully owned by BYD

BYD has taken full control of the Denza joint venture with Mercedes-Benz, marking the end of a 13-year partnership in China's electric vehicle market. BYD acquired the remaining 10 percent of shares in the company that were owned by Mercedes, bringing the premium EV brand entirely under BYD's ownership. Mercedes-Benz China declined to comment. Denza was founded in 2011 as a 50-50 joint venture between BYD and Mercedes (then Daimler). The collaboration aimed to produce premium EVs, but disappointing sales led Mercedes to reduce its stake to 10 percent in 2021.

MOTORING-AGENCIES



Changan's premium NEV arm, Avatr, unveils the 11 SUV coupe in Bangkok on Sept 17, marking its official entry into Thai market. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

NEW ARRIVAL

Nio's Onvo launches L60 SUV

Nio's Onvo brand launched its first model, the L60, on Thursday in Hefei, Anhui province, which will be delivered from Sept 28.

The five-seat electric SUV, with a starting price from 206,900 yuan (\$29,270), offers two battery packs of 60 kilowatt-hours and 85 kWh, which can run 555 kilometers and 730 km, respectively on one charge. If customers opt to rent the battery, the model's price starts at 149,900 yuan, with a monthly battery rental fee starting at 599 yuan.

As a family SUV, the L60 measures 4,828 millimeters in length with a 2,950-mm wheelbase. It fea-

tures a 52-liter fridge and offers ample storage space.

Relying on Nio's 10 years of technological expertise, the Onvo L60 features a 900-volt architecture and the SkyOS intelligent operating system.

The model achieves a class-leading energy consumption of 12.1 kWh per 100 km. It accelerates from 0 to 100 km per hour in 4.6 seconds, with a drag coefficient of 0.229.

Similar to Nio's models, the L60's battery can be swapped with a new one in three minutes and also charged for 200 km in 10 minutes.



LIFE



Kunqu Opera actor Yu Jiulin and actress Shen Pengying, who play hero Liu Mengmei and heroine Du Linjiang in the youth version of *The Peony Pavilion*, at Peking University on Sept 16, with performers of the Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theater of Jiangsu. **Below:** Chinese-American writer Pai Hsien-yung and the performers greet the audience after the show. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

In Peking University Hall on Sept 13, an air of reflective nostalgia and vibrant enthusiasm enveloped a lecture by Pai Hsien-yung, a distinguished Chinese-American writer, playwright and director.

Pai, 87, a pivotal figure in modern Chinese literature and theater, took the stage to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the youth edition of the Kunqu Opera, *The Peony Pavilion*, which he produced and adapted. This adaptation of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) classic, originally penned by Tang Xianzu, has been instrumental in bridging the gap between Kunqu Opera and contemporary youth culture. The lecture not only commemorated two decades of artistic endeavor but also highlighted the enduring relevance of this timeless tale.

Pai's lecture also opened the latest performances of the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*, which was staged for three days at Peking University from Sept 14 to 16. About 6,000 tickets were sold.

"Time flies. It's been 20 years since we premiered the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*. I am back here today, sharing this production with young people, just like what we did two decades ago," Pai says. "I am a writer and I never expected that my life would be associated with Kunqu Opera closely for such a long time. I consider myself a volunteer in protecting and promoting the ancient art form, which is so sophisticated and beautiful that it would be a great regret if we didn't keep it alive and let it be appreciated by a wider audience."

One of the oldest traditional opera forms still performed in China, Kunqu Opera was born in the region of Kunshan in today's Suzhou, Jiangsu province. It has distinguished itself by the virtuosity of its rhythmic patterns and exerted a dominant influence on other recent forms of opera in China, such as Peking Opera, which is over 200 years old. It is hence known as the mother of all Chinese operas.

Combining songs performed in the Suzhou dialect, graceful body movements, martial arts and dance, Kunqu Opera uses a great variety of gestures to express specific emotions.

For Pai, there is a reason why Kunshan was the birthplace of Kunqu Opera. "It's just like Western opera was born in Italy because the Italian language is rhythmic. Kunqu Opera was born in Kunshan because of the local dialect's musicality and expressiveness," he says.

In 2008, UNESCO inscribed Kunqu Opera on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (originally proclaimed in 2001). This recognition put Kunqu Opera in the international spotlight at the same time as it began to experience a domestic revival. The youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion* was the fruit of a collaboration between the Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theater of Jiangsu and Pai. Premiering in Taipei in 2004 and staged at Peking University in 2005, the production has been considered a major contributor to the development and revival of the art form.

With more than 500 performances across the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as in countries such as Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States, it has been watched by a combined worldwide audience of about 800,000. The shows were also staged at more than 40 Chinese universities at that time, which allowed Kunqu Opera to witness a surge in popularity, especially among young people.

In 2006, 2009 and 2016, the production returned to Peking University with shows and workshops. In 2009, appealing to the rising number of Kunqu Opera lovers, Pai, along with the university, initiated and launched a project, Inheritance Program of Kunqu Opera, to train young amateur fans. The school also launched an elective course on the art form, which, according to Peng Feng, dean of the university's School of Arts, is one of its most popular courses among students.

Born in Guilin, South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Pai moved to Shanghai with his family during wartime and later settled in Taiwan. He recalls that his enthusiasm for the art form started at the age of 9 when he watched a performance by Peking Opera masters Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) and Yu Zhenfei (1902-93) in Shanghai in 1946.

"I can still remember that performance, an excerpt, *The Interrupted Dream*, from *The Peony Pavilion*, that is still widely performed today. Because of the two Peking Opera artists' fame, tickets sold out fast and the audience was excited," Pai says.

Kunqu Opera is a hard act to follow

Art form steeped in tradition and culture enjoys a growing appeal, **Chen Nan** reports.

"People had been looking forward to Mei's return and the show was phenomenal," Pai adds. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Mei, who specialized in *nandan* (man performing female roles), stopped performing for eight years, refusing to entertain the invaders and growing a moustache to show his determination. *Nandan* roles are a practice forged in feudal times when women were forbidden to take the stage.

Pai as a child didn't understand what Kunqu Opera was all about; he was only impressed by the art form's beauty and the warm feedback of the audience. Gaining his degree in English literature from a local university and his master's degree in literary theory and creative writing at the University of Iowa, Pai became a professor of Chinese literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and lived there for over three decades until his retirement in 1994. His many works include *Taipei People* and *New Yorkers*.

It was in 2002, when Pai was invited to give a lecture on Kunqu Opera in Hong Kong, that he was inspired to produce the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*. Kunqu Opera faced a great challenge back then from modern life, and few people went to theaters to watch the old art form. "I wanted to let young people enjoy the beauty of Kunqu Opera. I wanted to build up a profound dialogue between the past and the present," Pai says.

For his lecture in Hong Kong, Pai not only narrated the history and cultural significance of Kunqu Opera but also had young performers display the singing and movements of *The Peony Pavilion*, an innovation that was widely praised by the students.

The original play, known for its intricate portrayal of love and longing, was a cornerstone of Chinese literature and drama. A beautiful young woman named Du Linjiang falls in love with Liu Mengmei, a handsome scholar she meets in her dream. She wakes up and finds that her longing for the man is so strong that it gradually causes her to fall ill and die. After her death, she persuades the judge of the underworld to grant her permission to return as a ghost to find him. She eventually finds Liu, who is temporarily staying at her family temple where she is buried. Their powerful love brings Du back to life, and they live happily ever after.

"*The Peony Pavilion* is just like William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which is timeless and embraced by different cultures. The difference is that Chinese people love a happy ending, so the couple conquered death and reunited," Pai says.

His version was specifically tailored to resonate with a younger audience, infusing the classic narrative with elements that appeal to modern sensibilities while preserving its historical essence. He invited Kunqu Opera actor Yu Jiulin and actress Shen Pengying to play the roles of Liu and Du, both in their 20s in 2004, similar in age as the targeted audiences.

The original version tells the story in 55 acts, spanning eight hours in total. To appeal to the contemporary audience, Pai narrowed it down to 27 acts.

Pai talked about the personal stories he encountered from audience members over the years, especially the exciting moments when the production toured four universities in the US in 2006. "We toured the US for a month. I was worried about the response of the audiences, whether they would be able to enjoy the old Chinese art form. To my surprise, our tickets sold out and our performances received long standing ovations," Pai says.

"For many, both the Chinese and Western audiences, the play was a gateway to discovering the complexities and beauty of Kunqu Opera, while for others, especially our creative team members and our then young performers, it was a profound reminder of the timeless nature of the story and the everlasting appeal of Kunqu Opera."

According to Weng Guosheng, one of the directors of the youth edition of *The Peony Pavilion*, Pai's adaptation took bold steps to modernize the presentation of the play, incorporating innovative staging techniques, contemporary music elements, and a focus on themes that speak directly to today's youth. "Pai's approach was both respectful and revolutionary, maintaining the soul of the original, while introducing new dimensions to enhance its appeal to younger generations," Weng says.

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What's on

Shimmers of bronze

Around 19th century BC, China entered an age in which bronze ware played a significant role in the material and spiritual lives of society. This era lasted for about 15 centuries. It witnessed a variety of elaborately patterned bronze vessels and apparatuses being produced, of which the shapes, inscriptions and pictorial motifs embodied the clues of the early stages of Chinese civilization.

Home to a collection of such fine, well-preserved bronzes, the Nation-

al Museum of China is touring Macao with selected samples, titled *The Splendor of Chinese Bronzes*, through November at the Macao Museum of Art.

The objects on show, used for ceremonial purposes, banquets and wars, display beautiful silhouettes, the imaginative power behind vibrant decorative patterns and well-developed smelting and sculpting techniques of the time. It shows how these elements related to the political and social systems.



10 am-7 pm, closed on Mondays. Avenue Xian Xing Hai, Macao Special Administration Region. 853-8791-9814.

Xinjiang pottery

The formation of trade routes along the ancient Silk Road motivated cultural exchanges in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which once provided well-navigated paths for traders from the East and the West. The booming communication at the crossroads of different

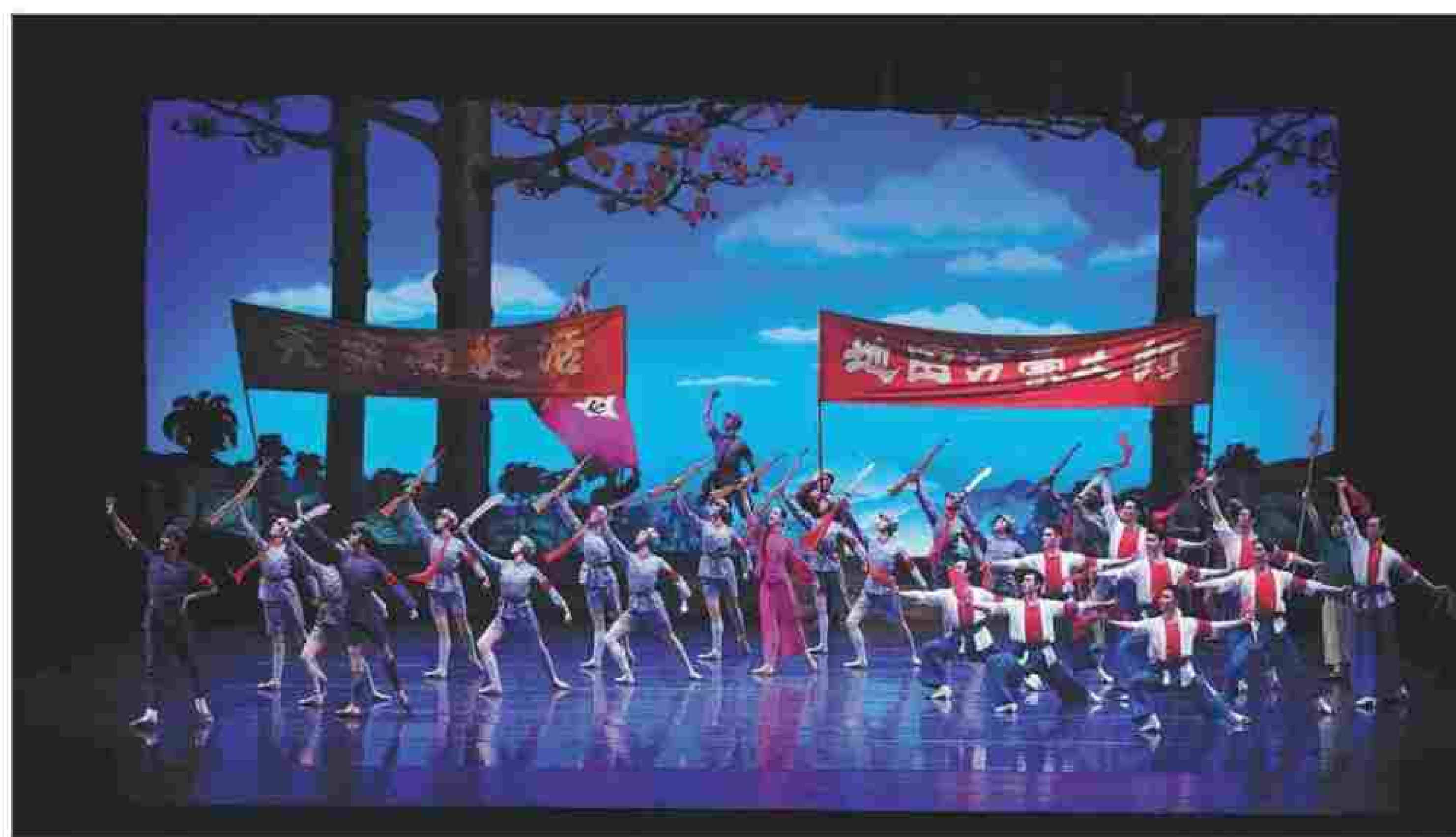
cultures inspired pottery production in the region, a tradition passed down to this day.

The Chinese Traditional Culture Museum is looking back at the evolution of pottery making in Xinjiang with an exhibition that gathers images, videos and potteries made by inheritors of the technique. The simple silhouettes of the objects and primitive beauty of the patterns depicting flowers, plants, and animals together reenact the booming scenarios of the Silk Road centuries back.



The exhibition runs until Nov 24. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 16 Hujing East Road, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-8799-1766/1866.

LIFE



Left: A scene from the Chinese ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* by the National Ballet of China. Right: Principal ballerina Qiu Yunting plays the lead role of Wu Qionghua. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A new generation's take on an old classic

Red Detachment still entralls audiences and wins fans 60 years after it was first performed, **Chen Nan** reports.

The air vibrates with the rhythmic sound of ballet shoes on the floor, as the young dancers focus intently on their breathing and movements. Here, in the rehearsal room at the National Ballet of China, they are busy with intense preparations for *The Red Detachment of Women*, which celebrates the 60th anniversary of its premiere with 10 performances that end on Thursday.

Since its premiere on Sept. 26, 1964, China's first ballet has transcended the realm of dance to become a cultural icon, and a powerful symbol of the country's artistic evolution. Over the past 60 years, the ballet has not only told its poignant story, but also inspired audiences with its representations of perseverance and national pride.

It is known in the US as the ballet performed for former president Richard Nixon during his visit to China in 1972.

This anniversary season, the production is touring nationwide, with 60 shows planned by the end of this year. In Beijing, the National Ballet of China put on a star-studded show with the likes of principal dancers Qiu Yunting and Ma Xiaodong and for the first time, students from the company's ballet school will also participate as a showcase of the troupe's collective strength and new generation of talent.

Additionally, esteemed ballet dancers, who have played leading roles in the classic production, such as Wang Caijun, Zhang Jian, and Wang Qimin, will grace the stage, adding depth and continuity to the celebrated work.

Under music director and chief conductor Zhang Yi, the national

ballet's symphony orchestra will provide powerful live accompaniment, permitting the audience to reexperience beloved melodies.

"*The Red Detachment of Women* is a milestone in Chinese ballet, a testament to the collective creativity of New China's artists. It has inspired generations and garnered global acclaim. Our mission is to preserve and renew this classic, ensuring that its emotional and artistic power remains ever-vibrant," says Feng Ying, artistic director and the head of the National Ballet of China, which was founded in 1959, 10 years after the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Based on a 1961 film of the same name, *The Red Detachment of Women* tells the story of a rural girl, Wu Qionghua, who escapes a life of slavery and joins an all-female Communist Party army battalion led by commander Hong Changqing on Hainan Island during the civil war in the early 1930s.

Feng, a renowned ballerina, can still recall the first time she played Wu. It was May 23, 1992, when *The Red Detachment of Women* was being restaged after a 10-year gap.

"The first ballerina to play Wu Qionghua was Bai Shuxiang, and she set a high standard for those who followed her in the role. *The Red Detachment of Women* is a Chinese story and incorporates a range of dance elements including classical Chinese dance movements, as well as movements borrowed from martial arts and Chinese operas," says Feng, who is known for playing the lead in Western ballets like *Swan Lake*, *Giselle* and *Don Quixote*.

"I was very lucky to be trained by the established ballet dancers and artists who created *The Red Detachment of Women*, such as choreogra-



Left top and above: Dancers of the National Ballet of China rehearse *The Red Detachment of Women* in Beijing. Right: Feng Ying, artistic director and the head of the National Ballet of China, coaches ballerina Qiu Yunting.

pher Li Chengxiang," says Feng. "The ballet plays a crucial role in training new generations of dancers, instilling in them the techniques, expressions and cultural narratives that are integral to the company's heritage."

Feng says that to better understand and portray the female soldiers, the creative team and cast members received military training, allowing them to observe and experience women soldiers in person. "The dancers took off their ballet shoes and put on army boots. They received strict training just like soldiers," says Feng, adding

that they also traveled to Hainan, where the story takes place.

Zhang Jian has played Wu many times. The former principal ballerina and the deputy director of the national ballet will return to the stage to reprise the role for the latest celebration.

"Ever since I joined the company, I wanted to play Wu Qionghua, a woman who is fearless and brave, battling a miserable fate. In 2002, I was proud to be able to fulfill that wish," says the dancer, who began to train at the age of 9 and graduated from Beijing Dance Academy in 1996. "The ballet embodies the rev-

olutionary spirit and patriotic fervor of its time, and celebrates the resilience and bravery of the Red Army's female soldiers, which resonates deeply with national identity and memory. It represents the artistic innovation of early Chinese ballet, blending Western techniques with Chinese themes and storytelling, setting a precedent for future works in the genre."

Feng says that *The Red Detachment of Women* is still evolving, as a new generation of dancers performs the piece. One is the current principal ballerina of the company, 29-year-old Qiu Yunting, who will

also be part of the celebration, and will play Wu.

"Though the story is far removed from my life, my main inspiration comes from the black-and-white movie, and the experiences passed down by veteran dancers. Wu Qionghua is like a role model for today's young people, as they fight for their future. She's full of positive attitude and energy," says Qiu.

In addition to Wu, the ballet tells the story of Hong, a key character who is a revolutionary leader and a dedicated Communist, and who plays a pivotal role in supporting Wu and leading the fight against oppressive forces in the story. He embodies ideals of resistance and dedication to the cause of revolution, and is generally played by senior ballet dancers like Wang Caijun and Ma Xiaodong, the latter being the company's principal male dancer.

"I have toured with this classic nationwide and abroad. The warm feedback from the audience proves that it is still as relevant and popular as ever," says Ma, adding that many young people are coming to watch the performance, and have been inspired to learn more about history and China's martyrs.

Ma grew up by watching superhero movies like many young Chinese. When he saw the film version of *The Red Detachment of Women*, he was intrigued by Hong, a hero who rescues Wu Qionghua and is captured and killed by the enemy.

"I grew up in a totally different world compared to Wu and Hong. In playing the role of Hong, I have fulfilled my wish to be a hero onstage," Ma adds.

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Cai Guo-Qiang's big bang of art, science and AI

By **RENALI** in Los Angeles
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When art meets science, the result can be explosive and revolutionary.

This fusion lies at the heart of *Cai Guo-Qiang: A Material Odyssey*, an exhibition currently on at the University of Southern California Pacific Asia Museum, which runs until next June.

The exhibition goes beyond the traditional gallery format, merging art with chemistry, physics and artificial intelligence to display the pioneering work of contemporary artist Cai Guo-Qiang, who uses gunpowder in his creations.

"Cai's work is a masterful demonstration of how art and science can converge to create something entirely new," Bethany Montagano, director of USC Museums, told reporters at a preview event on Sept. 13.

"We are excited to host this transformative exhibition, which not only celebrates Cai's

innovative use of gunpowder, but also highlights the important research and collaboration happening at the intersection of art, science and AI," she says.

A Material Odyssey features a series of gunpowder test pieces produced for the Getty Research Institute to study.

The 67-year-old was born in Quanzhou, Fujian province, and trained in stage design at the Shanghai Theatre Academy in the early 1980s. From December 1986 to September 1995, he worked in Japan and has lived and worked in New York since then.

Best known for his use of gunpowder in intricate paintings, drawings and large-scale pyrotechnic performances, Cai has spent decades pushing the boundaries of art by incorporating volatile materials into his creative process.

These materials have been central to his philosophy and creative practice, symbolizing both destruction and creation.

"I am often inspired by the calmness and the natural strength manifested in the work after the vibrant colors fade. Changes in the gunpowder bring about uncontrollability and unpredictability, which is what makes working with gunpowder so fascinating. The change itself is part of my work," Cai says.

According to Rachel Rivenc, lead curator and head of Conservation and Preservation at the Getty Research Institute, *A Material Odyssey* highlights something rarely seen in exhibitions: science as a tool for understanding artistic techniques, and presents imagery that explores the molecular behavior of gunpowder, and its evolution as an artistic medium in the artist's hands.

"Cai has embraced the use of gunpowder because he wanted to relinquish control over the creative process. No matter how precisely a gunpowder drawing is planned, the results are still unpredictable," Rivenc says.

"The awe-inspiring nature of Cai Guo-Qiang's work embodies many of the values we hold dear at our museum," says Rebecca Hall, USC PAM curator. "His gunpowder drawings and paintings, when presented alongside the museum's permanent collection and housed in this historic building, remind us that as we push the boundaries of art and science, we remain deeply connected to the wisdom and creativity of the past."

The event serves as a companion to the artist's latest project, *WE ARE: Explosion Event for PST ART*, which lit up the skies above the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Sept. 15. Integrating AI-driven choreography with fireworks, drones and data science, the free daytime performance commissioned by Getty launched PST ART's new theme, Art & Science Collide, in a spectacular fashion.

"Today, with the rapid rise of technologies like AI, culture and the arts often seem powerless. I



A visitor takes a photo of the exhibition during the preview event for *Cai Guo-Qiang: A Material Odyssey* on Sept. 13 at the USC Pacific Asia Museum. RENALI / CHINA DAILY

hope *WE ARE* will serve as a monumental gesture of how the art world can merge the virtual and real in this new AI-driven era, while also standing as a strong voice and decisive action in these turbulent times," says Cai, who has been researching

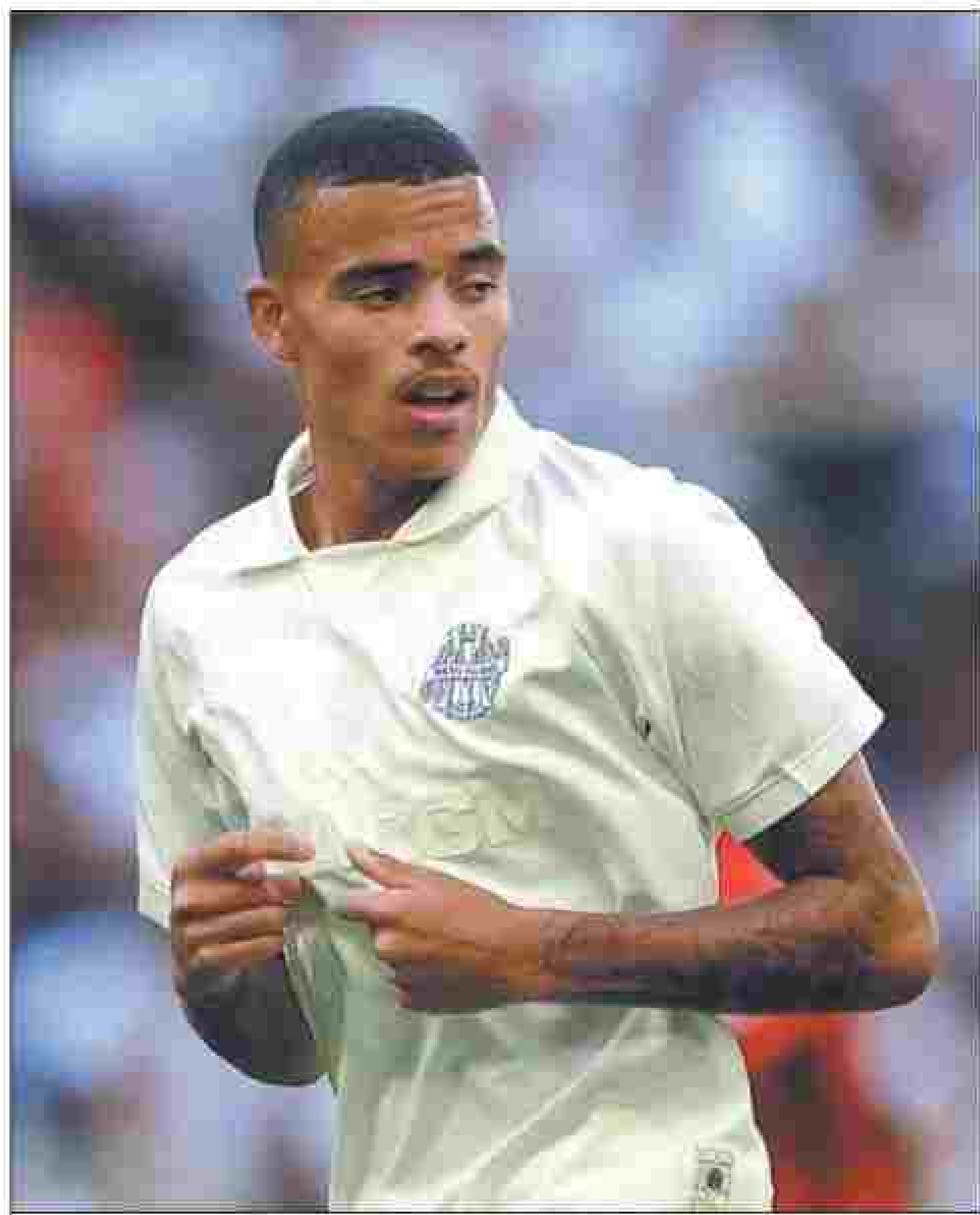
AI since 2017. The event was one of the first large-scale daytime fireworks display in the US to incorporate drone formations equipped with pyrotechnic devices, according to Katherine Fleming, president and CEO of the J Paul Getty Trust.

SPORTS

SOCCER

New recruits raise hopes of a resurgence

Shrewd acquisitions by Olympique Marseille have contributed to the club's unbeaten start to the season



From left: Marseille's new recruits, which include controversial English forward Mason Greenwood, France midfielder Adrien Rabiot and Denmark defensive midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg, have ignited hopes of a sustained title challenge among the club's demanding fan base. REUTERS

Olympique Marseille's promising start to the French league season has given its demanding fans hope of a sustained title challenge. Under new coach Roberto De Zerbi, Marseille's revamped squad is in second place behind leader Paris Saint-Germain and scoring freely, with many attributing the impressive early performances to a well-planned recruitment strategy. The signings have been shrewd, although not to everyone's liking. The most talked-about was Mason Greenwood.

During his loan spell at Getafe last season, the Spanish club filed a complaint after Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham allegedly called Greenwood a "rapist" during a game. The case was dropped in 2023. However, since joining Marseille, it's Greenwood's playing that has made the headlines, and he is currently the league's top scorer with five goals in four league matches. Marseille is still unbeaten and, with 12 goals, has the second-best tally behind PSG's 16. Another major coup was the acquisition of Adrien Rabiot from Italian giant Juventus last week. The dynamic France midfielder, who made his name at PSG, brings big-game experience and versatility.

He was a free agent after declining to extend his contract with the Turin side. Aged 29, Rabiot could emerge as a key player if Marseille pushes for the title. He brings invaluable leadership qualities to a young-looking team, having won six French titles with PSG and one Italian Serie A crown with Juventus. Rabiot made more than 200 appearances for Juve and has 48 caps for France, scoring for Les Bleus at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. He remains a first-team regular under national coach Didier Deschamps. Rabiot, who grew up in the suburbs of Paris and came through PSG's youth academy, was once a fan favorite in the French capital. However, his move to Juventus in 2019,

after a falling out with the club, left PSG supporters with a bitter taste in their mouths. Now that he's joined their fierce rival, Marseille, it has only added to the animosity. Marseille also bolstered its squad with several players boasting English Premier League experience. Forwards Neal Maupay, winger Jonathan Rowe and powerful midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg have all joined, adding depth and energy. Hojbjerg has made an immediate impact, providing stability in midfield, and should form an impressive partnership with Rabiot. The Denmark international's energetic style — honed from more than 250 Premier League games with Southampton and Tottenham — fits

seamlessly into De Zerbi's high-intensity, fast-paced style of play. Maupay burst onto the scene as a powerful 16-year-old with French side Nice, where he stood out for a remarkable ability to play with his back to goal at such a young age. The bustling forward then made a name — and some would argue a feisty reputation — with Brighton in the Premier League. At 28, he is entering his prime years. Likewise Hojbjerg, who is 29. De Zerbi brings with him experience of a highly competitive, demanding and scrutinized Premier League, where he impressed with his tactical innovation. Marseille's ability to sign him should not be understated since big European clubs — including Liver-

pool, when it was seeking a replacement for Jurgen Klopp — were reportedly looking at him. With no European competition this season, Marseille can fully focus on ending its long French title drought, which stretches back to 2010. To win a 10th league crown, however, Marseille may have to beat PSG. That isn't as unrealistic a prospect this season as it may have been in years past, as the capital club is still coming to terms with the departure of leading scorer Kylian Mbappe. The pair face off for the first time this season on Oct 27 at Marseille's Stade Velodrome.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Friendly kickabout bolsters ties among China-Africa youth



Young Africans and Chinese students compete in a friendly soccer match in Beijing on Saturday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By SONG PING and ZHANG ZHOUXIANG

African diplomats, their children, and Chinese teachers and students all enjoyed a friendly soccer match, that both sides believe will deepen China-Africa cooperation by forging connections among the next generation. Co-hosted by China Foreign Affairs University, the Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Sports, the match was held at the Beijing No 12 High School on Saturday, following the conclusion of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

divided into two categories based on age: the youth group, featuring children of African diplomats and students of Beijing No 12 High School, and the adult group, with African diplomats and African students studying in China competing against teachers from the school. Kouakou Koffi Lambert, leader of the African Dream Team, a group that attended the soccer match, noted the power of soccer to foster connections. "Football is a collective sport that allows us to meet and get to know each other," he said. The African Dream Team began its journey around China in 1996. Abdoul Kadir, who is in charge of consular affairs at the Cameroonian embassy to China, and a member of the African Dream Team, added that soccer helps strengthen cooperation not only between African countries, but also with their

Chinese counterparts.

Qiu Xianming, a counselor in the Department of African Affairs at China's Foreign Ministry, said that the youth is important in shaping the future of China-Africa relations, and sports and cultural exchanges help bring the people of both regions closer together.

Ehui Brou Bernard, a PhD student from Cote d'Ivoire at Beihang University who participated in the adult group at the soccer match, said they have a school team, and that he plays soccer with his Chinese friends a lot.

Zhou Qingjie, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University, stressed the need for more sporting exchanges between schools in China and Africa to enhance both cooperation and the quality of sports education.

Zhang Xijun, a freshman from Capital University of Physical Education and Sports, who also participated in the adult match, said the experience with foreign players encouraged him to exercise more, and he looked forward to more opportunities to engage with his international peers.

Arnaud Pambou, the cultural counselor of the Gabonese embassy to China, said the match was more about the process than the result, with both teams well-prepared for the day.

Besides the match, African and Chinese youths also collaborated on a scroll painting. Antonio Serifo Embalo, ambassador of Guinea-Bissau to China, said these activities helped deepen communication and understanding between the youth of both regions, paving the way for further exchanges and cooperation.

They won't have to wait long. During the Beijing Summit of FOCAC, 2026 has been designated as "the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges".

Lu Tianyue contributed to this story.

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Vinicius entrance helps unlock stubborn Espanyol defense

BARCELONA — Vinicius Junior made a decisive impact from the bench to help a "much faster" Real Madrid post a come-from-behind 4-1 win over Espanyol on Saturday, leaving it just a point adrift of La Liga leader Barcelona.

After struggling to find its best form so far this season, coach Carlo Ancelotti praised his team's victory, even though it took its time to crystallize against the determined Catalans.

Brazil star Vinicius started on the bench, but created a goal for Rodrygo before scoring himself to complete Madrid's turnaround, after a Thibaut Courtois own goal gifted the visitor the lead early in the second half.

Dani Carvajal leveled for Madrid soon afterwards, before Vinicius took the reins, with Kylian Mbappe adding a late penalty to score in his fourth consecutive game for the club.

"I thought it was a good game, (the players) reacted well after Espanyol's goal, we played much better, having more chances and I am happy," Ancelotti told reporters.

Madrid has not been at its most fluent, but this was a cut above its recent displays and the Italian was impressed.

"We played much faster, touching the ball quicker up front, with some better movement," noted Ancelotti. "Mobility is a very important weapon. Bit by bit we're returning to our best version."

The comprehensive victory was Madrid's 38th consecutive La Liga game without defeat, its last loss in the competition coming just under a year ago, against Atletico Madrid in September 2023.

"That says a lot, not losing games in so many weeks is really nice, but we have to continue," said Madrid captain Luka Modric.

"It's quality, character, commit-



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe (No 9) celebrates with his teammate Vinicius Jr after scoring a penalty against Espanyol on Saturday. REUTERS

ment from the team, everyone is ready when called on. Those are the key factors." Madrid had a stranglehold on the first half without being able to make the breakthrough, with Mbappe heavily involved, hunting for his sixth goal of the season across all competitions. Espanyol goalkeeper Joan Garcia made a fine save at his near post to thwart the France captain's effort from a tight angle, among other stops. Increasingly frustrated, Mbappe was booked for protesting against a

decision called against him. Madrid has been able to score just one first-half goal in eight matches this season, but on this occasion it was racking up the chances.

Carlos Romero came close for the promoted visitor early in the second period with a strike that flew off target, but it was mostly one-way traffic from Los Blancos.

Madrid was therefore stunned when the visitor took the lead in the 54th minute, with Courtois clumsily deflecting Jofre Carreras' cross into his own net.

Stylish comeback

Ancelotti sent on Vinicius immediately afterward, but it was Carvajal who leveled four minutes later, tapping home on the line after Jude Bellingham's cross squirmed away from the previously flawless Garcia.

Espanyol's resistance crumbled, and Vinicius produced a sublime cross with the outside of his boot to tee up Rodrygo for the second.

Mbappe unselfishly slipped Vinicius through on goal to tuck home the third, before the former Paris-Saint Germain star dispatched a late penalty himself to complete a sizeable victory.

It was Mbappe's fourth La Liga goal of the season, pulling him level with Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski as top scorer.

It was Endrick who won the penalty, when he burst into the box and was dragged down by Romero.

Ancelotti said he had to be "unfair" to the 18-year-old Brazil striker, who is yet to start for the club.

"It's unfair because, on one hand, he's training very well, but on the other, we have Rodrygo, Mbappe and Vinicius up front. You have to be a bit patient," he said.

AFP

SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Cui Yongxi participates in a sprint drill during the 2024 G League Elite Camp on May 11 in Chicago, GETTY IMAGES

By SUN XIAOCHEN

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Undrafted, but undaunted — China's latest NBA prospect Cui Yongxi is taking a leap of faith as he vows to make the best out of a marginal role with the Brooklyn Nets to realize his NBA dream.

Six years since the NBA last saw a Chinese player in action, the world's No 1 league is likely to soon see another talent — the seventh so far — from its biggest overseas market shine on the big stage, after the Nets, owned by Joe Tsai, chairman of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, signed Cui to a two-way contract as part of the franchise's preseason recruitment.

The signing, announced by the Nets on Friday, has left the majority of Chinese fans stoked about having another of their own to cheer for in the NBA, six years after Houston Rockets' 2016 second-round draft pick Zhou Qi played his final NBA game in October 2018.

Cui, a 21-year-old versatile swingman, went undrafted this summer, though, after training in the United States since completing his second season in the Chinese Basketball Association with Guangzhou Loong Lions in April.

Despite being given the cold shoulder at the 2024 NBA Draft, Cui chose to stay in the States to work out at trials with six different NBA teams, including Brooklyn, before he played in the Summer League, representing the Portland Trail Blazers on an Exhibit 10 contract.

A busy offseason has seen the CBA's Rookie of the Year (2022-23) grow stronger and sharper, eventually helping him get a foot in the door of the NBA.

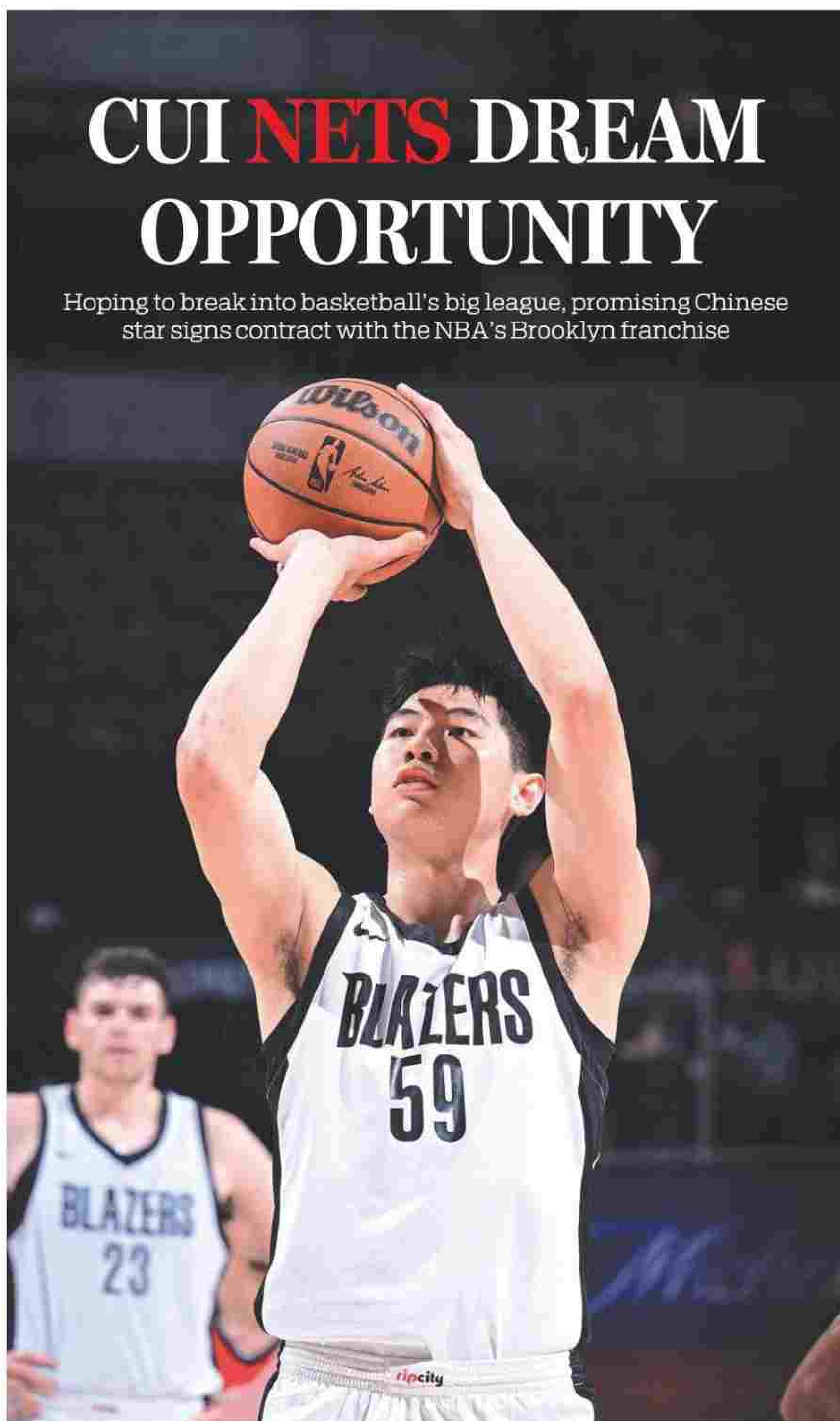
Cui, known as "Jacky" abroad, remains humble, though, opting to focus on his evolution in the G League with the Long Island Nets first.

"First and foremost, I am looking forward to improving myself in the development league, hopefully I can turn some heads," Cui, a Chinese national team starter at last summer's FIBA World Cup, said during an online interview with Chinese media on Saturday.

"Then I will fight from there for a chance to earn a call-up to the NBA. I am excited, but I know the gap is there, and I have a lot of catching-up to do."

"I also expect that there will be more young players of my age in China coming out of the country to try to play at the next level overseas."

"This is the only way to raise the level of the national team collectively, so that we have a shot at returning to the Olympics



Cui Yongxi, playing for the Portland Trail Blazers during this year's NBA's Summer League, shoots a free throw during a game on July 16 at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. GETTY IMAGES

through the next World Cup," said Cui, who made his international debut during Team China's disappointing FIBA World Cup campaign last summer in Manila.

With a two-way contract confirmed, Cui

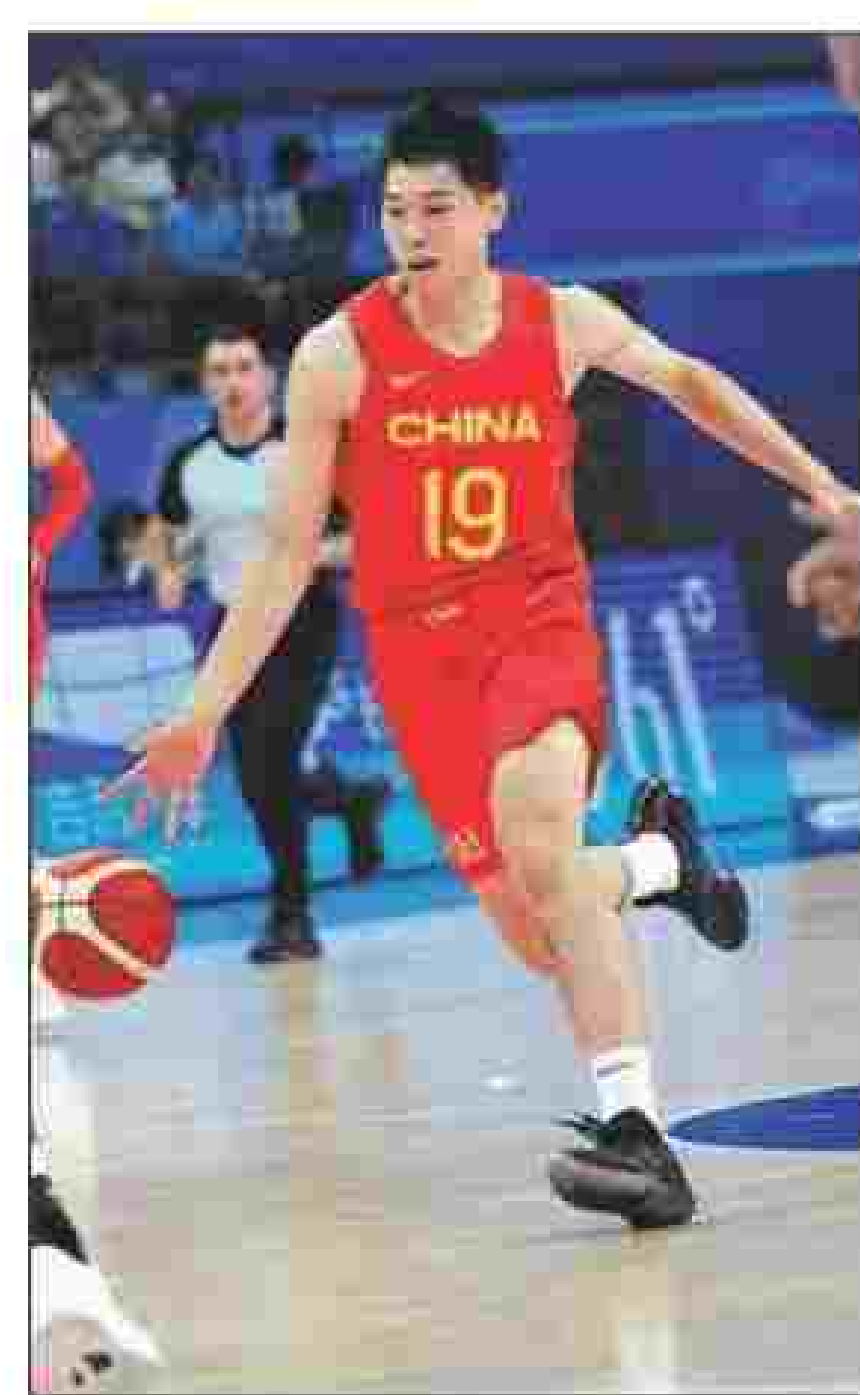
will split a full regular season between the G League and the NBA, should Brooklyn call him up from its Long Island affiliate on temporary basis. He is eligible to be active for up to 50 regular-season games in the NBA and

will earn a modest wage in his first year, equal to half of the minimum annual salary in the NBA, which is estimated at about \$578,000 before tax.

As one of the most sought-after rising

CUI NETS DREAM OPPORTUNITY

Hoping to break into basketball's big league, promising Chinese star signs contract with the NBA's Brooklyn franchise



Cui Yongxi hopes to be able to bring his NBA experience to the national team in the future. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

stars in the CBA, Cui could have expected to land a max-salary contract worth 6 million yuan (over \$850,000) a year if he chose to stay in the domestic league.

"That was never on my mind," Cui said.

"It's good enough for me to be able to play at such a high level. Money was never a concern for me. I only care about elevating my game to meet the requirement in the NBA, starting with the G League."

Standing 1.99-meters tall, with a long arm span and exceptional athleticism, the versatile forward/guard has proved he's got huge potential to be an all-rounder that adapts well to the modern game by making it into the CBA's first-team selection in just his second year. He averaged 15.8 points, 5.9 rebounds, 3.1 assists and 1.6 steals on 36.5 percent shooting from 3-point range in 56 games with the Loong Lions.

Before the draft, in May Cui was invited to the NBA G League Elite Camp in Chicago along with 44 other draft prospects, where he averaged 4.5 points and 1.5 assists in two scrimmages, and registered a max vertical of 35.5 inches in the strength and agility tests.

Later in the Summer League, Cui totaled nine points in nearly 22 minutes representing Portland across three appearances in Las Vegas, showing quite an impressive efficiency as a typical "3&D", a standard role player in the league who's good at shooting open threes and playing defense.

"He's very physical. He plays with such a great spirit. When he comes to the game, he lifts us up," Jonah Herscu, coach of Portland's Summer League team, said in a four-episode docuseries about Cui's summer produced by Tencent.

"As he continues to grow as a player, he will get more comfortable at many positions on the court. He's such a great kid, he's always about the team. He is a joy to coach."

Cui's arrival in the league has been welcomed by a group of NBA stars, including his national teammate Kyle Anderson, China's first naturalized basketball player courtesy of his maternal great-grandfather, and the Memphis Grizzlies star guard Ja Morant, who congratulated him on his signing on multiple social media platforms.

Golden State Warriors' forward Anderson, who now goes by the name "Li Kaier" in China, retweeted the Nets announcement on Friday and commented "hot pot on u Jacky Cui".

"I think he's good enough to play in our league," Anderson said during an earlier interview before the draft. "He has a real shot right now. The most important thing is for him to have fun. He's already put the work in, he works really hard. So just have fun and go do it. We all know he can do it."

BOXING

'Gladiator' Dubois destroys Joshua, landing brutal 5th-round KO

LONDON — Daniel Dubois is no longer an accidental world heavyweight champion.

With a brutal fifth-round knockout of Anthony Joshua in front of 96,000 fans at Wembley Stadium, Dubois showed he might be the real deal — and the future of boxing's marquee division.

"Are you not entertained?" Dubois roared to the crowd after dominating the all-British title fight to complete his quest to legitimize his status as a heavyweight titleholder, three months after gaining the IBF belt vacated by Oleksandr Usyk.

The 27-year-old Dubois entered the ring first — an unusual twist given he was the champion — to strengthen the feeling this was being treated as a homecoming for Joshua, the decade-long darling of British boxing who was bidding to emulate the likes of Muhammad Ali and Lennox Lewis as a three-time

heavyweight champ.

Dubois left the ring as heavyweight's next big thing, having floored Joshua in the first and third rounds before ending the fight 59 seconds into the fifth with a counter right that sent Joshua face first into the canvas.

Joshua's corner threw in the towel, but that wasn't needed. There was no coming back for a boxer whose best days look well behind him.

"This is my time, my redemption story," said Dubois, who put himself in a position to potentially fight the winner of the Dec 21 rematch between WBA, WBC and WBO champion Usyk and Tyson Fury. "I'm not going to stop until I reach my full potential."

As for the outclassed Joshua, he vowed to continue boxing after a fourth defeat over the last five years. His promoter, Eddie Hearn, said he



Anthony Joshua sprawls on the canvas after being hit by Daniel Dubois during their IBF world heavyweight title fight at Wembley Stadium, London, on Saturday. *REUTERS

wanted to exercise the rematch clause.

This was the worst of all those losses, though. Joshua was saved by the bell after the knockdowns in the first and third rounds, and put in a ragged performance throughout, with Dubois getting through his defense with ease.

Joshua never recovered from an overhead right late in the first round that knocked him down. He stuck out his tongue toward Dubois as he returned to his stool, but he was clearly hurt, disoriented and vulnerable.

The knockdown late in the third, off a big left from Dubois, dumped Joshua onto his backside through the ropes.

"I had a sharp opponent, a fast opponent," Joshua said. "But a lot of the mistakes were mine."

A British record post-war boxing crowd witnessed a changing of the guard.

Joshua has been a marketing phenomenon for the past decade, selling out stadiums across the United Kingdom and making hundreds of millions of dollars, mainly because of his punching power. He might be back, but surely not as a realistic title contender after slipping to 28-4.

Dubois (22-2, 21 KOs) is undoubtedly the future. He said after the fight that he wanted another shot at Usyk, to whom he lost in Wroclaw, Poland, last year — but only after sending the Ukrainian to the canvas with a disputed low blow from which Usyk was given time to recover.

Otherwise, there's potentially a money-spinning fight with the 36-year-old Fury in the offing.

"I'm a gladiator. I'm a warrior to the bitter end," Dubois said. "I want to go to the top level of this game."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA