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Book has different take on JFK 'magic bullet' theory

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Songwriter from Xinjiang inspired by his hometown

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XI'S VISION | THOUGHT ON CULTURE

Xi emphasizes enhancing cultural confidence, public communication

By XU WEI
xuwei@chinadaily.com.cn

Xi Jinping Thought on Culture was formally put forward at a national meeting on work related to public communication and culture, which was held in Beijing on Saturday and Sunday.

President Xi Jinping stressed the need to foster a stronger sense of cultural confidence, uphold openness and inclusiveness, and strive to break

new ground while upholding fundamental principles, in a recent instruction made for work that is related to public communication and culture.

The instruction made by Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, was conveyed at the two-day meeting in Beijing.

During the meeting, Xi Jinping Thought on Culture was put forward as part of Xi Jinping Thought on

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

In the instruction, Xi underlined new situations and tasks on the front of public communication and culture, as well as the need for fresh approaches and accomplishments, with the world undergoing major changes unseen in a century and the nation's great rejuvenation entering a crucial period.

He highlighted the need to focus on arming the Party with innovative

theories and educating the people, to continue promoting cultural prosperity, building a nation that is strong in culture, and developing modern Chinese civilization from a new historical starting point.

Xi stressed steps to enhance the Party's leadership over public communication and culture, develop a socialist ideology that has the power to unite and inspire the people, and cultivate and apply socialist core values.

It is important to carry forward Chinese cultural heritage, promote the creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture, and promote the prosperity of the cultural sector, he said.

The president reiterated the need to enhance the nation's capacity in international communication, promote exchanges and mutual learn-

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WORLD WATCH

By Irfan Shahzad Takalvi

New Delhi deceiving itself with new push on hydropower

China's Tibet autonomous region, the Himalayan wonderland, is known globally for its rich natural endowments. Abundant water resources, with their resultant hydropower potential, present one such gift of nature.

Zangnan, or southern Tibet — part of which India has illegally occupied, giving it a pseudo status and including it in so-called Arunachal Pradesh state — is no exception.

However, while the water wealth of Tibet is being harnessed, keeping in view the requirements of sustainable development and the ecological needs of future generations, the same in Zangnan remains a sorry tale of political misunderstanding and shortsightedness by New Delhi.

After decades of delays, controversies, objections and agitation, the Indian government and Zangnan's current authorities have once again joined hands to give another new push to hydropower development.

A total of 12 stalled hydroelectric projects, with a cumulative capacity of 11,517 megawatts, reportedly have been allotted to public sector undertakings, the name given to state-owned enterprises in India. Out of these, five projects totaling 2,620 MW have been assigned to North Eastern Electric Power Corp, five of 5,097 MW to Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Ltd, and the remaining two projects of 3,800 MW capacity to National Hydroelectric Power Corp. These are expected to cost about \$15 billion.

Over the years, such projects, which number a whopping 150, have faced roadblocks. Environmentalists have said these projects would be wiping away a large part of forest cover, would result in the unnatural change of course of rivers and their tributaries, could lead to an increase in flash floods, and would damage natural habitats and biodiversity.

Considering that the terrain is highly prone to landslides, experts believe that such large-scale hydro projects are a major danger not only to what is called

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Cease-fire urged in Gaza amid violence

China calls on global community to act with urgency on the Palestine question

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong and ZHOU JIN in Beijing

China and the international community have called for an end to the escalating Israel-Palestine conflict, which has left more than 900 people dead and thousands injured since Saturday.

As gunbattles raged on Sunday between Israeli forces and Hamas militants a day after the Islamist group launched a surprise attack on Israel from Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that his country was "in a state of war". He vowed to reduce to "rubble" Hamas hideouts in Gaza.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas held an emergency meeting attended by senior officials, where he emphasized the right of the Palestinian people to defend themselves against the "terror of settlers and occupation troops", Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

China said on Sunday that it is "deeply concerned" over the current escalation of violence between Palestine and Israel, and called on relevant parties to remain calm, exercise restraint and immediately end the hostilities to protect civilians.

The fundamental way out of the conflict lies in implementing the two-state solution and establishing an independent state of Palestine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

It called on the international community to act with greater urgency, step up input on the Palestine question, facilitate the early resumption of peace talks between Palestine and



Palestinians in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip search the rubble of a house that was destroyed on Sunday by Israeli strikes in retaliation for a surprise attack on Saturday by Hamas. IBRAHEEM ABU MUSTAFA / REUTERS

Israel, and find a way to bring about enduring peace.

The Arab League and some Middle East countries have expressed their sympathies over the casualties and called for an immediate cease-fire. They were joined by Indonesia, Russia and Colombia, among others. The United States, some European countries and India backed Israel.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit slammed Israel's violent policies against the Palestinians as "a time bomb," calling for an

immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

Analysts said that sustainable peace cannot be realized unless an independent state of Palestine is established, as Israeli and Palestinian rights will otherwise continue to be ignored.

Ayman Yousef, a professor of international relations at Arab American University, said the many factors that triggered this sudden escalation of tensions in Gaza include Israel's "daily killing of Palestinians in the West Bank", Israeli settlement activities in

occupied territories and Israeli settlers entering the holy mosque in Jerusalem on an almost daily basis.

Dina Yulianti Sulaeman, director of the Indonesia Center for Middle East Studies, said the complete context of the violence should be examined when not only Hamas, but also other rebel groups were joining these attacks. "International law gives the Palestinian people the right to resist. As long as the fundamental rights of the Palestinians, including independence, are not fulfilled, they

will continue to fight," she said.

Israeli military confirmed that Palestinian militants had launched nearly 3,000 rockets against Israel, and dozens of militants had infiltrated southern Israel, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Hamas claimed to have captured a number of Israeli officers and soldiers, and that they were being held in "safe places".

Contact the writers at jan@chinadailyapac.com

Memorable show lowers curtain on Asian Games

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Hangzhou
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

Amid a celebration of athletic feats, friendship and solidarity, the curtains came down on the Hangzhou Asian Games on Sunday to resounding global acclaim.

After 20 days of world-class sporting action, the 19th Asian Games bid farewell to participants in a memorable and touching ceremony at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Center Stadium on Sunday night. As Premier Li Qiang witnessed the event, the Olympic Council of Asia's acting president Raja Randhir Singh announced the Games closed.

Themed "Enduring Memories of Hangzhou", the closing ceremony kicked off with a show celebrating the reunion of Asian youths against a backdrop of surging waves projected onto a giant screen at the 80,000-seat stadium.

The track and field venue was transformed into a lush garden. Performers and volunteers danced on the "digital turf", the play of lights turning the oval-shaped lawn into a glittering color palette of sparkling images and characters.

Four moving props combined to form the word "Asia" behind the dancers, as 19 stems of osmanthus, Hangzhou's city flower, blossomed to adorn the virtual garden with a strong local flavor.

The parade of delegates then commenced to rousing cheers from the crowd, with athletes of all 45 national Olympic committees represented in Hangzhou marching into the carnival, dancing, singing and taking selfies with each other and performers.

As the biggest Asian Games in history featuring a record 12,417 athletes, the Hangzhou Asiad witnessed 15 world and 28 Asian records being set in 481 medal events, again the highest ever. Some competitions also served as Olympic qualifying events. A total of 67 Olympic qualification quotas were awarded in nine sports for next year's Paris Games.

The host delegation finished on top of the table with a whopping 383 medals, including 201 gold. China has now topped the Asiad medal tally 11 times in a row, having clinched the first position ever since the 1982 edition of the Games in India.

During the closing ceremony, two short films, documenting athletic



The digital torchbearer signs off in style on Sunday evening during the closing ceremony for the 19th Asian Games at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Center Stadium in Zhejiang province. CHENG TINGTING / XINHUA

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highlights and touching moments respectively during the Games, left spectators smiling tearfully as fond memories of the sporting achievements, the host's hospitality and most importantly the mutual respect and bonhomie among Asian neighbors overwhelmed all those in attendance.

"With unremitting efforts, we have delivered on our commitment of presenting a distinctly Chinese, uniquely Asian and spectacular Games," said Gao Zhidan, president of the Hangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee, during his speech at the ceremony. "Athletes from across Asia have strived to achieve excellence in the competition, and their passion and vitality

are the embodiments of a 'Heroic Asia,' added Gao, also president of the Chinese Olympic Committee.

Singh of the Olympic Council of Asia, said he appreciated the Chinese host's efforts in delivering a "spectacular and unforgettable" event before he declared the Games closed.

"We will never forget our time here together — the magnificent stadiums, the enthusiasm and generous support of the Chinese people and, of course, the amazing performances of our Asian athletes," said Singh, a former Olympic shooter from India.

A handover ceremony took place with Hangzhou passing on the OCA flag to Japanese prefecture Aichi and its capital city Nagoya, which will co-host the next Asian Games in 2026.

As a salute to volunteers, a projection of a memory river flew across the stage toward the end of the show, reflecting on all the hard work and thoughtful services provided by them during the Games, before welcoming them to join the athletes in the final celebration.

The giant virtual torchbearer, who lit the main flame together with Olympic champion swimmer Wang Shun at the opening ceremony, made a surprise return to the stadium amid thunderous applause from the crowd.

INSIDE

Multilateralism the way forward

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Asia's global sporting influence highlighted

By BAO DAOZU

The 19th Asian Games, which ended in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang province, on Sunday evening, attracted worldwide attention.

Despite being postponed for a year due to COVID-19 pandemic, organizers said the sporting extravaganza returned in style, with the opening ceremony and related coverage attracting a total of 503 million views.

Some 12,500 athletes from the 45 national and regional Olympic committees in Asia registered for the Hangzhou Asiad. A record of 481 gold medals in 40 sports were up for grabs, making it the biggest edition of the Games to date.

Featuring Olympic and non-Olympic sports, the Asian Games are often described as the world's second-largest multisport event after the Olympic Games, but the number of athletes taking part in Hangzhou surpassed the 11,309 competitors for the Tokyo Olympics, which were scheduled to take place in 2020, but were also postponed for a year due to the pandemic.

The Hangzhou Games coincided with the 110th anniversary of the Asian Games, giving the event particular significance.

Raja Randhir Singh, acting president of the Olympic Council of Asia, or OCA, who comes from India, said the ever-evolving Asian Games underline the growing influence of Asia on the global sporting stage.

Singh, a five-time Olympian shooter, won gold in men's trap at the 1978 Asian Games in Bangkok. During an anniversary celebration gala on the sidelines of the Hangzhou Games, he said: "The OCA prides itself on its diversity of culture throughout the continent. There is much more to the Asian Games and the OCA than elite sports competition."

The Asian Games, held every four years for athletes from across the continent, are arguably its first multisports event, first staged in 1913 in Manila, the

Philippines, and initially known as the Oriental Games, before being renamed the Far Eastern Championship Games, or FEC.

After 10 editions of the FEC held through 1934, Asian National Olympic Committees, or NOCs, started discussions at the 1948 Olympic Games in London on creating a unified multisports event for all the continent's NOCs.

These discussions led to the first Asian Games, staged in New Delhi, the Indian capital, in 1951, and featuring athletes from 11 NOCs in 12 sports. Indian IOC member Guru Dutt Sondhi was a key figure in founding the Asiad.

The Asiad was organized by the Asian Games Federation until 1982, when the federation was succeeded by the OCA, which was later recognized by the International Olympic Committee. Before the Hangzhou Games, only nine nations had hosted the Asian Games since 1951. A total of 46 NOCs have been represented at the Games, including that of Israel, which competed from 1954 to 1974.

In 2018, the Asian Games took place in Jakarta and Palembang, Indonesia, and featured all 45 NOCs that are currently part of the OCA.

Although based originally on the format for the Olympic Games, the Asian Games boast regional sports with distinct Asian characteristics, including dragon boat racing, kabaddi (a team contact sport), sepak takraw (kick volleyball) and kurash (a folk wrestling discipline).

More medals

The Hangzhou Games' 40 sports outnumbered those for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 by six, and 142 more gold medals were to be won in Hangzhou than in Tokyo three years ago.

The rising number of medal events and the ever-growing scale of the Asian Games have even triggered controversy among noted sports figures.

Wei Jizhong, OCA honorary life vice-president, said the late Juan Antonio

Samaranch, former IOC president, once criticized him for introducing too many sports for the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing.

"I told Samaranch that we wanted all Asian athletes to have the chance to get together, but not just for competition. The results are important, but they are not everything," Wei said.

Such tradition has been a feature of the Asian Games for decades.

At the 1974 Games in Teheran, Iran, fencing, gymnastics and women's basketball made their debut. Four years later, in Bangkok, archery and bowling were contested at the Games for the first time.

In Beijing in 1990, more than 6,000 athletes from 37 NOCs took part in the Games, as softball, sepak takraw, wushu, kabaddi and canoeing made their first appearances at an Asiad.

Wei, who headed the International Volleyball Federation from 2008 to 2012, said: "We are open to everyone. The Asian Games are not only for elite sportspeople."

"We found a way to add sports, especially regional ones, to give more athletes the chance of winning a medal. More than 80 percent of Asian NOCs boast medal winners."

"When athletes from developing countries win medals, their people are happy, their government is happy, and sport is supported. Sport has a high social position, so I think this policy of the OCA has been successful."

Singh, the acting OCA president, said, "The Asian Games are also a time to embrace our culture, our heritage, and to promote everything great about our continent."

He said it is important for the Games to attract young people with the addition of new, action-packed events that appeal to this audience, such as breaking (break dancing) and esports, which were both included in the Hangzhou Games.

"For young people, the Asian Games showcase the Olympic values of team-

work, dedication, respect and friendship. They let people unite to feel the value and thrill of competition and cooperation."

Zhou Jinqiang, a vice-minister of the General Administration of Sport of China, said: "The addition of new sports such as breaking and esports is welcomed by the younger generation. The sports at the Asian Games have strong Olympic elements and are a great opportunity for Asian countries and regions to display their cultures and traditions. The variety of sports at the Games is the best testimony to the inclusiveness and diversity of Asian sports culture."

Asia's regional sports are always a major attraction at the Games.

For example, kabaddi, one of the oldest sports in the world, with a 4,000-year history, was included in the main program at Hangzhou. A fast, furious and physical sport, kabaddi competitions are always great spectacles.

Another good example is sepak takraw. The sport, which has a vibrant history, is immensely popular in Southeast Asia. In 1990, sepak takraw was included in the Asian Games in Beijing. Since then, it has grown not only as a sport, but also in commercial and entertainment value.

Huge attention

Abdul Halim Bin Kader, president of the Asian SepakTakraw Federation, said: "This sport is very fashionable. Thanks to its development and promotion in recent years, a variety of regional competitions have emerged in Asia and across the world. The Asian Games in Hangzhou marked a milestone for sepak takraw."

The inclusion of breaking and esports attracted huge attention and generated a buzz among young people at the Games. Esports was included for the first time as a demonstration sport at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, with China winning two gold medals and one silver.

This year in Hangzhou, it debuted as an official medal sport, featuring seven competitions — Arena of Valor Asian

Games Version, Dota 2, Dream Three Kingdoms 2, League of Legends, PUBG Mobile Asian Games Version, Street Fighter V, and EA Sports' FIFA-branded football game. On Sept 27, China won the first gold medal in the sport by beating Malaysia in the final of the Arena of Valor Asian Games Version.

Breaking was included in the 19th Asian Games program at a meeting of the OCA General Assembly in Muscat, capital of Oman, in December 2020, following a successful appearance at the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2018, and its subsequent inclusion in the program for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

Yang Meng, a Hangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee official, said: "Breaking was added to the Games, as it is popular among young people. Through breaking, we hope more people, especially the younger generation, will be attracted to the Asian Games and sports."

Singh believes the successful Asian Games in Hangzhou will further promote the continent's ability to host major multinational sporting events.

"We are the only continent — and we should be proud of this — that has been ready to host any Games at any time, back to back," Singh said. He was referring to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in the Republic of Korea in 2018, the delayed 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics, and the Winter Olympics in Beijing last year.

"In 2029, the Winter Asian Games are due to be staged in Saudi Arabia, something that once would never have been imaginable," Singh added.

"We had one of the finest World Cups (soccer) in Qatar last year. The World Beach Games were supposed to be staged in another part of the world, but with just six months' notice, Qatar hosted them. In addition, Beijing has hosted the Summer Olympics and the Winter Olympics."

"Where does all this happen? It happens here in Asia."

TOP NEWS

Customs meet sports



Participants compete on Saturday in the Maralal International Camel Derby in Samburu County, Kenya. The 10-kilometer annual race, which sees participation by both professional and amateur riders, blends tourist enthusiasm for a traditional sport and Samburu's vibrant customs. GERALD ANDERSON / ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

COP28 president-designate praises China's lead role in green transition

By LI LEI
lilei@chinadaily.com.cn

Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, president-designate of the upcoming United Nations COP28 climate conference, praised China for its leadership role in facilitating the world's green transition and promoting renewable energy, and said he has received "overwhelming support" from the Chinese government.



Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber

Such support is crucial for making the summit a historic one with unprecedented results to be delivered, he said on Tuesday in Beijing during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"China has always been an active participant in the COP process and a strategic partner of the UAE," said Al Jaber, who is also the United Arab Emirates' special envoy for climate change and its minister of industry and advanced technology.

He made the remarks during his two-day visit to Beijing, his second

trip to China this year in the run-up to the 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Commonly known as COP28, the global climate summit will take place from Nov 30 to Dec 12 in Dubai, a constituent emirate of the UAE.

Al Jaber said that fossil fuels will continue to be harnessed to ensure global energy security despite calls to end their use. However, countries — rich or poor — must fast-track an orderly transition from oil and gas to cleaner energy sources, ranging from solar and wind to hydrogen, in order to avoid climate disasters.

"The world cannot unplug from the current energy system before we build the new energy system. Instead, we want to continue to decarbonize the oil and gas sector," he said, noting that fossil fuels cannot be eliminated even in the most progressive plan on reducing the world's carbon footprint. "Oil and gas will continue to be needed to meet global energy requirements."

Al Jaber cited the decarbonization drive targeting the conventional energy sector in the UAE — now an oil-producing country with the lowest carbon intensity — as an

example to illustrate the more "pragmatic" and "results-driven" approach that he has advocated to ensure the success of the upcoming summit.

Over the past two decades, the UAE commercialized renewable energy and made its oil industry more climate-friendly through methods such as electrifying operations and adopting carbon capture and storage technologies, he said.

"I want solutions. I don't want an alarmist approach. I want to strike a balance between passion and realism," Al Jaber said, adding that the world needs to triple renewable energy supply and bolster efficiency in the conventional energy sector to achieve a "fair, just, equitable and responsible" transition to climate-friendly energy sources.

To make this transition viable, Al Jaber said the climate finance system must be revamped so that the Global South can deliver its emission-reduction objectives.

He said he is also counting on the developed countries to deliver a promise they made in 2009 to give their developing counterparts \$100 billion a year to help fulfill green transition.

"The fact that finance has not

been made available, accessible or affordable has delayed progress ... and that's why the Paris Agreement has not been implemented in the right earnest," he said, referring to the agreement reached by world leaders in 2015 to keep global temperature increases below 1.5 C compared with preindustrial levels.

Earlier this month, the UNFCCC Secretariat released a report on the first global stocktake, which measures progress toward meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The report said the window to implement existing pledges and limit warming to 1.5 C above preindustrial levels is narrowing rapidly, and international public finance must be strategically deployed to avoid climate disasters.

Unfortunately, there has not been much progress in this regard, Al Jaber said. "We are way off track."

He said he wished to restore confidence at COP28, and use the event as a vehicle to turn rhetoric into actions and workable timelines, in the hope of successfully reducing 22 gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

This is his "north star" and the baseline requirement to keep the warming target within reach, Al Jaber said. "We should no longer be pointing fingers at anybody thinking they are the problem. Our enemy is emission," he added.

Li Menghan and Hou Liqiang contributed to this story.

Holiday buying sprees boost consumption

Experts hail signs of economic recovery, call for more measures to encourage spending

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese consumers unleashed their massive buying power during the eight-day combined Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holiday period, pushing up sales of high-quality intelligent home appliances and outdoor equipment.

Experts said this indicates the enormous vitality and resilience of the world's second-largest economy.

Highlighting that shoring up consumption is key to expanding domestic demand and bolstering economic growth, they called for more supportive measures to stabilize and expand employment, improve household incomes and further boost spending on automobiles, electronics and other big-ticket items.

Data from online discounter Pinduoduo showed that the turnover of intelligent kitchen appliances such as dishwashers surged 159 percent between Sept 29 and Friday, compared with the same period last year. Sales of household appliances such as clothes dryers and vacuum cleaners jumped 213 percent year-on-year.

Sales of mobile phones including those manufactured by Huawei, Xiaomi and Apple skyrocketed more than 50 percent year-on-year during the holiday season on Taobao, Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group's online marketplace.

In addition, travel gadgets and outdoor sports goods found increasing favor among Chinese consumers, with sales soaring 590 percent year-on-year during the eight-day break, according to online retailer Vipshop.

The turnover of running apparel jumped 153 percent year-on-year, surfing and diving equipment rose 87 percent and sunglasses increased 45 percent, Vipshop added.

The Ministry of Commerce said that in the first seven days of the holidays, sales of gold, silver and other jewelry, as well as communication equipment increased more than 10 percent year-on-year at retail enterprises monitored by the ministry, while sales of automobiles and cosmetics rose about 7 percent year-on-year.

The consumption boom during the eight-day holiday demonstrated the immense vitality and potential of China's consumer market, giving a strong boost to the country's economic recovery, said Zhang Deyong, a researcher from the National Academy of Economic Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"Consumption has become the primary engine for boosting economic growth," Zhang said, adding that the extended golden week holiday has typically been a peak season for consumption when Chinese shoppers loosened their purse strings to buy high-quality, personalized and diversified commodities at a brisk pace.

China's consumption market has witnessed rapid recovery during the

Chinese shoppers are carefully reviewing their needs, with the key focus being on the quality and value of the products they buy, as well as the feelings associated with making a purchase."

Wang Yun, a researcher at the Academy of Macroeconomic Research

eight-day break, which is the longest holiday in the year for consumers, said Wang Yun, a researcher at the Academy of Macroeconomic Research, which is affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator.

"Chinese shoppers are carefully reviewing their needs, with the key focus being on the quality and value of the products they buy, as well as the feelings associated with making a purchase," Wang said. Consumption, as a significant pillar of economic development, is expected to maintain recovery momentum, with the growth rate reaching over 7 percent this year, she added.

Consumption has emerged as a bright spot in the country's economic performance. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that retail sales, a major indicator of consumption strength, increased 7 percent year-on-year during the January-August period.

The tourism sector has also seen remarkable growth during the extended vacation period. According to Alibaba's travel platform Fliggy, orders for domestic and overseas trips over the holiday surged nearly 600 percent and more than twentyfold year-on-year, respectively.

Pan Helin, co-director of the Digital Economy and Financial Innovation Research Center at Zhejiang University's International Business School, said the robust recovery in consumer spending during the holiday is of great importance in bolstering market expectations as well as the confidence of investors and consumers.

Pan expected China's consumer market to pick up at a faster clip in the fourth quarter, fueled by the Singles Day online shopping festival in November, while calling for more stimulus policies to increase employment, spur the purchase of new energy vehicles in rural areas and promote service-related consumption.

More efforts are needed to speed up the construction of charging infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and guide charging pile operators to lower their service fees in order to stimulate the consumption of NEVs, Pan added.

Politics: Push for power projects raises questions

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Arunachal Pradesh itself, but also to downstream states, particularly Assam. Many projects still have not been given clearance in terms of environmental impact assessment.

Local communities that have been displaced or fear displacement in the future have also registered their protests and agitation on a number of occasions. Whether relevant Indian institutions will be able to arrange funds needed for the projects also remains a pressing question.

The reality is that Zangnan is not in any natural geographic harmony with Indian territory. It sits as a remote, isolated and disconnected 'state' — a state only on the map. Therefore, constructing transmission lines from project sites to population centers and economic hubs where the power generated would actually be used, if at all, also remains a perplexing proposition.

Why are New Delhi and its partners in "state"-level administration pushing at this point in time? Simply put, part of the answer lies in conventional wisdom: A growing Indian economy and a prospering

society need more electric power, much more than currently available, and any government in India has to tap all the resources and avenues available.

But India is going into the next general elections in about half a year. So the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party needs to show "progress" on a huge scale.

The country also has the objective of showcasing to the world that it is moving ahead in a big way in terms of green energy and planning for the future as a low-carbon country.

Ironically, this large-scale drive is also a tool to pinch and try to antagonize China with a message from India that "we are doing it, and we do not care what you think." This is particularly so after China's third phase of renaming rivers, mountains and towns in Zangnan, along with Beijing publishing a map with Zangnan as its legitimate territory. It should be noted that Beijing continues to tread ahead carefully, as per law and rules governing sovereignty.

In a nutshell, India's renewed push for the projects in so-called Arunachal Pradesh still has to face many ups and downs. It will not necessarily be a smooth ride.

Indian policymakers must realize that a false sense of development does not change the reality of whose territory Zangnan actually is, and where its future lies. Political gimmickry does not go far.

The author is founding president of the Eurasian Century Institute in Islamabad, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Thought: Road map for developing culture made

From page 1

ing between civilizations, and fully stimulate the creativity and vitality of the entire nation in the cultural sector.

The goal is to keep enhancing the soft power and influence of Chinese culture and provide strong ideological assurance, powerful spiritual strength and favorable cultural conditions for building a modern socialist country and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, he said.

Participants in the Beijing meeting highlighted that Xi Jinping Thought on Culture has made clear the road map and letter of assignment for the development of culture in the new era.

It marked a new height for the CPC in its level of confidence over its history and culture and will serve as a powerful spiritual weapon and scientific playbook for work related to public communication, ideology and culture in the new era and on the new journey, they said.

The meeting followed a decadelong effort from the CPC to build up the level of the nation's confidence regarding its culture and make the country more united and cohesive, as the world's second-largest economy forges ahead against various headwinds.

"We must not slacken or weaken the ideological work at any time while focusing on economic growth," Xi emphasized during a national meeting on public communication in 2013.

Han Qiang, dean of the School of Marxism at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the establishment of Marxism as the guiding position in the ideological field has charted the right direction for the nation's course of public communications, ideology and culture.

The new ideas and judgments about cultural development in the new era put forward by Xi have enriched and developed Marxist cultural theories and led to Xi Jinping Thought on Culture, he said.

"With the nation's traditional culture being revitalized, the level of cultural confidence among the people has been brought to an unprecedented level, and the unity among society has been lifted," he said.

Wang Huiyao, president of the Beijing-based think tank Center for China and Globalization, said that pooling strength from China's traditional culture, which emphasizes the value of harmony, family, education and diligence, coupled with the modern market system, will give rise to strong cohesive power and productivity in the nation.



Customers browse lipsticks on Thursday at the Haikou International Duty Free Shopping Complex in Hainan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CHINA



Fans cheer for Hunan Billows during a soccer game in the Chinese Football Association Cup that was held in Loudi, Central China's Hunan province, on June 22. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Campaign promotes healthier lifestyles

Residents of a city in Hunan province offer a microcosm of the picture nationwide. **Jiang Wei** reports.

Modern & Me China

Despite having been retired for many years, Tan Jianchang maintains a busy schedule.

As leader of a square dancing team that has more than 200 members, Tan practices for an hour twice a day, starting at 7 am and 7 pm. On Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, she teaches square dancing at a college for seniors.

Occasionally, her team takes part in square dancing competitions in their hometown of Loudi, in the central province of Hunan, and also in big cities such as Xiamen, Fujian province, Shenzhen, Guangdong province, and Hong Kong. The members have won several gold prizes.

Watching Tan dance, it's hard to believe that she is 70 years old. "I started square dancing after I retired," she said.

"Dancing and hanging out with friends make me happy every day, and I'm full of vigor now."

Tan established her square dancing team in 2013, and she is always full of pride when she talks about the members — most of whom are pensioners — and the changes that the activity has brought to their lives.

"One of my team members is more than 80 years old. She used to be sickly and lay in bed most of the time," Tan said.

"Since she joined my dancing team, her health has improved a lot. Now, she seldom gets sick, and she is grateful to me."

Varied activities

As a low-intensity form of working out, square dancing is one of the most suitable activities for seniors.

In Loudi, a city with a population of more than 4 million, there is a strong fitness theme, and many seniors enjoy dancing, tai chi, qigong and hill walking.

Members of the town's younger generation prefer sports that feature a strong social element. The growing popularity of sports that include flying discs in recent years is a perfect example.

"It's an activity where there is no physical contact. It's easy to play and a lot of fun. It helps you lose weight and get in shape," said Li Xiaolong, a flying disc enthusiast.

As the national fitness campaign gains momentum, the habit of exer-



Top: Runners take part in a half-marathon in Loudi on April 9. Above: Some of the city's residents practice square dancing routines.

cising to stay healthy has taken root and a growing number of people now consider physical exercise a key part of life.

"More than 95 percent of Loudi's residents take part in sports," said Peng Yiling, director of the Loudi Culture, Sports, Tourism, Broadcast, TV and Tourism Bureau.

"We often organize competitions to encourage residents to take part in sports. Some people join in to be with their friends, while others just love sports so they encourage their families to do them, too."

The development of a mass fitness movement in Loudi is a microcosm of the overall picture in China, where a growing number of people are enthusiastically playing sports.

"Obviously, competitive sports are a key aspect to people aspiring to athletic greatness, but the idea of sports for all is crucial to promoting truly healthy lifestyles," said Robert Rauch, president of the World Flying Disc Federation.

Government investment

Hunan has recently been investing heavily in the construction of fitness facilities to provide venues for people to exercise.

According to an action plan released by the provincial government, Hunan will invest 39 million yuan (\$5.3 million) over three years to build sports fields for rural residents and establish fitness facilities in primary and middle schools in remote areas.

It will also provide subsidies totaling 70 million yuan to stadiums so they can open to the public for free or at a low charge.

The Loudi Sports Center is one of the top sports venues in Hunan, with total investment exceeding 700 million yuan.

To enable more people to enjoy the fun, the city's sports bureau opened the center to the public for free or at a low charge at the end of 2014.

The move raised the center's utilization rate from less than 30 per-

cent to 90 percent, attracting more than 3 million fitness lovers every year.

Zhushan Park in downtown Loudi is nicknamed the city's "green lungs".

Previously, there was only one dirt path leading to the top of a high hill in the park. However, since the city invested 2 million yuan to build a fitness trail and a synthetic running track around the hill, many residents visit the park after dinner to run, cycle or walk.

In Changsha, Hunan's capital, 200 outdoor sports venues — including soccer pitches, basketball courts and multipurpose playgrounds — were set up or rebuilt last year.

Lu Chuyao, a junior middle school student, was delighted to see a basketball court near his home rebuilt last year. "We have new stands and a new floor was laid. My friends and I feel great playing on the new court," he said.

Community gyms

A number of smart community gyms quickly gained popularity after they were opened in Changsha a few years ago.

Each gym is about 100 square meters in area. Fitted with basic fitness equipment, such as treadmills and dumbbells, they have no staff members, so the facilities are controlled via the members' smartphones.

After a user downloads the gym app, he or she can check the room temperature, the PM2.5 index and the number of people inside, and make an appointment with a coach in just a few seconds.

Residents only need to pay 25 yuan a month to gain unlimited entry to the gyms.

A local resident, who gave her last name as Hu, said her only physical exercise used to be going out to buy groceries. Last year, though, she found a smart community gym near her compound on her way home, so she registered as a member to try it out.

"It's so cheap," she said. "Now I run for 20 minutes after buying food every day. It has become my new routine."

Since May 2020, more than 230 smart community gyms have opened in Changsha, and over 20 million people have worked out in them so far.

Hunan Heihamao Network Technology, the company that operates the smart community gyms, organizes various online and offline activities to promote the facilities and encourage more people to take exercise.

In August last year, the company held a rope-jumping contest that attracted 11,864 participants from more than 400 communities. People age 16 and younger accounted for 89.4 percent of the participants.

Contact the writer at jiangw@chinadaily.com.cn



Online
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Basketball coach helps develop top local talent

By **JIANG WEI**

Gong Weiwei's passion for basketball was influenced by his father, a sports enthusiast. Despite not advancing as a player during his college years, Gong set himself another goal: to become an excellent coach.

In 2002, directly after he graduated, he embarked on the path of youth basketball training in Loudi, Hunan province.

"At the time, there was no training club for children at kindergartens or primary schools," he said. "Many talented youngsters would only be discovered in the ninth grade."

In 2012, Gong gained a National Advanced Basketball Coach certificate, and he founded Loudi's first club for youngsters, the New Energy Youth Basketball Club, in 2016.

The standard of youth basketball was poor in Hunan. Gong wanted to change that situation by discovering and nurturing local talent through the club, building a talent pipeline and creating a development system.

The club later cooperated with the city's basketball association and set up a youth training center.

Thanks to years of hard work, the youth training system kept improving, so more and more children began playing basketball, leading to more clubs being founded in Loudi.

In 2018, New Energy won the national championship in the youth division of the China 3x3 Basketball League.

The same year, Loudi launched its own Little Basketball League in response to the "Little Basketball" campaign, initiated by the Chinese



By designing a smaller ball, lowering the basket and reducing the size of the court, the campaign wants children to enjoy the fun of playing basketball."

He Liqiang, secretary-general of the Loudi Basketball Association

Basketball Association and aimed at promoting the sport among children.

"By designing a smaller ball, lowering the basket and reducing the size of the court, the campaign wants children to enjoy the fun of playing basketball," said He Liqiang, secretary-general of the Loudi Basketball Association.

As of 2021, more than 3,000 players in 400 teams from primary schools and basketball clubs had participated in Little Basketball League matches in the city. Loudi also organized other basketball matches for children, igniting their passion for the sport.

"We will promote basketball in all kindergartens, primary and middle schools in Loudi," He said.

Gong said, "I hope New Energy can become a cradle for local and even provincial youth training, just like European clubs with a century-long history. Our higher goal is to nurture national players."



Children practice bouncing basketballs at a training session held in Loudi, Hunan province, on July 15. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Loudi planning to make itself into soccer center

By **JIANG WEI**

This summer, thousands of soccer fans from around the country visited Hainan Star, securing the team's first home win in the CFA's China League Two at the center.

On June 10, Hunan Billows beat Hainan Star, securing the team's first home win in the CFA's China League Two at the center.

On average, more than 15,000 people visited the center for each game, cheering for their team. To serve the fans well, authorities organized music, food, beer, camping and barbecue festivals, starting on May 24, to enrich the city's nightlife.

Hunan Billows' fan, Qing Bo, was excited. "I met many fans from other cities. We watched the soccer matches and drank beer together. What an amazing summer!" he said.

Zhou Zhi, a local restaurant owner, seized the opportunity to set up a stall at a night market near the center, where he sold 20,000 crawfish in one night.

It was not the first time Loudi had

held big soccer matches because it hosted the First China-Africa Youth Football Tournament in 2019.

Teams from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya played opponents from Shanghai, Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Shandong province and Loudi.

In recent years, the city has been promoting soccer development and striving to transform itself into a "soccer city". It has built 108 soccer fields and 13 soccer training bases, and trained more than 37,000 young players, 157 coaches and 258 referees. Currently, more than 1,000 young soccer players enjoy training sessions in the city.

Hu Jinhui, secretary-general of the Loudi Soccer Association, said that there is a big potential for the city's soccer economy as a result of the many matches, good infrastructure and the growing number of fans and players.

Zhu Qiang, vice-president of the Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology, said, "Loudi's move to organize festivals to go with soccer matches has boosted the residents' desire to participate in sports, created opportunities for physical exercise and ignited potential sports consumption."



People take part in a rope-jumping competition in Loudi, Hunan province, on Aug 6. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CHINA



Chen Liangdong (second from right) and other villagers showcase harvested rice seeds in a hybrid rice seed breeding base in Xinchang village of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, on Aug 26. PHOTOS BY YANG WENBIN / XINHUA

Farmer leads community toward hybrid rice farming



Chen Liangdong pollinates hybrid rice in the seed breeding base using bamboo poles in Xinchang village of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture on Aug 1.

Chen Liangdong, who is 61, is a major producer of hybrid rice seeds in Cengong county, Guizhou province. He worked as a construction worker in the county for many years, but returned to his village in 2012 to take over the idle land of the villagers to produce hybrid rice seeds. From spring to autumn, he is busy with tilling, sowing, mulching,

transplanting, fertilizing, pollinating, and other tasks.

As autumn arrives, the rice fields have turned golden, and Chen has invited a professional harvesting team from Henan province to harvest the hybrid rice seeds on his farm. Every year, he provides jobs for more than 100 households in the surrounding villages.

CHINA DAILY



Chen Liangdong and workers pay villagers who work at the rice planting base, on May 29.



Left: Chen Liangdong arranges harvested hybrid rice seeds at a processing workshop in Cengong county of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, on Aug 26. Middle: Chen Liangdong wipes away sweat while working in a hybrid rice field in Cengong county on May 29. Right: Chen Liangdong and his daughter-in-law load harvested rice seeds onto a truck in Xinchang village of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, on Aug 26.



Left: Chen Liangdong and villagers transplant rice seedlings in a hybrid rice seed breeding base in Xinchang village of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, on May 29. Right: Chen Liangdong (front) and villagers level the field at a hybrid rice seed breeding base in preparation for planting in Xinchang village, on April 6.



WORLD

Diplomats hail Kenyan railway link

Line proof of BRI's major role in African development and boon for passengers

By OTIATO OPALI
in Mombasa, Kenya
otiato@chinadaily.com.cn

Diplomats in Kenya have given the thumbs-up on their tour to the new Standard Gauge Railway to the country.

The envoys from 13 countries made stops at key SGR facilities before boarding a train bound for the port city of Mombasa on Friday.

The tour was part of the railway's sixth anniversary and a celebration of 60 years of diplomatic relations between Kenya and China.

Russia's Ambassador to Kenya, Dmitry Maksimych, said the SGR is evidence that the Belt and Road Initiative is playing a major role in transit-oriented development in Africa.

"We are happy to see what bilateral cooperation can do to support development, and the Kenyan Standard Gauge Railway is a good example of what mutual cooperation can achieve," Maksimych said.

Tobias Otieno, dispatcher with Kenya Railways Corporation, said the SGR has had a recognizable economic impact in the country and in East Africa.

"Our Chinese counterparts are still assisting Kenya Railways in operating some functions with the SGR line that is serving the northern corridor route in freight and passenger transport."

The SGR was commissioned in May 2017 as the first phase of the project, with the second phase, Nairobi to Naivasha, being completed four years ago.

The 592-kilometer track has carried 11.16 million passengers, Otieno said.

"The highest number of passengers transported in a single day has exceeded 10,000, while the punctuality rate has been as high as 99.9 percent."

Since the SGR has been in operation about 2.4 million standard containers and another 28.6 million metric tons of goods have been transported using the system, he added.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, executive director of UN-Habitat, said: "(The SGR increased) the accessibility of people from Nairobi to Mombasa. It is also being an alternative green transportation for Kenya."

"Hopefully, it is also connecting



Foreign diplomats from various countries in Kenya enjoy a dance show by the Maasai people at the Nairobi Terminus of the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Nairobi, Kenya, on Friday. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

people from Nairobi to the smaller towns outside Nairobi."

South Africa's High Commissioner to Kenya, Mzinwa Mahlangu, said: "I think the development of the SGR is quite a progressive one. It actually caters to the needs of the people, not just in terms of people traveling, but also cargo issues."

Monument of friendship

The tour by the diplomats started with a visit to the Dispatch Centre, the nerve center of the SGR operation, and there was a stop at a monument in Nairobi celebrating Sino-Kenyan friendship, before the party boarded the afternoon passenger train to Mombasa.

Iran's Ambassador to Kenya,

Jafar Barnaki, said he has been to Mombasa several times, earlier by air or road. He enjoyed his first ride on the SGR, he said.

"As developing countries we need to work together. The SGR is South-South Cooperation. It is very important whatever we have to share with each other in technology and experiences."

A former deputy chairman of the African Union Commission, Erastus Mwencha, who is also a member of the Advisory Council of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, said: "We have also seen the progress that has been made in the last 10 years. If you look at this year itself, it's wonderful statistics that speak for themselves."

The 592-km track runs from Mombasa to Nairobi, before terminating in the Rift Valley town of Naivasha at Suswa.

The construction of the first phase, comprising 472 km and running from Mombasa to Nairobi, began in December 2014 and was completed two and half years later, ahead of schedule, and was opened in May 2017.

Construction of Phase 2A, from Nairobi to Naivasha, covering 120 km, began in October 2016 and was completed three years later.



Online
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Chinese travelers help tourism regain its feet

CAIRO — At the Luxor temple, an enormous ancient Egyptian temple complex on the east bank of the Nile River, Huang Zhao, a Chinese tourist, was taking photos while listening to the tour guide on the temple's history.

"The temple is a masterpiece of art," said Huang, who also visited the Great Pyramid, Egypt's southern cities, including Aswan, and sea resorts in Hurgada. "I used to read many books on Egyptology, and visiting the archaeological sites was a dream."

Chen Wu, 22, a student who came with her parents from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, said she planned the trip to Egypt two years ago.

"My father always encourages me to read history books, especially on ancient civilizations that are similar to the Chinese one," she said.

"Ten days are not enough to visit all the archaeological sites," she said while visiting the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut. "It is a chef-d'oeuvre of ancient architecture."

The recovery of the tourism industry in China is providing a significant boost to outbound tourism. This surge in outbound travel coincided with one of China's most significant annual holidays, the Golden Week, which began on Sept 29 and lasted eight days. During this period, Chinese people celebrated both the country's National Day and Mid-Autumn Festival.

"In the world's No 2 economy, spending on holidays and inbound and outbound tourism is expected to surge, contributing to the world's tourism recovery," said

Mohamed Othman, chairman of the Cultural Tourism Marketing Committee in Upper Egypt.

According to the China Tourism Academy, a research institution in Beijing, overseas destinations received a total of 40.37 million visitors from the Chinese mainland during the first half of the year.

"Chinese tourists are very well-educated and have a great passion for learning about Egyptian civilization and travel with a good budget," Othman said, adding that Chinese tourists will help revive Egyptian tourism, one of the primary sources of foreign currency.

To cater to Chinese tourists, Egypt's tourism authorities have coordinated the installation of signs in Chinese languages at all the archaeological sites, temples and hotels, and provided tour guides who speak Chinese.

Main source market

According to Fitch Ratings, a credit rating agency in the United States, China was one of the world's largest tourism source markets before the pandemic, with a total international tourism expenditure of \$254.6 billion in 2019.

It expects a revival of Chinese outbound tourism to boost growth prospects in economies with substantial tourism sectors.

"With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, China is a treasure for the world tourism sector," said Ahmad Amer, an archaeological inspector in the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

XINHUA



Chinese tourists visit the Pyramids of Giza in Giza, Egypt, on Wednesday. AHMED GOMAA / XINHUA

Auto plants stay idle as strike hits 4th week

CHICAGO — The president of the United Auto Workers and other labor leaders headlined a rally in Chicago on Saturday to maintain union members' support for a strike against Detroit automakers that is now in its fourth week.

UAW President Shawn Fain portrayed the strike as a pivotal moment for organized labor and part of a war pitting working people against "the billionaire class and corporate greed."

Fain provided no new details on negotiations or whether talks continued on Saturday. A spokesman for General Motors said talks were continuing but without news to report. A spokeswoman for Stellantis said there was nothing to update on Saturday. Ford did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The union claimed a breakthrough on Friday, when GM agreed to put workers at new electric vehicle battery plants under the UAW's national contract. On Friday night, Ford repeated its previous statement that the plants have not even been built, and when they are, workers will



Striking Kaiser Permanent workers march in front of the Kaiser Permanente Vallejo Medical Center in Vallejo, California, on Friday. JUSTIN SULLIVAN VIA GETTY IMAGES

decide whether to join the union.

This year there has been a record of labor activities in the United States, as the number of workers involved in strikes has reached at least 411,000, the highest since 2019, recent figures show.

Workers have walked out of various industries such as automobile, healthcare, entertainment, hotel and airlines. This year's strikes also lasted longer than those in recent history, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Cornell University's Labor Action Tracker.

More than 75,000 healthcare workers remained on the picket lines across the US on Friday, marking the industry's biggest strike in history.

Beginning on Wednesday, the strike has entered its final day, but union leaders and their employer,

the California-based nonprofit healthcare organization Kaiser Permanente, have not reached an agreement on wages and a solution to staffing shortages.

The rise in organized labor movements is partly because of the tight labor market and inflation, analysts said.

Recent low unemployment rates have increased worker leverage, as many employers scrambled to compete for workers amid increasing resignations and early retirements.

Elevated inflation has also significantly eroded the buying power of salaries. Although workers' pay has increased, the income of most US people has not grown as much as rent and grocery costs.

XINHUA-AGENCIES

RCEP boosts regional trade, Cambodian official and experts say

PHNOM PENH — The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement that took effect last year has given impetus to trade in the region, a Cambodian senior official and experts say.

The RCEP comprises 15 Asia-Pacific countries, including 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — and their trading partners China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Sok Siphana, a senior minister in charge of special mission, said the world's largest free trade agreement is an important instrument of development for its members, and it has provided a big opportunity for Cambodia to export more.

"The RCEP has given an extra boost to trade, shaping the economic development of the member countries," he said during a live podcast under the theme "Different legal dimensions of the RCEP".

The RCEP covers 2.3 billion people, has a total GDP of \$25.8 trillion, and accounts for \$12.7 trillion of global trade in goods and services and 31 percent of global foreign direct investment inflows, the World Bank says.

Siphana said ASEAN, in which 80-90 percent of companies are small and medium-sized, will greatly benefit from the RCEP, which will eliminate 90 percent of tariffs on goods traded among its signatories over the next 20 years.

The agreement is comprehensive, covering trade in goods, trade in services, investment, economic and technical cooperation, dispute settlement, e-commerce, competition and intellectual property, among others.

Reaping maximum benefit

It is essential for the governments to promote the agreement's potential for companies in their countries to reap the maximum benefit from it, Siphana said.

The pact will also importantly contribute to reducing poverty in Cambodia and other member countries, he said.

Cambodia exported products valued at \$5.26 billion to other RCEP countries in the first eight months of this year, 22 percent more than in the corresponding period last year, the Ministry of Commerce said.

Kin Phea, director-general of the International Relations Institute of Cambodia, a think tank that is part of the Royal Academy of Cambodia, said the RCEP has promoted multilateralism and free trade against the backdrop of protectionism and unilateralism.

"It has helped stabilize the member countries' economies, especially during this time of global economic slowdown."

All RCEP members, particularly ASEAN countries, have reaped benefits from the pact by integrating further into regional and global supply chains, Phea said.

"The RCEP will help transform ASEAN into a new engine of growth in Asia."

XINHUA

More women in US seek help from Mexico for abortions

By BELINDA ROBINSON
in New York
belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

An increasing number of US women are traveling across the southern border to get an abortion in Mexico, according to abortion rights activists and clinics, a year after the US Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy.

The women from states such as Arizona, Louisiana and Texas, where abortions are either banned or not allowed after 15 weeks of pregnancy, go to clinics in Tijuana and Mexico City, The New York Times and The Associated Press said. There are no official numbers on how many women are doing so.

The Times quoted Andrea Sanchez, an abortion rights activist, as saying: "Before, the women from (the

Mexican state of) Sonora would go to the United States to access abortions in clinics, and now the women from the United States come to Mexico."

The border crossings have gathered pace since Mexico's Supreme Court decriminalized abortion last month. Before that the procedure had been illegal for decades. In about 20 of Mexico's 32 states abortion is still illegal.

After the Supreme Court overturned the landmark Roe versus Wade ruling last year half of all states banned or restricted abortion.

More than 20 mainly Republican-run states ban abortion after 18 weeks of pregnancy. In 14 states it is completely banned, regardless of any extenuating circumstances such as rape or incest.

"Every abortion ends the life of a preborn child — a vulnerable member of the human family," Carol Tob-

as, president of the National Right to Life Committee, an organization in Washington, told China Daily. "The court was right to correct an egregious error made in 1973."

Clinics in Mexico are also reporting that US women are seeking medical abortion pills to be sent to them clandestinely by mail.

Sending pills

An underground network of activists said it has sent thousands of pills across the border to aid women in states where it is difficult to obtain them.

Veronica Cruz, an abortion rights activist in Mexico, said her organization Las Libres, which means the free ones, has helped about 20,000 women in 23 states to get access to abortion pills.

Last year the US Attorney General Merrick Garland said the federal

Food and Drug Administration had approved the use of the drug Mifepristone for medicated abortions.

However, last month Republicans in the US House of Representatives introduced a bill aimed at banning the drug, which they say is dangerous, even though Mifepristone has been approved for 23 years for abortions until 10 weeks, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation in California.

Representative Andy Ogles, a Republican from Tennessee, was joined by anti-abortion groups to promote the new bill at a launch that coincided with International Safe Abortion Day on Sept 28. The bill has 13 Republican co-sponsors.

"Banning these dangerous drugs for the purpose of chemical abortion is an important step in protecting life," Ogles said. "We have a duty to uphold the sanctity of life."

WORLDUS

US' 'exclusionary' policies on China questioned

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
liazhu@chinadailyusa.com

The United States' policies toward China are "imbalanced" and "exclusionary", which is not conducive to a positive, constructive bilateral relationship, said an expert on US-China relations.

"Political actors in the United States increasingly define everything about China as a national security concern," said Jake Werner, a research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a think tank that promotes diplomatic engagement and cooperation between the US and other nations.

"The further that trajectory goes,

the harder it is to turn back," he said at a recent webinar examining the relationship. Werner's research focuses on the emergence of a great-power conflict between the US and China and policies to rebuild constructive economic relations.

The US approach is "too imbalanced toward deterrence and exclusion of China, and that is sending China a very clear message that the United States sees no future for China in the system the United States wants to create globally", said Werner.

As a result, the conclusionary policies lead to aggression from China and may escalate to conflict, he said. "Every antagonistic move against

China is being called competition. That is really misleading," he said. "Exclusion is the opposite of competition."

For instance, the US government's ban on semiconductors is "conclusionary", not "competition", he continued.

"In the global economy, the Biden administration has imposed a blockade on one of the most essential technologies for any form of economic growth in the future: semiconductors. Advanced semiconductors are no longer permitted," he said.

It's "a terribly provocative move" for the United States, in the name of national security, to "decide that China must be permanently subordinated in its possibilities for growth in

the global economy and to compete in the global economy", said Werner.

"It sends a very clear signal that the United States will not tolerate Chinese success," he said. "China, I think, could accept a competitive framework but cannot accept an exclusionary framework," he added.

On the Taiwan issue, he said there has been "a deep erosion of the one-China policy that had reassured China for many years that this issue could be set aside indefinitely".

The underlying issue behind the conflict is the political elites' failure to recognize that the previous structure of the global system has largely broken down over the past 15 years, he said.

"They've been struggling for the last 15 years to figure out how to deal with the loss of legitimacy in the political system and loss of dynamism in the economy," he said.

Those issues can be worked through, and the relationship between the two countries is not as aggressive as what the anti-China rhetoric describes, said Werner, adding that the two countries could come together around a set of policies that would increase global growth.

"We could find a pathway towards a constructive relationship by working together on overcoming the forces that are pushing the two countries against each other," he said.

"The two sides do not want conflict

and are willing to take real steps away from conflict. They are not throwing themselves against the other and they're not trying to execute an unconditional defeat of the other side," said Werner. "They are willing to, under the right circumstances, work together to execute common interests."

He said that the US and China have "a very strong interest in overcoming the zero-sum pressures", which he referred to as the notion that the US and China can't both succeed in the global economy.

"If they work together towards overcoming them, they could change the forces that are pushing them into conflict today," he said.

Ex-Secret Service agent sheds new light on 'magic bullet' in Kennedy assassination

By HENG WEILI in New York
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

The "magic bullet" theory in the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy is facing renewed scrutiny in light of a new book by a former Secret Service agent who was in the motorcade that fateful day 60 years ago.

Paul Landis, now 88, was part of the security detail of first lady Jacqueline Kennedy on Nov 22, 1963, when the president was struck by two bullets while riding in a parade through downtown Dallas, Texas. Landis rode in a car directly behind the limousine that was carrying the president and first lady in the back seat, the governor of Texas and his wife in the middle, and two agents in the front.

Landis, who said he long believed Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman, said that he eventually began to wonder if additional shooters were involved.

"I didn't think about it at all for about 45 years, and at that point it was March 2014, and I started thinking that maybe it was time that I told my story," Landis told People.com ahead of the Oct 10 release of his book, *The Final Witness: A Kennedy Secret Service Agent Breaks His Silence After 60 Years*.

According to the official Warren Commission, there were three bullets fired. The first one missed. The second bullet was the so-called magic bullet, which was determined to have hit Kennedy in the back, exiting his throat before then hitting Governor John Connally, breaking his rib, exiting his body and entering his wrist and then thigh, with the bullet staying virtually intact.

The third shot was the one that proved fatal to Kennedy, striking him in the head.

Landis contends that he found what was believed to be the magic bullet in the back seat of the presidential limo. He speculated that the bullet struck the president in the back but was undercharged and did not penetrate deeply, The New York Times reported.

The so-called magic bullet was positively matched to Oswald's Mannlicher-Carcano rifle through ballistics analysis, according to the Warren Commission.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr, the nephew of the slain president, who has long doubted the Warren Commission's findings, wrote on X on Sept 9: "The magic bullet theory is now dead. This preposterous construction has served as the mainstay of the theory that a single shooter murdered President Kennedy since the Warren Commission advanced it 60 years ago under the direction of the former CIA Director Allen Dulles whom my uncle fired. The recent revelations by JFK's Secret Service protector Paul Landis have prompted even the New York Times among the last lonely defenders of the Warren Report to finally acknowledge its absurdity."

Robert Kennedy Jr, whose father, Senator Robert Kennedy, was assassinated in Los Angeles in 1968 when he was a Democratic candidate for president, is seeking the Democratic nomination for president himself.

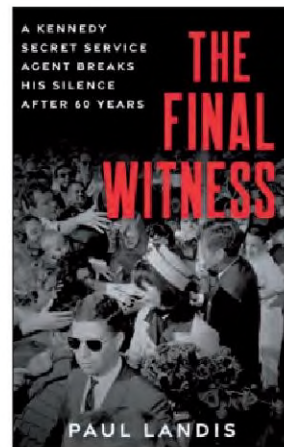
"If the bullet we know as the magic or pristine bullet stopped in President Kennedy's back, it means



Top: On Nov 22, 1963, US President John F. Kennedy, first lady Jacqueline Kennedy, Texas Governor John Connally, his wife, Nellie, and two Secret Service agents ride in a limousine in Dallas, Texas, shortly before President Kennedy was assassinated.

WALT CISCO / DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Left: A new book by a former Secret Service agent who rode behind the presidential limousine that day calls into question the "magic bullet" theory of the assassination.



"I didn't think about it at all for about 45 years, and at that point it was March 2014, and I started thinking that maybe it was time that I told my story."

Paul Landis, a former Secret Service agent who was part of first lady Jacqueline Kennedy's security detail on Nov 22, 1963, the day that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

that the central thesis of the Warren Report, the single-bullet theory, is wrong," James Robenalt, an Ohio-based lawyer, told the Times, speculating that Connally was hit by a different bullet.

Landis described how the president's motorcade that Friday afternoon had "just completed the hairpin turn in front of the Texas School Book Depository in Dealey Plaza, and the cars were straightening out" when he heard the first shot.

"I recognized it immediately as the sound of a gunshot, turned to look over my right shoulder, and I saw nothing," he said.

Landis said he saw the president sitting in the limo and leaning slightly to his left, though it was unclear if he had been hit. That's when Landis turned to scan the surrounding areas, including the infamous "grassy knoll" along the road.

"I had just finished scanning the overpass ... and I heard this second shot, and still no reaction from President Kennedy," Landis told People.

Then a third shot rang out. Landis described how one agent immediately rushed to President Kennedy's side before the motorcade raced to Parkland Memorial Hospital.

"It was like a flash of white, and then the air just filled with a cloud of blood and brain, flesh, bone matter — and I ducked so I wouldn't get splattered as we drove through it," he said.

At the hospital, Landis said he ran to the president's limo, where the first lady was sitting with her husband's head in her lap.

That's when Landis said he

noticed a fully intact bullet "sitting on the back seat ledge, where the cushion meets the metal on the car."

"I looked at it and I started to put it back. I didn't see anybody in the vicinity, I was wondering where all the agents were," he told People. "And they all seemed to be over looking for the president or to help remove the president. So I put the bullet in my pocket."

Landis said he and the others rushed to a trauma room in the hospital.

"I was kind of behind Mrs Kennedy at this point. She was right there holding onto the gurney. I just got pushed in. It was like being trapped."

Landis said he was in the hospital room when doctors and nurses removed the president from the gurney, moving him to an examination table.

"So all the time I've been standing there, I've been kind of fumbling with the bullet in my pocket," he told People. "I took it out and I set it by the president's left foot, and it was like a white cotton blanket on the table, and the bullet started to roll off the table, and I reached out and grabbed it, and there was a little wrinkle in the blanket. So I put the bullet (in a place) so that it wouldn't roll off. It stopped in that blanket."

"I figured this was the place the bullet needed to be. They would find it. And I felt a great relief that I had saved an important piece of evidence," he said.

"I just figured, well, I'm going to be questioned by the Warren Commission and I can tell my whole story then," Landis said. "And that time never came."

It wasn't until 2014, when Landis told People that he read the book *Six Seconds in Dallas* that he saw mention of a bullet found on a gurney — though in that book, it's described as being found on the gurney of Connally, who was seriously wounded but survived the shooting.

"They showed a picture [of the bullet] in the book, and my reaction was, 'Well, wait a minute. That's the bullet that I put on President Kennedy's stretcher.'"

Landis noted that he has no theories about the bullet's significance or how its existence might change the way some people think about the assassination, which the Warren Commission determined was the result of a lone gunman, Oswald, who was perched on the sixth floor of the Book Depository, behind the motorcade when the shooting started.

Landis' account also differs from two statements he wrote a week after the shooting. The New York Times reported. He didn't initially mention finding the bullet and reported hearing only two shots. "I do not recall hearing a third shot," he wrote. He also did not mention going into the trauma room, writing that he "remained outside by the door" when the first lady went in.

Landis said he was in shock and had barely slept in five days as he focused on helping the first lady, he told the Times, and didn't pay enough attention to what he submitted.

Ballistic experts using modern forensic techniques also determined 50 years after the assassination that the magic bullet theory was plausible, the Times reported.

Forecasters say 2023 may be hottest year on record

By BELINDA ROBINSON
in New York
belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

This year looks set to be the hottest year on record, say forecasters, after record-breaking heat soared throughout Europe, the United States and countries worldwide.

The summer of 2023 was the hottest ever recorded, with sweltering heat in parts of the US and European countries Italy, Spain and Greece.

September has also seen blistering temperatures, unusual for this time of year, according to Copernicus, Europe's climate change service, which examines international weather patterns.

Samantha Burgess, deputy director of Copernicus, said in a statement that last month several records were broken "by an extraordinary amount" of weather that brought on never-before-seen high temperatures for that time of year.

Last month, temperatures were 1.75 C or 3.2 F warmer than usual for the weather average recorded in the month of September from 1850 to 1900, described as the pre-industrial reference period.

It broke the previous monthly record in 2020 by 0.5 C, according to Copernicus. September has not been so hot since the service began its records in 1940.

Burgess added: "The unprecedented temperatures for the time of year observed in September following a record summer have broken records by an extraordinary amount."

The record-breaking heat puts 2023 on track to be the hottest year on record internationally, with weather patterns 1.4 C above pre-industrial levels, Burgess said. This year had several record-breaking hot months, including July and August.

July had the hottest four days in a row ever recorded on Earth as temperatures soared to a balmy 17.18 C worldwide, or 62.92 F, the US National Centers for Environmental Prediction found.

October is also on track to be hot in European countries Spain, Poland, Austria and France.

Copernicus calculates its weather results by analyzing billions of measurements taken from weather stations around the world, ships, satellites and aircraft, which track changes in sea ice and global surface air temperature.

Climate change activists warn that current temperatures are dangerously close to the limit set for global warming of 1.5 C, or 2.7 F

above preindustrial levels laid out in the Paris Agreement of 2015 — a legally binding international treaty on climate change.

Thousands of protesters from around the world descended on Lower Manhattan last month to demonstrate against climate change as world leaders met at the United Nations for a one-day climate ambition summit.

They urged leaders to do more and blamed greenhouse gas emissions over the equatorial eastern Pacific for pushing global temperatures up.

International leaders will meet in Dubai for the United Nations COP28 climate summit in December to discuss climate goals.

Thanu Yakupitiyage, former communications director of 350 Action, an organization that mobilizes progressive voters and works to elect climate champions, said that extreme weather patterns are clear indications that the world must act quickly to address climate change.

"In 2022, alone, there was damage from climate disasters, including [last] September's hurricanes Fiona and Ian; it exceeded \$100 billion in damages, just from two hurricanes alone," she told China Daily.

"Wildfires ravaged the US West Coast, which has some of the worst air quality in the world because of fires and the climate crisis. The bigger picture is that we have three years to write the ship to avoid a point of no return on climate."

Extreme weather continued this year.

Last month, New York saw record-breaking rainfall that surpassed the record for any day in September during Hurricane Donna in 1960, the National Weather Service said. The rain caused the city's streets to be flooded and parts of the transit system to stop working.

In the same month, Canada dealt with devastating wildfires. South America had record-breaking heat, and thousands died from a massive flood in Libya.

Greece was ravaged by Storm Elias which dumped several months of rain on the island in less than a day. It came just weeks after Storm Daniel killed 17 people in the country. Heavy rain in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria left 14 dead.

Heat is the No 1 weather-related killer of people in the world, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In the US, 600 people die from heat-related illnesses each year, the CDC reports.

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USA

NEW YORK
HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
CORN
Subscription: 212-537-8899
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530 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247
SAN FRANCISCO
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900,
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-348-8288
Fax: 415-348-8388
SEATTLE

701 Fifth Ave, Suite 4200
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel: 206-922-2868
CANADA | TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6B8
Tel: 416-461-9706
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BUSINESS

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Next big opportunities in China for MNCs

Trade in services, sustainability and shift to digital era set to attract huge investments

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

What is it that global companies need to do for robust growth in China, as the old formula of setting up manufacturing facilities and global distribution systems would no longer suffice? That key question is fast creating consensus among both experts and industry leaders that what is required is alignment with China's emphasis on expanding its openness in the fields of trade in services, green sustainability and digital transformation.

In recent times, global companies such as France's Schneider Electric SE, Finland-based Wartsila Corp and Saudi Arabia's Ajlan & Bros Group have already increased their investments in the sector of trade in services. That is in keeping with the second-largest economy's evolving role in the international industrial chain. From being the world's key factory, China has transitioned to being a pivotal "global office".

In contrast to trade in goods, trade in services refers to the sale and delivery of intangible services such as transportation, finance, tourism, telecommunications, construction, advertising, computing and accounting.

To pursue high-quality development, the country has been promoting import of technologies and services geared toward energy efficiency and reduction of carbon emissions, while simultaneously expanding its export of green and low-carbon technologies, said Huang Dongmei, vice-president of the Shanghai University of Electric Power.

Executives of multinational corporations and market watchers said that for various countries, the vibrancy of China's trade in services will open up significant opportunities for export-driven growth, increase foreign investment inflows and deepen integration into global value chains.

Schneider Electric said it believes China's digital and green transitions have provided crucial support for trade in services and opened up new space for MNCs. In response, Schneider Electric introduced a number of software solutions during the 2023 China International Fair for Trade in Services held in Beijing in early September, to help domestic manufacturers cut carbon emissions and boost production efficiency.

"In the era of the digital economy, we witness a profound integration of technology into the modern services sector, which is instrumental in driving China's real economy toward a more rapid transformation and upgrade," said Xiong Yi, senior vice-president and head of strategy and business development of Schneider Electric's China arm.

This convergence of the digital and physical realms represents a pivotal opportunity for the growth



An exhibitor (right) introduces jade ornaments to visitors at the Myanmar exhibition stand during the 2023 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing on Sept 4. LI XIN / XINHUA



Left: Visitors (left) pick hand-woven baskets during the 2023 CIFTIS in Beijing on Sept 2. LI WENMING / FOR CHINA DAILY



Right: A Pakistani exhibitor (right) introduces carpet products to visitors during the 2023 CIFTIS on Sept 3. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

of a range of industries. To further promote this convergence, technologies, particularly software technology and services, play critical roles, he said.

Expressing similar views, Hakan Agnevall, CEO and president of Wartsila Corp, one of the world's largest life cycle and power solutions providers for marine and energy markets by sales revenue, said that apart from running four plants in China, the Finnish company will deploy more resources to boost its service-related businesses such as engine performance improvement, voyage planning, training and decarbonization services in the country.

"From a longer-term perspective, we understand that for Chinese fleet owners, knowing when and how to adapt over the multidecade vessel life-spans is critical for maximizing the value and useful life of an asset," said Agnevall, adding that increasingly strict regulation means shipowners need new technologies, retrofits and upgrades throughout

the lifetime of their vessels to stay compliant with the regulations while also maintaining profitability and competitiveness.

"China is by far the biggest shipbuilding country in the world and is therefore a priority market for Wartsila. The country will continue to hold the global No 1 position in shipbuilding, which has offered strong growth momentum for our marine business in China," he said.

China's trade in services maintained stable growth during the first seven months of 2023, growing more than 8 percent year-on-year to 3.67 trillion yuan (\$503.61 billion) in total value, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

The country's trade in knowledge-intensive services climbed 11.7 percent year-on-year to 158.38 billion yuan during the period. The figure represents 4.3 percent of total services trade in the January-July period, up 1.4 percentage points from a year ago.

The surge in exports of human capital-intensive services, the grow-

ing consumer demand for high-quality imported services and the increasing convergence of traditional manufacturing with the modern services sector have all created numerous opportunities. This shift in focus is accompanied by a decline in the export volumes of China's labor-intensive products, said Zhong Zeyu, vice-president of the Shanghai-based China Association of Trade in Services.

Emphasizing the potential of human capital-intensive services, Zhong said that China's future economic growth could be driven by exporting services that require high levels of expertise and skill, such as technology consulting, research and development, and engineering.

Echoing this sentiment, Mohammed Al Ajlan, chairman of the Saudi-Chinese Business Council and deputy chairman of Ajlan & Bros Holding Group, said the expansion of China's exports of knowledge-intensive services has played a role in improving the industrial structure and promoting the process of mod-

ernization around the world.

"We wish to enhance cooperation in emerging fields, such as 5G, artificial intelligence, big data, biotechnology, financial technology and automation, among others, join hands with more Chinese companies to tap into the potential of Saudi-China bilateral economic and trade cooperation, and help investors from the two countries achieve a higher level of cooperation," he said.

In a global landscape marked by declining goods demand and increasing geoeconomic fragmentation, China will underline progress in crafting national and pilot free trade zone versions of the negative list governing cross-border trade in services, amid efforts to further advance its opening-up, said Chen Chunjiang, assistant minister of commerce.

In addition to proactively aligning with high-standard international economic and trade rules, the government will expedite the establishment of upgraded national dem-

onstration zones for innovative development of trade in services, the commerce official said.

Aiming to generate renewed momentum in exports of services, China will also establish high-standard service outsourcing demonstration cities to foster innovative formats and approaches within various subsectors of trade in services, according to information released by the Ministry of Commerce.

In the context of sluggish international demand, increasing protectionist pressures and escalating geopolitical tensions, Xin Yongfei, head of the Policy and Economic Research Institute at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, noted that the realm of digital trade, propelled by technological innovations, policy support and evolving trends, will emerge as a pivotal driving force in strengthening China's exports and cutting down on business transaction expenses.

Digital trade refers to trade in goods and services that are digitally ordered and digitally delivered, such as cross-border e-commerce and digitally facilitated transactions in trade in services, which account for a growing share of international trade, according to information released by the Geneva-based United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Xin warned that it is crucial for China to further elevate the strategic importance of digital trade and actively promote international cooperation in this field to enhance its strength, as many economies, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and South Korea, have deeply engaged in global digital trade agreements, safeguarding their advantageous position in digital trade.

The total value of China's foreign trade in digital services reached \$371.08 billion in 2022, growing 3.2 percent year-on-year and accounting for 41.7 percent of its total trade in services last year, according to a report jointly released by the Development Research Center of the State Council and the CAICT.

To reinforce China's growth potential in the digital trade sector, the government will accelerate the industrialization pace of the digital sector as well as nurture and strengthen digital industries such as cloud computing, big data, artificial intelligence, blockchain, virtual reality and industrial software, said Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Xiao Ran, general manager for China at British technology consulting company Thoughtworks Inc, said China's "Digital China" plan solidifies the country's position as the leader in the digital era.

"The emergence of generative artificial intelligence illustrates China's expanding capacity for innovation while also opening up sizable potential that plays to our advantages," said Xiao. In the next step, the company will deploy more resources to enhance the business coordination between its offices in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, and Hong Kong to expand its businesses in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, he said.

services, education, culture and healthcare. This opening-up should be executed in an organized fashion, utilizing pilot free trade zones as trailblazers.

Given the ongoing technological advancements and the impact of the new industrial revolution, which continuously foster innovation and transformation in service trade formats, China has been actively involved in the development of relevant trade regulations, in order to exert more influence and participate significantly in the decision-making processes related to the formulation of rules and standards, as well as reduce associated risks.

A noteworthy example of China's proactive stance is its formal application to join the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement in November 2021. This move paves the way for novel collaborative approaches and cooperation on matters related to digital trade, setting a precedent for tackling emerging issues in this domain.

Critical factor that's transforming nation's industrial structure

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhong Nan

China's industrial structure has a new linchpin — trade in services — and it's injecting vitality into its value-added dimension. That's the consensus which emerged from the halls and conference rooms of the 2023 China International Fair for Trade in Services, which took place in Beijing in early September.

Amid the relentless march of the technological revolution and the ever-expanding global trade, trade in services is fueling the transformation of China's industrial structure and propelling its ascent to higher industrial echelons.

Driven by a strong desire to

refine its economic structure, China has steadfastly pursued the expansion and liberalization of its services sector and trade in services in recent years. Notably, substantial progress has been made in the systematic opening-up of the services sector, marked by growing value of trade in services and relaxation of foreign market entry restrictions. These efforts have positioned China as a key driver of global trade in services.

In comparison to trade in goods, which involves the physical movement of tangible products via various transportation modes such as sea, land and air, trade in services exhibits distinct characteristics. It is often characterized as environmentally friendly, low-carbon, high value-added and knowledge-intensive. Moreover, it typically experiences limited fluctuations, maintaining a relatively stable trajectory that

remains less influenced by external environmental changes.

With the exception of traditional services like travel, transportation and construction, most other non-physical transactions can be executed seamlessly through online payment systems. These transactions are not hindered by challenges related to cross-border transportation or other external factors.

As a result, during periods of robust global trade, the growth rate of trade in goods tends to outpace that of trade in services. However, when global trade experiences a downturn, the growth rate of trade in services tends to surpass that of trade in goods.

To address various challenges, including diminishing global demand for goods and unexpected geoeconomic shocks, China has implemented a range of policies

aimed at fostering innovation in trade in services. These initiatives involve opening up the services sector, establishing a negative list management system for cross-border services trade and intensifying efforts to promote digital trade.

In addition, the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past three years have accelerated the global trend toward digitalization. China has been a pioneer of this shift, leveraging its advanced 5G technology and "new infrastructure" projects to develop effective frameworks for cross-border digital governance.

In contrast to traditional infrastructure such as railways, roads and water management, "new infrastructure" pertains to critical facilities rooted in information technologies like 5G, AI, the industrial internet and the internet of things, which enables interconnec-

tions among networks of devices for data exchange.

China's sizable population has also played a pivotal role in fostering the growth of its digital economy, with data emerging as a key economic resource. This phenomenon presents opportunities for developing nations to narrow their gap with developed economies and emerge as significant players in the global digital economy.

After years of growth, the integration of the manufacturing and services sectors, coupled with enhancements in service supply, have further contributed to the synchronized development of trade in services.

China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for the Development of Trade in Services highlights the need to systematically encourage the opening-up of various sectors, including telecommunications, internet ser-

BUSINESS



Visitors browse exhibits at the home accessories exhibition area during the 133th China Import and Export Fair — Canton Fair — in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on April 23. DENG HUA / XINHUA

China's exhibition industry experiences robust resurgence

1,947 biz expos, 47.196 million sq m of area in HI demonstrate country's value to trade

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Driven by China's ongoing endeavors to optimize the business environment and the export surge of tech-intensive green products, the country's convention and exhibition segment will serve as a pivotal factor in bolstering exports and attracting foreign investment, said market watchers and industry players.

To date, China's exhibition industry has experienced a robust resurgence this year. A total of 1,947 exhibitions were held nationwide in the first half, marking a 3.9-fold year-on-year growth and a 13.9 percent growth compared to 2019, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Additionally, China saw total exhibition space reach 47.196 million square meters in the first half, a 4.7-fold growth year-on-year and a 24.9 percent increase compared to 2019.

To tackle challenges such as softening demand in many countries, the disruption of global supply chains, geoeconomic challenges and a decline in cross-border investment, the holding of trade fairs in key sectors is conducive to enhancing cooperation and sharing opportunities among businesses from various countries, said Lin

Shunjie, board chairman of Beijing-based China International Exhibition Center Group Ltd.

To further unlock the potential of foreign investment in the domestic market amid current uncertainties shrouding the global economy, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, the country's top foreign trade and investment promotion agency, and China International Exhibition Center Group will hold the inaugural China International Supply Chain Expo in Beijing from Nov 28 to Dec 2.

Lin said the expo is expected to promote the organized and efficient interconnection of industries among countries and help build resilient global industrial and supply chains.

"Many foreign companies I have spoken to are quite pragmatic and looking to seize this rare opportunity. Many firms from the United States have mentioned the need to restructure their global supply chains after three years of COVID-19 disruptions, and it is impossible to neglect both the Chinese market and Chinese companies. This shows that the CISCE comes at just the right time," he said.

Messe Frankfurt, one of the world's largest trade fair and event organizers by sales revenue, will hold more than 40 business exhibi-

tions on the Chinese mainland this year and 2024, respectively. Due to the impact of the pandemic, the German company managed to hold only 11 trade fairs in China in 2022.

China's fast-growing exhibition economy, ongoing green transformation, domestic companies' willingness to expand in global markets and the tangible benefits generated by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement offer many opportunities, said Wendy Wen, managing director of Messe Frankfurt (Hong Kong) Ltd.

Highlighting that businesses from industries such as auto parts, new energy vehicles, new materials, metallurgies, trade in services, garments and textiles are seeing soaring demand to expand sales and reinforce their brand awareness via participating in various business exhibitions, Wen said Messe Frankfurt will deploy more resources and technology solutions to hold trade fairs both on the Chinese mainland and in the Asia-Pacific region next year.

The Frankfurt-based group will organize several trade fairs and events on the Chinese mainland, including the International Exhibition for Musical Instruments and Services in October and the China International Stationery & Office Supplies Exhibition in November in Shanghai.

The London-headquartered RX, formerly known as Reed Exhibitions, will hold 75 business exhibi-

tions across China this year to meet demand from local companies seeking to boost exports and better compete with global rivals.

Since made-in-China vehicles are gaining more popularity both in domestic and overseas markets, automotive manufacturing — especially advancements in new energy vehicles, internet-connected vehicles, auto electronics, smart cockpits and autonomous driving — has been an exciting application industry that the company is interested in, said Hugh Jones, CEO of RX.

The sector is expected to drive exports and serve as a major pillar of the country's economic growth, he added.

Qu Weixi, vice-president of the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that the exhibition industry inherently integrates the upstream and downstream segments of various industries, paving the way for a more comprehensive and upscale development trajectory.

Moreover, it serves as a vital bridge and connector within global industrial and supply chains, he said.

China will run big-ticket trade fairs such as the 134th China Import and Export Fair — Canton Fair — in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in October, and the sixth China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Zheng'an county's guitars hit high note with BRI

GUIYANG/MOSCOW — After more than 200 elaborate and lengthy manufacturing procedures, exquisitely crafted guitars are revealed as signature products of Zheng'an county in Guizhou province.

These works of art are then distributed by China-Europe freight trains, sea transport and other means to the world.

In a music studio on the outskirts of Moscow, Russian guitarist Grigory Novikov is plucking a classical guitar from Zheng'an county, reveling in the beautiful melody of a Russian classic.

Novikov, 44, began learning classical guitar in his youth. Over the past nearly 30 years, he has played numerous guitars. Today, he has a special liking for this one from China.

"By chance, I acquired a guitar from Zheng'an county through a Chinese distributor, which deepened my understanding of Chinese guitar craftsmanship and music culture," he said.

Novikov not only plays Chinese-made guitars, but also recommends them to others. He believes that even though the guitar is a Western musical instrument, Chinese-made guitars excel in terms of materials, craftsmanship and sound quality.

One of his students, who has been learning from Novikov online for many years, won an award at a competition for young guitar professionals this year, using a Chinese guitar that Novikov lent him.

The young man was so delighted with the guitar that he played it while recording videos, preparing for the competition and during this year's virtual competition.

Back in Zheng'an, a county more than 6,000 kilometers from Moscow, the Guitar Culture Industry Park receives a steady stream of orders from around the world. It is home to over 120 guitar-related enterprises.

"I can't imagine that there was nothing here 10 years ago," said Zhu Meifang, director of the Zheng'an Ruixin Industrial Park management service center.

Due to geographical and transportation constraints, Zheng'an county, in the northern mountains of Guizhou province, was once one of the most

impoverished counties in China.

It started making guitars in 2013 when China initiated the Belt and Road Initiative to build trade and infrastructure networks connecting Asia with Europe and Africa on and beyond the ancient Silk Road trade routes.

Ten years on, Zheng'an county has become a guitar manufacturing center in China, producing over 6 million guitars annually, accounting for about one-fifth of China's and one-seventh of the world's guitar production.

"We do OEM production for more than 100 global brands, producing over 400,000 guitars annually, 95 percent of which are for export," said Zheng Chuanjiu, founder of Zunyi Shenqu Musical Instrument Manufacturing Co Ltd, the first guitar factory to settle in Zheng'an in 2013.

A decade later, Zunyi Shenqu has become a leading local enterprise, with its products exported to countries joining the BRI, such as Türkiye, Russia and Romania, with an annual output of 400 million yuan (\$54.8 million).

At a music instrument and equipment event held at the Anaheim Convention Center in California on April 13, Hakan Kutlu, general manager of a Turkish company engaged in guitar sales, said they order over 10,000 guitars annually from Zunyi Shenqu.

"The reasons I order Chinese instruments are the good quality, high cost-effectiveness and popularity," he said.

At the exhibition, another guitar company from Zheng'an, Natasha Musical Instrument Manufacturing Co Ltd, attracted the attention of guitar enthusiasts from various countries with its independently developed all-bamboo smart guitar.

Zhao Jianfeng, founder of Natasha, told reporters that they have invented an intelligent guitar made of bamboo, providing a richer playing experience through innovative technologies such as embedded sound cards and chips.

"The Belt and Road Initiative has provided Zheng'an with a broad platform for external exchanges," said Zhu from Zheng'an Ruixin Industrial Park.

XINHUA



A student of Russian guitarist Grigory Novikov plays a guitar produced by Natasha Musical Instrument Manufacturing Co Ltd at a musical school in Perm, Russia, on Aug 23, 2022. XINHUA

The Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative, reflecting common ideals and the pursuit of fairer, more connected human societies, endeavors to seek new models of international cooperation and inject a new sense of positivity into efforts aimed at promoting world peace and development.



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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Expansionary fiscal policy need of hour

EAGLE EYE

By Yu Yongding

China ended its dynamic zero-COVID-19 epidemic response policy late last year, and by January-end, the sales revenue of various consumer sectors nationwide had climbed by 12.2 percent year-on-year during Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year.

A total of 308 million tourist trips were undertaken across the country during the holiday period, 23.1 percent higher than during the corresponding period in 2022.

Though there have been high hopes of a robust economic recovery, the nation has not yet witnessed the anticipated momentum even after seven months.

China's gross domestic product grew 4.5 percent and 6.3 percent, respectively, in the first and second quarters. The relatively high growth in the second quarter has largely been attributed to the low base effect during the same period last year.

The already modest year-on-year growth rate of the consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, in the first seven months of this year edged down continuously until it eventually dipped into negative territory of -0.3 percent in July.

The producer price index (PPI), which measures the costs of goods at the factory gate, has also been declining since October last year. The index decreased by 2.5 percent year-on-year in July, hitting a new low for the current round of depressed growth.

Several domestic and foreign economists have asserted that China has entered a phase of deflation because both the CPI and PPI has reached a range of negative growth.

It is in fact questionable whether China's current economic position can be classified as one that is deflationary as there is no clear definition of deflation and the CPI has only been negative for one month. In my most recent piece, I used the term "quasi-deflationary" to avoid causing controversy.

Past lessons

Actually, this isn't the first time that the Chinese economy has encountered such a similar situation.

Through a 4-trillion-yuan (\$547.8 billion) stimulus package, China was able to successfully combat the effects of the global financial crisis from 2008 to 2009 and achieve a V-shaped rebound.

China's GDP growth rate quickly

recovered to 12.2 percent in the first quarter of 2010 from 6.4 percent the year before, with consumer and asset prices both increasing sharply at the same time. In March 2010, the CPI went beyond 3 percent, and it rose even further, reaching 4.9 percent in February 2011.

The government set the CPI control target at around 4 percent for 2011. In fact, the government's macroeconomic policy orientation for 2011 had shifted to prevention of asset bubbles and inflation rather than promotion of economic development.

Infrastructure investment declined 2.36 percent year-on-year in February 2012 as a result of the tightening of fiscal and monetary policies in 2011 and a raft of real estate control measures had been implemented since 2010, and the growth rate of real estate investment also gradually decreased since May 2010 after reaching a record high of 37 percent.

Meanwhile, in 2012, there occurred considerable overcapacity, particularly in the steel sector, where profit margins plunged to about 0.04 percent from 2.55 percent in 2011. Most economists at the time believed that excess capacity was the primary issue facing the economy and that it needed to be reduced.

There was significant overcapacity in the steel industry, to be sure, but this was mostly attributable to the severe decrease in the growth rates of industrial, real estate and infrastructure investment.

Since the symptoms of both excess capacity and insufficient effective demand are largely the same, the two are frequently conflated in policy analysis. The path of macroeconomic policy is determined by different assessments of whether the economy is experiencing insufficient effective demand or excess capacity.

Excess capacity generally stems from overexpansion of investment by firms that are overly optimistic about the economic outlook. On the other hand, a lack of effective demand typically results from businesses having an extremely negative view, which causes an overly compressed investment.

Overcapacity is generally a structural problem with the economy, whereas lack of effective demand is typically a macroeconomic issue. A key factor in deciding whether there is surplus capacity or inadequate effective demand is the differing nature of external shocks.

For instance, in 2012, China's overcapacity was linked to a swift

change in macroeconomic policy from one of expansion to one of austerity. In reality, China's budget deficit ratio dropped from 2.7 percent in 2009 to just 1.5 percent in 2012, and new loans from Chinese financial institutions peaked in 2009 at 9.6 trillion yuan before falling to 7.95 trillion yuan in 2010 and 7.47 trillion yuan in 2011.

Despite increasing to 8.2 trillion yuan in 2012, fresh lending was still less than what it was in 2009. To put it another way, China's overcapacity in 2012 should be mostly attributed to the lack of effective demand brought on by the abrupt change in macroeconomic policy from loosening to tightening.

In hindsight, the government rushed to the "normalization" of macroeconomic policy from

2010 to 2011 as it overestimated the risk of inflation and asset bubbles. As a result of this, China's GDP growth quickly fell below 9 percent and then 8 percent.

In 2012, the Chinese government and the economic community came to the conclusion that China's potential growth rate was less than 8 percent, a result that the country should have been happy to accept.

However, after falling below 8 percent, GDP growth continued to drop.

While the CPI was kept at a level of roughly 2 percent and the PPI was in negative growth mode since March 2012, GDP growth dipped below 7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015.

In light of this, I'm starting to worry that China's economy might be about to spiral into a debt-deflation vicious cycle.

In my essay, I wrote: "China must pursue an expansionary fiscal policy

to promote effective demand through government-supported infrastructure investment in order to avoid a hard landing of the economy and to lessen the discomfort of adjustment."

Finding solutions

The pandemic-induced shocks have significantly slowed China's GDP development. Long-term evidence of insufficient effective demand in China's macroeconomy is provided by low inflation and persistently negative PPI growth.

The conclusion reached by the central government that "insufficient aggregate demand is the major problem facing the current economic operation" is correct. Given this, the basic path for resolving China's current economic issues is clear.

Local government debt and real estate firm blowouts have emerged as the two main problems threatening China's socioeconomic stability. China still has a lot of room for fiscal and monetary policy to deal with these two problems.

Problems of real estate companies that may pose a systemic financial risk can be addressed by curbing further declines in asset prices, and providing sufficient liquidity, while local government debt can be dealt with through debt swaps and other strategies.

In addition, the government should encourage infrastructure investment through expansionary fiscal and monetary policies in order to boost economic growth. Higher economic growth will boost people's and businesses' confidence, as well as create solid conditions for resolving the debts of real estate companies and local governments.

Fiscal policy should play a leading role in macroeconomic policy, and if expansionary fiscal measures cannot be taken, China's economic growth would continue to trend downward. Stabilizing economic growth through fiscal policy entails boosting fiscal spending, which calls for a corresponding increase in the fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio.

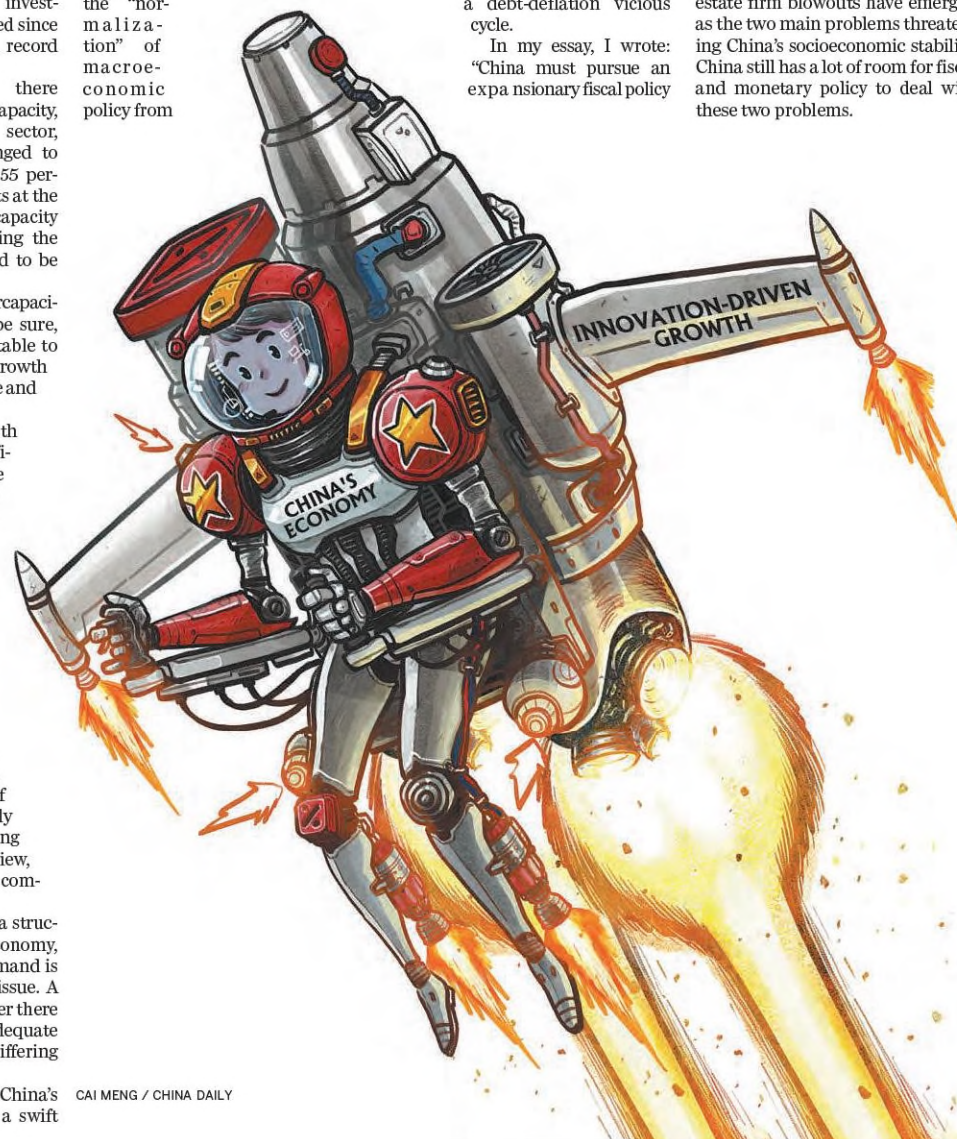
Western countries have long abandoned the so-called Maastricht Treaty requirements, which state that the fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio should not exceed 3 percent and the national debt-to-GDP ratio should not surpass 60 percent.

The quantitative easing and zero-interest-rate policies of the United States have been criticized as irresponsible, but it is precisely because of the implementation of such policies that it has set a historical record of 120 consecutive months of positive growth.

It should be noted that this essay solely addresses the short-term macroeconomic situation and macroeconomic stabilization policies. In the long run, whether China's economy can shift from one driven by real estate investment and exports to one that is driven by innovation will determine if it can retain a high growth rate.

Indeed, there is positive momentum in many industries, and innovation-led firms are flourishing across the country. China will be able to maintain a high rate of economic growth over the next decade or two as long as it persists in innovation, and will eventually realize its century-old ambition of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The writer is former president of the China Society of World Economics and former director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He served on the Monetary Policy Committee of the People's Bank of China from 2004 to 2006. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Decade on, Belt, Road helping uplift developing world

MAIN STREET

By Fan Zhiyong

In a visionary move, in September 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed the initiative of constructing the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, and the upcoming third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation will be hosted in China.

The BRI has actively embraced multilateral and multilateral cooperation and various regional collaboration platforms ever since it was first established. Drawing inspiration from the ancient Silk Road, it champions the principle of peaceful development while actively fostering economic partnerships with countries involved in the BRI, working toward a community of shared interests, future and responsibility, marked by mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness.

More than an initiative for economic and trade collaboration, it opens new pathways to help realize China's model of modernization and offers fresh possibilities for other developing countries to achieve their own respective modern development. In the annals of human history, closed economies have proved

insufficient for modernization — the growth of international trade and cross-border flows of people, goods and capital together constitute the imperative route to modernization for all economies.

Historically, whether during the Age of Discovery or the ignominious triangular trade, modernization of developed countries in the West was often associated with colonial warfare and exploitation, inflicting profound suffering upon the peoples of colonized nations.

In contrast, China's path to modernization embodies a peaceful journey. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized China's commitment to an open policy and a win-win outcome based on mutual benefits. It will continually provide opportunities for the rest of the world through its new development paradigm, advancing the construction of an open global economy for the collective well-being of all nations.

From the outset, the BRI articulated five development goals for participating countries — policy coordination, facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people connections. Going beyond formal agreements and infrastructure investment, the initiative's enduring value lies in genuine and deep people-to-people ties, forging a beautiful vision where people from diverse cultures unite to construct a better global community.

The initiative has evolved into an internationally acclaimed platform for open, inclusive, mutually benefi-

cial and win-win international cooperation over the past decade, and has been warmly advocated by an increasing number of countries. According to official statistics, as of January 2023, 151 countries and 32 international organizations have signed over 200 cooperation agreements with China under the BRI framework. By aligning their national development strategies with the initiative, participating countries have discovered new opportunities on a broader platform to achieve their development objectives.

The BRI also provides new ideas for economic re-globalization. In recent years, driven primarily by their self-interests, Western developed countries have intensified protectionism, posing significant challenges to economic globalization. Consequently, many countries, especially developing ones, find themselves at risk of missing out on the benefits of globalization and economic and social progress.

Within the BRI, it has been China that steadfastly upholds the role of pushing forward economic globalization, promoting trade and investment liberalization, facilitating bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation, enhancing international policy coordination, collectively creating an international environment conducive to development, nurturing new engines of global growth, and actively supporting the acceleration of development in developing countries.

From a historical view, inadequate infrastructure has been a

critical impediment to the progress of developing countries. Based on the concept of "club convergence" in economic theories, a nation's initial per capita level determines its eventual level of economic development. Barriers such as educational limitations, lack of resources or poor infrastructure prevent economically challenged countries from moving to a higher convergence club. These factors make it nearly impossible for a country in one convergence club to move to higher convergence club. In simpler terms, poor nations remain poor because they were poor in the past. According to this theory, one way to help developing countries escape poverty is to increase their capital stock, primarily through infrastructure development.

However, due to weak construction, operation and management capabilities — as well as a shortage of skilled personnel, mere financial assistance has failed to lift these economies from their underdeveloped predicaments. This is why many BRI projects, through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, have enabled countries to enhance their local infrastructure while involving China in their operation and management. This approach has helped cultivate a large pool of skilled workers and managers, providing a continuous impetus for sustainable local economic development.

In Africa, the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, constructed by Chinese enterprises, has played a vital role in Kenya's social

and economic development. In Asia, since its inauguration in December 2021, the China-Laos Railway, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, had transported over 20 million passengers as of August. The Jakarta-Bandung High-speed Railway, involving Chinese participation, also commenced operations in September, and is expected to help boost Indonesia's economy. The forthcoming China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway will also greatly facilitate economic and trade exchanges between China and Central Asian countries, further enhancing regional economic integration.

As an initiative that has drawn participation from over three-quarters of the world's nations and numerous international organizations, the BRI enjoys broad approval from the international community, especially from developing countries. In its early stages, collaboration between China and other BRI countries was primarily manifested in large-scale infrastructure and investment projects, with Chinese State-owned enterprises playing a major role. However, as bilateral and multilateral exchanges deepen, the initiative has entered a new phase, influencing day-to-day lives of people in all Belt and Road countries.

An example of deepened cooperation taking on various forms is the Luban Workshop. Pioneered in Tianjin, it has rapidly expanded in BRI countries. As of today, China has established 27 Luban Workshops in 25 countries, covering fields such as railway operation, new energy, Chinese cuisine and traditional Chinese medicine. These projects have not only cultivated internationalized local talent for

BRI partner countries, but also created employment opportunities, significantly improving local livelihoods through participation in cooperative projects.

Chinese products, renowned for their high quality and competitive prices, are gradually gaining recognition and favor among consumers worldwide. Beyond everyday consumer goods infiltrating people's lives, technological advancements have established durable Chinese products as reputable choices in foreign markets. Chinese products have even become fashionable possessions in some countries and regions. In the first half, China surpassed Japan to become the world's largest exporter of automobiles, with one-fourth of these exports being electric vehicles. EVs, representing the future direction of technological development and the green consumption trend, are becoming a new hallmark of Chinese manufacturing.

The BRI is reshaping daily lives of people in China and other BRI countries. It reaffirms the belief that open cooperation is the right path to shared prosperity. Undoubtedly, in the future, the initiative will bring about further changes in people's livelihoods and offer more opportunities for economic development to countries around the world.

The writer is a professor with the School of Economics at the Renmin University of China. This article is translation of a Chinese piece published on the WeChat account of the China Macroeconomy Forum, a think tank. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials

Senators' visit could help Washington make more informed and reasonable decisions

A bipartisan group of six US senators, three Democrats and three Republicans, is visiting China in what some observers say is a sign of improving bilateral relations.

It may be too early to say the strained Sino-US relationship is improving. But if the ongoing visit proceeds well, perhaps with the delegates meeting senior Chinese leaders, it may pave the way for the much-needed improvement — ideally a widely expected meeting between Chinese and US leaders in San Francisco on the sidelines of the APEC meeting, to be held from Nov 12 to 18.

Led by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the congressional delegation will visit multiple Chinese cities and meet with government and business leaders. No matter how the trip ends, it no doubt will "contribute to a more objective understanding of China in the US Congress", as the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement last week.

After all, seeing what is actually happening here with their own eyes, comparing notes face-to-face with real people running businesses, government institutions and the country may help the US senators better understand the country they have labeled their "No 1 rival".

US politicians may not entertain China's complaint that their policy choices vis-a-vis China are too often driven by misperceptions and distor-

tions. The real China is different from what they frequently berate and act against on Capitol Hill. A short trip like this may not suffice to remove every misgiving, but it surely will be conducive to reducing, more or less, some of the misconceptions. Face-to-face communication is always better when it comes to mitigating misunderstanding.

Senator Schumer has said: "Members of Congress have their finger on the pulse of what the American people are feeling... I want to hear from the Chinese exactly what vexes them about the United States, just as I think they should hear what vexes us about China."

It always helps to hear from both sides. And the US lawmakers will gain important firsthand knowledge about what the Chinese people are feeling right now. This in itself could help make informed decisions about the two countries' relations in terms of lawmaking. For that reason alone, Senator Schumer was right to say the visit "is certainly worth trying".

This might not be the "propitious moment" Senator Schumer had described. But this certainly is a moment when people-to-people communication at all levels is badly needed for stabilizing the China-US relationship. Such communication is necessary not only for better mutual understanding, but more importantly for avoiding misjudgments and potential subsequent crises.

Nations US doesn't like are its enemies

The United States first imposed restrictions on the exports of chips to China in 2015. It extended it in 2021, and again in 2022. So vicious is the US' restriction policy that it didn't spare even a Western company, Dublin-based data storage equipment provider Seagate Technology Holdings, for exporting hard drives to Chinese telecom giant Huawei, a main target of the US high-tech war, in April. The US forced Seagate to pay \$300 million for violating its "orders".

In 2022, China's integrated circuit imports dropped by 3.9 percent year-on-year, while its imports from the US dropped by 29.2 percent. With its chips supply almost cut off, Huawei had to develop its own chips to make the latest Mate 60 and Mate 60 Pro smartphones.

Not content with imposing sanctions on Huawei, ZTE and other Chinese high-tech companies, in order to check the development of China's high-tech sector, the US Department of Commerce added 42 more Chinese companies to its Entity List on Friday for "their support for Moscow's military and defense industrial base — support that includes the supply of US-origin integrated circuits".

But how could they do that when US high-tech supplies are drying up and China is developing its own chips?

The US' move is nothing but economic bullying. By targeting the 42 Chinese companies, the US is abusing the concept of national security and using its self-proclaimed extraterritorial jurisdiction to target China and Chinese companies. The US, therefore, should be prepared to face countermeasures from the Chinese side.

The US Commerce Department has also added seven entities, from as diverse countries as Finland, Germany, India, Turkiye, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom, to its trade export control list, again for their "support for Russia".

It's too early to say whether the US has any evidence supporting its claim, but it has long believed in the dictum "either you are with us or against us", which former US president George W. Bush first spoke publicly about during the Afghanistan war in 2001. To be sure, the US sees enemies everywhere, indicating it is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The US has always used Russia, whether or not it does something, as an excuse to violate international laws and interfere in other countries' internal affairs, and puts the entities of any country it does not like on its Entity List.

China and Russia are good neighbors, and partnership is what best defines their relationship. Yet the US continues to see enemies. It's time Washington changed its course.

Belgian sleuths should stop shooting in the dark

The "China threat" farce seems to be playing out again, this time in Belgium. Last week, Belgian intelligence agency, VSSE, told the media that they are investigating "possible espionage and/or interference activities" by Chinese entities "including Alibaba", especially Alibaba's logistics operations at the cargo airport in Liege.

But as has become the norm for Western countries, the VSSE has not provided any concrete evidence to back its claim. Instead, it said the presence of Alibaba "constitutes a point of attention for the VSSE" because Chinese companies are "bound to share their data" with the Chinese authorities. "China has the intent and capacity to use this data for non-commercial purposes," the agency said.

This is not the first time a Belgian department or Western media outlets have hyped up such give-a-dog-a-bad-name-and-hang-it allegation. In May 2021, the Chinese embassy in Belgium refuted similar accusations against Alibaba, emphasizing that the baseless allegations were nothing but the "China threat" theory. As the embassy spokesperson said, this is an extremely irresponsible practice that not only misguides the Belgian public but also sullies the reputation of Chinese businesses and individuals in Belgium.

The e-commerce giant's logistics company Cainiao has operated the smart logistics hub since it opened in 2021 after Alibaba and the Belgian government reached an agreement on the establishment of the project in 2018.

The Chinese company follows the European Union's strict data protection regulations as well as Belgium's local laws and rules. That's why the logistics center at Liege has flourished as a regional e-commerce hub in Europe despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, creating jobs for locals and opening up the Chinese market to Belgian enterprises.

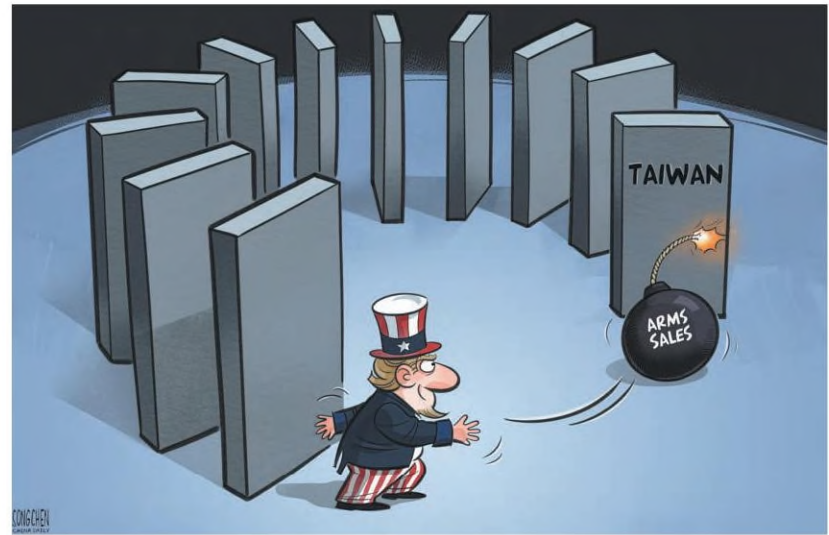
The fact that the VSSE has failed to furnish any evidence to substantiate its claim prompted Cainiao to say the allegations are based on "conjecture". Importantly, Cainiao's partner, the Liege Airport, has not spoken against their cooperation.

"Cainiao is an ambitious and innovative partner, which pushes us to reinvent ourselves and to be better," Frederic Jacquet, CEO of Liege Airport, said at the opening of the logistics center in November 2021. "Like other important partners of Liege Airport, Cainiao will help us grow in a win-win relationship, which finds its full meaning in the development projects that are ours."

Although a new law came into force in Belgium to screen foreign investments in critical infrastructure in July 2023 — some attribute the VSSE's newly found zeal for targeting Alibaba to the law — it is by no means an excuse to baselessly accuse a company, even if it is a foreign company, of spying.

Unfortunately, Belgium may end up paying the price for its intelligence agency using "national security" for some unknown, weird purpose, because such moves shake multinational companies' confidence in a country's business environment, thus harming its economy.

Song Chen



Opinion Line

Culture, service key to high-quality development of tourism industry

The eight-day Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holiday that ended on Friday added momentum to the tourism industry's recovery, and raised the requirements for the high-quality development of the industry.

Although many cities have introduced special cultural events such as music festivals to attract more tourists, far more than that is required to propel the high-quality development of the industry.

According to statistics, about 826 million passenger trips were recorded on the domestic circuit, generating revenue of 753.43 billion yuan (\$103.19 billion), both higher than the same period in 2019.

However, the authorities need to further promote the in-depth integration of the culture and tourism

sectors by digging deep into the local culture to organize creative cultural shows and produce innovative tourism-related products. There is also a need to increase the overall supply of high-quality tourism products and services. For example, with self-driving tour and other travel methods becoming popular, tourism products and services should be further refined and diversified to appeal to different kinds of tourists.

At the same time, local governments should do more to create the necessary conditions to merge tourism with other industries in their jurisdictions to not only enhance tourists' travelling experience but also further benefit local economies from the tourism boom, by helping boost consumption.

Notably, as the complaints of some tourists indicate, more measures should be taken to use social media networking to advantage in order to improve the efficacy of tourism information dissemination, keeping the tourists, including those on their way to the tourist attractions, updated with the reality of the situation. Tourists should be forewarned of any emergencies, such as worsening local weather conditions, or temporary entry limits to a tourist spot due to the huge rush of tourists within a short period of time.

More importantly, the high-quality development of the tourism industry cannot be realized without tourists being aware of the importance of environmental protection and following public codes.

— THE PAPER.CN

Israel-Hamas conflict a blow to Biden's peace efforts

That both Israel and Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, said on Saturday that they are "at war" after Palestinian militants launched an early morning assault on southern Israel which was unprecedented in its intensity, shows how serious the situation is there. Unlike previous conflicts between the two sides, Hamas' attack this time was unprecedentedly fierce, and Israeli casualties were far more than many had imagined.

Israel seems to have made two fatal mistakes this time. The first was a gross miscalculation on the part of its intelligence wing. Such a large-scale attack by Hamas, especially on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, was apparently carefully planned over a long period of time, but surprisingly Israeli intelligence

had no inkling about it. The second was the Israeli army's slow reaction to Hamas' sudden assault, possibly because it was caught unawares. The Israeli army not only failed to protect civilians, but also lost some of its personnel who were either killed or taken as "prisoners of war" by Hamas. Perhaps the relative calm of the past few years had pushed the Israeli army into a state of rest, or the fierce internal strife in Israel had further lowered the morale of the famed Israeli intelligence.

The attack revealed the fighting power and strategic prowess of Hamas. The most frightening aspect for Israelis is that Hamas broke through Israel's supposedly impregnable separation wall, and breached the Israeli-made border. It will take a long time for Israeli

citizens to overcome the psychological shock now that they know the barrier is not secure.

The retaliation of the Israeli side is almost predictable, and the Palestinian side has to prepare for a renewed and massive counterattack by Israel.

No peace-loving person would like to see that happening, though. Both sides should realize that war does not solve any problem; instead, it sows more seeds of hatred, extending conflicts and feuds to future generations.

Moreover, the conflict is a big blow to the Joe Biden administration which has been working to broker a rapprochement between Israel and Palestine in line with the United States' "commitment" to peace in the Middle East.

— NIUTANQIN WECHAT ACCOUNT

What They Say

China's high-tech advancement cannot be checked

The Joe Biden administration raised its semiconductor export control to the level of high-tech trade blockade on Oct 7 last year. One year on, it's time to ask whether the move has worked as the administration expected it to.

Unlike what Washington expected from it, the "high-tech trade war" has gradually deviated from its preset track and is messing up the global industry and supply chains, with its expected "victory" nowhere in sight.

To turn the situation in its favor, the US has further intensified its high-tech campaign against China, from blocking specific enterprises to tightening technology investment control, from banning technology exchanges to blocking the flow of science and technology talents and forming a three-dimensional suppression system to contain China's rise.

In an attempt to stifle China's high-tech sectors, the US administration now doesn't even hesitate to use its long-arm jurisdiction, forming a so-called chip alliance and using intelligence agencies to target Chinese high-tech companies and Chinese science and technology talents.

However, these moves have hurt US entities and US allies, too. Most semiconductor manufacturing giants based in the US, Japan and the Republic of Korea have reported lower revenues simply because they cannot find a large enough market to replace China after Washington forced them to suspend their normal deals with the world's second-largest economy.

Yet, thanks to the US' vicious targeting of China's high-tech sector, China now knows which fields in the high-tech sector it should focus on to seek breakthroughs, in order

to become self-reliant in high-tech, especially advanced semiconductors.

Paradoxically, the US' move has helped accelerate China's research and development in high-tech, which is crucial for safeguarding national security. The US' trade bullying has apparently made Chinese policymakers and decision-makers realize that as long as China relies on exports for the smooth functioning of its core technologies and equipment sectors, it will continue to face high external risks and uncertainties.

As some observers have said, the US cannot contain China's development by controlling high-tech exports. At best, it can delay China's progress. China's journey to become self-reliant in high-tech is unstoppable.

— WECHAT ACCOUNT OF THE MINISTRY OF STATE SECURITY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Belt and Road Initiative

Editor's note: The Belt and Road Initiative has opened up enormous development opportunities for countries involved in the initiative. Following the principle of achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration, the BRI has been improving infrastructure to boost economic development. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Mushahid Hussain Sayed

CPEC fully proves its real worth

In a speech at the Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan, President Xi Jinping launched what has become the 21st century's most significant development initiative. By June 2023, China has signed agreements with 152 countries and 32 international organizations on Belt and Road cooperation. Comprising the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the Belt and Road Initiative has helped improve infrastructure and connectivity between and within countries.

We in Pakistan, neighbor and strategic partner of China, are fortunate to have the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. The CPEC has helped build an enabling economic environment in Pakistan with energy, education and the economy being among its key pillars. China has invested nearly \$26 billion in direct projects in Pakistan, creating 236,000 jobs, generating 8,000 megawatts of electricity, and building 510 kilometers of highways and 886 km of the national electricity grid. Also, about 28,000 Pakistani students are studying in China and more than 20,000 Pakistanis are learning Chinese.

The CPEC is not just about bricks and mortar. It is also about people-to-people exchanges, which are at the core of the strategic bond between the two "iron brothers", Pakistan and China. The CPEC was launched when Pakistan was facing immense challenge from terror groups. It was also facing instability and conflict due to the US "war on terror" in neighboring Afghanistan.

By launching the CPEC, China gave a vote of confidence to Pakistan and its people, and raised Pakistani people's hope for a better future. The CPEC's successful completion of "early harvest projects" on schedule, with no job cuts even during the COVID-19 pandemic, speaks volumes about the dedication and commitment of both sides to complete these projects.

The Belt and Road Initiative demonstrates resilience and continuity of a world that is facing turbulence and transformation. The past 10 years has seen the investment of \$1 trillion in about 3,000 Belt and Road projects, which have created 420,000 jobs and helped lift 40 million people out of poverty.

As it celebrates its 10th anniversary, the Belt and Road Initiative faces a barrage of propaganda from its detractors in the West who largely view it through a geopolitical lens because they seek to contain China by igniting a new Cold War.

As an English saying goes, imitation is the highest form of flattery. To counter the Belt and Road Initiative, the West, especially the United States, has come up with similar development initiatives



The author is the founding chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute, and chairman of the Senate Defence Committee, Pakistan.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

only to fail in delivering any of its promises. For example, in 2018, the US Congress passed the BUILD Act (Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act), with an institutional back-up in the form of the International Development Finance Corporation, and having a financial

outlay of \$60 billion for infrastructure projects. But nothing materialized.

In 2021, at the G7 Summit in Cornwall, the United Kingdom, US President Joe Biden announced the "Build Back Better World" (B3W) initiative with much fanfare. A year later, after Biden failed to launch any project, the G7 rebranded B3W as the "Partnership for Growth in Infrastructure and Investment". Concurrently, the European Union launched its copycat version, "Golden Gateway", to "compete" with the Belt and Road Initiative.

None has shown any concrete outcomes in terms of projects launched.

And at the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September, the US, together with the EU and some other countries, launched yet another "historic" initiative to "counter" the Belt and Road Initiative: the "India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor".

What critics of the Belt and Road Initiative fail to realize is that the China-proposed initiative is not just about building projects; it is about a different mindset, a mindset that promotes values and delivers on promises at a time when the global center of gravity is shifting from the West to the East.

The Belt and Road Initiative, together with the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, is helping establish a global order based on equality, diversity and inclusivity, build bridges (the China-brokered rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a fine example), and promote modernization and connectivity.

Conversely, born again Cold Warriors in the West are building barriers (sanctions, tariffs and protectionism), militarizing international relations (QUAD, AUKUS, eastern expansion of NATO) and sparking confrontations and conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region. This is their tried and tested but failed formula to contain China. For instance, the launch of Mate 60 Pro smartphones by Huawei is a slap on the face of the proponents of sanctions.

As for people in Pakistan and the majority of the Global South, they support the Belt and Road Initiative and participate in and benefit from it due to its people-centric development and "win-win cooperation" approach. The Global South, as the backbone of Belt and Road Initiative, is on the right side of history, working together to build a better tomorrow with no overlords and underdogs.

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

Djoomart Otorbaev

Railway can drive Central Asia's development faster

The Belt and Road Initiative has built remarkably efficient railways connecting China and Europe via Central Asia. These rail routes did not exist even a decade ago. Within a short period, they have boosted local and national economies thanks to their solid infrastructure, smooth operation and socioeconomic impacts.

Between January and August in 2023 alone freight trains made 11,638 trips and transported 1.26 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cargo between Asia and Europe. The trains have an average speed of 120 kilometers an hour, and connect 86 routes that cover 217 cities in 25 European countries and more than 100 cities in 11 countries and regions in Asia.

Over the past 10 years, China-Europe freight trains have made a total of 77,000 trips, carrying 7.31 million TEUs of goods worth more than \$340 billion.

At present, most cargo between China and Europe is transported along the so-called northern route that passes through Central Asia, Russia and Belarus. However, the shortest and most efficient southern route from Central Asia to China, and then through the South Caucasus to Europe, is gaining more attention. In this regard, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan section will be a promising inclusion to these routes.

In September 2022, an agreement was signed at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, to promote construction of a railway connecting China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Additional documents were signed during the China-Central Asia Summit in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, in May this year to conduct a feasibility study and work out a financing model.

The Kyrgyz section of the railway will start from the Torugart Pass, from where the railway line will extend northwest through Arpa and Makmal to Jalal-Abad, where it will connect with Uzbekistan's railway network. To facilitate that, the railway gauge will be changed from the standard gauge (1.43 meters) used in China and Europe to the standard gauge (1.52 m) found in Central Asia, probably in Makmal, which is home to a gold processing plant.

The Kyrgyz section of the railway will span 280 km, crossing rugged mountainous terrain and require the construction of at least 90 tunnels. The total cost of the project is estimated to be between \$3 billion and \$5 billion. Also, China will need to build about 160 km of access roads within its territory to connect to the new railway line.

After the completion of this section, the railway can be extended to the West, passing through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, the South Caucasian countries and Turkey to ultimately reach Europe. This extension is expected to reduce the distance from China to Turkey by about 900 km.

As for the return on the investment, the parties can recover their amount by collecting road toll, primarily for cargo being transported from China to Europe — estimated at 5 million tons of freight per year.

Central Asia is set to become a critical transport hub for the whole of Eurasia. The East-West transport corridor in this region will soon connect with the North-South corridor, linking the northern countries through Iran and Afghanistan with South Asian countries and the ports around the Indian Ocean. This will make Central Asia a vital transportation hub in the foreseeable future.

Some experts initially had doubts about the feasibility of building a railway in the challenging terrain of the Kyrgyz mountains. However, these doubts disappeared, considering the features of the newly built China-Laos railway. The China-Laos railway covers 1,035 km from Kunming in Southwest China's Yunnan province to the Laotian capital of Vientiane. The railway runs through high mountainous terrain with complex geology, high seismic risk and high geo-stress.

Moreover, the China-Laos railway crosses 218 faults and fractures as well as the Mekong River, with an altitude difference of 2,900 m. Despite these challenges, the railway has been built and newly features 301 bridges and 167 tunnels.

That China has paid special attention to the environment and the fragile ecology of the mountains during the construction of the railroad goes without saying. The railway bypasses multiple national nature reserve forests, including Xishuangbanna and Luang Prabang, as well as tourist attractions and national forest parks. The project was, therefore, designed to blend harmoniously with the environment along the route. The China-Laos railway has already started bearing economic fruit, especially for the tourist spots along the way.

Similarly, the railway connecting Asia and Europe through Central Asia will be a prime example of transportation infrastructure having a positive impact on the economy, promoting development in a region, and bringing different countries closer. With the latest transportation technologies, trade will be simplified and expedited, distances will be reduced, and people and cultures will come closer, leading to increased exchanges of knowledge and experiences.

The caravans of the ancient Silk Road facilitated intercultural and intellectual dialogue between people from different countries, shaping modern civilizations and promoting development.

In the same way, every train passing through Eurasia will bring economic prosperity through partnership and strengthen trust between peoples. The railway, when completed, has the potential of transforming Central Asia from a land-locked region to a land-connected hub for the whole of Eurasia. By channeling collective energy toward revitalizing new routes, the Belt and Road Initiative has been reviving the great spirit of the ancient Silk Road as a trade corridor and opening-up passages connecting people, cultures and civilizations.

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



The author is former prime minister of the Kyrgyz Republic and a distinguished professor at the Belt and Road School of Beijing Normal University.

Ong Tee Keat

Only BRI truly meets infrastructure needs

The 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative marks its coming of age amid rising geopolitical tensions. The ambitious global endeavour of an unprecedented scale has weathered through its first decade with much vigor despite the immense challenges.

The multitude of orchestrated disinformation designed to discredit it with such malicious labels as "debt trap" has failed to hamper the Belt and Road Initiative's momentum. The incessant insidious vilification of the initiative by the West has failed to slow its progress in infrastructure development. As of June 2023, China has signed more than 200 agreements with 152 countries and 32 international organizations, including the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, under the Belt and Road framework.

As the Belt and Road Initiative makes new inroads in Latin America, once dubbed the "backyard of the US", the post-pandemic Southeast Asia is now on the threshold of economic recovery with an escalating demand for infrastructure development. The latter's rail links are projected to grow by 20 percent with an extension of more than 1,350 kilometers by the end of 2024 as compared with that on January 2023, according to a Nikkei analysis of projects in countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

While the BRI skeptics in the West continue to cast aspersions on the BRI infrastructure projects, little did they anticipate China-ASEAN goods trade volume in 2022 — the year when the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement came into force — has posted an impressive increase of 15 percent year-on-year.

Alongside a respective increase of 26.7 percent and 15.5 percent in both the sea-borne and air-cargo logistics involved in the China-ASEAN trade, the whopping increase of 197.6 percent in rail logistics stands out to be the most remarkable. In this context, the China-Laos railway service inaugurated in December 2021 has its fair share of contribution to the quantum leap in the rail logistics.

These RCEP statistics mirror the compounding impacts of the RCEP implementation alongside the logistical connectivity provided by the BRI. The trillion dollar worth mega-endeavour is truly a game-changer in its own right as it seeks to transform the landscape of regional, if not, global con-

nectivity in all respects.

A case in point is the China-Laos rail link. At one time, it was deemed a near insurmountable challenge in the pan-Asian railway project. Now it has emerged as the forerunner in setting the pan-Asian railway into momentum. Its immediate impact is that it has transformed Laos, a land-locked ASEAN member state, into a land-linked country, thus enhancing the economic competitiveness of the nation.

When the world is still reeling from the pandemic-induced floundering economy, the US-led West set their sights

more on the number of new BRI projects rolled out and were quick in drawing the conclusion that the Global Development Initiative, among others, was rolled out at the expense of the BRI. The latter was said to be left at the back burner with fewer projects hogging the international limelight.

Yet, the truth lies in that the GDI serves as an enabling platform to make the BRI outreach multi-dimensional. The complementarity of both the BRI and GDI simply evades the radar screen of the critics as seen in the case of how the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership delivers the economic dividends by riding on the BRI's logistical connectivity.

When the endeavour goes global, cultural differences rooted in the existing civilizational disparity between China and the rest of the world have to be bridged in the interest of confidence building. Effective communication to promote mutual understanding remains central to the successful implementation of the BRI.

In this regard, intensified vilification against the BRI by the doomsayers is certainly not the least anticipated. Though the venomous "debt trap" conspiracy theory has been pronounced unfounded, it is still being resurrected repeatedly to satisfy the insatiable greed for egoistic pride among the "sore losers". The unnecessary disdain displayed is simply "sour grape" at work.

Be that as it may, new "mini-lateral" groupings, ostensibly sponsored by the US, are now entering the ring of infrastructure development, purportedly to



The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for the Asia-Pacific, and former transport minister of Malaysia.

help bridge the gap of global infrastructure finance which requires an additional \$3.2 trillion or 2 percent of the global GDP annually to realize the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The new kid on the block is the "India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor", which was launched at the recent G20 Summit in New Delhi. It has been projected as a transnational rail and shipping route spreading across Asia, the Middle East countries and Europe.

Prior to this, the kick-off of the BRI in 2013 has sparked off a litany of fresh initiatives for infrastructure development that are touted as viable alternatives. The low- and medium-income countries in dire need for infrastructure development seem to have made an ideal ground for showering hopes and promises.

The "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" promised by Japan in 2015, followed by the launching of the "Asia-Africa Growth Corridor" by India in 2017 were both remembered to have slid into another promise of harmonizing their initiatives with their QUAD partners, namely the US and Australia in 2020 on the platform of Blue Dot Network. This was further eclipsed by the "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment" rolled out by the US and its allies in G7 in 2022.

Prior to this, the European Union was joining the fray when it launched the "Global Gateway" program in 2021 with a commitment to deliver a "values-driven, high-standard and transparent" infrastructure partnership to meet the global infrastructure development needs.

All these initiatives shared the same purpose of funding infrastructure projects in the Global South. But none has yet had anything substantive to showcase the promised model of high-quality infrastructure on the horizon.

From the global perspective, no party should ever be paranoid of healthy competition in the interest of humanity. The BRI has proven its prowess by delivery of projects on-schedule. After all, proof of the pudding is in the eating. Amid the rising politics of infrastructure, no amount of empty hubris and rhetoric could ever reshape the global infrastructure connectivity, but sincere commitment certainly does.

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

GLOBAL VIEWS

BA FENG AND ZHANG MINGHUI

Sinking emissions

Tapping the potential of forest carbon sequestration projects can help realize the net-zero goal

China, representing one of the emerging economies, stands out as one of the pioneering developing nations to engage in international forest carbon sequestration projects since the 2000s. At a time when global climate governance is undergoing major transformation, China is increasingly taking on a more significant responsibility in global climate governance.

Forest carbon sequestration — the process of using afforestation, forest management and forest protection to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in plants and soil, so as to reduce the carbon intensity in the atmosphere — has a critical role to play in achieving the goal of global net-zero emissions. China's participation in international forest carbon sequestration projects, a vivid example of the country's participation in global climate governance, has reflected a change in its role in such cooperation and provided reference for China to participate in and promote climate cooperation among countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The development of China's forest carbon sequestration projects is undergoing a major transformation alongside the profound changes taking place in global climate cooperation.

At the global level, from the Tokyo Protocol to the Paris Agreement, the international climate cooperation mechanism — known as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) that divides the participants into the developed countries and the developing countries — is becoming irrelevant. Whether developing countries such as China can be deemed as the hosting nation of CDM programs has aroused controversy. Since May 2015, with the conclusion of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, China has seen no new forest carbon sequestration projects successfully registered under the CDM, and the existing projects have also stagnated with no new buyers emerging. On the other side of the equation, China has been advancing its domestic emissions trading mechanism and launched the national carbon emissions trading market in 2022, providing yet another platform for the development of China's forest carbon sequestration projects.

Specifically, the development of China's forest carbon sequestration project is faced with three major transformation trends.

To start with, the trading condition for China's forest carbon sequestration projects is evolving from the international market dominated by global cooperation projects toward the domestic market under China's national carbon trading market.

China's forest carbon sequestration projects will possibly witness yet another round of rapid growth after experiencing sluggish growth in CDM projects. However, since China's carbon trading market is still in its infancy, the quota allotted to emissions-restrictive industries and standards are being explored and adjusted. Thus, the room left for voluntary emissions reduction trade remains to be seen. The China Cer-

tified Emission Reduction (CCER) program, a voluntary program in which participants can trade carbon credits, was first launched in 2012 and suspended in 2017. During the five years of operation, in general, the supply exceeded demand in the trade of forest carbon sinks and the price was relatively low.

Second, the policy focus for forest carbon sequestration projects is changing from global emissions reduction trading to integral involvement in China's national ecological development.

The goal of China's forest carbon sequestration projects is also changing from purely addressing climate change to accomplishing multiple targets involving poverty alleviation, ecological compensation and the realization of ecological products value, among others. The trade is evolving from international cooperation projects led by the National Development and Reform Commission toward a policy tool used for ecological construction by a number of commissions and departments in a coordinated manner.

On Sept 25, the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, China's Cabinet, jointly issued the Plan for Deepening the Reform of the Collective Forest Rights System, which emphasizes support for eligible forestry carbon sequestration projects.

In the plan issued by China on Sept 25, detailed discussions were provided on various aspects, including the forestry carbon sequestration measurement and monitoring system, forestry carbon sequestration market trading mechanisms, forestry carbon sequestration ecological compensation mechanisms, and legislative supervision mechanisms related to forestry carbon sequestration.

Third, China's accumulation of knowledge and experience in forest carbon sequestration projects has progressed from passive acceptance to active reshaping and sharing.

Compared with other emissions trading projects such as solar, wind, hydro projects, forest carbon sequestration projects are unique in that they involve a large number of rural households in a forest community and will bring about changes to the traditional livelihood of local communities. However, research indicates that CDM forestry carbon sequestration projects are typically implemented in remote and economically disadvantaged forestry areas, making them prone to local livelihood conflicts, and often resulting in deviations from project objectives.

According to the author's field research in China's Sichuan province on forest carbon sequestration projects from 2016 to 2018, some communities combined the promotion of

carbon sequestration programs with the transformation of natural resource utilization, which successfully balanced the accomplishment of multiple goals including carbon credit trading, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, and biodiversity protection. By summarizing and analyzing the practices of forest carbon sequestration projects in developing countries, China can have experiences and lessons to share with other countries when promoting international cooperation for green development in the BRI participating countries, and the establishment of new mechanisms for climate cooperation among developing countries.

Based on the above three trends, the following recommendations are proposed:

First, driven by the carbon peak and neutrality goals, China has introduced a range of policies to robustly support the development and trade of forest carbon sequestration projects. However, it should also exercise caution to avoid "overheated" expansion of such programs and the fostering of overly high expectations regarding their returns.

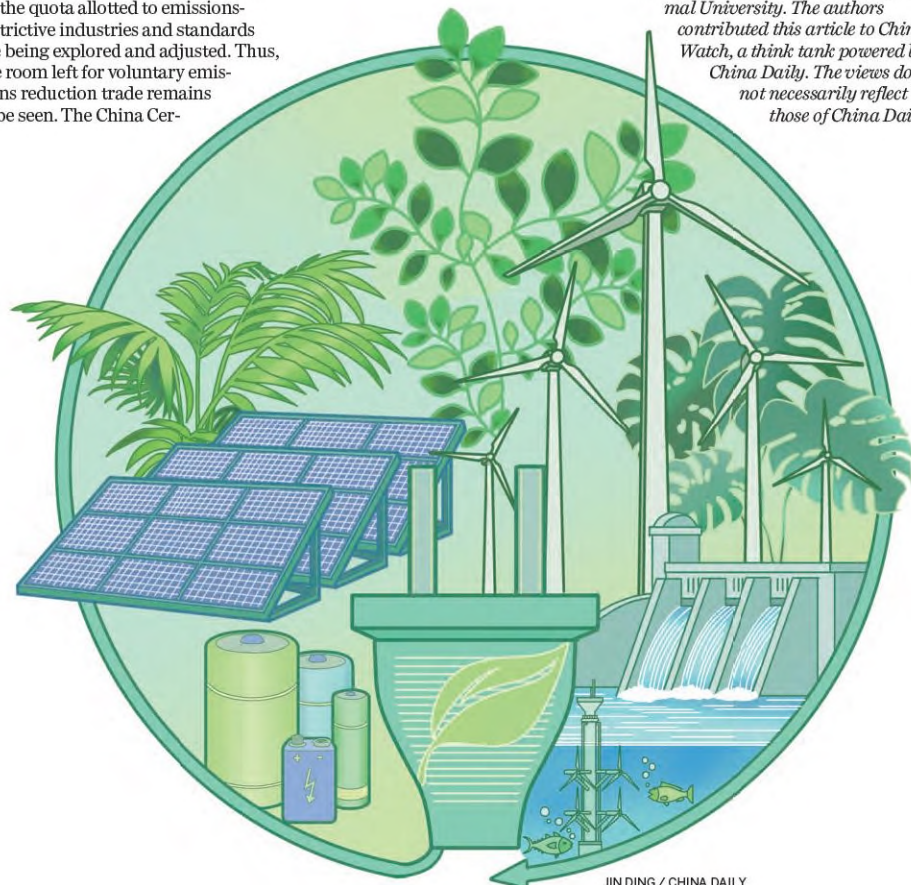
Second, aside from increasing carbon credits, the value of forest carbon sequestration projects in terms of poverty alleviation, community development and biodiversity protection needs to be fully supported by the policy.

For instance, during China's poverty alleviation campaign, the NDRC and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment successively unveiled policies to support the carbon trading market including impoverished areas' forest carbon sequestration projects into the market with a higher priority and encouraged carbon trading compliance enterprises and entities to pair up with poor areas to purchase such programs. These have provided a stellar example of using such programs for advancing poverty alleviation.

Last, the practical experience of forestry carbon sequestration projects in developing countries need to be promoted.

In the years to come, China needs to summarize its experiences in forest development, improve the scientific plan and know-how for the development and trade of forest carbon sequestration projects, and vigorously promote experience sharing and knowledge communication among developing countries on forest carbon sink trade. These moves will advance the joint construction of a green Belt and Road and steer global climate governance in a more inclusive and equitable direction.

Ba Feng is a lecturer with the College of Humanities and Development Studies at China Agricultural University. Zhang Minghui is an associate researcher with the College of Economics and Management at Nanning Normal University. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

MUSTAFA KAMAL KAZI

Multilateralism the way forward

The world needs more economic corridors such as BRI to bring shared prosperity and civilizations closer

More than 2,000 years ago, great Chinese entrepreneurs and explorers, trekking across the vast steppes and deserts, opened a transcontinental route connecting Asia, Europe and Africa. Navigating through the rough seas, Chinese seamen created a Maritime Silk Road linking the East with the West. These ancient routes served as vistas of friendly engagement between the nations. They added a splendid chapter to the history of human progress and prosperity. These pioneers won their place in history not as conquerors with warships, guns or swords. Rather, they are remembered as friendly emissaries leading camel caravans and sailing treasure-laden ships.

Generation after generation, the Silk Road travelers have built a bridge of peace and East-West cooperation. These routes enabled people of different civilizations, religions and races to interact and embrace each other with an open mind. In the course of the exchange, they fostered a spirit of mutual respect and were engaged in a common endeavor to pursue prosperity. These interactions boosted flow of knowledge and learning. The Chinese civilization generously shared its know-how and skills at that time. Today, a rejuvenated China has achieved technological and economic progress at a speed unprecedented in human history. Most Asian countries count China as their top trading partner.

To share its progress and prosperity with the world, particularly the Global South, China gave a new 21st century version of the 2,000-year-old Silk Road. This vision was outlined in 2013 by President Xi Jinping when he proposed the Belt and Road Initiative. This initiative was based on China's historical experience that in this increasingly interdependent, multipolar, economically globalized and culturally diversified world, economic growth and development need to be more inclusive and balanced. The BRI aims to promote inter- and intra-regional connectivity, through industrial, economic and infrastructure development. It will help reduce the widening gap between the rich and the poor in the world.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is one of its flagship projects. Completed

The issues of rising and declining powers should not necessarily become a zero-sum game. Multilateralism rather than unilateralism is the best means of finding solutions to the world's increasingly complex problems.

and functioning, the CPEC projects include multiple road infrastructure, transport, energy plants and a deep-water port. Plans are being finalized for a high-speed train line from Karachi to Peshawar and construction of industrial zones. This makes the role, scale and scope of the initiative a massive global win-win proposition. By altering the balance of global economic power and transforming the prospects for many developing countries, the BRI has proven to be a bold and decisive global economic project ever conceived.

The BRI moves fast across the Asian and African landmasses, as well as the waterways of the Indian Oceans and the Mediterranean. It involves multiple economic corridors all over the planet. It comprehensively connects the Eurasian landmass through huge railway networks spanning Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia to Europe. The BRI also creates a new route to the sea through the CPEC connecting Southeast Asia by land through new railroads going through Laos as well as a route which spans West Asia through Türkiye.

Washington and former colonial powers seem extremely uneasy at the rise of China, apart from China's role in the creation of powerful regional and cross-regional groupings such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and support for the African Union. They fear that the Global South would increasingly view China as a successful role model for their economic development. They regard these developments as a threat to their centuries-old geo-economic and geopolitical global hegemony — more so because China's economic resurgence and rise is unique. It achieved

all this while being in full command over its sovereignty, its foreign and domestic policies.

The end of the Cold War generated new hopes for a peaceful global order. It was felt that the world would now single-mindedly focus on addressing issues affecting the welfare of entire humanity, particularly those affecting the countries in the Global South. But it wasn't to be so. Washington abused its unipolar moment and uncontested primacy, as a result of forever wars, particularly after the Sept 11 attacks. There is no need to go into details of Islamophobia and consequent wars and destruction in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. There is lot of talk within the United States and the world on how the US' wars nourish its military-industrial-corporate-political complex.

The revival of polarized geopolitics, great power competition, risky military confrontation have a real danger of escalating into a nuclear war or fights over resources. These geopolitical risks are colliding with complex new challenges such as climate change, pandemics, financial turmoil, global supply chain issues and nuclear proliferation. There is a need to work together on these challenges. The issues of rising and declining powers should not necessarily become a zero-sum game. Multilateralism rather than unilateralism is the best means of finding solutions to the world's increasingly complex problems. In any case, whether we like it or not, the world now lives in a new reality. With lasting shifts in the global economy and technology, the world is moving toward a transformed geopolitical landscape and a much-needed multipolar order which creates due and legitimate space for the Global South. Today, we need more and more economic corridors such as the BRI to bring shared prosperity and civilizations closer and closer.

The author has been ambassador of Pakistan to Russia, the Netherlands, Indonesia and Iraq. He is currently on the Governing Board of the Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh, Karachi, Pakistan. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LIFE

The town he loves so well still inspires, as does the majesty of Xinjiang's landscapes, **Chen Nan** reports.

Yiqikelike in Kuqa in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region was once a thriving oil town. Meaning "a place where gazelles appear" in Uygur, and hidden deep in the Tianshan Mountains, Yiqikelike was once home to thousands of people who labored night and day to extract the treasure buried beneath its streets.

Zhang Zhi was born and raised in the oil town, where his parents worked. He can still recall vividly that it was covered in snow in the winter, and, as a child, he spent his days sledding with his elder brother and the other neighborhood children.

"I spent my childhood there. I think it is the most beautiful place in the world, and I still think so," the 50-year-old says.

He grew up being exposed to the cultures of the many ethnic groups that live in the area, absorbing their music and learning to play their instruments.

His dream was to become an artist and, while he did learn to paint as a child, he later became a singer-songwriter, dedicated to writing folk songs incorporating the musical elements of Xinjiang. In 2010, he joined the band Voyagers as lead vocalist and songwriter.

During a recent online event, Zhang shared stories about life in Yiqikelike and how it inspired him to create his music, which has been enthusiastically welcomed by fans.

Along with two other band members, Jin Mei, who plays the *yangqin* (a hammered dulcimer), and Mongolian ethnic musician Gawa, who plays the *morin khuur* (the horse-head fiddle), Zhang performed one of his most famous songs, *Yiqikelike*, which he wrote in honor of his hometown.

He says that he wrote it after he took a *dombra* (a two-stringed plucked instrument) to play in a valley on the outskirts of Xinjiang's Karamay city.

As the notes from his *dombra* mingled with the sound of the wind, he was inspired to write the song, which is about his parents, who moved from Sichuan province to work in the oil fields.

"When they came here, they were young. When they left, they were gray-



Singer-songwriter Zhang Zhi (top) performs during an online event, along with Jin Mei (above left), who plays the *yangqin* (a hammered dulcimer), and Mongolian ethnic musician Gawa (above right), who plays the *morin khuur* (the horse-head fiddle). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

I read lots of comments that touched me deeply. Many people have never heard of Yiqikelike and I am happy to tell stories about the place, and people who once lived there."

Zhang Zhi, singer-songwriter

haired. The song is also dedicated to all those others, just like my parents, who worked and lived there," he says.

It appeared on Zhang's debut album, *Small Town Nileke*, which was released in 2011. Featuring eight songs of his songs, it incorporates musical elements from Xinjiang's ethnic groups. The

album won numerous awards, giving Zhang and the band the opportunity to perform at outdoor music festivals around the country, among them major events, such as the Midi Music Festival and the Strawberry Music Festival.

Music critics praised the songs as "a map of the folk music of Xinjiang" and

fans were intrigued by the far-off lands depicted in them.

"I read lots of comments that touched me deeply. Many people have never heard of Yiqikelike and I am happy to tell stories about the place, and people who once lived there," Zhang says. "I was also amazed when others

told me that they had also grown up there and that their parents had spent their entire lives there.

"I taught myself to play guitar when I was a teenager. I also learned to play folk instruments like the *dombra* from people I met in Xinjiang, who introduced me to the colorful sounds of Xinjiang's folk music," he adds.

In 2013, he released his second album, *Bakhtu Port*. In the winter of 2008, as Zhang was traveling to Karamay from Tacheng, where Bakhtu port is located, the scenery outside the window inspired an improvised melody. "It suddenly took me back to the boundless wilderness and snowy scenes of Bakhtu port," he says. He recorded the melody and later wrote the song, which features the guitar, the accordion and the mandolin.

Another song on *Bakhtu Port*, *Horseman*, was written after a trip to see a friend in Alashankou. They visited the house of an old Kazak man in his 70s, who played his *dombra* all night and told them his story of falling in love, when he was young, with a woman, who left for a far-off land after marrying another man. In his memories, the girl had black eyes and always sang softly.

"I enjoy listening to people's stories; they inspire me to write songs. The old man impressed me deeply. I wrote his love story into the song with my *dombra* and guitar," says Zhang, adding that his debut album was a love letter to his parents and his hometown, and the second was a diary of trips to different parts of Xinjiang, through time and space.

His third album, *Sand and Dust*, was released in 2019, and was inspired by a sudden sandstorm in the Taklimakan Desert.

Now living in Lijiang, Yunnan province, Zhang returns to Xinjiang to visit relatives as well as to collect examples of folk music. His life in Lijiang is simple. He gets up early in the morning and rehearses with the band members most of the day, and also composes songs.

The band's core members include bassist Wu Junde and drummer Wen Feng, but they work with a variety of other musicians, to inject a diversity of musical elements into their songs.

Zhang is now at work on his fourth album, *Lost River*, which is about a week he spent on a ranch in Kuqa, Xinjiang, about eight years ago.

"I met a number of different people there, including the owner of a small store and a handsome miner. The seven days I spent on the ranch felt like a dream," he says.

Contact the writer at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn



Above left: Zhang Zhi (left) and his band members rehearse outdoors in Lijiang, Yunnan province. Above right: The group travels around the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region to collect folk music material.



What's on

Faces of time



What people look like in their own eyes and what others look like lies at the heart of an ongoing exhibition at Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts, which runs until Nov 12. It comprises a selection of iconic

figure paintings and portraits from the collection of the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum of Japan. The exhibition, *Faces of Time*, navigates the progress of Western portraiture spanning five centuries. Through these faces and images from different periods of time, one is introduced to people of different character, social standing and virtue, in the process offering a glimpse into the changes to social life, vividly presented in art that still sparkles at a time when photography is highly dominant.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 2 West Chang'an Avenue, Xicheng district, Beijing. 010-6655-0000.

Calligraphic view

The Song Dynasty (960-1279) produced dozens of calligraphers of prominence and creativity, among them Su Shi, Huang Tingjian, Mi Fu and Cai Xiang, whose accomplishments are grounded in the



years-long cultivation of arts and culture, as well as diverse life experiences and acute observation of their times. *A Grand View of Artistic Intention*, a calligraphy exhibition now on at the Zhejiang Art Museum in the provincial capital Hangzhou, assembles work by illustrious Song calligraphers and artists of later dynasties under the influence of Song calligraphic art. It examines how these figures continued to mount new peaks of calligraphy over the centuries as, meanwhile, the prosperity and cultural atmosphere of Hangzhou, once the impe-

rial capital of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), prompted the development of the art form. The exhibition ends on Friday. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 138 Nanshan Lu, Hangzhou. 0571-8707-8700.

Artistic uplift

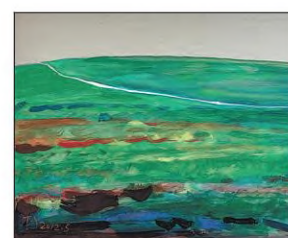
Dozens of Russian oil paintings and sculptures are being shown at the opening of a new international creativity park unveiled in Beijing's Shunyi district. The venue has been created in a former food



processing factory that has been given an uplift to serve cultural and creativity institutions. Russian art is a popular draw for museum-goers and art lovers. Works on show celebrate the dynamism and rich landscapes of nature, and exude a feeling of peace and tranquility. The exhibition runs until Oct 23. 9 am-5 pm, daily. Gaoliying, Shunsha Lu, Shunyi district, Beijing. 136-8139-2165.

Nostalgic mood

Tie Yang, now aged 88, says he is a farmer and worker, rather than an artist. The painter hails from Zhaoxian county in Hebei province, and was trained as a designer of stage art at the Central Academy of Drama in the 1950s. His paintings of the vibrant colors and serenity of countryside life remind one of the slow pace of the past. His work offers a mental escape to anyone suffering



from the anxiety and pressure of the urban hustle and bustle. *Ode to the Way Home*, an exhibition of Tie's art at the Tsinghua University Art Museum until Dec 10, introduces the audience to the world of animation and warmth he has created with his vigorous brushwork, a way of conveying his love of home and the countryside, and his concern for the people living there. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. Tsinghua University, Haidian district. 010-6278-1012.

LIFE

Doctor's blood oath to cure illness

Hematologist develops innovative treatment to improve outcomes for leukemia patients, reports **Zhou Wenting** in Shanghai.

At the beginning of his medical career three decades ago, Hu Jiong chose the roller coaster of bone marrow transplantation over the more routine merry-go-round disciplines of the medical profession.

In the early 1990s, hematology was an emerging field where a lot of improvements were needed. However, Hu says he preferred the challenge of hematology to other medical disciplines that already had set treatment plans and predictable outcomes.

Hu, 53, is now the director of the Bone Marrow Transplantation Center of the Hematology Department, Shanghai Ruijin Hospital, and his treatment innovations have improved the outcomes for many leukemia patients.

Hematopoietic stem cell transplantation involves clearing away damaged or diseased bone marrow in a patient's body through chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

This is followed by infusing normal donor hematopoietic stem cells, and rebuilding the hematopoietic and immune system in a patient's body.

The procedure is recognized as one of the most challenging clinical treatment techniques, and requires highly skilled physicians, according to medical experts.

Hu says a patient is usually hospitalized for five to six weeks during the transplantation procedure. Doctors have to ride a roller coaster with the patient as there are many obstacles to overcome, including complications and rejection of the donor material.

"We'll be haunted by fear all the time. But I enjoy such challenges from work," says Hu, whose hospital is affiliated with Shanghai Jiao Tong University's School of Medicine.

For his patients, Hu's aim is to lessen the impact of the roller-coaster ride of treatment, by improving their outcomes, achieving a full cure, and reducing donor material rejections and recurrence of the disease.

Through constant innovations in his treatment method — intensive chemotherapy with sequential transplantation — Hu and his team have improved the long-term survival rate of patients suffering from refractory acute myeloid leukemia, or AML. Since the method was initiated in 2015, the long-term survival rate has increased from 20 percent of patients to between 50 and 60 percent.

The recurrence rate of the disease among refractory AML patients — those who do not achieve full remission after treatment — has been lowered from around 60 percent to less than 20 percent.

"That gives hope to patients and their families who originally had already lost hope. As a doctor, saving lives is always my goal. Nothing else compares with this," says Hu.

Refractory AML accounts for half



of all AML cases. But these patients are often turned down by medical institutions due to the high relapse rate and risks of complications.

The increased transplantation success rate was achieved by combining established international practices with innovations introduced by Hu's team. The lower recurrence rate was a result of using new targeted medicines, which proved to have good efficacy and fewer side effects, he says.

Since the late 1990s, the international status of Hu's team has gone from follower to front-runner.

Spreading benefits

Multicenter prospective clinical research to confirm the treatment used at Shanghai Ruijin Hospital, is in the works.

Two centers in France have already introduced the Ruijin treatment for refractory AML patients. The centers include the Institut Paoli-Calmettes in Marseille, which began using it in 2019.

A published paper about the treatment method showed that 42 percent of patients could realize long-term survival, with the percentage expected to rise over the following years.

The centers in Shanghai and in Marseille have regular exchanges, with the two teams often visiting each other. Hu got to know Didier Blaise, leader of the blood and mar-



Top: Hu Jiong, director of the Bone Marrow Transplantation Center of the Hematology Department, Shanghai Ruijin Hospital, checks on a patient in a hospital ward. **Above:** Hu poses for a photo with Didier Blaise (left), a blood and marrow transplantation expert at Institut Paoli-Calmettes in Marseille, France, after a working discussion in Shanghai last month. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

row transplantation and immune cellular therapy program at Institut Paoli-Calmettes, at an international conference in 2004.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they held monthly online meetings to discuss difficult and complicated cases. Regular meetings have been maintained after that, with new ideas and research programs discussed.

In June, Hu was invited by the

center in Marseille to join a hematologist experts conference to help the center review its clinical treatment plans. A month later, Blaise was invited to Shanghai by Hu to review the Ruijin team's methods.

Sharing and reviewing knowledge and techniques helps research teams avoid getting stuck in a rut, Hu says. "Sometimes we need an onlooker from the outside to assess our programs from a different per-

“That (improved survival rate) gives hope to patients and their families who originally had already lost hope. As a doctor, saving lives is always my goal. Nothing else compares with this.”

Hu Jiong, director of the Bone Marrow Transplantation Center of the Hematology Department, Shanghai Ruijin Hospital

spective, especially an international one, which may make our treatment approaches better recognized in international academic circles," he says.

Some Western experts are not solely convinced by data from study results, Hu says. A researcher needs to have sound thinking and reasoning as well as medical ethics, which include proper consideration for patients throughout the research process.

Blaise, also a senior member of the European Cooperative Group for Bone Marrow Transplantation, says

Hu's team is exceptional and their dedication to refining treatments is noteworthy. Hu distinguishes himself through his ability to lead medical innovation and swiftly translate it into tangible benefits for patients, he says.

"His unwavering dedication to improving patient outcomes is palpable, driving his relentless pursuit of collaborations with diverse teams both domestically and internationally," says Blaise, who is also former chairman of the French Society of Bone Marrow Transplantation and Cell Therapy.

"This collaborative spirit extends beyond cooperation, as he adeptly orchestrates these partnerships for the collective advancement of all teams and, most importantly, the well-being of the patients they serve."

More innovation

More recently, Hu's team has been working on the optimization of transplants by using dual alkylating drugs as a front-line treatment for patients with AML. Alkylating agents are a family of anticancer drugs that interfere with a cell's DNA and inhibit cancer cell growth.

Hu was selected to give an oral presentation during the EBMT 2023 Annual Meeting in Paris in April, following the good outcomes of the alkylating drugs treatment.

"Regarding the recurrence rate, we're definitely becoming a leader. The recurrence rate for average cases is around 15 percent, and we have brought it down to 5 to 6 percent," he says, adding that it is uncommon for any transplantation center in the world to achieve single-digit results.

Around 150 patients treated at Ruijin, and another 200 patients treated in dozens of medical centers nationwide have benefited from the innovative transplantation methods of Hu's team. Among them are young patients, including minors and people in the prime of their life.

Although many medical innovators have strong personalities and fixed ideas, Hu says, "I'm open to communication and to welcoming ideas from both home and abroad. For me, that's how innovations are produced."

He is willing to send his students elsewhere and welcome outsiders to his team. Only one member of his current team of five is a former student of his.

"In my mind, it's good for them to grow and thrive when they have opportunities to work with different experts before they develop a fixed idea about their work. Work experience with different minds, and of different work methods, will stimulate them to think of new questions and see things from a variety of perspectives," he says.

Contact the writer at zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Impact of river basin civilizations highlighted at forum

By **WANG RU** in Zhengzhou
wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

The importance of great rivers in the development of civilizations and how to better protect cultural heritage in these areas was under the spotlight at a major forum in Zhengzhou, Henan province, last month.

More than 300 heritage professionals and diplomatic envoys from China and other countries with great river basins, including the Indus, Mesopotamian and Nile, attended the 2023 World Great Rivers Civilizations Forum on Sept 17 and 18.

Wang Wei, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Academic Division of History, says that, in the long history of China, most of its prehistory and dynastic changes took place in the Yellow River Basin.

About 10,000 years ago, people in this area began to grow millet, one of the earliest attempts at organized agriculture in the world. With the advent of agriculture, populations increased, which in turn promoted the development of handicrafts and further population growth.

As a result, social differentiation gradually intensified, leading to the



Left: The 2023 World Great Rivers Civilizations Forum was held in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on Sept 17 and 18. **Right:** People listen attentively to speeches made by attendees of the forum on the importance and protection of great river basins. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

emergence of class-based dynasties and states, says Wang. "Most of the influential ancient Chinese political systems and ideological beliefs were born in this area. That is why we say Yellow River culture is the root of the Chinese civilization."

He also points out that the Yangtze River, another great waterway in China, also played a vital role in the formation of Chinese civilization as rice-based farming and its associated culture developed.

Yang Jianhua, a professor at Jilin University's School of Archaeology, makes comparisons between the origins of civilizations in the Yellow River Basin and Mesopotamia, both cradles of civilization, in terms of family structures, patterns of culture, regional integration and religious traditions.

According to her, the Sumerian civilization in Mesopotamia and Chinese civilization, as represented by the Yellow River, are two of

the most important early civilizations in history. Their development paths into states are of universal significance to the world.

She also points out the discontinuous nature of Mesopotamian civilization when compared with the Yellow River. "In the Yellow River Basin, the continuity of kinship guarantees the continuity of cultural concepts and national identity, which is the foundation of the continuity of a

civilization," says Yang.

"On the other hand, the development of geopolitical organizations in Mesopotamia was at the cost of weakening kinship. As a result, national identities were constantly reorganized and replaced traditional cultural identity, making the civilization a noncontinuous one.

"They represent two different modes of the process of state formation. ... The difference influenced ancient societies in each

region and provides an important reference for us to understand differences in the current world."

Wang says that, without a thorough understanding of other civilizations in the world, it's difficult to summarize the characteristics of Chinese civilization.

"That is the reason why we Chinese archaeologists have gone out of China with big strides in recent decades," he says.

"Altogether, 36 Chinese teams have carried out archaeological work in more than 20 countries, including one to study the Mayan civilization since 2015 and one to study Egyptian civilization since 2018," he adds.

Tu Weiming, vice-chairman of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies, highlights the importance of communication between civilizations.

Greek philosophy and the Enlightenment, and the intellectual and philosophical movement in Western Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, have also inspired modern Chinese thinkers, he adds.

Wang says, "We hope to make the forum an international academic platform for scholars from various countries to exchange ideas and reach more cooperation in various fields in the future."

CULTURE



From left: Hatsune Miku, a virtual pop star from Japan; Various garage kit figures from Chinese, Japanese, European and US animations displayed at the 20th China Digital Entertainment Expo and Conference, or ChinaJoy, in Shanghai in July; Asuka Shikinami Langley, from the anime and manga series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Dimensions of growth

Garage kit figures strike chord among young Chinese fans, **Chen Meiling** reports.

After waiting eagerly for a week, Peng Yang, a liquor industry worker from Zunyi of Southwest China's Guizhou province, finally received his customized figurine of Son Goku, the hero in Japanese anime *Dragon Ball*, in the mail.

The assembly scale model kit, also known as a garage kit, depicts the anime character transformed and ready for battle — muscular with a bare upper body, sporting tattered pants, a steadfast face and clenched fists with bulging blue veins.

"I colored it myself because I wanted to participate in creating it out of my understanding of the character," said Peng, 24. He ordered the garage kit from an online store, paying 400 yuan (\$55) for it.

"The most impressive memory in my childhood was that of Goku becoming Super Saiyan for the first time out of anger and grief over the death of his friend Krillin," Peng said. "I wondered why his hair could become so cool."

In the anime, Super Saiyan is an advanced transformation that members of the Saiyan race, extraterrestrial warriors from the planet Vegeta, can achieve when pushed to their limits, overcoming intense emotions. They gain a significant boost in strength, speed and energy at that level.

Son Goku is based on Sun Wukong, also known as the Monkey King in the West, a main character of the classic 16th century Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. Garage kit figures, whose images are adopted from comics, games or animation characters, are gaining traction among young people in China with the booming ACG market, which refers to anime, comic and video games, covering the "two-dimensional space".

Many fans said they are attracted by the appearance or personalities of the ACG characters; others said the characters' stories inspire them to become a better person; and still others said that by immersing themselves in the characters' world, they also experience another life.

Garage kit figures bring what only exist in the virtual 2D world to reality. Young fans collect them to show their love and support for the characters, with which they establish emotional links.

Another character that touched Peng is Goku's father Bardock, a Saiyan warrior.

"When the planet was being destroyed, his lone and resolute spirit, standing against countless enemies, left me deeply impressed and inspired," he said.

"I also hope that in the future, I can be like him, fearless in the face of difficulties and rising up to challenges."

Peng has bought hundreds of garage kits in the last five years and he is trying to collect all the characters in *Dragon Ball*, and he even paid 12,000 yuan for a large, high-end statue of Son Goku.

Different kind of life

Yu An, 27, from South China's Guangdong province, bought his first garage kit in April last year after joining a games company and seeing his income increase significantly.

His favorite piece, Asuka Shikinami Langley, from the anime and manga series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, is one of the main characters and pilots of the giant humanoid robots known as Evangelions. Asuka is known for her fiery personality, confidence and flowing red tresses.

"I believe many people would like her," Yu said. "In the story, she pretends to be strong and evokes a protective instinct in people," he said.

"Especially during high school, I seemed to yearn for a relationship. In the intricate and difficult plot designed in the anime, Asuka's struggles and pure emotions easily moved me. After all, real-world relationships are often plain and mundane," Yu said.

"In the span of a drama series, you can witness a condensed version of someone's life, spanning over a decade or even a lifetime. And the character's personality in the manga remains unchanged, making it hard not to like her. So, in a sense, Asuka is my goddess," he said.

Yu has a special cabinet to store all his garage kits, each costing 500 to 800 yuan. He called himself a collector with a "mini museum".

"A few people are willing to spend money on garage kits, while most probably think that we are wasting our time on toys," he said.

"However, I like anime characters because they are

often more pure than real actors, and will never disappoint you. Also, anime has become a new form of entertainment for many people. It is an iteration of the era's entertainment."

The idea resonates with 20-year-old college student Jiang Zhi.

"Compared to the three-dimensional world, the two-dimensional world lacks the complexities of intrigues and the characters are relatively flat, which makes it 'simpler' and thus has a simple beauty," he said.

Jiang's first figurine was Emilia, the female protagonist from Japanese anime *Re: Zero, Starting Life in Another World*. "Emilia's optimistic attitude in the face of difficulties reflects a very straightforward personality. Because anyone would feel defeated and sad when facing challenges, but she never does. She always approaches difficulties with optimism. It is difficult to encounter such a person in real life, so I find her to have an ideal personality that I admire and aspire to," he said.

Fervent collectors

To some youngsters, the 2D world composed of animation, comics and games breaks the limitation of the 3D world, providing a "spiritual habitat" where everything can be possible — a jungle adventure, a gun fire, a spacewalk, a romance with a fairy, to name just a few.

Song Duomi, 26, an e-commerce worker from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, has been keen on ACG for

over 10 years. She has bought some 300 garage kits, each costing from 1,000 yuan to 3,000 yuan.

"I rarely go out in real life and I am mostly immersed in my personal hobbies," Song said.

"Although there are many non-social entertainment options, I prefer playing games so it is related to my love for ACG world."

Her favorite genre is hot-blooded anime with fast-paced storylines and a lot of fighting scenes.

"These things cannot be experienced in real life.

Watching anime feels like both avoiding social interactions and experiencing a different kind of life," she said. "I also enjoy plots with the touch of a magical world setting. I find those spells very intriguing."

Her favorite characters include Nico Yazawa from Japanese anime *LoveLive!*, which is "cute and has a distinct personality", and Madara Uchiha. "He is a powerful character with exceptional abilities, and he is someone I aspire to become. The most memorable moment for me was when he was resurrected and effortlessly defeated his opponents, which was extremely charismatic," she added.

Garage kits may also help bridge the young generation with the older one, or work as a companion during a teenager's puberty.

Yu Sen, 27, a human resources worker from Shenyang, Northeast China's Liaoning province, said that when he was in high school, his parents would give him a garage kit figure as birthday and Spring Festival presents or as

a reward for doing well in examinations.

He has a separate room with six cabinets storing all his collections over the last decade. "I feel proud and relaxed sitting in the room, like 'a king in his own kingdom,'" he said. Each kit cost about 900 to 1,000 yuan.

Zhang Xiaocha, 25, from Shanghai, developed an interest in animation during middle school. She said she was under a lot of pressure during her studies and "felt a bit out of touch with reality".

"My parents didn't understand me, and I turned to watching anime that had abstract elements. They infused philosophy into the plot, and it made me feel cool," Zhang said.

"I particularly enjoy science fiction settings in anime. Anime also has many light-hearted and entertaining series, which allows me to find something that matches my mood. I enjoy exploring different genres and experiencing various stories.

"I haven't encountered anything similar to my own experiences or the person I want to become in the 2D world. I feel like I'm just an ordinary bystander, unlike the anime protagonists who can save the world. I don't want to bear the responsibility of saving the world as it seems too difficult and distant from me."

Zhang has collected about 30 garage kits. Some are put on the desk, with carefully matched backgrounds. For example, she placed a figure with blue hair in front of a computer case with blue lights "to create a beauty of cyberpunk".

Booming market

The market for garage kits, a kind of peripheral ACG product, is growing as more people are seeking to meet their emotional demands amid economic and social development, said Wang Dongyang, general manager of garage kits manufacturer Bijie Moon Crafts and Arts Co in Guizhou province.

The company produces about 200,000 figures annually and had an output value of 110 million yuan last year. Consumers need to wait 18 months to receive their products after making an order online.

According to a report by consultancy iResearch and show.bilibili.com, the peripheral products and anime offline events' tickets sales website under Bilibili, a leading video-sharing platform among ACG lovers, the Chinese garage kits market reached 9.12 billion yuan in 2021, almost doubled from 2020.

As an imported concept from Japan, garage kits are gaining popularity in the Chinese market, with the ACG intellectual property sector booming. The initial core audience of the ACG culture in China grew up alongside the spread of Japanese and US comics, with Generation Z netizens having a higher acceptance and preference for ACG culture.

According to an industrial white paper released by China Insights Consultancy in August, the number of ACG users in China is growing, reaching nearly 460 million in 2021. They express a strong willingness and capability to pay for related content and sideline products. The figure is set to reach 520 million in 2026 with an average annual compound growth rate of 2.5 percent from 2021.

The "second-dimensional space" is gradually moving away from being a niche culture and entering the mainstream, with the future user group expected to continue expanding. With the rapid growth of "second-dimensional space" fans, the Chinese market for garage kits is expected to reach hundreds of billions of yuan by 2026, experts said.

Kathy Jiang, principal at consultancy Roland Berger, said the popularity of garage kits reflects the enthusiasm and support of young people for the anime, film and gaming industries, contributing to their growth.

With more characters being produced, continuing to attract the attention of young people, the figurine market will further expand. Both online and offline exhibitions, exchange activities and communities provide young people with more interactive and communicative platforms to meet their social needs, she said.

"The prosperity of the market also provides commercial opportunities for related companies and creators, promoting innovation and economic growth," she said. "The potential is enormous."

Cui Yutong contributed to this story.

The two dimensional world lacks the complexities of intrigues and the characters are relatively flat"

Jiang Zhi, college student



Clockwise from top left: Various garage kit figures are displayed at the 20th China Digital Entertainment Expo and Conference in Shanghai in July; Nico Yazawa from the Japanese anime *LoveLive!*; Son Goku, the hero in the Japanese anime and manga series *Dragon Ball*; Shura, known as the Gold Saint of the constellation Capricorn, from the anime and manga series *Saint Seiya*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY