

Companions of nature

Rangers closely monitor vast reserve in Hunan as tourist numbers grow

LIFE, PAGE 10



Biomedical plan aims to promote gene therapy

BUSINESS, PAGE 15



Courting acclaim

Shanghai Masters tennis tourney returns bigger, better than ever

SPORTS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2023

BRI brings world closer together

Initiative provides a road map for reshaping global economic landscape

By XU WEI
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When President Xi Jinping presented his vision 10 years ago for the Silk Road Economic Belt, few might have imagined the global implications of the policy address, delivered to faculty and students at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan.

In the eyes of many analysts, the speech marked a historic starting point to reshape the global economic landscape, heralding changes leading to infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and closer people-to-people ties.

A month later, during a speech to the Indonesian Parliament, the Chinese president expounded his vision for the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which, together with the Silk Road Economic Belt, became known as the Belt and Road Initiative.

Ten years on, Xi is set to host representatives from over 140 countries and 30 international organizations at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on Tuesday and Wednesday in Beijing.

Regarding the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Tatiana Urzhutseva, former director of the research center of China and the Pacific Rim at St. Petersburg State University of Economics, said, "Looking back, one cannot but feel assured that those were truly historic initiatives in favor of goodwill cooperation between nations."

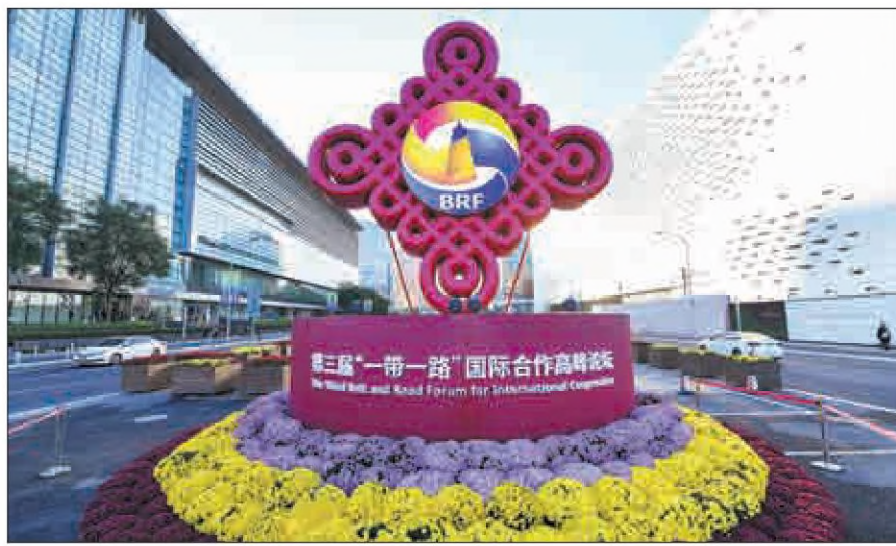
Urzhutseva, who is now head of the Russian Culture Center in Beijing, said the personal role of President Xi in leading the development of the BRI cannot be overstated.

Xu Xijun, director of the International Political Economy Department of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, said the Chinese president has personally planned and promoted the BRI's transition into a new stage of high-quality development.

Through his intense diplomatic agenda, Xi, on bilateral and multilateral occasions, has promoted high-level policy coordination and strategic alignment, created a favorable international environment and established a solid political foundation for the steady and long-term development of the BRI, Xu said.

Over the past decade, more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations have joined the BRI family, with many agreements inked during bilateral meetings attended by the Chinese president.

The BRI has taken much-anticipated infrastructure projects from vision to reality in much of the developing world, ranging from bridges, highways and railways to hospitals and sports stadiums. It



Clockwise from top left: The mega container ship OOCL Piraeus docks in Piraeus, Greece's largest port, in July; the last rotor of the Suki Kinari Hydropower Project, a flagship project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, is hoisted on June 10; a floral arrangement for the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation is seen near Beijing's National Convention Center on Saturday; attendants on a train car of the China-Laos Railway present a performance for passengers in April; workers bolster tracks for a section of the Chinese-built Hungary-Serbia Railway in Kunszentmiklos, Hungary, in May. PHOTOS BY XINHUA

has created 420,000 jobs for participating countries and lifted about 40 million people out of poverty.

The China-Laos Railway, for instance, has employed over 3,500 Laotian workers and created more than 100,000 jobs through its impact on logistics, transportation, trade, commerce and tourism.

Charles Okechukwu Onunajiu, director of the Center for China Studies in Nigeria, said that through participation in the Belt and Road, key projects including highways, ports and energy infrastructure are remarkably taking shape in West Africa.

"The BRI is the concentrated expression of globalization in its broadest sense of accommodation, inclusion and participation, and it carries Africa's fervent historic wish and will," he said. "In the past 10 years, since the Belt and Road pro-

cess hit the ground running, Africa has witnessed the most impactful revolution in infrastructure construction and facilities connectivity."

President Xi hosted global leaders at the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in 2017, and at the second Belt and Road Forum in 2019 in Beijing, both times delivering speeches that outlined the future road map for BRI cooperation.

The BRI has also been a priority on Xi's domestic agenda, with the president having chaired high-level symposiums three times on promoting the high-quality development of the landmark initiative.

During the most recent symposium in 2021, the president called for stronger political mutual trust, more cooperative mechanisms and a better connectivity network link-

ing land, sea, air and cyberspace.

He urged efforts to increase trade with neighboring countries, expand imports of high-quality products, promote international industrial-capacity cooperation and enhance financial connectivity and cultural exchanges.

Hu Biliang, executive dean of the Belt and Road School at Beijing Normal University, said the BRI has led the way for China's greater strides in opening-up and emerged as a key part of the national drive to foster a new development paradigm.

Building a better regional connectivity network will inject new momentum into the development of a more open and in-depth partnership between China and other countries participating in the BRI, Hu said.

The BRI has also directly benefited the further upgrade of China's trade and investment, he said.

Pakistan's PM says Belt and Road offers opportunities

By XU WEI
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Pakistani Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has lauded the Belt and Road Initiative for having "advanced inclusive development to reduce poverty and inequality, improved people's ability to pay taxes and enhanced governments' ability to retire their debts".

In an exclusive interview with China Daily ahead of his first official visit to China, Kakar described the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, one of the signature projects under the BRI, as a practical manifestation of win-win cooperation and shared prosperity and a commendable endeavor in building a China-Pakistan community with a shared future.

"All these elements also form the bedrock of President Xi Jinping's visionary Belt and Road Initiative," he said.

The Pakistani leader, who took office in August as the eighth caretaker prime minister of Pakistan, is visiting China for the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, which will be held in Beijing on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Kakar dismissed theories that the BRI has led participating countries into "debt traps", saying that China is offering "a unique mechanism of development financing to developing countries — which is without conditions and different from the traditional development financing models".

"It is wrong to describe BRI financing as a 'debt trap'; it is rather an essential tool for helping countries in achieving comprehensive and inclusive development of their peoples."

He explained that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which has brought about a direct investment of \$25.4 billion to Pakistan and created a total of 236,000 jobs, is key to the nation's socioeconomic progress.

"The project underlines an excellent example of an open, coordinated and inclusive development paradigm that benefits all parts of the country and all segments of society," he said, adding that the development of Gwadar Port has already opened new economic opportunities.

"Strategically located, the port is

now functional and regularly handling cargo ships including transshipment trade for Afghanistan. A free economic zone is in place offering lucrative incentives for local, Chinese and other international investors," Kakar said, adding that a new international airport will also be inaugurated, bringing the port closer to its vision of serving as the hub of regional trade and connectivity.

Meanwhile, the prime minister emphasized that the "foolproof safety and security of Chinese personnel and institutions is our top-most priority", adding that the Pakistani government has put in place stringent security protocols to safeguard Chinese workers and entrepreneurs.

He cited examples including regular security briefings, risk assessment and information exchanges between the two nations, in order to identify potential threats and come up with solutions accordingly.

"These concerted efforts underline Pakistan's solid commitment to provide a secure environment for our Chinese brothers and sisters, who are contributing to Pakistan's socioeconomic development and progress."

Kakar said he has high expectations for the forum, during which he will meet with Chinese leaders.

"It has provided both our countries with a stage to reaffirm our commitment to international cooperation and development, while highlighting the successes, reviewing the lessons learned and charting the future trajectory of the CPEC," he said.

"Our relations with China form the cornerstone of our foreign policy. I am here to reaffirm our commitment to this all-weather strategic cooperative partnership," Kakar said, describing China as a strategic and trustworthy development partner.

He also spoke highly of China's remarkable achievement in having lifted more than 800 million people from abject poverty, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

"Like China, Pakistan too is a developing country, with a population of 240 million. There is so much that we can learn from China to put our nation on a path of sustainable development."



Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

INSIDE Sino-African cooperation a bright spot Global Views, page 13

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Global bodies call for aid to get through to Gaza

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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International and humanitarian organizations are calling for "immediate unconditional access" for critical aid to Gaza to deter a rapidly escalating crisis, with the number of displaced people now estimated to have exceeded 1 million — 10 days into the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The appeal from the United Nations came as clean water, food and other vital supplies are reportedly running out, with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres saying that these should not be

used as "bargaining chips".

The World Health Organization said that lifesaving assistance, including health supplies for 300,000 patients, was awaiting entry into Gaza through the Rafah border crossing, The Associated Press reported.

Guterres also urged the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, to release its hostages amid a looming Israeli ground incursion.

Around half of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have so far evacuated their homes, and AP reported that the Israeli military had ordered people living in 28 communities near the Lebanese

border to evacuate on Monday.

Talk of opening the Rafah border, which Egypt shares with Gaza, has been rife in Western and Middle Eastern media circles.

On Monday, Al-Jazeera reported that both Israel and Hamas denied there was any cease-fire in southern Gaza. This followed a Reuters report that said two Egyptian security sources had told the news agency that a cease-fire in southern Gaza lasting several hours had been agreed to on Monday morning to facilitate aid and evacuations at Rafah.

The Egypt State Information Service published an article on Sunday saying the Rafah border crossing was open, "but became inoperable after Israel bombed it", citing its Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry's interview with CNN.

See Crisis, page 2

Visit by California governor would highlight climate cooperation potential

Gavin Newsom, governor of the US state of California, may soon visit Beijing to discuss climate change. If we take him at face value as someone who cares about the environment, and with California being in the vanguard of national if not global efforts to fight global warming, then visiting China is essential.

Although Washington is promoting tech-decoupling and financial de-risking, it's likely that environmental products and services will avoid such restrictions. This means that China and California may have more freedom to increase trade and investment

WORLD WATCH
By Josef Gregory Mahoney

serving environmental needs.

While China-US relations overall may continue to deteriorate, and while bilateral cooperation on the environment fails to gain traction at the national levels, we might instead see advances between Beijing and California, and possibly other US states as well.

China is now the leading producer of green energy and green energy products. Many places I

visited recently in Europe featured homes and buildings covered with Chinese solar panels, responding to the energy crisis and the hottest summer on record. While some policymakers dislike depending on China to provide these products, China remains essential for green energy transitions worldwide.

Some Western media have criticized Newsom for his perceived willingness to cooperate with China on the environment, including disparaging China's climate record and commitment to fighting global warming.

See Advances, page 2

TOP NEWS

Chinese-funded intl airport opens to traffic in Cambodia

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing and LI YINGQING in Kunming

The Chinese-funded Siem Reap Angkor International Airport in Cambodia commenced operations on Monday and is expected to become a gateway to the world-famous temples of Angkor.

The first commercial flight operated by Bangkok Airways landed at the airport in the morning, receiving a warm welcome from Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister Vongsey Visoth.

Speaking at the welcoming event, Visoth said the airport will contribute to the development of Cambodia's tourism, trade and economy in the long term. "It (the airport) is a testament to the fruitful cooperation between Cambodia and China under the Belt and Road Initiative," he added.

The facility is the first overseas international airport delivered under the build-operate-transfer model by Chinese enterprises. Angkor International Airport Investment (Cambodia) Co — an affiliate of China's Yunnan Investment Holdings — has funded the airport, and it is operated and managed by Yunnan Aviation Industry Investment Group.

The airport commenced operations as China and Cambodia celebrate 65 years of diplomatic relations, and China marks the 10th anniversary of the inception of the BRI.

"The airport is expected to help promote Cambodia's economic growth and social development. Its completion marks an achievement for Cambodia's national development strategy and the BRI," said Yang Danzhi, a senior researcher on national security at Renmin University of China.

Covering an area of 700 hectares, the new international airport is located in Sotr Nikum district, about 40 kilometers from the UNESCO-listed Angkor Archaeological Park and 50 km from Siem Reap provincial town.

The new terminal, which is bigger than Siem Reap's old international airport, borrows its



It (the airport) is a testament to the fruitful cooperation between Cambodia and China under the Belt and Road Initiative."

Vongsey Visoth, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Cabinet Minister

architectural design from the traditional sloping roofs of Cambodia. It will be able to handle 7 million passengers annually from 2024, a significant rise from the annual 2 million handled by the old airport, according to local authorities.

Sokhom Pheakavanmony, secretary of state of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport of Cambodia, said the building of the new airport is an achievement for the country, as the architecture of the airport suits the local style and its operation is expected to attract more global travelers to Siem Reap.

The opening of the airport coincides with global air travel picking up after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Asia-Pacific airlines saw a 98.5 percent increase in passenger traffic in August compared with the same period of last year, maintaining its lead over other regions globally. The capacity climbed 85.5 percent and the load factor increased by 5.5 percentage points to 84.2 percent, according to the International Air Transport Association.

"Heading into the last quarter of the year, the airline industry is nearly fully recovered to 2019 levels of demand," said Willie Walsh, director-general of the IATA.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at zhuvwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Ancient cemetery unearthed



A sarcophagus draws visitors on Sunday to the archaeological site in El Minya, southern Egypt. A cemetery dating back about 3,400 years to ancient Egypt's New Kingdom was unearthed at Tuna el-Gebel necropolis in the Minya governorate, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said. The cemetery belonged to high priests and senior officials. SUI XIANKAI / XINHUA

Top economist foresees dynamic development

Former vice-president of World Bank says China will not decline like Japan

By LIU ZHIHUA
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China will not follow in the footsteps of Japan of the 1990s and fall into a so-called balance sheet recession period characterized by income being used to pay off debt rather than on spending, according to a top economist.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Justin Yifu Lin, dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics at Peking University, said that despite facing some difficulties including housing-related debt issues, the Chinese economy, with endogenous strength from factors such as its enormous domestic market and increasing innovation capability, is well poised to rebound and experience "dynamic" growth and make a great contribution to global economic development.

"When income does not grow and debt is very high, debt payments become a burden, forcing households and enterprises to reduce investment and consumption in order to repay loans, leading to sluggish economic growth," said Lin, a

former senior vice-president and chief economist at the World Bank.

China's debt is not as high as that of many other countries, and more importantly, the income of Chinese people is still on the rise thanks to emerging industries and industrial upgrades, he said.

"The key issue is whether we will be able to continue to ensure dynamic growth. In the case of Japan, after the Plaza Accord, it voluntarily or involuntarily gave up the semiconductor industry, and we didn't see any new industry emerge in Japan," Lin said.

"I'm sure China will continue to see technological innovation and industrial upgrades to raise productivity, and with that, the incomes of households and profits of companies will increase," he added.

Recent economic data has indicated that the economic recovery in China is gathering pace.

Fresh data from the People's Bank of China, the nation's central bank, showed that the aggre-

gate social financing, or the total amount of financing to the real economy, reached 4.12 trillion yuan (\$566 billion) in September, up by 563 billion yuan from a year earlier and 1 trillion yuan from August, pointing to a pickup in financing activity.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's official manufacturing and nonmanufacturing purchasing managers' indexes both improved in September to 50.2 and 51.7, respectively. Both figures were above the 50-point mark separating contraction from expansion.

Lin said he believes the current difficulties facing the Chinese economy are mainly rooted in the external environment. Sluggish global economic growth is subduing demand for Chinese products, affecting domestic investment and consumption, he said.

He suggested that Chinese authorities expand the fiscal deficit and ease monetary policy to boost



Justin Yifu Lin

investment, consumption and job creation, and enhance confidence.

The economist added that despite the attempts of Western countries, the United States in particular, to weaken China's position in global industrial and supply chains through trade restrictions, China has reached a stage where "as long as we think it's necessary, we will be able to mobilize enough resources and talent to achieve breakthroughs in those areas (facing Western countries' trade restrictions)".

"Huawei is a very good example. Huawei cannot import chips from US companies, but as you see, Huawei has already made breakthroughs. I think the story that applies to Huawei will also be applicable to other sectors in China," Lin said.

Trade is win-win for any country, he said, adding that the best way for China to address trade restrictions imposed by the US and others is to maintain stability, growth and openness, by pursuing technological innovation and industrial upgrading to expand the domestic market, while at the same time further opening up to the rest of the world.

"We have every intention of maintaining peace and stability in the world, and we also want to contribute to the stability and growth in the world," he said.

"As long as we do our things right, and maintain our stability and growth, I think by opening up our economy to the world, we'll be friends with everyone in the world."

Crisis: Aid agency on verge of 'collapse', warns official

From page 1

The death toll on both sides has exceeded 4,000, with over 14,000 injured and more than 1,000 missing.

Amid the mass evacuations taking place at short notice in Gaza, appeals to de-escalate the situation continue to increase.

Philippe Lazzarini, commissioner-general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, said the agency was "on the verge of collapse" and was no longer able to provide humanitarian assistance. The UN agency is seeking \$104 million in funds for lifesaving aid to Gaza.

China is providing emergency humanitarian aid to the UN agency and the Palestinian Authority, China Central Television said on Monday. The aid is to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Gaza and to address urgent needs, such as food and medical care, CCTV quoted the China International Development

Cooperation Agency as saying.

On Sunday, the United Arab Emirates announced its support for the UN agency's humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip with a new contribution of \$20 million.

Israel's planned ground operation in Gaza has raised concerns in the international community.

The Arab League and the African Union said in a joint statement on Sunday that it could "lead to a genocide of unprecedented proportions", the Arab News and various media reported.

Iran has warned Israel of a regional escalation if the Israeli military enters Gaza for a ground operation as the conflict drags on, Al-Jazeera reported.

US President Joe Biden, who declared support for Israel after Hamas' attack on Oct 7, warned in an interview with CBS News on Sunday that any move by Israel to occupy the Gaza Strip again "would be a big mistake", but added that going in to take Hamas militants out "was a necessary requirement".

Advances: Green innovation accelerated

From page 1

In fact, more than a decade ago, China's central government became increasingly attentive to the environment in response to growing public complaints. This led to major reforms that have significantly improved air, water and food quality, and thus significantly improved the quality of life for hundreds of millions of people.

Separately, China also began to accelerate investment in green innovation and development. Initially this was strategic. Due to the oil, coal and automaker lobbies that continue to influence US policymaking, the US was lagging behind. China recognized this as an opportunity to become a global leader.

Furthermore, over the past decade China has become increasingly aware of the challenges associated with climate change. Several scientific studies indicate that China faces the greatest economic risks associated with global warming. This includes too little water in the northwest and too much in other parts of the country, with extreme weather events becoming more frequent and disruptive in both areas.

China also understands that climate change is still getting worse despite international attention.

Russia, for example, seems unworried, and some studies indicate that Russia may actually benefit from a warmer world. Meanwhile, the US has been unreliable and perhaps disingenuous: Former president Donald Trump quit the Paris climate agreement, and President Joe Biden has expanded oil production, consolidating the US' position as the world leader in petroleum production.

Consequently, China realizes that confronting climate change is a matter of survival and that it can't count on others to lead. This is why it is aggressively expanding green innovation and development, cleanups and other initiatives that will help it and others survive in the future.

With this in mind, Newsom should check how Hefei, the capital of Anhui province, is restoring wetlands surrounding the city to serve as carbon traps while cleaning up the massive Chaohu Lake, led by a mayor who completed doctoral work related to environmental studies. The lake is being dredged, with toxins pressed into bricks and buried in exhausted coal mines. Meanwhile, the region is experiencing massive investment in green technologies. Some of the most advanced electric vehi-

cle production plants in the world are now in Hefei.

Given the role that agriculture plays in California, Newsom might also talk about food production. One-fourth of China's arable land is terraced. Maintaining terraces is backbreaking work; but the terraced areas of Sichuan, Hunan and Yunnan provinces are essential for Chinese food security. Research suggests that these areas are among the most resistant to climate change. Consequently, many new projects are underway to study and improve the terraces, some at least 2,000 years old and perhaps twice that.

Can California contribute to these studies and help create technological solutions to make terraces more productive and easier to maintain? How might such lessons be shared with other countries that also depend on terraced agriculture? This is one of many topics that could guide increased collaboration, including greater cooperation with California's leading universities and technology companies.

If Newsom stops in Shanghai, he should check out the Suzhou River rehabilitation project. Essentially an open sewer snaking through the city a decade ago, it has been cleaned up and restored as a natu-

ral habitat. Fish and water birds have returned, and the city has constructed parklands running the length of the river. Or he can visit nearby Chongming Island, where conservation of a major wetland is the dominant feature, while another part of the island promotes organic farming. Or he can drive south on Donghai Bridge to see a long line of giant windmills turning with the ocean breeze.

But even if he stays in Beijing, he'll see a city transformed with an incredible expansion of green spaces. He'll see that most public transportation, taxis and increasingly personal vehicles are electric.

In short, Newsom has a strategic vision for a greener California, and there's a massive strategic vision for the same at work in China, one that has evolved substantially in recent years but is still greatly misunderstood by many in the West. Newsom could help correct this misunderstanding. Through increased cooperation, he can also help China and California save themselves and others.

The author is a professor of politics and international relations at East China Normal University and a senior research fellow with the Institute for the Development of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics at Southeast University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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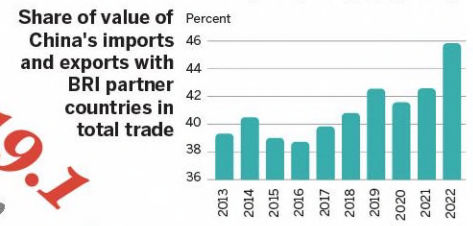
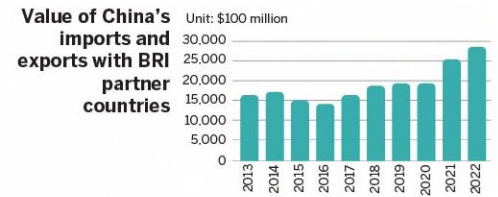
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Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

FIGURES IMPRESS

China stands ready to work with other countries to pursue closer and more fruitful cooperation under the BRI framework, implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, and build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity. Its goals are to pass on the torch of peace from generation to generation, sustain development, ensure that civilizations flourish, and build a global community of shared future.



THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

BRI

70 projects
Number of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects carried out by China with 30-plus developing countries

7.6 million
people are expected to be lifted out of extreme poverty by 2030 due to BRI-related investments. 32 million people are expected to be lifted out of moderate poverty, the World Bank estimates.

17.2 percent
proportion of direct cross-border inflows in Southeast Asia in 2022, up from 15.1 percent in 2021

50,000 young people
from more than 100 partner countries were invited to China by the "Chinese Bridge" Summer Camp for academic visits.

200 BRI agreements
are signed by China with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations as of June.

89 percent
Chinese firms in Africa recruited local employees.

\$19.1 trillion
Cumulative value of imports and exports between China and BRI partner countries from 2013 to last year

2.2 trillion yuan
Balance of loans from the Export-Import Bank of China for BRI projects

313
Confucius Institutes and 35 Confucius Classrooms are opened in 132 partner countries.

7
LAND
railways open to traffic: The Lahore Orange Line Metro, the Belgrade- Novi Sad section of the Hungary-Serbia Railway in Serbia, the China-Laos Railway, the Jakarta-Bandung High-speed Railway, grain and oil rail lines between North Kazakhstan and China, the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway and the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway

5
highways enter service: The Peshawar-Karachi Motorway Sukkur-Multan section, the Karakoram Highway Phase II Havelian-Thakot section, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Highway, the Western Europe-Western China Highway, the Smokovac-Matesevo section of the Bar-Boljare Highway in Montenegro

3
bridges
The Peljesac Bridge, the Heihe-Blagoveshchensk Highway Bridge and the Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye Railway Bridge, **three gas pipelines and five power plants** are fully operational. **1 DC transmission project** operational **1 special economic zone** reaches the comprehensive development stage.

AIR
57
partner countries China opened direct flights with

Core principles
Extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits

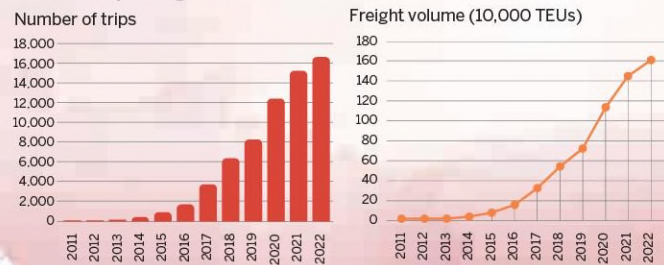
Concepts
Open, green and clean cooperation

Vision
A path to global wellbeing
A path to peace
A path to prosperity
A path to openness
A path to innovation
A path to social progress

Results

- 1 Bringing tangible benefits to participating countries
- 2 Adding vitality to economic globalization
- 3 Providing new solutions for improving global governance
- 4 Garnering strength for the progress of human civilization

China-Europe freight trains



MARITIME

117
As of June 30, the Silk Road Maritime network had reached 117 ports in 43 countries.

Notable increase in cargo transportation efficiency at five ports in participating countries

1 port project underway

The infrastructure network connects subregions in Asia as well as the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa.

Source: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China

JORGE CORTES / CHINA DAILY

**Belt and Road Forum
for International Cooperation**

Editor's note: Admiral Zheng He's legacy has reached far and wide. This page looks at how Chinese medical ships have been carrying on his legacy six centuries later in line with the Belt and Road Initiative, and helping to cure patients around the world.

Centuries later, ships sail again to save lives

Peace Ark draws similarities with ancient Chinese explorer's voyages

By PAN JIE
panjie@chinadaily.com.cn

Tears welled up in the eyes of the 40-year-old woman as she expressed gratitude for a surgery that delivered her from excruciating pain.

For nearly three years, Rosien Lelekele from the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu had endured severe agony because of gallstones. Her pain was only partially alleviated after treatment at a hospital in Port Vila, the capital.

When the Chinese medical ship *Peace Ark* sailed into the port on Aug 8, it came as a beacon of hope for Lelekele. On Aug 12, she underwent on board the vessel a surgery she had long needed — a laparoscopic removal of her gallbladder.

It was a routine procedure conducted in hospitals around the world but had never been performed before in Vanuatu. Lelekele was able to go home the next day.

"I love the *Peace Ark*, it was worth the wait," said Lelekele, while talking about the ship that has treated more than 290,000 people in the past 15 years.

The care that *Peace Ark's* personnel have delivered in the ports of 45 countries and regions has not only saved lives but has changed lives as well.

Turn the clock back six centuries or so, another Chinese maritime venture had already set a similar example.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644), one of China's greatest naval explorers Zheng He commanded a fleet on seven voyages that took him to Southeast Asia, South Asia and Mogadishu in East Africa.

Even with the largest fleet in the world at the time, China had no desire to exploit or plunder other lands. Instead, Zheng He's fleet

showed respect to whoever they encountered.

Western navigators such as Christopher Columbus began to search for a "new continent" and establish colonies decades after Zheng He's voyages. They captured a large amount of wealth, laying the foundation for the "Industrial Revolution".

However, the Chinese explorer's crew carried the message of friendship, helped the locals build cities and combat piracy, and imparted skills such as shipbuilding and farming. Sailors took with them a treasure trove of exquisite goods, including silk and porcelain.

His fleet also carried medical officials, drugs, and medical books. During his voyages, his crew imparted traditional Chinese medicine knowledge and promoted the exchange of medicinal materials, which greatly promoted the development of local medicine.

Medical purposes

With about 180 medical personnel on board, Zheng He's crew used traditional Chinese medicine to treat the local people. The explorer promoted the development of healthcare facilities in countries and regions along his travel route, and improved the quality of life of the people.

Zhao Zhigang, deputy secretary-general of China Zheng He Research Association, said: "The values of peace and equality conveyed by the *Peace Ark* and those conveyed by Zheng He's fleet share similarities."

He said medical ships such as the *Peace Ark* served the people of several countries and regions, similar to that of Zheng He's fleet.

The book, written in 1730, *Hai Guo Wen Jian Lu* (Records of Things Seen and Heard About the Coastal Regions), completed by Chen Lun-



Clockwise from top: Rosien Lelekele poses with a Chinese doctor in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY; A TCM doctor on board the Chinese naval hospital ship *Peace Ark* instructs a Kiribati nurse on a cupping therapy procedure. LI YU / XINHUA; *Peace Ark* arrives on Sept 3 in the Port of Dili, Timor-Leste. XU WEI / XINHUA

jiang, an official from the Qing Dynasty (1644 to 1912), said that during Zheng He's voyages in Siam (now Thailand), his crew taught local people how to dig wells, and added medicine into the water, so the local residents who fell ill could get cured with the water treatment.

Although he is often described as an explorer, Zheng He did not set out primarily on voyages of discovery. More than 2,000 years ago, the maritime silk routes had already emerged from China's coastal regions, travers-

ing a vast expanse of oceans and seas to the southern end of the Indian Peninsula and Sri Lanka.

However, Zheng He's voyages extended the maritime route to an unprecedented level in the 15th century, said Zhao, who is also a senior adviser at the International Zheng He Society in Singapore.

Zhang Jing, a researcher at Tsinghua University International Center for Communication Studies, echoed Zhao's views, saying: "Throughout history, China has consistently

upheld the principles of equality and peace, be it during the 15th-century voyages commanded by Zheng He or in the present day."

By upholding the principles of equality and peace, China strives to create a shared future for mankind. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative, China can actively contribute to global governance and provide public goods, especially health products, to people in other countries, she added.

Since China sent the first foreign

medical team to Algeria in 1963, a total of 30,000 medical personnel have treated 290 million patients in 76 countries and regions across five continents as of February, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

In the past six decades, Chinese medical teams have helped local people through their medical efficiency. After the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in 2014, China sent more than 1,200 medical workers to treat more than 800 patients and provided health training to more than 12,000 people.

BRI's 10th anniversary

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative, and China proposed the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Jia Duqiang, an associate researcher of Southeast Asian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said: "Together these initiatives embody a Chinese solution to global governance, aiming to foster common development and advance the world toward the ultimate goal of a community with a shared future for mankind."

"Their alignment with the interests of the international community and various parties has garnered support from numerous countries. They offer a fresh perspective and act as a driving force for promoting peace and large-scale cooperation worldwide in the future."

Meanwhile, nearly two months after the surgery, Lelekele has returned to her post as a nurse, saying she feels good about the recovery.

"I would like to thank the Chinese government for this medical ship that came right to our doorstep to help the unlucky ones," she said, adding that when the ship visits Vanuatu again, she will volunteer to become a member of this "boat of life".

Peace, partnership and prosperity: Zheng He's legacy remembered

By SHAO XINYING
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Admiral Zheng He's legacy is as vast as the oceans he once sailed in.

This year marks the 618th anniversary of the 15th-century Chinese explorer and diplomat's historic voyages, and his legacy is celebrated around the world for its profound impact on diplomacy, trade and cultural exchanges.

From 1405 to 1433, Zheng He embarked on seven epic voyages and commanded a fleet that consisted of colossal treasure ships, some of which were more than 100 meters long, a scale unrivaled in the world at that time, according to studies.

The fleet, manned by about 30,000 sailors, reached distant shores as far as Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and even East Africa. He set off nearly a century before Christopher Columbus set foot in America.

The grand tour began on July 11, 1405, and this date has been dubbed China's Maritime Day.

"Zheng He led his fleet on peaceful missions, and he treated sovereigns of other lands with the utmost respect," Zhao Zhigang, the deputy secretary-general of the China Zheng He Research Association and a senior adviser of the International Zheng He Society in Singapore, told China Daily.

"That's a world away from the plundering that Western mariners engaged in."

In August, Indonesia held events to commemorate the admiral's arrival in Semarang city in Central Java Province. At Sam Poo Kong temple, devotees held a procession parading the explorer's statue.

Moreover, Semarang's name in Chinese — *sanbaolong* — originated from Zheng He's original name, Sanbao, illustrating the city's deep historical connection to the navigator.

Veronika Saraswati, a China relations expert at the Jakarta-based think tank Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said Zheng He's expeditions were not merely trade missions.

"Zheng He arrived in Semarang, Central Java, for the purpose of



A statue of Admiral Zheng He in Semarang, Indonesia. XU QIN / XINHUA

trade, but ended up staying for much more. ... He began by spreading a new agriculture system and moved on to people-to-people exchanges like culture and language," she told China Global Television Network.

"China's and Indonesia's cultures are now intertwined for generations to come and this is something that cannot be separated because we see both countries have similar values and cultures within the Asian region."

Apart from being an explorer, Zheng He also engaged in diplomacy, a testament to China's peaceful engagement with other countries.

Gesture of goodwill

Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon, was an important stop during Zheng He's maritime odyssey. He and his crew members communicated with locals, traded goods and presented steles as a gesture of goodwill.

The Zheng He Galle Stele, dated 1409, was discovered in Galle, Sri Lanka, in 1911 and is now preserved in the Colombo National Museum. It is a stone tablet with an inscription in three languages, Chinese, Tamil and Persian. A rubbing

of the stele was presented as a state gift to China in 2014.

Samitha Hettige, an expert on strategic studies and conflict prevention, told Xinhua News Agency that the concept of the Maritime Silk Road has a deep historical basis dating back to Zheng He's expeditions.

"The Maritime Silk Road is a network that will connect products and services across the globe," he said. Among the places that the admiral had visited, Malacca remains the epitome of Zheng He's influence on cultural exchanges between the East and the West. The Malaysian city, which he visited five times during his seven voyages, houses a gallery and a cultural museum in his name.

In January, the Sixth Zheng He Forum was held in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the explorer's indelible marks on civilization.

"Zheng He's voyages in the Malay Archipelago and their momentous impact on civilization are a reminder of Malaysia's foreign policy outlook," Malaysian Foreign Minister Zambry Abdul Kadir told the forum.

In his three decades of voyages, Zheng He led his fleet to more than 30 countries and conducted trade with the locals.

He also presented gifts of gold, silver, porcelain and silk to monarchs on foreign lands. In return, he brought back to China precious stones and exotic animals, including a giraffe.

"Court officials were shocked to see the giraffe. They had never seen such a long-necked animal," Zhao said. "From then on, painters began giving animals longer necks."

Pan Jie in Beijing and Xinhua contributed to this story.



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The Belt and Road Initiative PEACE AND COOPERATION

Instilling new vigor and vitality into the ancient Silk Road, the Belt and Road Initiative aims to promote the connectivity amongst countries in Asia, Europe and Africa and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multilayered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries.

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LIFE

Symphonic dance, *The Legend of Monkey King*, a new piece by composer Liu Sola, was staged during the Beijing Music Festival on Oct 5. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

An animated performance

Liu Sola's symphonic dance piece about the legendary Monkey King, which was inspired by the renowned 1960s cartoon film, returns to the capital, **Chen Nan** reports.

"I haven't left my house in five years. Now, here I am, on the stage of the Beijing Music Festival and I am a little bit nervous," says Liu Sola, a renowned Chinese composer, whose symphonic dance, titled *The Legend of Monkey King*, was performed by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Liu Sola and Friends Band, under the baton of conductor Zhang Jiemin, on Oct 5 in Beijing.

As part of the program of the ongoing, combined 25th and 26th Beijing Music Festival, the capital's largest annual music event which falls every October, the music was presented along with the screening of videos of the classic Chinese animation, *The Monkey King: Uproar in Heaven*.

"This piece was like a surprise to me, because the theme is very special and the animation itself inspired me," says Liu. "The music featured in the animation was mostly Chinese folk music and traditional Chinese opera — Peking Opera. I tried to write music that will make people want to dance by using traditional Chinese percussion, *pipa*, as well as elements of jazz music."

"It is true that traditional Chinese music is a big inspiration for contemporary music composition," she adds.

The Monkey King, or Sun Wukong, is a character from the classic Chinese tale *Journey to the*



Left: Composer Liu Sola was awarded the Artist of the Year of the Beijing Music Festival, by conductor Yu Long (right), who is the founder of the festival, and Zou Shuang (left), artistic director of the event. Right: Under the baton of conductor Zhang Jiemin, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Liu Sola and Friends Band performed the symphonic dance, *The Legend of Monkey King*, in Beijing.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

West, by Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) writer Wu Cheng'en. The story follows the adventures of a Tang Dynasty (618-907) monk and his three disciples during their journey to obtain Buddhist scriptures.

Produced and released by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio during the 1960s, the animated film *The Monkey King: Uproar in Heaven* has become one of the best-known "superhero" animations in China, and is still enjoyed by both children and adults today.

Living in her studio located in Beijing's eastern suburbs, Liu, an internationally renowned, pioneering composer, vocalist, writer and artist, is recovering from a severe illness that has kept her bedridden for about four years.

She was invited to compose the new piece, *The Legend of Monkey King*, a project which took her eight months to finish.

In the beginning, Liu could only work for 30 minutes a day, gradually building up to one hour. She



calls the new work "a celebration of life."

The premiere of the piece was staged by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Liu Sola and Friends Band, under the baton of conductor Zhang, in Shanghai on Oct 6, 2022.

Before the concert in Beijing, Yu Long, founder of Beijing Music Festival, and Zou Shuang, artistic director of the festival, presented Liu with an Artist of the Year award, acknowledging her contri-

but ion to China's music scene.

"During the past 40 years, she has released a large number of successful works, covering a wide range of art forms, such as opera, dance drama, musical, symphony and film scores. She is also a pioneer, creating a musical style of her own by absorbing a diversity of genres, such as classical, jazz and rock," says Yu of Liu.

"In her musical world, she shows her unlimited imagination, just like the Monkey King's magi-

cal power, making 72 changes to his shape and size, turning himself into different animals and objects."

Born in Beijing, Liu learned to play the piano as a child. In 1978, she and her classmates, including Tan Dun, Chen Qigang and Guo Wenjing, were among the first group of students to be admitted to the Central Conservatory of Music after the "cultural revolution" (1966-76). They've also become the first generation of Chinese composers to enjoy recognition among Western audiences.

In 1985, she achieved fame with her novella *Ni Bie Wu Xuan Ze* (You Have No Choice), depicting a group of highly gifted, but frustrated music students.

In 1987, she visited the United States, where she met and worked with jazz and blues musicians. Later, she lived in London, before moving to New York in 1993.

One of her best-known albums, *Blues in the East*, was released in 1995. It was her debut album, which saw her collaborate with top jazz and blues musicians in New York, such as Bill Laswell, Henry Threadgill and Umar Bin Hassan. Liu's follow-up album, *China Collage*, in 1996, saw her compose for *pipa* and voice.

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US students wax lyrical about China in book

CHICAGO — Years after returning from China, where he and his parents lived for four years, Hugh Shepard still remembers his life in Beijing vividly.

On his first Chinese language test at Yew Chung International School in Beijing, he received a score of 30 percent, but Shepard was determined to do better.

"I studied Chinese every day, and got a score of 87 percent on the next test. After living in Beijing for a year, I became comfortable using Chinese to buy tickets, order food, and I became more familiar with both the city of Beijing and my school," he says.

Shepard's experience in China is included in *West Meets East: 100 Essays from University Students in*

the United States, a book that contains the experiences of students studying Chinese and which was published by the Beijing Language and Culture University Press and Phoenix Tree Publishing Inc.

Shepard has continued to study Chinese since his return to the United States, and is now a freshman at the University of Chicago.

The Windy City's famously cold weather reminds him of his ice festival experience in Harbin, capital of the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, and of the taxi driver he met there. "Harbin and Chicago have much in common. Both cities have good universities, and both have freezing winters. Like the taxi driver we met in Harbin, many Chi-

“Our collective future depends on the successful nurturing of today's young people into truly globally minded leaders.”

Morton Schapiro, former Northwestern University president

agoans are very proud of their hometown.”

Valeria Gogunskaya, a student at the

University of Illinois Chicago, has never been to China but after years of studying the language, she has learned about one important Chinese custom, social respect.

"I find that respect in China is very distinctive. In Chinese society, respecting one's elders is very important. I believe that this custom can greatly improve social relations," Gogunskaya says.

"The respect advocated by Chinese society not only helps strengthen family relations, but also helps maintain harmonious and happy social relationships. Respect is the cornerstone of China's maintenance of a harmonious society for thousands of years."

Gogunskaya's take on China was also included in the bilingual book, which is divided into eight sections, including *My Chinese Stories*, *Journeys of Learning Chinese*, *Deep*

Friendships, *Cultural Exchange*, and *Current Affairs Commentary*.

The 100 essays were carefully selected from 300 student essays from 60 universities, says Gu Licheng, the book's chief editor and a professor at Northwestern University.

Despite their differences, the essays share a common thread — they all show the students' passion for the Chinese language and interest in China, Gu says, adding that they could become "nongovernmental ambassadors to maintain the friendship between China and the US, to enhance the mutual understanding between the Chinese and American people."

In a letter to readers, former Northwestern University president Morton Schapiro recalls his visit to China. "Highlights for me included climbing the Great Wall with our

students, touring the imperial palace together, and visiting the magnificent Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an."

"Our collective future depends on the successful nurturing of today's young people into truly globally minded leaders," he stresses.

Shepard has his own thoughts. "Despite the many cultural, economic, and political differences between the US and China, the two countries have much in common," he says.

"If we study foreign languages, and learn more about different cultures, we can broaden our perspectives, and discover the interesting characteristics of different places. And this knowledge and experience will contribute to improving international relations."

XINHUA

LIFE



Mei Diyang, 29, the first Chinese musician to become a member of the Berliner Philharmoniker, performs with the Berliner Baroque Solisten (Berlin Baroque Soloists), an 11-piece ensemble founded by members of the orchestra, at a concert in Beijing on Sept 28.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Viola virtuoso tantalizes with tour

First Chinese member of Berliner Philharmoniker returns for five-city trip with fellow members of Baroque ensemble, **Chen Nan** reports.



It has been about a year since Mei Diyang was appointed first principal viola at the Berliner Philharmoniker, the first Chinese national to become a member of the orchestra in its 141-year history.

On Sept 28, the 29-year-old returned to his home country with the Berliner Baroque Solisten (Berlin Baroque Soloists), an 11-piece ensemble that specializes in early music which was founded by prominent members of the Berliner Philharmoniker in 1995. Their concert in Beijing included a selection of Baroque and early Italian music.

"This is the first time I have performed with musicians from the Berliner Philharmoniker in China, although I've performed several times here since I joined the orchestra. This tour really excites me," Mei said on Sept 27, a day before the concert at the capital's Forbidden City Concert Hall.

The concert was part of the ongoing Beijing Music Festival, an annual event.

Mei played the *Viola Concerto in G Major* by Georg Philipp Telemann, the first known concerto for the viola. Sixteen years ago, he played the same piece at the same venue when he was a student at the Middle School Affiliated to the Central Conservatory of Music.

He also played the *Concerto for Viola and Strings in E-flat Major* by Alessandro Rolla, a composer Mei says greatly contributed to the viola, an instrument that is often forgotten, tucked away between violins and cellos. Rolla not only wrote 20 viola concertos and plenty of sonatas for the viola and other instruments, such as the violin, cello and piano, but also wrote small pieces for the viola and orchestra.

"No other composer's legacy boasts this number of compositions featuring the viola," says Mei, who also arranged and played the *Sonata*



Above: Violist Mei Diyang during an interview before the concert in Beijing on Sept 27. **Below left:** Mei at the Beijing concert. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"This is the first time I have performed with musicians from the Berliner Philharmoniker in China, although I've performed several times here since I joined the orchestra. This tour really excites me."

Mei Diyang, violist

per *la Grand Viola* by Niccolò Paganini, one of Rolla's most famous students.

The Beijing concert was one of five stops on a tour of China, which took Mei and the Berliner Baroque Solisten to cities including Shanghai, Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Changsha, Hunan province, between Sept 28 and Oct 7.

"When the other musicians found out that we were going to play in my hometown, Changsha, they were very happy because they wanted to see where I was brought up and learned to play music."

"I had quite a smooth transition after joining the Berliner Philharmoniker," he says, when asked how his life changed after becoming a member of the orchestra. "Musicians love music, and each of them is a great soloist. When they play together, they sound like one. That's the magical thing about being a part of the Berliner Philharmoniker. All I need to do is listen and fit in."

He adds that around 30 ensembles have been formed by members of the orchestra, and that he is keen to play in them in addition to serving as principal viola at the Philharmoniker.

Mei began to play the violin when

he was 5, because his grandfather, a history teacher at Hunan Normal University, loved classical music. In 2005, when a team from the Middle School Affiliated to the Central Conservatory of Music visited Changsha to recruit new students, the then 11-year-old Mei auditioned as a violinist. One of the school's teachers, Wang Shaowu, was impressed by his performance and suggested that he switch to the viola. That was Mei's introduction to the instrument.

The mellow, deep tone of the viola, so unlike the higher-pitched violin, instantly attracted him and so between 2005 and 2014, he studied the instrument under Wang in Beijing.

In 2014, Mei continued his studies at the Central Conservatory of Music, and also enrolled to study at the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich under violist Hariolf Schlichtig. In 2018, he won first prize in the viola category, as well as the Audience Prize at the 2018 ARD International Music Competition in Munich. In 2019, he became principal viola at the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra while continuing to study with Japanese violist Nobuko Imai at the Kronberg Academy.

When he became the first Chinese musician to join the Berliner Philharmoniker last year, Mei made headlines, but what matters to him is that people notice the viola and enjoy its sound.

"He became a part of the Berliner Philharmoniker from the day we rehearsed together. The young man knows us very well and did a lot of homework before his audition. We are happy to have him," says double bass player, Ulrich Wolff, who performed in China for the first time in 1979, the year after he joined the Berliner Philharmoniker, which was conducted by Herbert von Karajan at the time.

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New finds illuminate Hongshan Culture

By WANG RU
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A medium-sized settlement from the early Hongshan Culture period was unearthed during recent archaeological excavations in Jianping county, Liaoning province. The discovery has deepened understanding of this dominant Neolithic culture, which occupied a vast area between the modern-day Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Liaoning province between 5,000 and 6,700 years ago.

The discovery was announced at a news conference by the National Cultural Heritage Administration in Beijing on Sept 28.

The remains of houses, sacrificial pits and articles of daily use, like tools made of stone and bone, alongside pottery vessels, have been discovered at the site, which has been named Ma'anqiaoshan. The site was found in 2018, and excavations by the Liaoning Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology began in 2019 to deepen understanding of Hongshan Culture.

According to Fan Shengying, a researcher at the institute, Ma'anqiaoshan covers an area of about 200,000 square meters. It dates back to between 5,500 and 7,700 years ago and contains traces of two distinct cultures, Hongshan Culture and the earlier Xinglongwa Culture, which dates back to between 7,400 and 8,200 years ago.

"This settlement has residential and sacrificial areas. The residential area is located in the eastern part of the site, and covers about 54,000 sq m. It is surrounded by a moat with a circumference of nearly 900 meters. Inside the moat, 11 houses, 46 ash pits, and one ash trench have been discovered. Four large houses seem to be in the center, with smaller houses and other relics distributed around them," says Fan.

The sacrificial area is in the northern part of the site, where 42 sacrificial pits and three burnt sacrificial remains have been discovered. Intact pottery vessels, stone tools, as well as animal bones and shells have also been unearthed in this area, he adds.

Discoveries show that early Hongshan Culture was settled and mostly relied on agriculture for food.

"Microelement analyses of human and pig bones show that both relied on grain as their principal source of nutrition. This means the early Hongshan Culture period witnessed the development of agriculture, and that the crops harvested were not only used to feed people, but also livestock," he explains.

Zhang Chi, a professor of archaeology at Peking University, says the excavations at Ma'anqiaoshan are very important. "Since the discovery of the Niuheliang site (a major sacrificial site from the late Hongshan period) in Jianping in the 1980s, which was a milestone in the study of Hongshan Culture, it has attracted a great deal of attention," he says.

"Since Niuheliang is so large, many people believe it played a vital role in tracing the origins of Chinese civilization. Sacrifice was considered so important by ancient people that they spared no effort in erecting buildings related to the practice, but to fully understand Hongshan society, we also need to understand the scale of contemporaneous settlements, which we have not yet been able to find," he says.

"Although Ma'anqiaoshan belongs to the early Hongshan Culture, and is not contemporaneous with Niuheliang, it's still a valuable discovery as we haven't excavated many Hongshan settlements so far, and so it helps us answer some pertinent questions," he adds.

Fan also mentions that the sacrificial customs reflected at Ma'anqiaoshan show similarities with those at Niuheliang, but are less complex. "The discoveries at Ma'anqiaoshan are the first sacrificial remains we have found from the early Hongshan Culture period. By comparing them with the finds at Niuheliang, we can better understand the evolution of sacrificial rituals and systems, and their increasing sophistication," says Fan.

"They also prove that Hongshan society underwent complicated changes, possibly leading to the origin and formation of pluralistic, integrated Chinese civilization."



Top: A painted pottery jar unearthed from the sacrificial area of the Ma'anqiaoshan site in Jianping county, Liaoning province. Above: A barrel-shaped pottery vessel found in the site's residential area. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Top: One of the 42 sacrificial pits found at the site. Above: A bird's-eye view of the excavation area at the site between 2021 and 2022.

LIFE



The concert *Pastoral for the Planet*, featuring performances by Spanish theater troupe La Fura dels Baus, is one of the highlights of the ongoing Beijing Music Festival. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

The capital's classical music enthusiasts are enjoying October thanks to the annual Beijing Music Festival, which features concerts by musicians from all over the world.

For its organizer, one way to expand the festival's fan base is by taking advantage of innovation and so, during this year's festival, which runs until Sunday, some performances have been staged to display the impact of technology on classical music.

Among them was the concert, *Pastoral for the Planet*, performed by the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, which included pieces such as Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No 6 in F Major, Op 68*, the Introduction (*La Tempesta*) from *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43* and the second movement of the *Symphony No 7 in A Major, Op 92*.

Spanish avant-garde theater troupe La Fura dels Baus, founded in 1979 in Barcelona, which is known for producing the opening ceremony of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, joined in with installations, performances, visuals and sound.

According to Huang Yi, the music director of the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, the idea for the concert was initially inspired by Beethoven's *Symphony No 6 in F Major, Op 68*, which is widely known as "the Pastoral".

From there, the idea was imaginatively expanded to flesh out the program. In addition to music by Beethoven, the concert also featured *Orange* from Anton Reicha's cantata, *Lenore, Jota*, a traditional song from Aragon in Spain, and *Overture to Hero und Leander, Op 11* by Julius Rietz.

"The production combined classical and modern music, and was presented with live visual effects to create an immersive world, as we explored the complex relationship between humans and nature," says Zou Shuang, artistic director of the Beijing Music Festival.

"Classical music has long been celebrated for its beauty, complexity and emotional depth. Technology transforms the way we live, and it's also having a great impact on how we create and experience classical music," Zou adds.

Carlus Padrissa, director of La Fura dels Baus, says that audience was able to interact with the performance via a mobile app, bridging the gap between the environmental themes the production explored and their daily lives.

VISUALIZING the CLASSICS

Beijing Music Festival introduces technology to lend concerts an added dimension, **Chen Nan** reports.



Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra and Spanish theater troupe La Fura dels Baus join hands to offer audience an immersive experience of classical music at the concert *Pastoral for the Planet*. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Padrissa says that the tree-like installation they built on stage was an attempt to represent the power of life and nature by inviting the audience to not only listen to the music, but also "watch" it with their eyes, and respond using their phones.

"The key is to engage audiences with the music and the musicians. Technology plays an important role in that by preparing them for, and getting them excited about, an event, as well as connecting them to the musicians and allowing them to participate," he says.

"The production combined classical and modern music, and was presented with live visual effects to create an immersive world, as we explored the complex relationship between humans and nature."

Zou Shuang, artistic director of the Beijing Music Festival

She also says that this year's festival theme — "Future, Attitude" — signifies the exploration of new experiences and models through innovation.

"The aim of this year's festival is to combine classical music with modern technology and multimedia to create a new atmosphere for broader public engagement with classical music, and introduce change and influence to the genre," Zou says.

AI's Variation, an opera composed by Hao Weiya, was staged at Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall on Oct 3. It depicts a future world where artificial intelligence coexists with humanity, sparking discussions on the ultimate meaning of existence.

"One of the most exciting and controversial developments in the intersection of classical music and technology is the use of artificial intelligence to compose music. It offers a new avenue for creativity and innovation, allowing composers to explore new musical territory," says Hao.

"However, it also creates challenges. While AI can generate music that sounds similar to classical music, it cannot replicate the emotional and intellectual processes that underlie human creativity."

For the first time, Hao used electronic music in his composition. "The process of composing the opera made me think, and I hope that the result is thought-provoking for the audience," he adds.

In 2017, when Hao saw the news about AlphaGo becoming the first computer to defeat a world chess champion, he started to think about the relationship between AI and humans.

Young pianist Zhang Haotian, who once studied at the Mannes School of Music in New York and at the Royal Academy of Music in London, also staged his exploration of classical music during the festival.

On Oct 3, he gave a concert featuring pieces including Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker Suite*, Franz Schubert's *Ständchen, D 889* and Igor Stravinsky's *Three Movements* from the ballet *Petrushka*, in collaboration with digital artist Dada (whose real name is Da Qiyuan), and visual director Ren Dongsheng.

"We created something that was visually arresting and grabbed people's attention, which made me very excited," says Zhang.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn



Left and center: *Pastoral for the Planet* features immersive visual effects. Right: Pianist Zhang Haotian performs at the Beijing Music Festival. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

This year's Golden Rooster program announced

By CHENG YUEZHU
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The 2023 China Golden Rooster and Hundred Flowers Film Festival is scheduled to take place between Nov 1 and 4 in Xiamen, Fujian province, according to a news conference held on Monday in Beijing.

Highlights include the opening ceremony and a concert of film scores, the 36th China Golden Rooster Awards nomination ceremony, a red carpet event, and the closing and awards ceremonies.

Between Oct 27 and Nov 12, around 100 films will be screened, and the program will also include domestic film premieres, post-screening panel discussions, film appreciation lectures and a showcase event.

The screenings are divided into international and domestic films. In the international section, films from 30 countries and regions, including Russia, France and Brazil, have been invited to the festival.

Directors of major international film festivals, as well as film industry experts from countries such as the United States, Poland and New Zealand have also been invited to boost global film exchange.

Forums and symposia will allow experts, scholars and filmmakers to discuss the development of Chinese film from the perspectives of film studies, the film industry, actors and films of traditional Chinese opera.

A new marketing unit has been added to boost the development of the film industry, which will include promotional events for regions

including Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as new film launches by production companies based on the Chinese mainland.

An investment conference, a short film season for young people, and outdoor screenings and exhibitions will also be part of the festival.

According to Yan Shaofei, secretary-general of the China Film Association, the main goals this year are to promote the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture through the medium of film, support the development of Chinese film, focus on the nurturing of young filmmakers, and strengthen the ties between the art of cinema and the general public.

The 36th China Golden Rooster Awards will give out 20 awards. Since opening for entries on June 28,

the committee has received 179 submissions.

A panel of 19 experts, scholars and filmmakers took more than a month to watch 138 submissions, review, discuss and participate in real-name voting. Thirty-four films have been shortlisted, among them 16 feature films, 12 medium and small-budget feature films, and six children's films.

Another three panels, each composed of five judges, reviewed submissions for the documentary and educational, traditional Chinese opera, and art film categories.

The poster for this year's awards was unveiled at the conference. The design makes use of the time-honored tradition of paper-cutting, and was introduced by Zheng Minghua, head of the poster design team and deputy head of the Fujian Graphic Design Association.

With a crowing rooster at its center, the poster is framed by patterns

associated with Xiamen and its culture, including representative flora and fauna — bougainvillea, the egret, and the phoenix tree — and landmarks like Sunlight Rock and Bagua Mansion on Gulangyu island.

"Paper-cutting dates back more than 2,000 years and is deeply rooted in the lives of Chinese people. Just like the art of filmmaking, it draws inspiration from, and transcends, everyday life, conveying Chinese sentiments and aesthetics," Zheng says.

Since ancient times, the technique has been used to adorn lanterns and make shadow puppet figures, and some of the country's earliest animated films incorporate elements of shadow puppetry.

"With paper-cutting, we would like to pay tribute to one of China's highest cinematic honors, while using the global influence of the awards to promote national cultural treasures and enhance our cultural confidence," Zheng says.



Poster for the Golden Rooster film festival. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE



Singer-songwriter Laufey Lin Jonsdottir, who is half-Icelandic and half-Chinese, gives her first concert on the Chinese mainland on Sept 26 in Beijing.
PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Crossing the musical spectrum

Young Icelandic-Chinese performer makes mainland debut in Beijing with classical and jazz-tinged songs, **Chen Nan** reports.

Standing in front of the China Philharmonic Orchestra at the Poly Theater in Beijing on Sept 26 and singing songs blending jazz and classical music, 24-year-old singer-songwriter Laufey Lin Jonsdottir, with Laufey as her stage name, who is half-Icelandic and half-Chinese and known domestically as Lin Bing, gave her first concert on the Chinese mainland.

Playing guitar and cello, Laufey performed about 20 songs, including *Let You Break My Heart Again*, *Beautiful Stranger* and *Bewitched*. Their sonic landscapes, which portray moments of everyday life, have gained Laufey a global following since she started releasing songs online during the pandemic.

"I am not nervous about this first concert on the Chinese mainland. I am more nervous about wearing high heels onstage. I don't want to fall over," the young singer-songwriter told China Daily, a few hours before her concert in Beijing.

After touring the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States, she finally had the chance to perform for Chinese fans.

"The rehearsals with the China Philharmonic Orchestra have been incredible," she says. "And it just feels special to be back in Beijing again."

Laufey's grandfather, Lin Yaoji (1937-2009), a well-known violinist himself, is credited with teaching many other violinists.

"Because lots of my grandfather's students are in the orchestra, it feels like his music is running through them," she says. "It's definitely running through me."

Lin Yaoji died when Laufey was 9 years old but her memories of him are vivid. She describes her grandfather as a very lively person.

"I have been told that I am very similar to him," she says. "He was a musical genius and he did it all out of love for the art. He loved singing, dancing and teaching violin. He also loved jazz."

"People who are new to my music can expect an escape and a different time. A lot of my fans are young and are going through difficulties at school and in friendships, and suffering heartbreaks. I hope my music provides a way to escape those sad times, and brings them somewhere really beautiful."

Growing up in Iceland and now living in Los Angeles, Laufey used to visit China for a few months every summer to study piano and cello. This is the first time she has returned to Beijing since the pandemic.

Classical music has always been an important influence. Her mother, Lin Wei, is also a violinist, and has been a member of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra since 1988. Laufey grew up learning to play the violin, the piano and the cello and took classical music very seriously as a child.



The concert's conductor Jin Yukuang

"Laufey's music has received critical praise. She melds elements of modern music with the more traditional sounds of classical and jazz. With her family's musical legacy, she has made a name for herself by producing a captivating sound that is uniquely her own."

Zou Shuang, artistic director of the Beijing Music Festival

Jazz was also part of her life thanks to her father's love of the genre.

"I remember that my father played jazz music at home," she says. "I have a low voice, so when I started singing, jazz felt appropriate."

While Laufey's parents have always been supportive of her pursuing a career in music, she wasn't sure herself, writing her first song when she was 16, which she hid for years.

"In classical music, you learn to be a player, not a creator of music. Then when I was 20 and studying at the Berklee College of Music, I realized that I had started writing songs again. This time it felt honest and about myself," she says.

She started releasing those songs during the pandemic, and spent a lot of time on social media like TikTok and Instagram, which was her "stage". Last year, she released her debut album, *Everything I Know About Love*, and this September a follow-up album, *Bewitched*, which she calls "the second chapter" of the first album. She plays piano, cello, and guitar on most of the tracks and she breaks the walls between classical and jazz music.

In one of the songs on the second album, *Letter to My 13-year-old Self*, she sings: "Don't worry about your curly hair, clothes that don't quite fit you anywhere ... and grow so tough and charm them, write your story, fall in love a little too. ... I wish I could go back and give her a squeeze myself at 13. ... Keep on going with your silly dream."

She says: "I was so worried when I was 13 years old. I wanted to be a singer, but I wasn't sure if things would work out. The song is for the 13-year-old version of me."

Besides her parents, Laufey's twin sister Junia is also a big supporter, and takes care of the visuals accompanying her music.

"She is my creative director," Laufey says. "The whole visual world behind my art project is all her. It is great to have someone who can be so honest with you without making you angry for being honest. It's very special."

Asked about her songwriting process, she says that before writing anything, she knows what the song is going to be about and what its message or title will be, and hopes to write music for movies one day.

Zou Shuang, artistic director of the Beijing Music Festival, says that she is excited to have Laufey in Beijing as part of the ongoing annual event, which highlights young musicians.

"Laufey's music has received critical praise. She melds elements of modern music with the more traditional sounds of classical and jazz," says Zou. "With her family's musical legacy, she has made a name for herself by producing a captivating sound that is uniquely her own."

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Village children find their voices through verse

ZHENGZHOU — One afternoon in late September, little Zhang Haofeng sat down with his school friends and read out a poem he had just written: *In the eyes of a bug, / Raindrops form seas, / Big and small, / Wherever they fall, / But me, too, / I see those seas.*

It was a rainy day, and the children had been sheltering inside during their lunch break. Eleven-year-old Haofeng's poem was inspired by the rhythm of the raindrops, the first sign of autumn.

He had barely finished reading his poem when his classmate Zai Bingjie eagerly shared his own verse: *It is raining, / Ordinary, docile raindrops fall on the ground, / But the naughty ones slip off the wall, / Into my soul.* "You must be a rebellious raindrop," one boy joked, and they burst into laughter.

The children are members of a poetry society established in 2019 in a rural school in Henan province's Xiuwu county, which has about 50 students, all natives of Dananpo, a mountain village that is home to about 1,000 people.

These young poets, however, have written more than 2,000 poems, and their works have been collected into three books since the society was founded four years ago.

"I believe that poetry is a lamp illuminating life," says Liu Xiaojiang, head teacher of Dananpo Primary School. "Poetry writing is a chance for the children to find their voices in literature, and become people who are reconciled with themselves and who love life."

Zhang Yanwen, the poetry society's tutor, is herself an avid reader and writer, but teaching the children to write was a different story. In her first poetry class, she says, the students sat in silence for at least 10 minutes, not knowing what to write. The theme of the class was "an incredible realm".

She ended up telling the children to simply "go out and take note of everything you see". They came back with simple images that were readily transformed into poems.

One of them wrote: *I've turned into a cloud, / That chats with the sun during the day, / And frolics with the moon at night.*

Another verse goes: *The sun is sleepy, / You can tell from its light, / Which dazzles and dims, / From one moment to the next ... Dear sun, / Sleep tight tonight.*

Touched by these lines, in December 2021, Liu, the head teacher, compiled the poems into a book titled *The Hidden Rainbow*.

Six months later, it was followed by a second collection, called *Summer*.

As the children observed the world around them, they became more creative and their verse explored more themes, ranging from the four seasons to their families, emotions and aspirations.

One of the young authors was a boy whose father worked in a faraway city, leaving him at home with his mother. He was a boy of few words, but he penned this verse: *I miss you, / So I put wings on my heart, / Hoping that I can fly to your side, / Together we climb the mountains, / And play football, / My dad.*

The poem was included in the third collection of the children's works, entitled *My Dream Is an Ice Cream*.

Zhang Yanwen says that many rural children are separated from their parents, who are migrant workers in faraway cities. "Some children, due to a lack of security, are reluctant to open up to their guardians, teachers or peers, but now they have learned to pour out their emotions in writing," she says.

Dananpo village, perched in the Taihang Mountains, is about 600 years old. Until the 1970s, it was rich in coal resources and had a dozen mines that employed over 1,000 people. In the 1980s, the depletion of resources and damage to the environment became evident, and by the end of the 1990s, all the mines had been closed. In 2014, it was listed as a very poor village, with nearly a half of its residents living in poverty. Many adults had to look for jobs in faraway cities, leaving behind their children and elderly parents.

Though the village declared an end to poverty in 2019, regaining prosperity has been an uphill battle. Following the advice of rural development specialists, the village has taken steps to revive the local economy through culture and art. It has renovated its ancient architecture, opened a bookstore, library and art center, and organized exhibitions and music festivals.

The children are also encouraged to explore the world through reading and writing, so that their imaginations are not confined by the craggy mountains.

This year, their three collections of poems have been introduced to their peers in big cities. In June, Haofeng was invited to a literary camp in Tianjin, the only representative from Henan.

XINHUA

LIFE

TRAVELER ON A QUEST
STILL RELISHING THE JOURNEYFrench artist and philosopher builds bridges to ensure greater high-level and comprehensive contact, **Li Yingxue** reports.

After residing in Beijing for almost two decades, Christine Cayol, a French philosopher, writer, and artist, has undergone a remarkable transformation — from initial unfamiliarity to seamless adaptation, from absolute rejection to embracing the Chinese way of life and the profound culture. Consequently, she has emerged as a cultural bridge-builder between China and France.

She currently holds multiple roles. As the vice-president of the Sino-French Cultural Forum, she is committed to establishing a high-level platform for cultural and artistic exchange and dialogue between China and France.

Additionally, she is the founder of a home for Chinese-French art, Yishu 8, where she has initiated the French Young Artist Award, Chinese Young Artist Award, and a Sino-French craft exchange program. Over the years, she has continuously supported young artists from both countries with their residencies and studies.

Furthermore, she is also an accomplished writer who continues to introduce the lives and thinking of contemporary Chinese people to a French audience.

Cayol attended this year's Beijing Culture Forum on Sept 14 and 15 for the first time, and gave a speech at a parallel panel.

"There are numerous forums worldwide, with the majority dedicated to economics or politics. However, cultural forums are a rarity. I am genuinely excited about the chance Beijing offers me to engage in meaningful cultural and social dialogue with my Chinese friends," she says.

"I find that there are commonalities between the French and the Chinese, and one of them is romanticism," says Cayol.

She believes that romanticism involves blending simple, natural elements with culture and things that are understated yet profound, and both the Chinese and the French enjoy making friends, sharing stories over a meal and a drink,

and savoring life.

"Culture isn't limited to reading books or appreciating art; culture is about embracing life," she emphasizes.

Cayol views the cultures of China and France as akin to tea and wine. "Both tea and wine are like genuine works of art; delving deeper into them requires time and continuous learning," she says.

Pivotal role

Cayol founded Yishu 8, a nonprofit art organization, in 2009 to facilitate cultural exchanges between China and France.

"It's a family for artists. I'm an artist, and I don't have precise business goals. I just want this place so that something new happens in art. It's all about innovation," Cayol explains.

In 2011, Yishu 8 officially launched the French Young Artist Award, followed by the establishment of the Chinese Young Artist Award. In 2019, Yishu 8 and Golden Phoenix cofounded the Hand of Wisdom Sino-French craft exchange program to bring young Chinese craftspeople to France for exchange and exhibitions.

Lacquer artist Yao Bangliang is the winner of this year's exchange program. He just finished his three-month trip to Paris last month and he found this experience quite eye-opening and inspiring.

Yao thinks that Cayol holds a deep fascination with Chinese culture and possesses substantial knowledge about it, and she has also played a pivotal role in fostering cultural and artistic exchanges between China and France.

"She holds great respect for the work of artists and strives to provide them with maximum freedom when offering assistance and support," Yao says.

"Artists, you are free," is a phrase that she frequently says," Yao adds.

Cayol mentioned that Yao's work has garnered significant popularity in Paris, and he has gained a lot from this experience.

"This journey has had an impact

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We are asking them to create new art reflecting what China brings to their creation. It's like a family reunion and an opportunity for the French artists to revisit China."

Christine Cayol,
French philosopher,
writer, and artist



Christine Cayol is the founder of Yishu 8, a home for Chinese-French art, which supports young artists from both countries with their residencies and studies. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

on him and his work, although the effects may not be immediately visible; instead, they may become apparent over the course of a decade," Cayol remarks.

In 2011, Yishu 8 moved to the former location of the Sino-French University, situated to the southeast of the Forbidden City. The recipients of the French Young Artist Award had the opportunity to stay there and immerse themselves in the vibrant street life of the capital.

Cayol believes that, to facilitate dialogue among artists, it is essential to invite them to each other's cities. She is delighted to extend an invitation to young French artists to come and reside at the foot of the imperial palace, experiencing life in Beijing.

"The path to mutual understanding is arduous. It cannot be traversed in just a mere three days in China or France. It demands considerable patience and personal reflection, including contemplation of one's own culture and civilization," she notes.

On Sept 16, French Ambassador to China Bertrand Lortholary visited Yishu 8 to attend 2020 Yishu 8 · French Young Artists Award winner Chloe Silbano's exhibition (*se*) *deplacer* (removal). The exhibition showcases 12 canvas oil paintings created by Silbano during her residency in Beijing over the past month.

"I greatly appreciate the works of Silbano, a young French artist who has captured the soul of Beijing with her eyes and brush," Lortholary says.

"Cayol and the Yishu 8 team have accomplished something remarkable over the past decade. They have built a bridge for cultural exchange and dialogue between China and France," he says.

Next year marks the 60th anniversary of Sino-French diplomatic relations and is also the Year of Sino-French Tourism and Culture. Lortholary says he looks forward to Yishu 8 continuing its artistic endeavors.

According to Cayol, Yishu 8 is planning a large-scale exhibition at the National Art Museum of China next year. This exhibition intends to gather Yishu 8's award-winning young artists from China and France over the past decade, offering them a platform to display their art in Beijing.

"We are asking them to create new art reflecting what China brings to their creation," Cayol says. "It's like a family reunion and an opportunity for the French artists to revisit China."

In addition to the exhibition, Cayol is also planning to diversify offerings from Yishu 8 by transforming the former location of the Sino-French University into a space where individuals can find respite amid the bustling city life while also

engaging in learning opportunities.

Co-organized by Yishu 8, the Sino-French Cultural Forum is gearing up for its fifth edition this autumn in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, with Cayol serving as the vice-president representing the French side for this event.

According to her, they are listing the guests for this year's forum, which includes both emerging talent and renowned artists from France.

"Yishu 8's exchange programs are long-term and sustained, whereas the Sino-French Cultural Forum, spanning just two or three days, can involve a broader audience," she says.

"Simultaneously, it has the potential to ignite numerous collaborative inspirations and facilitate substantial cooperation within a short period."

Teacher's view

Before relocating to Beijing with her husband in 2003, Cayol had an impressive career as a teacher of French and philosophy in both Spain and France. Additionally, she had authored several books exploring the realm of art.

Her initial encounter with Beijing was in 2002, and it left an indelible mark on her memory. While strolling alone through the halls of the Palace Museum, her attention was suddenly drawn to a plaque bearing

the Chinese characters *wu wei* (inaction), inscribed by Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

This serendipitous encounter ignited Cayol's fascination with the Chinese philosophy of inaction, as espoused by Laozi, prompting her to embark on a journey of self-learning about Taoism. "Western philosophy is based on the idea that action is the best. You make this decision and you take action. Action is reality," Cayol explains.

"In Taoism, you have to accept that as human beings sometimes you don't have to do anything. I have never seen a philosophy that says no action. This is very distinctive and interesting difference in philosophy dealing with change and action," she says.

In her apartment in southern France, which she reserves exclusively for her writing endeavors, there is a striking emptiness, punctuated only by two essential items: a cross and the timeless philosophical masterpiece, the *Tao Te Ching*, available in both French and Chinese editions.

Cayol underscores that her quest for learning and embracing Taoism is a lifelong endeavor, paralleled by her dedicated efforts to promote cultural exchange between China and France.

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Christine Cayol and French Ambassador to China Bertrand Lortholary on a visit to Yishu 8.

Bonds of literature with Malaysia help turn a new page

By FANG AIQING

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A writers' residence will be launched in Kuala Lumpur later this year to enhance literary ties between China and Malaysia, according to a cooperation agreement signed on Sept 15.

The signing between the October Branch of the Beijing Publishing Group and the Malaysia Han Culture Centre was part of the 2023 Beijing Culture Forum held on Sept 14 and 15, which was organized by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee and the Beijing municipal government.

The upcoming residency program will invite Chinese and foreign writers and translators to experience life in Kuala Lumpur, creating new works and exchanging ideas with each other, and will organize book release events and public lectures, according to Chen Dongjie, general manager of the October Branch of the Beijing Publishing Group.

The branch owns the influential

literature magazine October, which was founded in 1978.

These days, Chen's company has been turning October into a literary brand with a series of events, including the writers' residency program that started six years ago.

Previously, they have established such residencies in 13 domestic and overseas cities, including Edinburgh, Kathmandu, Beijing, Lijiang and Lizhuang ancient towns, respectively in Yunnan and Sichuan provinces.

The Kuala Lumpur residency's working venue at Malaysia's Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Institute of Language and Literature) will be put into use within this year, and they will also set up exclusive counters at local bookstores for works published by the Beijing Publishing Group, Chen adds.

Through the residency program, he says, he hopes to work with Malaysian publishing institutions to cultivate outstanding writers, publish quality works and attract more Sinologists and translators to join the literary undertaking.

Datuk Goh Hin San, president of

the Malaysian center, says that living in Malaysia for a couple of months will enable sensitive and observant Chinese authors to have a deeper understanding of local customs and people, which will benefit their writing.

Such experience may open up an international horizon and inspire them to review their work from an alternative perspective, he says.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the two countries' diplomatic relations. Goh says he hopes the residency program will be a literary highlight to celebrate the bond.

Goh has been endeavoring to promote Chinese literature, culture and language education in Malaysia for more than 30 years.

Official statistics shows that ethnic Chinese makes up around 23 percent of the Malaysian population. Goh has put an emphasis on promoting Chinese culture to mainstream Malaysian society in recent years.

His team has translated the four household classic Chinese novels — *Journey to the West*, *A Dream of Red*

Mansions, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *The Water Margin* — into Malay.

They've particularly paid attention to localizing the content so that it's easier for Malaysians to understand.

For example, they applied traditional Malay poetry forms in translating those in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. When putting classic stories of *Journey to the West* on stage, they replaced the Chinese monsters with local ones.

"We want to tell the stories of traditional Chinese culture using Malay elements that audiences are more familiar with," he says.

For him, this is a practice of their long-standing philosophy, the idea of *hehe* (harmony and unity).

"There's part of me in you, and part of you in me. Chinese culture is shared by people all over the world," Goh says.

Over the past years, his center has translated and published more than 100 books in cooperation with over a dozen Chinese publishing houses.

In collaboration with the Beijing Publishing Group, they have translated and published best-selling



The October Branch of the Beijing Publishing Group and the Malaysia Han Culture Centre sign a cooperation agreement during the 2023 Beijing Culture Forum. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

contemporary Chinese literature works like *Jade King: History of a Chinese Muslim Family* by Huo Da and *Ordinary World* by Lu Yao, and both are read in Malaysian schools.

According to Goh, mainstream Malaysian society is curious about China's reform and opening-up, and what Chinese people are thinking. With the Belt and Road Initiative that was initiated 10 years ago, introducing and translating Chinese literature works has become more smoothly.

Meanwhile, works of Malaysian writers like Ng Kim Chew and Lim Pow Leng, both writing in Chinese,

have been popular in China and received high marks on review site Douban.

"These writers have powerful Chinese language capabilities and sophisticated writing skills. They are resilient and hardworking. Their writing horizon is fresh for Chinese readers," Goh says, adding that writers from both countries should learn and get inspiration from each other.

"When people have cultural exchanges, mutual understanding and sentiments, we will get twice the result with half the effort in promoting other matters within the BRI framework," he adds.

LIFE

Ranger lets nature work

Vast reserve is under constant monitoring as tourist numbers grow, **Xu Lin** and **Feng Zhiwei** report.

Having committed himself to the same territory since 1994, 55-year-old Peng Shiwen has become very familiar with the terrain he safeguards.

As a ranger of the State-owned Zhangjiajie forest farm in Hunan province, his daily routine includes patrolling the secluded wood-covered mountains and staying vigilant for signs of fire.

"After all these years, I've grown accustomed to my simple life in the forest farm and formed a deep emotional connection with it. I consider the forest ranger station as my home and green mountains and woods as my companions," he says.

Peng recalls that in the past, he had to communicate with other rangers with a walkie-talkie or face-to-face, but nowadays, thanks to new technology, they're able to use smartphones and update their patrol trails and work logs in an app.

"Our working conditions are much better, with tools such as drones that patrol specific areas regularly and plan routes. We do manual patrol every day and focus on forest fire prevention and safeguarding against pine wilt disease," he says.

The forest farm is part of the Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area, which was inscribed as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 1992. It meets the criteria for the assessment of outstanding universal value — "containing superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance."

A spectacular area stretching over 26,000 hectares, the site is dominated by more than 3,000 narrow sandstone pillars and peaks, many over 200 meters high.

In addition to the striking beauty of the landscape, the region is also noted for the fact that it is home to a number of endangered plant and animal species.

Li Wei, an official from the administrative bureau of Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area, says they're using a forest-fire early warning system, with high-altitude thermal imaging cameras to identify smoke or fire and a 24/7 control center to quickly respond to any emergencies.

To protect against pine wilt disease, they regularly clear dead pine trees to eliminate the threat of the epidemic.

"Each forest ranger is in charge of patrols of a specific region. The tradition of forest protection has been passed down through the generations. Our careful protection has achieved positive results, with good quality water and air, and conservation of wild flora and fauna," Li says.

Heritage preservation

In January 2001, the Hunan provincial authorities implemented the regulations for the protection of Wulingyuan World Natural Heritage Site, which have been revised several times.

Ecological migration and relocation in scenic areas have always been the primary challenges in the coordinated protection and development of the Wulingyuan area.

Between 1999 and 2001, Wulingyuan initiated two large-scale ecological migration and relocation projects, moving residents from the core scenic area and demolishing a total of 235,000 square meters of buildings and structures.

In May 2017, the local government issued an announcement for the third project, which is still ongoing, involving 3,087 residents and 185,100 sq m of housing.

"Wulingyuan has attached great importance to heritage conservation,"



Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area, a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in Hunan province, boasts more than 3,000 narrow sandstone pillars and peaks, all clad in lush vegetation. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



An aerial view of farming fields nestled in the depth of mountains in Wulingyuan area. WU YONGBING / FOR CHINA DAILY

says Hu Xinhua, former director of the protection office of Wulingyuan World Natural Heritage property.

"We've demolished buildings in the scenic area that violated the regulations or had a negative impact on the intrinsic value of natural heritage."

The government has also relocated noncompliant reception facilities out of the core scenic area, as well as the people involved. Now, there are no overnight services in the core area.

According to Hu, if there are construction projects, all building materials must be approved before entering the core region.

"We've put in significant efforts to protect heritage resources in Wulingyuan. Thanks to years of preservation, the lush and green hills clothed in wild profusions of vegetation are more beautiful," he says.

He says that as heritage preservation is an ongoing effort, it's necessary to improve the organizational structure to ensure a long-lasting national mechanism for sustained efficiency.

He calls for more financial support from the central government because it's not easy for the local government to balance heritage preservation and economic development. They sometimes have to rely on future development to provide the funds needed for protection, but the

investment in protection is high.

Hu also suggests that education about the uniqueness of Wulingyuan should start from kindergarten, exerting an invisible, formative influence on local younger generation. It will raise their awareness of protecting the natural environment and resources.

"Tour guides play a crucial role as ambassadors for Wulingyuan, and they should promote the heritage value. For example, they can improve their knowledge via training, and incorporate more heritage-related content to tour guide speeches, ensuring that visitors have an overall understanding of Wulingyuan," he says.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's World Heritage Outlook assessed Wulingyuan as of "significant concern" in 2014, noting that its outstanding universal value was threatened by the development of tourism facilities, roads, and increased visitation.

Since then, Wulingyuan started to put more efforts into prioritizing preservation, and in 2020, the IUCN World Heritage Outlook assessed it as "good with some concerns".

Xiao Shizhen, professor at the School of Geography and Environmental Science, Guizhou Normal University, says that Wulingyuan's protection is a tortuous progress and it now embraces the idea of

focusing on conservation and sustainable development.

According to Xiao, this transformation was achieved through the collaborative efforts of relevant management authorities, expert teams, as well as various local departments and enterprises.

"Now management is highly effective and continues to see improvement. The awareness of protection has been elevated greatly among all the teams, including local government and managing authorities. We see that the heritage value of Wulingyuan is well-preserved, with its integrity well-maintained," she says.

"Success in heritage declaration doesn't mean we can engage in development or other activities without restrictions."

Since 2015, Xiao and her team have written Wulingyuan's state of conservation reports to the World Heritage Committee, providing responses to concerns in a scientific and rational manner.

She analyzed the actual situation, proposed resolutions and offered recommendations on how to implement them. She stated in the reports that the infrastructure facilities, such as cable cars and an elevator in the scenic area, have brought positive impacts despite some negative influences on the aesthetic landscape.

"Tourists can enter and exit more quickly, improving the efficiency of sightseeing, so they no longer need to stay longer on the mountains. As more tourists can now appreciate the mountains' scenery, it has promoted the development of the tourism industry," she says.

She adds that it's also good for fire prevention and handling tourist emergencies.

Achieving balance

"The current stage of heritage preservation and tourism development in Wulingyuan is in a positive cycle of growth," says professor Zhang Chaozhi from the School of Tourism Management, Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

"To balance heritage preservation and tourism development, it's essential to figure out where the

equilibrium between preservation and development lies," he says.

"If we must provide a simplified answer, it involves respecting the traditional livelihood needs of the local community and balancing local socio-economic development and the preservation of natural heritage integrity."

Zhang says the most pivotal approach is to develop a tourism industry that's compatible with heritage conservation. He also emphasizes that not every mode of tourism development, every form of tourism, or every category of visitor, can help balance tourism growth and heritage conservation.

He says that heritage preservation and tourism development reinforce each other, creating a mutually beneficial loop.

On one side, preserving heritage improves scenic areas greatly, such as reducing unauthorized constructions and enhancing infrastructure and the environment, thereby creating a better experience for visitors.

On the other side, tourism development brings in revenue that can support the government in environmental improvement, land expropriation and demolition, and sewage treatment.

"The success of managing a heritage site largely depends on how well the conflicts between the community's livelihood development and heritage protection are handled," Zhang says.

He explains that in heritage tourism development, the community has a vital role — local residents are not only the inheritors of heritage value, but they also bear the impact of heritage preservation on their livelihoods, and actively participate in tourism industry.

In later stages, as the community seeks to expand facilities due to high demand for tourism, conflicts may arise with heritage preservation efforts.

Many heritage sites in China are popular tourist spots. While welcoming visitors, they follow stricter protective measures than other places, setting benchmarks in tourism.

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Kashgar's traditions and scenery offer visitors exceptional attractions

By YANG YANG and MAO WEIHUA in Kashgar, Xinjiang

In an evening in mid-September, as the sun set and cool wind dispersed the heat of the day, nightlife in Kashgar, the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, started.

In Guli's Home, a guesthouse transformed from a residence, visitors were drinking tea while enjoying a traditional dance by a young woman and 80-year-old Ismayil Sawut.

Opened in 2017 by Salamatgul, Ismayil's granddaughter, the two-story guesthouse has become a key attraction in the city. On short-video platform Kuaishou, Salamatgul's account has been followed by more than 500,000 people. She told the media in July that on average, the guesthouse receives 300 tourists a day, who dance and dine together and talk to each other.

In Maimaiti's old house that has a history of 300 years, young women dressed in Uygur attire and makeup, posed for photos. Covering an area of 700 square meters, the house has 20 rooms, including bedrooms, a granary and carpet room. A good showcase of local tradition and culture, the building has become an important site for tourists to take photos.



Visitors take a night stroll around the ancient city of Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. PHOTOS BY YANG YANG AND MAO WEIHUA / CHINA DAILY

Shops for the photo tour business have grown from two in 2020 to about 200. Song Hanyu, 35, is the manager of Kashgar Sun City Photo-shooting Tour. Song used to grow jujubes. Six months ago, he started the photo-shooting tour business in a 1,500-square-meter theater that went out of business before the COVID-19 pandemic. During peak time, like the May Day holiday, the shop receives 200 clients, and the lowest price for an order that includes attire, makeup and 40 photos is 499 yuan (\$68).

"Because many people love the dresses and scenes of local characteristics, and more people are coming to visit Kashgar, the photo-shooting tour business has kept growing," he says.

During the May Day holiday, the ancient city of Kashgar, one of the top tourism attractions in Xinjiang, received nearly 255,000 tourists, up 136 percent compared with 2019, according to the local government's website.

In August, the ancient city saw about 1.23 million visits. It was the first time that visits to the 2,100-year-old city passed 1 million within a month, according to a report on ts.cn, the top news portal in the autonomous region.

Contact the writers at yangyang@chinadaily.com.cn



Left and right: Sanitation workers clean up garbage on steep cliffs at Wulingyuan scenic area in Hunan province. Center: An employee of the scenic area feeds a group of wild monkeys. Wulingyuan is a haven of flora and fauna. PHOTOS BY DENG DAOLI AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Belt and Road Forum
for International Cooperation

BRI powering development across the world

Editor's note: The year of 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. Ten experts share their views with China Daily on how the initiative promotes economic development and improves people's livelihoods.

Initiative has become a game changer globally

The Belt and Road Initiative has become a game changer on many levels globally. It has provided a model for transboundary economic cooperation. Its emphasis on the common goals of development of nations, transcending political, cultural and ideological differences, is a unique feature of the initiative. And the fact that it respects the sovereignty and dignity of the countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative is an important addition to international relations and global governance.

More important, the Belt and Road Initiative has put the "win-win" concept on the world cognitive map at a time when zero-sum games and the winner-takes-it-all have become the norm for some major Western economies.

China has presented a world view which believes that "your prosperity is my prosperity", and if your neighbor's house is burning, you cannot be sure of the safety of your own house.

In terms of development financing and goals, the initiative presents an effective and coordinated way of achieving them based on long-term results rather than immediate monetary gains. Also, China believes in helping other countries realize development by building and improving large-scale infrastructure instead of providing them with "aid" which runs off into the sand, perpetuating poverty.

In terms of economic-scientific thinking, the emphasis on clearing the "three bottlenecks of development" in Africa — by filling the financing gap, helping build or improve the needed infrastructure, and addressing the shortage of skilled labour — is key to eradicating poverty and ushering in development.

Hussein Askary is vice-chairman of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden.

BRI vital to international cooperation, development

The year of 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, which is aimed at improving infrastructure connectivity and serves as a catalyst for economic development and shared prosperity for all by championing multilateralism and global unity.

The initiative stands as a transformative platform in the realm of international cooperation, representing a decade of concerted efforts to achieve win-win cooperation across various domains. The ambitious project, which facilitates policy exchanges and road connectivity, promotes trade and creates jobs.

President Xi Jinping's unwavering commitment to global development and peace deserves commendation, especially because China has been playing a pivotal role in assisting countries in their pursuit of a shared future through Belt and Road projects.

One exemplary manifestation of the Belt and Road Initiative's impact is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Over the past decade, the CPEC has transformed from a concept to a tangible reality, reshaping Pakistan's development landscape. It has not only deepened economic cooperation but also bolstered cultural ties between China and Pakistan. With its focus on development and its inclusive nature, it has helped improve the energy and transportation sectors of Pakistan and other Belt and Road countries.

Indeed, the CPEC signifies a momentous vision, cementing an unbreakable bond between China and Pakistan in their collective pursuit of a human community with a shared future.

China's sincere pursuit of global development goals are exemplary and offer valuable lessons to the world. The international community should look to China as a model of effective collaboration and sustainable development.

Khalid Taimur Akram is executive director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future in Islamabad.

Connectivity, synergy and opportunities

As connectivity has become a defining feature of a modern economy, it is evident that connectivity needs impetus, planning and proper implementation. The Belt and Road Initiative helps make those connectivity goals a reality.

Evidence abound on the successful endeavors of countries that were wise enough to see the potential beforehand and pragmatic enough to lay the grounds for a cooperation that would benefit all sides involved.

Central and Eastern Europe have seen several such tangible results, including in the Budapest-Belgrade high-speed railway, the Pelješac Bridge in Croatia, the Port of Piraeus in Greece, and hundreds of kilometers of highways throughout the Balkans built with Chinese funding and expertise.

In addition to the short-term impact of infrastructure investment, there are also

medium- and long-term effects in strengthening the basis for future economic growth, including making labor more efficient and productive, which for Southern and Eastern Europe means narrowing the gap with wealthier Western Europe.

The world has become a different place since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, but the initiative has to evolve to enable countries to capitalize on its strengths and identify its untapped potential. With China's rapid growth and chaotic conditions worldwide, it is of vital importance that the world must understand China's role. The initiative offers a proper lens to see China's approach to global development and its efforts to build a human community with a shared future for mankind.

Marsela Musabelliu is the executive director of the Albanian Institute for Globalization Studies.

BRI filling infrastructure and funds gaps

In the 10 years since it was proposed, the Belt and Road Initiative has become an important global public good, generating tangible benefits for countries including increased investment, job creation and improved livelihoods. The initiative has progressed from a vision to reality, yielding tangible results for Belt and Road countries and their peoples.

Infrastructure development is essential for economic development, and there is a huge need of funds in developing countries to narrow the investment gap. But the lack of proper infrastructure has held up the development of many countries. Better connectivity and deeper economic cooperation are needed to facilitate the development of many countries.

Fortunately, the initiative has been filling the funds and infrastructure gaps in many countries, thus boosting regional and global trade. That's why more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations have already signed the Belt and Road cooperation documents with China.

Sri Lanka, too, has launched a series of development projects under the Belt and Road framework, leading to a huge improvement in its infrastructure. The Belt and Road Initiative is also promoting Sri Lanka's economic growth, creating jobs and improving people's livelihoods.

China is a great friend of Sri Lanka and has always supported the country in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity. China has also provided much-needed emergency humanitarian aid for Sri Lanka in times of crisis.

Besides, China has agreed to strengthen cooperation with local and foreign companies, and contribute more to Sri Lanka's economic recovery. But some countries have been countering China and the Belt and Road Initiative while proposing many alternative initiatives some of which fail to even take off.

Whether some countries like it or not, the Belt and Road Initiative has been driving infrastructure development globally, and improving connectivity and trade.

Maya Majueran is director of the Belt and Road Initiative Sri Lanka, an independent and pioneering Sri Lanka-based think tank.

Initiative changes the world for the better

It's impossible to overstate just how much the Belt and Road Initiative has changed the world in the decade since it was proposed. In many countries, too many so-called leaders say nice words that people want to hear, but few deliver on the (false) promises they make to lure the people, mostly for votes. Sadly, when the world is facing horrendous problems, such as climate change, global public health, poverty and war, some countries have chosen confrontation over cooperation, ostensibly to perpetuate their hegemony.

President Xi put forward the idea of building a "human community with a shared future" in a speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations on March 23, 2013. To turn words into action, later the same year, during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, President Xi proposed a very significant global initiative,



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

the Belt and Road Initiative.

Oscar Wilde once said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Former US president Donald Trump proposed the now-forgotten "Blue Dot Network", which unsuccessfully tried to counter the Belt and Road Initiative in sectors such as the digital economy, cybersecurity, energy and infrastructure development. Incumbent US President Joe Biden and the G7 have proposed the "Build Back Better World" initiative which one never hears about nowadays, proving that it was only a pathetic attempt to counter China's initiative by trying to ape it. Similarly, the European Union has its "Global Gateway Project" which seems to be a high-way to nowhere.

On Jan 17 of that year, on a state visit to Switzerland, President Xi repeated his call for building a community with a shared future for mankind at the United Nations office in Geneva. Three days later, after his inauguration as US president, Trump said: "From this day forward, it's going to be 'America first.'" Sadly, it still is. With so many existential threats facing humankind, why can't we work together?

Harvey Dzodin is a senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization.

Diversified energy market beneficial for all

Qatar is the world's top liquefied natural gas (LNG) exporter. However, the competition for LNG has intensified since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, because countries, especially major powers, need huge volumes of LNG from other sources to make up for the shortage created in reduced Russian LNG supply. China is one of the powers that is keen to diversify its sources of energy.

For this reason, China is keen to strengthen relations with countries in the Middle East, Qatar in particular. In fact, on June 20 this year, Qatar and China signed a 27-year agreement under which Qatar will supply China with 4 million tons of LNG annually. This follows a similar 27-year agreement that Qatar Energy and China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation signed in November 2022. With this deal, Qatar replaced Australia as China's largest LNG supplier.

Qatar is aware that China, as a reliable long-term importer of energy, is growing as a consistent consumer of Gulf countries' energy. This is mirrored in the trade relations between Qatar and China — China has been Qatar's top trading partner since 2021. China-Qatar trade last year reached about \$25 billion, of which Qatari exports to China were worth \$20 billion. I believe China, with its huge market, will become the preferred destination for many Middle East countries' energy exports.

Khair Diabat is a professor in the Foreign Affairs Department of Qatar University.

BRI, RCEP to help Cambodia realize its development goals

Over the past decade, more than 150

countries and 30 international organizations have joined the Belt and Road Initiative, which has achieved remarkable success since its launch in 2013.

The initiative provides a non-discriminatory and inclusive platform for cooperation, and has helped further increase ASEAN-China trade. China is now the largest trade partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, with the China-ASEAN trade volume reaching 2.59 trillion yuan (\$356.15 billion) in the first five months of 2023.

Cambodia is one of the staunchest supporters of the Belt and Road Initiative, because it has reaped tremendous benefits from Belt and Road infrastructure projects, including the construction of the Siem Reap International Airport and the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, the country's first expressway, which was completed in October last year.

By the end of 2017, more than 2,000 kilometers of roads, seven long bridges and a new container terminal at Phnom Penh Autonomous Port had been built with support from China. At present, Cambodia's second expressway, the 135-km-long expressway to Bavet City, is being built by China Bridge and Road Corp. for a cost of \$1.35 billion.

The initiative provides an excellent opportunity for Cambodia and China to raise their relations to a new level, not least because the two countries' economies complement each other, and their political relations are strong and stable.

The Belt and Road Initiative, along with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Cambodia-China Free Trade Agreement, will help Cambodia achieve its development goals.

Kin Phea is director-general of the International Relations Institute of Cambodia, Royal Academy of Cambodia.

Initiative strengthens China-Chile ties

There are many "firsts" in China-Chile relations. Chile was the first South American country to establish diplomatic relations and the first to sign a free trade agreement with China, as well as the first to recognize China as a market economy. It was also in Chile, in January 2018, that all the member states of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, issued with China a joint statement underlining the importance of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Of the five pillars of the memorandum of understanding signed by Chile and China on the Belt and Road Initiative, Chile has already reaped rich dividends from bilateral trade. With China being the largest trading partner of Chile, the two sides have made important advances in investment, and in July 2021, the Chilean Financial Market Commission approved the opening of a representative office of the Export-Import Bank of China.

Two years earlier, China Construction Bank and Bank of China opened their offices in Chile. Tianqi Lithium has the highest stakes among all Chinese companies in Chile's mining sector. In 2018, Tianqi acquired 24 percent of SQM for \$4.1 billion, a key entity in lithium production, and Chile put into service the largest fleet of electric buses, including double-decker buses, a major change in the country's urban transportation system, outside of China.

And while former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet attended the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in 2017, previous Chilean president Sebastian Piñera, participated in the second Belt and Road forum in 2019 — a practice incumbent President Gabriel Boric will continue at the third forum to be held on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Furthermore, at the third seminar on Chile's "Future Foreign Policy Cycle" in July 2021, China and its global economic integration project were among the main topics of discussion. Today, with an eye to 2030 — to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals — Chile and China find in the Belt and Road Initiative a plethora of possibilities for boosting cooperation and contributing to

global economic recovery and improving global governance.

Fernando Reyes Matta is a former ambassador of Chile to China, and the director of the Center for Latin American Studies on China, Universidad Andrés Bello, Chile.

Transport powering China-Africa cooperation

Since 2016, the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation Nigeria Limited has completed five railway projects in Nigeria. The last one, Lagos Metro Blue Railway Line, was inaugurated in Lagos on Sept 4.

The 12-km-long Lagos Metro is the second subway in operation. It comprises the first phase of the 37-km-long railway in Nigeria.

The others are the 157-km-long Lagos-Ibadan railway which has an additional 7-km-long arm, the 42-km-long Abuja metro railway, the 186-km-long Abuja-Kaduna railway, and the 368-km-long Ajaokuta-Itakpe-Warri railway. These projects have contributed immensely to the revival of the moribund railway system in Nigeria.

In 2019, immediately after the pandemic broke out, the Nigerian Ministry of Transportation said the China-built railways had contributed greatly to improving transportation and making traveling less stressful.

While covering the major Belt and Road projects and interviewing many people, I found that most of the passengers had never traveled by train in Nigeria before. Almost all the passengers said the coaches were comfortable and railway services efficient.

Since 2019, the CCECC has completed and handed over many projects to the Nigerian authorities for operation. And while the international airports in Abuja have been renovated or upgraded, new terminals have been built in Kano, Port Harcourt and Lagos. These four projects are masterpieces in architecture.

In December last year, as a seal of approval for its quality work and for completing all projects on time, the CCECC was awarded the contract to build the 37-km-long Lagos Fourth Mainland Bridge at a cost of \$2.5 billion, with much of the funding coming from the Export-Import Bank of China.

In January, another Chinese company, China Harbor Engineering Company, completed the Lekki Deep Seaport in Lagos — the largest seaport in West Africa. All this shows the Belt and Road Initiative has made significant contributions to Nigeria's economic development.

Ikeenna Emewu is editor-in-chief of Africa China Economy Magazine, Lagos Nigeria.

BRI creates global ripples on the development front

The Belt and Road Initiative promoted cooperation and development worldwide. Among the five major priorities of the initiative, infrastructure connectivity and people-to-people relations were the most successful in the past decade, even though policy coordination, unimpeded trade and financial integration fared well too.

Infrastructure discourse topped the Belt and Road agenda since massive infrastructure-related projects were completed in China and abroad linking almost two-thirds of the world population from Africa to Asia and elsewhere, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs. Despite some false narratives on China's "hidden agenda" and "debt trap", the initiative has brought millions of people together through new projects along the ancient Silk Road, helping narrow the yawning gaps among countries for lack of communication and connectivity.

The Belt and Road Initiative should offer two significant things in its second decade. The first is China's experience in eradicating poverty, and the second is its successful intervention in project development to the benefit of a large section of society.

However, different communities have different experiences about such interventions. So the initiative should develop a model for this. It should also build a permanent headquarters so that scholars, practitioners and beneficiaries, and representatives of states and organizations can assemble on a platform to delve into global issues.

Also, the Belt and Road Initiative brings more scholars from the Global South on board for research and development. Such activities will ensure sustainability and inclusiveness of the Belt and Road projects, while triggering further debates on the existing modalities of research, target groups and academic discourses in order to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Mahendra Subedi is a Nepal-based journalist.

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

COMMENT

Editorials

New start for BRI contributing to world's common development and prosperity

The message of the Belt and Road Initiative, since it was launched 10 years ago, has always been about improving infrastructure connectivity and achieving common development. The third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, being held in Beijing on Tuesday and Wednesday, carries the same message of pursuing common development.

Held under the theme "High-quality Belt and Road Cooperation: Together for Common Development and Prosperity", the forum, apart from the opening ceremony, consists of three high-level meetings for in-depth discussions on connectivity, green development and the digital economy, and six thematic forums—on trade connectivity, people-to-people relationship, exchanges among think tanks, green Silk Road, subnational cooperation and maritime cooperation. A CEO conference, too, will be held where entrepreneurs can have face-to-face discussions.

Aside from delivering the keynote speech at the opening ceremony, President Xi Jinping, along with the representatives of more than 140 countries and over 30 international organizations, will attend a series of bilateral events with some of the foreign delegates to chart a new blueprint for the initiative's further development.

With globalization facing headwinds, the international community expects China to find, through the Belt and Road Initiative, ways to promote global economic growth, not least because the theme of the forum is "common development and prosperity".

In today's uncertain and unstable world, there is an urgent need for countries to settle their differences through talks and promote development through cooperation. Over the past decade, thanks to the concerted efforts of all parties, the Belt and Road Initiative has transformed from a vision to reality, driving global growth in the process. The initiative has mobilized \$1 trillion in investments and undertaken, solely or jointly, more than 3,000 cooperation projects, created valuable development opportunities for all Belt and Road countries, and offered viable solutions to global governance problems.

The initiative follows a global governance philosophy of extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefits. It prefers consultation over confrontation, breaking over building barriers, and integration over decoupling, while seeking to make the global governance system equitable and fairer. It is therefore fair to say that the Belt and Road Initiative is an open and inclusive platform for cooperation and a global public good.

With the forum expected to produce substantial outcomes, the total number of deliverables is likely to exceed those of the first and second forums.

More important, China will use the forum to take stock of the valuable experience of Belt and Road cooperation over the past decade, draw a new blueprint for promoting high-quality cooperation in the future, and make new contributions to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

And that is what development is all about.

Peace incumbent on Palestinians getting justice

The fundamental reason why the Israel-Palestine discord has reached such a state is that the Palestinian people have been denied the right to statehood for long—75 years since the formation of Israel and almost three decades since the mutually negotiated "two-state solution", the highlight of the Oslo Accords.

Israelis and Palestinians can coexist peacefully only if the two-state solution is implemented and the Palestinian people get a state of their own. And the right way to advance the two-state solution is to revive the Middle East peace process. Otherwise, the two sides will continue to be locked in a vicious circle of zero-sum games, with violence perpetuating more violence.

Israel should realize the more vicious its current "self-defense" campaign is, the more destruction, both human and material, it will cause in the Gaza Strip. And the more destruction it causes to the Palestinian side, the more determined the young Palestinians will be to seek revenge by attacking Israeli targets in the foreseeable future.

Israel, which has been pounding the Gaza Strip with missiles for a week after the brief shock and uncertainty from the sudden, frightening Hamas attack on Oct 7, is obliged to heed the concerns of the international community, including its close allies, on the grave humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

It is incumbent upon the international community, too, to act swiftly to prevent the situation in the Gaza Strip going from bad to worse, leading toward a humanitarian crisis. Beijing, on its part,

has wasted no time in talking with stakeholders, including not only the two conflicting sides but also the United States, Russia, the European Union, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey, calling for an immediate cease-fire and seeking a permanent resolution to the dispute.

Also, the special envoy of the Chinese government on the Middle East issue is engaged in shuttling diplomacy, visiting different countries and imploring the two sides to call a cease-fire and stop killing each other. Importantly, China has decided to provide emergency humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian National Authority through the United Nations.

The two sides should stop the fighting, make efforts to ensure the safety of civilians, and open a humanitarian rescue and assistance passage for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

As for the United Nations, it should place the Israel-Palestine issue on top of its agenda, and the UN Security Council should shoulder the responsibility for building an international consensus on resolving the issue.

On the question of Palestine, China will continue to stand on the side of peace, justice, international law, shared aspirations and conscience. The question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East issue. It's a wound that has been festering for 75 years. There is no shortage of injustice in the world, but the injustice done to the Palestinian people has dragged on for far too long. Peace is incumbent upon the Palestinian people getting justice.

Hubris of power reflects in warmongering report

In the 1960s, at the peak of the Cold War, which almost turned into a hot war, the US Department of Defense adopted a "two-and-a-half strategy"—to have the ability to fight two major wars and one limited conflict simultaneously.

Adjusted by administration after administration, the strategy evolved into a "two-theater model" in which the US needed to be capable of launching offensives in the Middle East, most possibly against Iraq, and the Far East, most possibly against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Neither strategy measures up to what the bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission of the US Congress has proposed in its latest report, "America's Strategic Posture". The report, released on Oct 12, says the US must prepare for possible simultaneous wars with Russia and China by increasing its conventional forces, strengthening alliances and enhancing its nuclear arsenal and program.

This, to some extent, echoes US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's statement that "the United States can walk and chew gum at the same time" after the Israel-Palestine bloody conflict broke out. What he meant is that the US could back both Israel and Ukraine (in its conflict with Russia) at the same time.

In 2015, the US Heritage Foundation's "2015 Index of U.S. Military Strength" said it couldn't cope with two "major regional contingencies"

simultaneously, while the 2018 version rated the US military's ability to win wars against two major adversaries as "marginal". But some arrogant politicians in Washington think they are smarter than US presidents and military experts, and claim Washington can fight wars with two major powers.

History tells us that all the powers that fought wars with two or more countries collapsed soon after. Germany took on the United Kingdom and Russia, and later the United States, only to surrender in World War II. It lost World War I, too.

For any empire that dreams of ruling the world by force, defeat is the fate awaiting it. Worse, preparing for wars against both Russia and China means some in the US take the two powers as imaginary "enemies". Perhaps the US is already involved in a conflict with Russia, albeit a proxy conflict, in Ukraine. To test the other "enemy", the US is turning to China.

The worst, and paradoxically tragic, part of the whole warmongering exercise is that the report was released on a website called "The United States Institute of Peace", which claims to be "dedicated to the proposition that a world without violent conflict is possible". Maybe this ridiculous fact best explains how the US interprets peace—conquest or threat of conquest so as to build a global system in which everyone obeys it as the only superpower.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Investors' rising confidence in China boost for global recovery

Recent economic and financial data show that in September, China's consumer price index was flat year-on-year, up 0.2 percent month-on-month, and the producer price index fell 2.5 percent year-on-year, but rose 0.4 percent month-on-month; the yuan loans increased by 2.31 trillion yuan (\$317.43 billion), 176.4 billion yuan less than the same period last year, but social financing increased by 4.12 trillion yuan, 563.8 billion yuan more than the same period last year.

Judging from these macroeconomic indicators and the general trend of economic development, the fundamentals of China's development have not changed, and the advantages of its economy continue to improve rather than worsen, and the new economic drivers are growing faster.

As the "combination" of a series of pro-growth policies gradually work, China's economic resilience will be

further enhanced, and its economic recovery further consolidated.

First of all, the purchasing managers' index, a leading indicator of the economy, has taken the lead in releasing positive signals. In September, China's manufacturing PMI, nonmanufacturing business activity index and composite PMI output index were 50.2 percent, 51.7 percent and 52 percent, respectively, up 0.5 percentage points, 0.7 percentage points and 0.7 percentage points from August, showing a rebounding economic prosperity level. The development index of China's small and medium-sized enterprises also returned to the rising range in the third quarter. That, together with the macroeconomic sentiment index that reflects business confidence standing at 98.9, up 0.5 points from the previous quarter, indicates a rising confidence and investment willingness of SMEs.

China's improving economic data

has further strengthened international confidence on its economy. A number of international financial institutions recently raised their growth forecasts for China's GDP to about 5 percent this year. In its World Economic Outlook 2023, the International Monetary Fund predicted that China still remains the largest engine of global economic growth.

However, China's economic development still faces numerous challenges. It still needs to strengthen the combination of macro policies, improve the precision of policies, accelerate the implementation of adopted policies and foster new drivers and advantages for high-quality development. All those will provide strong support for achieving its economic and social development goals, and inject continuous impetus into world economic recovery.

—SECURITIES DAILY

Transforming urban villages to improve cities

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development has said that superlarge cities are actively and steadily promoting the transformation of urban villages, according to a report in Xinhua on Thursday.

Such transformations have always been a major challenge. Urban villages evoke a range of emotions among people. For many fresh graduates and migrant workers, this is their first place of residence in a big city, a place to settle down and work hard toward realizing their dreams. For the big city, it is also a manifestation of inclusivity and openness.

However, urban villages often have housing and fire safety haz-

ards due to their outdated infrastructure and poor ventilation. Urban villages often spring up in large cities, which is why they are often called causes of "big city diseases". When there is an accident, the losses are often huge, given how everything is jostling for space in the urban villages.

To ensure that urban villages do not become synonyms for "dirty and chaotic", accelerating their transformation is a must. However, given the difficulties with the resettlement of people and industries, the authorities cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach.

It is necessary to plan carefully. For example, it is necessary to

seek the opinion of village inhabitants, relocate industries, properly resettle personnel, protect historical and cultural features, and pay proper compensation to the residents so that they are willing to support the project that concerns their core interest.

The entire process should be carried out in accordance with the law. The transformation of urban villages is essentially about breaking the current pattern of a small society and inevitably curbing the vested interests of some people. Only by coordinating various demands and resolving conflicts can the transformation proceed smoothly.

—THEPAPER.CN

What They Say

Quiet carriages maintain your train of thought

The China Railway Group recently introduced a "quiet carriage" program on some of its high-speed trains. Passengers can choose the "quiet carriages" while booking tickets if they find the noise created by other passengers, from people talking loudly on smartphones, or surfing online on their digital gadgets, to children creating a din while playing and babies crying, intolerable on trains.

The enthusiastic response the program, piloted on some high-speed trains running between Chengdu and Chongqing from December 2020, has received from passengers shows people are fed up with the increasingly noisy traveling experience, which has become more serious with the popularization of smartphones, and want tumult-free train journeys.

In the "quiet carriages", not only

are special signs posted to remind passengers to maintain silence but also the train conductors are instructed to pay more attention to keeping the decibel to the lowest possible level.

All the passengers in a "quiet carriage" are expected to strictly abide by the rules to maintain silence. For instance, they are required to turn their mobile phones to silent mode, leave the carriage when making or receiving a phone call, and turn off the external audio function of their digital gadgets.

In other words, booking a seat or berth in a "quiet carriage" means the passenger agrees to abide by these rules. Passengers traveling with babies or very young children are advised to not book seats in such carriages.

The introduction of the program, as some passengers said, reflects the CRG's response to passengers'

demand and commitment to upgrading its services to adapt to the needs of the times. The program should be rolled out on other passenger trains and public transport vehicles, too, such as the subway, in which "cool" and "mildly cool" subway cars during summer have already been introduced in some cities.

Besides, the fact that many bullet train carriages don't have "quiet carriages" does not mean passengers are free to create commotion on trains. Although it is difficult to maintain total silence on trains, people need to respect fellow passengers' needs, by not making a racket or disturbing others in any other way. And parents or adult relatives traveling with children by train should set a good example for minors by behaving themselves and following the code of conduct in public places.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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GLOBAL VIEWS

GETACHEW ENGIDA

BRiGht future

Although the world is encountering instability, there is hope if Africa and China continue to promote economic openness and sustainable cooperation

In 2013, two years before member states of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative. China has carried out development cooperation and contributed to policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity, creating space and opportunities to promote high-quality Belt and Road partnerships. This is summed up as follows in the white paper by China's State Council Information Office under the title of "A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions" published in September 2023.

"Together, participants in the initiative have jointly advanced hard connectivity, soft connectivity and people-to-people connectivity, setting up an important platform that has enabled wide participation, built international consensus and pooled the strengths of all parties."

Under the framework of the BRI, traditional infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, ports and power stations have expanded to Africa, Oceania and Latin America. The investment is significant and it serves to plug the world's infrastructure gap, especially in low-income countries.

By June 2023, China had signed more than 200 BRI cooperation agreements with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations across five continents, yielding a number of signature projects and small-scale yet impactful projects. This is by any measure a significant success story, despite some criticisms and concerns.

As China has outlined priority

areas and pursues its aim of becoming a world leader in high-tech, it is promising that the BRI will become ever broader and critical in the future by including areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, the internet of things, smart cities, semi-conductors, and quantum computing, etc.

This initiative is a bold, ambitious and transformative component to the implementation of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development goals. There is ample scope for countries involved in the initiative to benefit from the economic development through its projects.

Africa is a continent close to my heart. Today Africa stands at the dawn of a new era. Aligning the BRI with Africa's own development is beneficial through enhanced connectivity and sustainable development between China and Africa, and will deepen African regional integration, boosting intra-African trade as well as spurring industrialization.

Marked results can be seen in many sectors of the African continent. According to the report released by the Chinese Ministry of Education, Africa ranked the sec-



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

ond, sending 81,562 students that accounts for 16.57 percent of the total international students by 2018. On the other hand, Mandarin

is increasingly featured in African school curriculum and Chinese translators are in ever-rising demand on the continent. There is

an increasing trend of Mandarin being officially taught in all schools alongside French, Arabic and German — languages already on the curriculum. The realization of the importance of educational cooperation is evident. It will help unleash human ingenuity, fostering innovation for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all.

Although the world is undergoing a tremendous change, characterized by growing instability and fragility, I believe that Africa and China must continue to foster closer ties to promote economic openness and sustainable cooperation, by respecting each other as equals. There are three reasons to be optimistic for the future.

First, China and Africa have an established friendship and successful diplomatic relations. Although China was relatively underdeveloped at the time, it provided extensive assistance to emerging African countries. A well-known example from the early 1970s is the Tanzam (Tanzania-Zambia) railway project.

Second, China has enlightened strategic approaches to partnerships and shared long-term development for all mankind. The year 2021 saw the BRI featured in the

14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25). The BRI is a significant component of China's major-country foreign policy with a promising long-term outlook for those who are part of it.

Third, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation will build and extend the existing cooperation along with the initiative. The FOCAC has 53 African countries as its members and high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

As a co-president of the China-Africa Leadership Development Institute of Tsinghua University, I have seen the initiative's potential for a deeper and wider partnership between China and Africa, working even more closely in support of knowledge sharing and active collaborations for sustainable development. The CALDI will do its utmost to support the capacity building component of the BRI and the FOCAC as well as contributing to inter-cultural dialogue and people-to-people exchanges with a focus on leadership skills.

To conclude, in the past 10 years, the initiative has shown tremendous successes in its implementation of transformative projects and holds a great potential to change relations between countries and peoples not as adversaries but long-term partners to make a planet where humanity can flourish and prosper.

The author is former UNESCO deputy director-general and co-president of the China-Africa Leadership Development Institute at Tsinghua University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

MAHMOUD ISA-DUTSE

Improving funding in Africa

Adding equity and quasi-equity financing mechanisms can advance BRI's objectives in the large, populous but poorest continent and, possibly, other continents too

Extreme poverty is afflicting hundreds of millions all over the African continent. The enormous economic potential of the continent needs to be developed not only for the benefit of its peoples but also for the benefit of the entire world.

Africa's land mass is 30 million square kilometers or 20 percent of the Earth's surface, which makes it the second-largest continent after Asia. It is, however, fragmented into 54 countries. By some estimates, Africa has 1.1 billion hectares of agricultural land, 600 million of which is uncultivated, by far the highest in the world, which is indicative of its enormous agricultural potential. It also has vast quantities of mineral resources such as oil, gas, gold, diamonds, uranium, nickel, phosphates, iron ore, copper and many others.

Currently, Africa's population accounts for 17 percent of the world's total, and is growing at a fast pace; it is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050.

The GDP of the continent adds up to \$2.7 trillion, which is a paltry 2.8 percent of global economic output. Meanwhile, about 500 million people are living in extreme poverty, on less than \$2 a day.

On the bright side, Africa's GDP is growing at an average of 3 to 4 percent a year. The African market is therefore expanding at a fairly respectable pace and should expand even faster in the future with the commencement of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which makes the continent the world's largest free trade area.

It is also worth noting that Africa is rapidly urbanizing. Some 44 percent of the population lives in urban areas and this proportion is

projected to rise to 56 percent by 2050. Although this rapid urbanization comes with its own problems, it does make the provision of infrastructure and other public goods easier and less costly, a feature relevant to the Belt and Road Initiative.

Africa has the youngest population profile in the world which can be turned into a formidable workforce with the right level and quality of investments in education and health infrastructure.

Given this reality of a large, populous but poorest continent, there is a compelling and urgent need for the continent to pull itself up and realize its enormous potential. There is the strong need for it to rapidly develop its resources, both human and material. A key factor inhibiting economic development on the continent is its massive infrastructure gap: grossly inadequate roads, railways, ports, navigable waterways, airports, communication and power infrastructure. This deficit, by some estimates, adds an average of 30 to 40 percent to the cost of goods traded among African countries.

China's BRI directly addresses the yawning physical infrastructural gap in Africa and is already making a big impact on the continent. With this initiative, China is now Africa's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade value reaching \$282 billion in 2022.

Africa's borrowings from all other sources are nowhere near what is required to meet the infrastructure gap. The African Development Bank estimates that the continent's infrastructure financing needs will be as much as \$170 billion a year by 2025, with an estimated gap of around \$100 billion a year. This amount does not include

what is needed for climate adaptation and mitigation.

At least half of the amount needed should come from domestic revenue mobilization within Africa but, nevertheless, a big gap remains which can come from external sources. There is a clear need to do more but the headroom for more lending seems low in view of difficulties and challenges that have become evident. A major challenge for Africa seems to be the worsening debt profile of several African countries, with many facing debt distress. According to the World Bank, 22 countries in sub-Saharan Africa are now at high risk of external debt distress or already in debt distress.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a major factor, although even before its onset, several African countries were already facing fiscal and debt servicing challenges. The pandemic exacerbated the crisis as governments were forced to increase health spending, make payments to vulnerable segments of the population amid severe contractions in GDP and fiscal revenue. As a result, government borrowings ballooned and average debt to GDP ratio on the continent almost doubled within a decade to 57 percent by 2022. As much of the debt is denominated in US dollars, the post-COVID-19 increase in rates by the US Federal Reserve and other central banks to contain inflation and increases in energy and food prices following the Ukraine crisis have exacerbated debt vulnerabilities.

It is time to consider adding equity and quasi-equity financing mechanisms to advance the objectives of the BRI in Africa and possibly other continents as well. Debt is still needed, in even bigger



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

quantities, but it needs to be complemented by equity and quasi-equity financing instruments. The equity can be sourced from either the public or private sector, and can involve both investor and investee countries. This approach, if appropriately structured, can permit the crowding-in of private sector funding into Belt and Road projects. The private sector can, in this arrangement, bring to the table both debt and equity (or quasi-equity) funding as well as technical expertise, innovation and commercial management. The public sector can provide first-loss capital and other forms of support to de-risk projects.

The equity option is much more complex, and more risk factors need to be taken into account. Not

all projects will be suitable, but experience in many countries has shown that the private sector can, if well-structured, participate positively and profitably in the provision of infrastructural facilities. It is also acknowledged that many countries in Africa need to adopt more investment-friendly policies including more effective regulation and transparent legal frameworks for this approach to succeed. The negative impact of all these risk factors can, however, be reduced through government-to-government collaboration and bilateral or multilateral agreements.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the BRI. It has made a positive impact on the development of badly needed infrastruc-

ture in Africa. A lot more, however, needs to be done if the objectives of the initiative are to be fully realized.

It is time to consider additional financing mechanisms in the form of equity and quasi-equity and bring in the private sector. These adjustments will improve the development impact of the BRI by addressing two serious limitations of funding and the project absorption capacity of African countries, which urgently needs upscaling.

The author is former permanent secretary of the Federal Ministry of Finance of Nigeria. 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.

Belt and Road Languages and Cultures Network

Language exchange platform launched

By CHINA DAILY

Practitioners in the languages and cultures of communities involved in the Belt and Road Initiative have launched a cross-cultural language services platform to promote language education and cultural exchanges within the BRI.

The platform is supported by a website, which will assist in policy alignment among member countries, share industry information and facilitate language teacher training.

They raised the proposal after unanimously agreeing to establish the Belt and Road Languages and Cultures Network in Beijing on Monday.

The BRLCN, a nongovernmental international organization, will strengthen the alignment of language education policies, enhance the quality of language education, facilitate language connectivity, strengthen cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and other BRI countries, enhance the influence of the BRI and help implement it.

"We believe that it will be effective for the high-quality development of the BRI by strengthening resource sharing and win-win cooperation among language education and cultural organizations, using language and cultural development to promote connectivity and mutual cultural learning," the consensus said.

"We support the network in its development and growth through collective wisdom, dialogue and consultation."

Consensus at First Council Meeting of the Belt and Road Languages and Cultures Network

The inaugural council of the network was composed of nearly 60 language education and cultural organizations from more than 50 countries, with China Daily serving as its chairman.

The BRLCN will adhere to the principle of mutual respect and equal treatment, commit to building a Belt and Road language and culture community in unity, foster an atmosphere of equality, inclusiveness, mutual benefit and vitality in language and cultural cooperation, the consensus said.

"We support the network in its development and growth through collective wisdom, dialogue and consultation. We advocate for a nonprofit, inclusive approach to expansion, welcoming the non-participant of more language education and cultural organization," said the consensus.

To propel resource sharing and mutual understanding, the network promised to organize in-depth research, academic conferences, high-level dialogues, selection activities and publication programs.

The BRLCN already plans to broaden its global membership network with an anticipated more than 100 members by the end of 2024.

The BRLCN will host the Belt and Road Forum for Language and Culture Collaboration annually, and support its members in organizing international academic conferences to improve its international impact.

Concerning teacher training sessions, the BRLCN will hold online public lectures on Belt and Road English-language education later this year, and the first Belt and Road Advanced Seminar for English-Language Teaching in Macao in the first half of 2024.

Li Menghan contributed to this story.

Demand for multilingual skills grows

A decade of the BRI has seen universities, colleges adapt curriculums accordingly

By LI LEI
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Chinese universities and vocational colleges are revamping their curriculum to meet the soaring demand for talent with multilingual skills and cross-cultural awareness as the Belt and Road Initiative expands its global reach.

China has signed BRI-related documents with more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations, according to official figures.

The expansion has reversed the trend of declining popularity of English majors and other language programs from the early 2010s as workers with multilingual skills have become increasingly in demand by employers wishing to

expand their global footprint under the framework of the BRI, said Chen Fachun, president of Tianjin Foreign Studies University.

"The rollout of the BRI greatly bolstered the confidence of our college and its language education-focused peers," he said at a roundtable discussion at the 2023 Belt and Road Forum for Language and Culture Collaboration. The theme for the discussion was "Experience and Inspiration on Improving Linguistic Connectivity along the Belt and Road".

The forum serves as the inaugural meeting of the Belt and Road Languages and Cultures Network, which was created to help reduce language barriers and ease cultural misunderstandings among BRI participants.

"The rollout of the BRI greatly bolstered the confidence of our college and its language education-focused peers."

Chen Fachun, president of Tianjin Foreign Studies University

Zhejiang Normal University, a teacher training institute in the coastal province of Zhejiang, is among a growing cohort of higher learning institutions that have revved up research into the African continent — where there is a stronghold of BRI projects — as part of a broader attempt to train a new generation of graduates with greater cultural awareness.

Zhang Jianzhen, the university's vice-president, said its focus on African studies dates back to the 1990s, when it sent teachers to the continent to teach Chinese. Now the college aims to train Chinese students

to be experts on African issues, and vice versa.

"Language education is the priority in the endeavor," she said, adding that her college has rolled out courses that help students acquire an African language as well as an academic specialty.

Zhang said the rollout of the BRI has helped enlarge friend circles and created more channels for colleges like hers to conduct exchange programs.

Ye Xianghong, vice-president of Beijing Youth Politics College, a vocational college, said the institution has worked to facilitate the BRI by launching training programs

with counterparts in countries such as Kazakhstan, and recruiting overseas students from countries involved in the BRI.

The college has launched programs that combine language training with specialties such as e-commerce and cross-border trade.

"Such exchanges are increasingly active," she said, adding that it provides a valuable opportunity to reform vocational education.

Hu Kaibao, assistant president of Shanghai International Studies University, said his university has 48 language degree programs and can largely meet the needs of the BRI.

But he said language alone is not enough to bridge cross-cultural barriers. "The university is stepping up exploration into education about a certain target country or region," he said.

"We're now building two large teaching buildings to that end."



WANG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Soundbites



Daniela Cuccurullo, president of Tesol Italy

I think the government should invest more in the recruitment of teachers, because we didn't have so many teachers to cover all the classes at the beginning of the year, and there is a lack of continuity as students change teachers year after year. In addition, we should promote training courses, and that is what we should do to help the government as an association. As for problems with technology, we need funds to create innovative processes inside the classrooms with new technologies and new methodologies.

lution in Brazil speak English right now. Considering that we are in a globalized world, mastering a foreign language is really the key.

I think being able to speak a foreign language can preach different cultures, enable the negotiation between different countries and can be mutually beneficial for different countries. I think what China Daily can do in terms of promoting this initiative is fundamental for bringing different countries together so that they can work together.



Liu Jun, rector of City University of Macau

The establishment of the Belt and Road Initiative sends a message to celebrate the diversity of multilingualism and multiculturalism because all the member countries represent their own cultures and languages when we work with them together.

Regardless of our backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, linguistic backgrounds, we can work together through this global language (English), which is not the native language of many countries, but is the lingua franca that helps us understand each other and communicate with each other more effectively.



Aymen Eltayeb Elsheikh, co-founder and former president of Africa ELTA

The Belt and Road Initiative is a very ambitious initiative, trying to connect so many countries together. However, these countries have different practical cultural backgrounds, so issues of language barriers can impact this cooperation negatively.

It is the main challenge we face, as we want to be able to understand and be able to be understood. Therefore, we need to develop a mechanism whereby we can overcome these language barriers and our cooperation, our trade, our economy will be conducted successfully.



Shi Dalin, vice-president of Xiamen University

In my personal opinion, when it comes to evaluating internationalization, there are two crucial aspects. The first one, in summary, is mainly about diversity. The second one, which I believe is even more important and perhaps harder to assess, is the need for an internationalized ecosystem.



Sergio Monteiro, president of BRAZ- TESOL

Only 5 to 7 percent of the popu-

CHINA DAILY

Education experts propose enhancing international sharing, collaboration

By CHINA DAILY

Addressing the issues of diversity and globalization, practitioners from language and cultural organizations have proposed enhancing international collaboration and cultural exchanges with positive attitudes.

Eight experts from across Asia, Europe and the Americas proposed allying more organizations to establish a bigger network in order to provide long-term support for training programs for language teachers, sharing information and resources, and promoting international cooperation on a larger scale.

The idea was proposed at a roundtable dialogue discussing cultural exchanges and regional cooperation among countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative at the 2023 Belt and Road Forum for Language and Culture Collaboration on Monday.

According to the experts, countries were confronting different cultural and language challenges in their own national contexts.

Ika Lestari Damayanti, coordinator of the cooperation and collaboration division of the Association for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia, spoke of the difficulty in understanding in a

country where 300 million people speak more than 700 dialects.

Ahmed Bashir, president of Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association, was concerned about the indigenous and minority languages in the country, as 98 percent of citizens speak the official language, Bengali. He stressed the pivotal role of a nonprofit, nonpolitical and voluntary network in addressing problems facing different countries.

"A positive attitude brings about positive actions," said Mira Namsrai, president of the English Language Teachers' Association of Mongolia, who proposed shifting



Experts share their thoughts on exchanges among countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative on Monday. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

the original teacher-centered teaching model to a student-centered one with the concerted efforts of language teachers worldwide, to

inspire the learning enthusiasm and promote student initiative.

Li Menghan contributed to this story.

BUSINESS

Shanghai eyes glory in gene therapy biz

Biomedical plan focuses on research, demo centers, innovation bases, firms

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Shanghai's municipal government said on Monday it aims to promote gene therapy in a big way.

The city will build five clinical medical research centers and demonstration research hospital wards, and 20 gene therapy innovation bases and platforms by 2025.

Also, 15 backbone enterprises in gene therapy will be set up, according to the Shanghai Action Plan for Promoting Gene Therapy Science and Technology Innovation and Industrial Development (2023-25).

It is one of the four action plans unveiled at the opening ceremony of the five-day International Biopharma Industry Week Shanghai 2023 that opened on Monday.

All such new policies are aimed at accelerating the construction of a biomedical innovation center

with international influence in Shanghai. The larger goal is to make the city home to world-class biomedical industry clusters.

"Basic research, key core technologies, and key equipment and materials will be the focus of innovation orientations for Shanghai in the field," said Zhuang Mudi, deputy secretary-general of the Shanghai government, while releasing the action plan.

"The Zhangjiang Cell and Gene Industrial Park in Pudong New Area and Pujiang Gene Future Valley in Minhang district will be the main powerhouses to fulfill the goals," he said.

Data from the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization showed that the city has continued to maintain a good trend in biomedical innovation, especially gene therapy, in recent years. From January to August, 133 clinical trials of first-class innovative medicines developed in Shanghai were approved by



A medical robot on display during an industry expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the country's drug authority. Twenty of them were in the field of cell and gene therapy.

The other three action plans unveiled on Monday are in the fields of synthetic biology innovation, medical robots and biomedical intelligent manufacturing.

In the field of medical robots,

Shanghai will strive to build two industrial agglomeration areas in Zhangjiang and the Grand Zero Bay by 2025, with the first focusing on design, research and development and the other focusing on cutting-edge innovation and clinical tests.

"We target building 10 innova-

tive and world-class medical robots and creating 10 application demonstration scenarios, including those for surgery, rehabilitation and auxiliary services, which can be promoted and replicated," said Zhuang.

"Since 2019, one-fourth of the first-in-class innovative drugs from locally approved firms or labs in the country are from Shanghai, and one-sixth of the local innovative medical devices registered in the country are from Shanghai. The city has evolved from being a center for creation and imitation to being a leader in innovation. A number of new drugs, China's first cell therapy new medicines and world-class medical devices have emerged at a rapid pace," said Chen Jie, vice-mayor of Shanghai.

Both foreign investment and the local private economy in biomedicine are growing in Shanghai. Official data showed that between January and August this year, 23 new major projects in the biomedical field kicked off in the city, entailing a total investment of 5.58 billion yuan (\$763 million).

Briefly

Power consumption up 9.9% in September

China's electricity consumption, a key barometer of economic activity, continued its stable expansion in September, official data showed on Monday. Power usage climbed 9.9 percent from a year ago to 781.1 billion kilowatt-hours last month, said the National Energy Administration. Power consumption by primary industries increased 8.6 percent, while power consumption by secondary and tertiary sectors rose 8.7 percent and 16.9 percent, respectively.

Online shopping index shows uptrend

China's e-commerce logistics index, an indicator of logistics operations in the e-commerce sector, stood at 112.3 points in September, up 1.2 points from a month earlier, said the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing. The subindex tracking total business volume last month stood at 123.9 points, marking an increase of 2.5 points from August. The satisfaction rate subindex stood at 101.5 points in September, up 0.2 point from August, continuing an upward trend for the fourth consecutive month.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Chinese e-commerce, logistics powerhouses upping their game across Europe

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese e-commerce and logistics companies are ramping up efforts to expand delivery networks and build logistics infrastructure in Europe amid a broader push to boost delivery efficiency and safeguard the stability of industrial and supply chains.

Ochama, Chinese e-commerce giant JD's omnichannel retail brand in Europe, recently announced the expansion of its home delivery services into 19 additional countries, as the company aims to expand its

presence on the continent.

First launched in the Netherlands in January 2022, Ochama offers a retail model that merges online and offline shopping experiences. Shoppers can enjoy the convenience of ordering products online through Ochama's app, where a wide range of commodities like food, consumer electronics, beauty, maternal and infant products are on offer.

It provides both pick-up services and doorstep deliveries. This expansion brings Ochama's home delivery service to a network spanning 24 countries, integrating with existing services in the Netherlands, Luxem-

bourg, Belgium, France and Germany.

Currently, Ochama has established more than 500 pick-up points in Europe and operates a 20,000-square-meter warehouse in the Netherlands, powered by AGV (automatic guided vehicle) robots that significantly enhance sorting efficiency. All orders will be packed at Ochama's automated warehouse in the Netherlands before being delivered to their final destinations.

"Overseas warehouses and express delivery networks serve as vital infrastructure that boost the growth of China's cross-border e-commerce sector," said Zhang

Zhouping, a senior analyst of business-to-business and cross-border activities at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy.

Cainiao Network, the logistics arm of Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, is also accelerating steps to build logistics networks and boost its service in Europe.

It has expanded its last-mile delivery network in Spain, offering next-day delivery in nine major cities including Madrid and Barcelona, as well as two-day delivery service in over 20 other Spanish cities. The delivery network is empowered by

Cainiao's investments in smart logistics infrastructure like automated sorting centers and parcel lockers.

The company has developed a network of around 500 parcel lockers in Madrid and Barcelona to offer faster, more efficient and carbon footprint-reducing experiences.

SF Airlines, the aviation branch of logistics giant SF Express, has invested heavily in providing air cargo services and expanding its freighter fleet in Europe. It launched a new air cargo route linking Ezhou, Hubei province, with Frankfurt, Germany, in July.

Lu Zhenwang, CEO of Shanghai-based Wanqing Consultancy, said the efforts to invest in overseas warehouses and supply chain construction will enhance the competitiveness of Chinese foreign trade enterprises and bolster sales of Chinese products in overseas markets.

In addition, developing the international air freight business will help enterprises boost long-haul freight capacity and further improve cross-border delivery efficiency, said Yang Daqing, deputy director of research at the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.



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SPORTS

TENNIS

Shanghai serves up a treat

Asia's premier ATP tournament returns bigger and better than ever to the acclaim of fans and players

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Shanghai
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With a new champion crowned, venue renovations lauded and record revenues achieved, the Rolex Shanghai Masters returned from a four-year pandemic hiatus to resounding acclaim last week.

Organizers, though, are keen to build on the improvements after pulling off a huge challenge to deliver an expanded tournament to higher standards at their first attempt.

"We're actually in uncharted waters," tournament director Michael Luevano told China Daily last week in his office at Qizhong Tennis Center in Shanghai's southern suburbs.

"The player population has increased by a third. We have bigger locker rooms, bigger gyms and more people to cater to, and there are many more matches.

"I think the challenge becomes that we have to maintain a very high level of services for players and all participants over a longer period. This is a new one for us."

As one of nine top-tier ATP 1000 events, and the only one of those in Asia, the Shanghai Masters this year expanded to a 12-day tournament with 96 players in the singles draw, up from eight days and 56 players. Madrid and Rome have undergone the same changes as part of the ATP's "One Vision" initiative.

Despite the absence of the injury-sidelined Rafael Nadal and last-minute withdrawal Novak Djokovic, the quality of play in Shanghai lived up to its billing as the apex of men's tennis in Asia Pacific, underscored by a fiercely contested final on Sunday.

Up against fifth seed and crowd favorite Andrey Rublev of Russia, rising Polish star Hubert Hurkacz fired 21 aces, winning 81 percent of his first-serve points, and saved a match point in the third-set tiebreaker to earn a hard-fought 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (8) victory in over two hours.

The win in his third trip to Shanghai added a seventh ATP Tour title to Hurkacz's resume and his second at the 1000 level following his 2021 title run in Miami.

After securing one of the biggest wins of his career, the 26-year-old Hurkacz paid tribute to the organizers and the support of the Chinese fans.

"The tournament (director and staff), they made a great effort," he said.

"They always make great effort to communicate with the players... there's a new gym, the areas are big-



Poland's Hubert Hurkacz kisses the trophy after beating Russia's Andrey Rublev in the Rolex Shanghai Masters final on Sunday. In a thrilling contest, Hurkacz saved a match point to prevail 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (8). AFP

ger and better. It's a really well-organized tournament, and I think they're doing just an unbelievable job here."

Citing the overall positive feedback from players, ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi heaped praise on the tournament's new incarnation.

"I think having tournaments like Shanghai elevated to two weeks completely raises the standards and the level of our tournaments," Gaudenzi said at the Shanghai Masters.

"Shanghai has already been leading that process in the last few years... We've got the four Grand Slams as the pinnacle of our sport, but we really also need to elevate our Masters. I think Shanghai is doing a great job," said the former Italian pro, who last visited Shanghai in 2000 when he competed at the then Heineken Open, the city's very first ATP event launched in 1998.

Attracting the crowds

Twenty-five years have passed since professional tennis was introduced to Shanghai, yet, compared to other Masters hosts, there is still plenty of room for the market to grow in the city.

With a record total attendance of 190,000 this year, the Shanghai Masters still lags far behind the likes of Indian Wells in California, which easily attracts over 400,000 fans every year.

Indian Wells, Madrid, Rome, and Miami all benefit from a corresponding women's event, but Chinese organizers are determined to catch up in the numbers game.



A fan poses for a photo with Roger Federer during the Shanghai Masters final at Qizhong Forest Sports City Tennis Center in Shanghai on Sunday. AP

"That's where we still need to improve," said Yang Yibin, general manager of Juss Sports, organizer and promoter of the Rolex Shanghai Masters. "We are in a different development stage compared to other Masters hosts, and the tennis market in China is not fully mature yet."

"However, we will keep making greater efforts to draw more and more spectators on-site by adding more exciting events, such as junior tournaments and grassroots promotional activities, on our extended schedule."

Part of those efforts was the introduction of an International Tennis Federation J100 (grade-3) junior tournament during the second week of the Masters, helping Qizhong

Tennis Center to draw in decent crowds even during workdays after the first week of the National Day holidays.

The appearance of Swiss legend and two-time former champion Roger Federer on the final weekend proved a masterstroke, with hordes of Federer fans swarming everywhere the 20-time major winner appeared.

With further facility upgrades on the way, smarter scheduling and better ticket promotions, Luevano is confident attendances will continue to rise.

"We take a long-term view with our fans. Are we disappointed that the stadium doesn't look full on certain days? Yes, but we have a plan," said the South California

native, who's been involved in tournament management in Shanghai since 1998.

"We have the fan base, it's just the culture. It's a challenge, but it is really only about the development of the culture."

Home pride

Having a hometown hero to cheer on was another big bonus for fans.

Chinese men's No 1 Zhang Zhizhen, a native of Shanghai, rose to the occasion to reach the round of 16 last week — his best-ever run at a hard-court Masters tournament.

Zhang's impressive run capped a fine year for the 26-year-old, who reached the quarterfinals on clay at the Madrid Masters.

"I couldn't be more excited about that performance," Luevano said. "Hands down, 'Tripe Z' has shown that we've arrived."

"It's something that we've always dreamed of — to have a Chinese player of his caliber. And here we are. It happened at the best time this year."

With the future of Chinese men's tennis looking bright and the Shanghai Masters raising its game, the ATP is bullish on the sport's future globally.

"I think having a premium event of this size and relevance is really important for getting more kids to play tennis and engage a global audience," said Gaudenzi.

"You cannot be a truly global sport without a presence in China, so that's really important."

GOLF

Macao glory for Aussie star Lee

World No 46 Lee Min Woo combined power with precision to complete a wire-to-wire victory at the \$1 million SJM Macao Open on Sunday.

The Australian closed with a superb eight-under-par 63, adding to rounds of 62, 64 and 65 to triumph by two strokes.

The tournament's marquee player hit crushing drives and holed putt after putt on Sunday for an astonishing four-round aggregate of 30-under — a new tournament record and two short of the Asian Tour record.

Thailand's Poom Saksansin also signed off with a 63, like Lee bogey-free, to finish second after a fascinating final-day duel between the big-hitting Australian and the tenacious Thai golfer.

Lee started the day with a two-shot lead over Poom, and the margin was the same at the turn as both players pulled away from the field with four birdies apiece.

The turning point proved to be the par-five 13th, where Lee opened up a four-stroke cushion after he made an eagle, for the second day in row, against Poom's par.

A wild drive a long way left on the short par-four 15th by Lee gave Poom a glimmer of hope, but his ball stayed away from trouble. He had a clear shot to the green and was able to avert disaster and make a comfortable par.

Predictably Poom refused to give up and made birdies on the next two holes to close the gap to two before they both made four on the par-five 18th.



Lee Min Woo

"I love it," said 25-year-old Lee.

"As soon as the week started I had a couple of days' rest because of the typhoon, and the course was looking amazing from the beginning. Obviously, it was pretty bad for a couple of days there, so it was props to the green keepers for keeping the course in such good condition."

"And yeah, I played wonderful, really flawless golf for a lot of the holes, there were only a few holes that I could really look back on. But yeah, I'm really proud of the way I handled myself."

Lee's score smashed the event's previous lowest winning total of 20-under, set by Australian Scott Hend in 2015 and was just two short of the Asian Tour record, which Thailand's Chatchai Nirat set at the 2009 SAIL Open in India, when he finished 32-under.

After pocketing a check for \$180,000, Lee said: "Poom played unbelievably today. He never left, he just stayed around. I tried my best and ended up on top, but he was giving it to me the whole time."

It is Lee's first victory since claiming the Scottish Open in July 2021 and while he was winning in Macao, his sister and two-time major winner Lee Minjee tied for 12th at the Buick LPGA Shanghai.

For Poom it was yet another fine performance coming off the back of his success at the Yeangder TPC last month and a tied-third place at last week's International Series Singapore.

"I don't know when I'll be able to putt like this again," said Poom, whose win at the Yeangder TPC was his first in five years and fourth Asian Tour title.

"I would say that I played very well today but needed a miracle to win. Like I said yesterday, I would have to hit at least 10-under to win today. Lee is a very good player. He hits it very far and had a very good game plan. His chipping and putting are awesome. He should have been better than 30-under."

Zheng savors second career title in Zhengzhou

Zheng Qinwen thrilled the home fans at the Zhengzhou Open on Sunday, as the Chinese No 1 pulled off a 2-6, 6-2, 6-4 win over No 7 seed Barbora Krejickova to claim the WTA 500 title, and celebrated with an impromptu karaoke session at the trophy ceremony.

The popular 21-year-old capped an incredible week with victory over Czech Krejickova to become just the third Chinese woman to win a singles title at the WTA 500 level or higher, after Li Na and Zheng Saisai.

This year marked the first time in WTA Tour history that three different Chinese women have won a singles title in a season, with Zhu Lin triumphing in Hua Hin, Wang Xiyi in Guangzhou and Zheng, last season's WTA Newcomer of the Year, claiming her first trophy in Palermo in July.

After winning Asian Games gold on Sept 29, the 24th-ranked Zheng suffered a disappointing first-round loss at the China Open to Elena Rybakina, but she recovered

remarkably by securing the biggest title of her young career 13 days later.

"That was such a special experience to win my first 500 in China, especially in Zhengzhou," said Zheng, who rises to No 19 in the rankings.

"It's a lot of pressure, you could see in the match. In the first set, I was leading 2-0, (then) I lost six games in a row," added Zheng, who also made this year's US Open quarterfinals in a breakout year. "There were a lot of ups and downs, but in the end, the important (thing) is to win the match, whatever happens."

Zheng was the first to break as she leapt to a 2-0 advantage but Krejickova grabbed the next five games and took a one-set lead in 39 minutes.

Zheng's first-serve percentage was a shockingly low 29 percent and the Chinese No 1 knew that statistic had to change for her to stand a chance against the former French Open champion.

The home favorite began the second set brightly, breaking from the start and carving out a 5-2 gap.



Zheng Qinwen is all smiles after defeating Barbora Krejickova in the Zhengzhou Open final on Sunday. XINHUA

Her first-serve percentage was a healthy 68 percent in that set, and she won 92 percent of those points.

The final set was a tug of war, with the quality of play going up. Rallies got longer, and each player came up with incredible shots when their backs were against the wall.

A brilliant crosscourt backhand winner gave Zheng a pair of break points in game seven and the 21-year-old inched ahead 4-3 on a Krejickova double fault, her sixth of the match.

Krejickova struck back but she could not hold off Zheng, who regained her advantage and served out the victory in style, with an impressive one-two punch and three service winners.

"Definitely a tough day for me but it was a great week," said Krejickova, who was bidding for a third title of the season from four finals contested.

Only Iga Swiatek (seven) and Aryna Sabalenka (six) have reached more singles finals than Krejickova in 2023.

Yuan Yue was the other Chinese woman in a Sunday final but succumbed to top seed Jessica Pegula, 6-2, 6-3, at the Korea Open, handing the American her fourth title of her career.

Pegula dropped only one set through the tournament and

becomes the first American since Venus Williams in 2007 to win the title in Seoul.

"My mom is Korean and she was adopted from here so it's really special to be able to win here," Pegula said. "In the last few years, as my ranking has gone up, I've definitely felt so much more support from the fans, a lot more than I expected coming back here from five years ago. So it's really special."

Playing in her first career final, 128th-ranked Yuan showed no signs of nerves and earned a break point in Pegula's opening service game, which the American saved with a forehand winner.

The world No 4 then won eight consecutive games to take the first set and build a 3-0 lead in the second as a quick victory looked likely.

Yuan then rallied to get back to 4-3 but Pegula's power from the baseline propelled her to her first title since Montreal earlier this year and her first outside of North America.