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CHINA DAILY

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Confidence of world boosted by Xi's speech

Major steps announced at Beijing forum raise prospects of global modernization

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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President Xi Jinping has succeeded in shoring up more global confidence in common prosperity, unity and multilateralism in the long run, as some remarks from his latest landmark speech on the Belt and Road Initiative impressed and were supported by world leaders, officials and scholars.

Xi delivered his keynote speech, titled "Building an Open, Inclusive and Interconnected World For Common Development", at the opening ceremony of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing on Wednesday.

In the speech, he announced eight major steps that China will take to support the joint pursuit of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, including "building a multidimensional Belt and Road connectivity network".

He also highlighted the concept of "global modernization", saying that China will work with all parties involved to deepen the Belt and Road partnership of cooperation and "make relentless efforts to achieve modernization for all countries".

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, when visiting the China Institute of International Studies in Beijing after the opening ceremony, quoted parts of Xi's speech, such as "humankind is a community with a shared future" and "we should jointly address various global risks and challenges".

"This is something all of those countries who subscribe to the policy of self-reliance and independence and wish to determine their own future independently are eager to hear," Vucic added.

He recalled Xi's visit to Serbia in 2016, saying the visit "helped with Serbia's development tremendously".

With China's help, a Serbian steel mill, which is a landmark BRI project, had become one of Serbia's top exporters.

"Some officials in the West see China as a rival and say they want to compete with and defeat China. This kind of thinking is still stuck in the old world order," he said.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the Belt and Road Initiative provides a crucial and effective way to help developing countries achieve sustainable development, and sets a model for South-South cooperation.

The eight major steps announced by Xi fully align with the purposes and principles of the UN and can help developing countries accelerate their development, Guterres told Xi during their meeting on Wednesday.

Zhai Kun, a professor at Peking University's School of International Studies, said the eight major steps show that "Beijing is determined to fully carry out the BRI blueprint and translate it into reality without interruption".

"The detailed actions reflect an amazing evolution of themes for cooperation over the course of the past 10 years, from regular cross-border trade to social network-based e-shopping, and from basic digital infrastructure to artificial intelligence governance," Zhai added.

Muhammad Zamir Assadi, a Pakistani political analyst and a journalist with the Islamabad-based Country Media Group, said Xi's speech "has sent the message to the international community that it is a time of unity, it is a time of cooperation and it is a time of stepping forward together".

"The speech has told the international community that the achievements of China are to be availed by all," Assadi said after attending the opening ceremony.

"People in different participating countries are looking for the peaceful development that should not be attached with any kind of political strings, and the BRI offers choices of development that are meeting the needs of the local people," he said.

"We should reject bloc mentality, we should reject the voices of anti-globalization and unilateralism, and we should reject the mentality of egoism," he added.

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Climate call



Members of Climate Activist disrupt a meeting of the Economic Club of New York just prior to a speech by Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell in New York City on Thursday. BRENDAN MCDERMID / REUTERS

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China calls for closer energy partnership with Russia

By **XU WEI** and **LIU YUKUN**

China is willing to work with Russia to build a high-level energy partnership and enhance the resilience of the energy industry and supply chains, in order to contribute to the long-term, healthy, stable and sustainable development of the global energy market, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

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In a congratulatory letter to the fifth China-Russia Energy Business Forum, Xi called on the two countries to make bigger contributions to build a global partnership for clean energy cooperation.

With joint efforts over the years, China and Russia have built up all-around, wide-ranging, in-depth and high-level energy cooperation, Xi said.

This has served as a good example of China-Russia pragmatic cooperation based on equality and mutual benefit, and has played a positive role in ensuring energy security and sustainable development for the two countries and the world, he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has just wrapped up his visit to China, also sent a congratulatory letter to the forum.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the forum, Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang read out Xi's letter. Ding put forward a three-point proposal to enhance China-Russia energy cooperation, saying that both sides should enhance connectivity of energy infrastructure, maintain effective communication and jointly ensure the safe and stable operation of cross-border energy channels.

Both nations should explore new growth engines in energy cooperation and strengthen cooperation in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, hydrogen energy, energy storage and carbon markets, said Ding, who is also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

China-Russia energy cooperation has been the bedrock of bilateral trade, the target of which has been set at $200 billion for 2024.

During the forum, companies from the two countries reached over 10 cooperation agreements in fields such as oil and gas, coal and talent development.

Ren Jingdong, deputy head of the National Energy Administration, said that China-Russia energy cooperation will continue to strengthen with vitality and potential.

In the first eight months this year, energy trade between China and Russia reached $56.19 billion, up 6.2 percent year-on-year, according to the administration.

Zhao Yongfeng, general manager of the China Coal Technology and Engineering Group, said there is a strong foundation and promising prospects for cooperation between China and Russia in the coal sector.

"Going forward, more efforts are expected to strengthen cooperation in areas such as industry design standards, safety standards and construction norms," Zhao said.

Zhang Hualin, assistant president of the China National Petroleum Corp, said that strengthening cross-border oil and gas facility interconnection and promoting the construction of onshore oil and gas pipelines are recommended.

"There should also be joint efforts to explore clean utilization of fossil fuels, digital transformation and carbon reduction in oil and gas projects," Zhang said.

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Preparing for liftoff



The Shenzhou XVII spaceship is transported atop a Long March 2F carrier rocket to the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China on Thursday. After extensive tests, the spaceship will carry astronauts to China's Tiangong space station. WANG JIANGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chile shows extensive reach of Belt and Road

WORLD WATCH
By Jorge Heine

With his participation this week in the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing, Chilean President Gabriel Boric has conveyed a powerful message. In so doing, Chile will become the only Latin American country to have taken part at the presidential level in all three such forums.

Former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet did so in May 2017, and former president Sebastian Pinera did so in April 2019. Now Boric, in his first visit to China, has followed in their footsteps.

On the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, there has been much reflection on what this ambitious program has achieved so far.

Notably, Chile is the BRI participant country that is the farthest from China.

Today, 22 countries in Latin America have signed memorandums of understanding with China on the BRI, and eight have joined the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank. In May 2017, Bachelet was the first head of state to visit the headquarters of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, when Chile became a prospective member.

What has happened since?

The Belt and Road, China's most ambitious foreign policy initiative in this century, quickly evolved to span the Eurasian region, connecting the world's fastest-growing area, East Asia, with the European Union, and has now become even grander.

The BRI offers a new development proposal for the Global South. This proposal is markedly different from the traditional one put forward by the post-World War II Bretton Woods institutions and the West more generally.

Infrastructure and connectivity are powerful drivers of development. China has demonstrated this and is doing the same for countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Latin America suffers from a huge infrastructure deficit, estimated by the Inter-American Development Bank to be around $150 billion a year.

This hampers the region's international competitiveness, so China's offer to step in was thus most welcome.

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LAOTIAN VILLAGE HEADS LEARN A LOT FROM TRIP TO YUNNAN

Visitors experience nation's efforts to alleviate poverty, revitalize rural areas

By **LI YINGQING** in Kunming and **XIN WEN** in Beijing

in-depth

Southwest China's Yunnan province is famous for its all-season blooming flowers, tea leaves picked by hand on mountain slopes and people from ethnic groups dressed in traditional clothing.

Yunnan has now gained more significance as the newly built China-Laos Railway connects it with Luang Namtha, a province in northern Laos that features a similar climate, ethnic customs and culinary culture.

It has also become a magnet for Laotians who wish to experience the ecological, economic and tourism development in the province.

In May, a group of 10 Laotian village chiefs from Luang Namtha made a train journey to Kunming, the capital of Yunnan. Tong Xoc Piewmeu, 30, one of the 10 village heads, said that during the fact-finding trip, he focused on rice planting.

"In Laos, many villagers face financial constraints, and under the current economic situation, we are only allowed to engage in small-scale farming. Otherwise, we have to seek employment away from our villages," said Piewmeu, who has been a village chief for 10 years.

"I hope that in the near future, we can try planting rice in our village to help local people benefit more from cultivation," he added.

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INSIDE
BRI a game changer for many developing countries
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PAGE TWO

Chiefs: New rail line boosts trading links

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From May 15 to 19, Piewmeu took part in a training class in Kunming designed for the village heads. They learned about modern agricultural cultivation techniques, the development of traditional Chinese medicine, China's experiences in alleviating poverty, and measures to revitalize rural areas by promoting tourism and healthcare.

The first stop on the visit was the Lancang-Mekong International Vocational Institute at Yunnan Minzu University in Chenggong district, Kunming. The visitors attended a two-hour class taken by Yin Xiaoying, an associate professor at the university specializing in industrial integration.

In addition to the friendliness of the Laotians, Yin was impressed by their desire and passion for economic development and their specific interest in understanding the policies and measures implemented by the Chinese government for poverty alleviation and rural revitalization.

Yin said, "As far as I know, these village chiefs from the border area between China and Laos, especially those near the crossing points, proposed coming to Yunnan to learn and exchange ideas.

"To my surprise, they were enthusiastic during and after the class. They asked many questions and were fully engaged throughout the session."

Yin instructed the visitors on development of the walnut industry in Yangbi Yi autonomous county, Dali Bai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan. They were also told how the province has improved industrial, production and operational systems in the agricultural sector.

The county is known for its walnut production, and in Guangming village, which sits on Cangshan Mountain in the east of Yangbi, walnut trees can be seen everywhere, with the oldest boasting a history of 1,165 years.

Local farmers relied on planting walnuts for a living, but in 2017, the price of walnuts suddenly plunged by 10 yuan ($1.4) per 500 grams. The villagers could not sell their crops for a good price, and factories processing the walnuts were struggling to stay in business.

To cope with this sluggish market, the walnut growers considered establishing village cooperatives to manage and sell their produce in a more orderly way, in the hope of raising prices and the quality of their crops.

Yin also began conducting a five-year field study in 2017 to observe factors influencing the village's economic development and methods to help lift local people out of poverty.

"I saw that they had diversified the way in which walnuts were produced. The villagers established a number of cooperatives, introduced smokeless ovens to bake walnuts, and expanded the distribution channel to establish e-commerce platforms for online sales," Yin said.

"From farming to manufacturing, the walnuts produced were fully used, and the village also launched a group of specialized homestays to boost rural tourism."

During her lecture in Kunming to the Laotian village heads, Yin told them how Guangming was lifted out of poverty. The ensuing development of the walnut industry, along with accompanying measures to boost tourism, was also discussed.

"Because Guangming has a small economy, it is still exploring advanced processing of some agricultural produce, and has yet to achieve large-scale operation. However, the local tourism industry is booming due to its reliance on scenic Cangshan Mountain," Yin said.

She added that the Laotians wanted to learn more about such progress and how Guangming had achieved relatively fast economic growth, as their own villages are facing a similar situation.









Top left: Students from Laos prepare to board the Lancang bullet train at the newly built station on the China-Laos Railway in Vientiane, capital of Laos, on June 21. KAI QIAO / XINHUA **Top right:** Visitors inspect products at the 20th China-ASEAN Expo in Vientiane in April. KAI QIAO / XINHUA **Left:** Passengers are welcomed at Vientiane station in April. XING GUANGLI / XINHUA **Right:** Laotian staff members in Vientiane greet passengers taking the first cross-border train from Kunming, capital of Yunnan province. XING GUANGLI / XINHUA

Transportation links

Laos has only three administrative levels: province, city and village. Each Laotian village has a chief, whose administrative power is second only to that of the mayor — similar to a district or county head in China.

Due to a relatively low urbanization rate, most people in Laos still live in rural areas. Village chiefs act as a bridge between the government and the people, and in rural areas of the country, residents often have a close relationship with their village head.

Seng Xaiyavong, 44, head of Ban Borpied village, which is about 8 kilometers from Boten, a northern border crossing point with China, said 696 people live in the village, and most of them work in Boten during the day.

Two of the villagers work at Boten station on the China-Laos Railway, which is only about 1 km from their village, said Xaiyavong, who was among the village heads who took this rail line to Kunming for the exploratory tour. It was the first time that Xaiyavong had traveled abroad.

"I came to study, and learned a lot. I was particularly impressed by the rural tourism businesses that are flourishing in Gulang village, Anning, where natural hot springs help boost the local economy thanks to the development of related cultural tourism facilities," he said.

Xaiyavong said boosting agricultural industries, which requires large amounts of capital and resources, is often beyond the reach of individuals. "Laos is different from China in terms of rural industry growth. We have a lot of room for improvement," he added.

The opening of the China-Laos Railway in December 2021 boosted trade between the two countries, injecting new momentum into Laos' economic recovery, which was badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Even though Laos had a short rail link along its border with Thailand before the China-Laos Railway opened, many Laotians consider the latter to be the country's first modern rail line, and are proud of it.

Piewmeu, the village head, said: "People in our village depended on planting and tapping rubber trees for a living, because there is no local pillar industry. A few years ago, we could only sell the rubber to a local factory for a low price. With the railway opening, more business owners from China are now buying our rubber, and prices of the product have risen."

He said that traveling to Vientiane, capital of Laos, typically took two days by bus from Boten.

"After the railway opened, travel time to Vientiane was reduced to just four hours," Piewmeu said, adding that villagers now choose to go out to work instead of staying at home to farm.

In addition to convenient transportation, Laotians' incomes have risen.

"We used to rely on natural conditions to make a living, but rarely thought about how we could improve our living standards," Piewmeu said. "The railway connected us to the outside world, allowing Chinese businesspeople to come to our village. They saw opportunities, and I tried to recommend local projects to them to give the villagers more employment opportunities."



A member of the Yi ethnic group displays walnuts at the Dali Yangbi Walnut Festival in Yunnan in September 2018. CHEN SHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Experience shared

Communication with business owners in Kunming further strengthened the confidence of Laotian village chiefs in boosting development.

Qi Mingde, general manager of Yunnan Ruran Letu Agricultural Development Co in Anning, said the visitors were most interested in how Chinese entrepreneurs, as investors, have helped villagers raise their annual income from 18,000 yuan to 23,000 yuan in just two years. They also wanted to know why the entrepreneurs took the bold decision to make such a large-scale investment in a rural area.

"In the hope of earning a better living, the village chiefs were inspired to think outside the box and experiment to test the knowledge they gained from our experience in developing rural ecotourism," Qi added.

He said that in the past five years, his company has turned local farmers into shareholders by involving them in making decisions to fully tap local resources. The village's 30 surplus laborers were all employed, and last year, the average monthly income of local residents reached about 3,000 yuan.

Qi said that to improve the village's environment, areas where garbage was piled high were cleaned up and transformed into green zones. Residents' houses were renovated, and a walking path now surrounds the village to improve fitness levels.

"The average annual income of villagers in Gulang, where we developed rural tourism, has risen from 18,000 yuan five years ago to 23,000 yuan. The second phase of our tourism project has been completed, and the third phase will continue to expand the scale of operation," he said.

On an exploratory tour to the border, Qi saw that Laos boasts abundant natural resources.

"It is a good place to develop ecological tourism. The village chiefs may not be aware of the specific methods involved, but the pleasant environment in Laos could be used to improve tourist resources," he said.

"Many Laotian village chiefs said they hoped to replicate the success that our company has had in Gulang in their own villages. They also plan to send more villagers and officials from relevant departments to China to learn from us.

"I have no hesitation in sharing our experience with the Laotian people and I am very willing to help the development of rural areas in Laos."

The Laotians were also impressed by the agricultural planting techniques used by rural companies in Yunnan.

Xaiyavong, the Ban Borpied village head, said he hoped agricultural experts and technicians from Kunming would visit his village soon to guide residents in producing plant products in a more advanced technological way.

"We grow rubber, sugar cane and watermelons. Much of our produce is sold to other parts of China through Yunnan. I was deeply impressed by the diverse varieties of specialty crops, large-scale planting models, and the mature procurement and sale systems in Yunnan. I hope to strengthen cooperation with the province in this respect," he said.

Progress has been made in cooperation between China and Laos in terms of transportation.

The 1,035-km China-Laos Railway has produced a convenient logistics channel between the two nations. After the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership officially took effect in January last year, demand for logistics services between the two countries greatly increased.

International freight services on the China-Laos Railway have risen from an average of two trains a day after the line opened, to an average of 12 trains per day. As of May, more than 20 million metric tons of goods had been transported by the line. The types of goods carried by the railway have risen from just over 10 at its initial opening, to more than 2,000.

Yin, the associate professor, said: "The Laotian people are pragmatic. They are now more interested in the specific way of doing things, such as how to sell produce and better cultivate crops. I told them that we love the dark Laotian beer, and they immediately asked how they could find the best retail channels for beer sales.

"Compared with direct aid, I think they wanted to know more about methods to improve their economic situation."

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The first cross-border passenger train passes over the Galanba bridge on the China-Laos Railway in Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan. JIANG WENYAO / XINHUA

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TOP NEWS

UN official lauds China's role in corruption fight

Adoption of mutual assistance law seen as potential driver for more foreign collaboration

By CAO YIN
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China's significant role in advancing sustainable development as well as its proactive involvement in building international rules against corruption have been praised by an official from the United Nations.

"This is an important year as we mark the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention against Corruption," said Ghada Waly, executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. "I'm pleased to see that China has taken important steps to further align its anti-corruption framework with UNCAC requirements."

She made the remark on Wednesday in Beijing during an exclusive interview with China Daily on the sidelines of the Thematic Forum on Clean Silk Road at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

Waly commended China for adopting the Law on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters in 2018 to ensure compliance with the UN convention, providing a solid legal foundation for collaboration with foreign counterparts on transnational corruption.

She also praised China's active participation in the Implementation Review Mechanism — a peer review process that assists states to effectively implement the UN convention — and its engagement in policy discussions.

"This involvement not only demonstrates China's commitment (to) but also its role and contribution in shaping international policies to combat corruption," she said.

Waly welcomed several documents about deliverables issued during the Thematic Forum on Clean Silk Road as new efforts initiated by China to promote transparency, integrity and ethical business practices within the context of the Belt and Road Initiative.

"The deliverables represent the commitment of BRI countries to eradicating corruption in investment projects and to enhancing international cooperation and strengthening partnership," she said.

In recent years, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime has further strengthened its capacity to combat corruption. In 2020, it started a project to foster sustainable development by supporting the implementation of the UN convention in countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt, including safeguarding the integrity of international investment projects under the Belt and Road Initiative.

So far, such support has been provided to 16 member countries across Central Asia and Southeast Europe, where the UN office has conducted workshops and online sessions to facilitate the exchange of best practices.

Waly said that while some progress has been made, the international community is still facing many challenges in the areas of asset recovery and combating cross-border corruption.

She said there has been an increase in the number of countries engaging in asset recovery, but pointed out that many continue to rely on outdated policies and laws or bilateral treaties for international cooperation.

In addition to gaps in legislation, other obstacles include inadequate technical skills, limited resources and a lack of trust among partners to cooperate globally, she said, encouraging more international cooperation and dialogue.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime has been working on setting up anti-corruption platforms and hubs in Latin America, Asia and Africa, with deep commitment to supporting countries to build up their capacities to prevent the flow of the proceeds of corruption and recover stolen assets, primarily through the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, which is a partnership between the World Bank and the UN office.

It also provides tailored technical assistance, produces a wide range of manuals, tools and training materials, and offers dedicated on-site guidance and advice through strategic partnerships with other international and regional organizations.

"But our work is not limited to engagement with (relevant) countries," Waly said. "Very importantly, the UNODC, through the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, supports international efforts to end safe havens for corrupt funds."

She emphasized that the initiative has brought together the strengths of both the UN office and the World Bank, saying that it has worked with financial centers to prevent the laundering of proceeds of corruption and to facilitate a more systematic and timely return of stolen assets.



An aerial image shows a solar, thermal and photovoltaic composite project photographed in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates on Aug 15. The project, executed by a consortium that includes Shanghai Electric Group Corp, boasts a large installed capacity and high technical standards to help the UAE achieve its clean energy goals. XINHUA

UAE celebrates 10 years of BRI, maintains focus on development

The United Arab Emirates has made major contributions to the Belt and Road Initiative and has reaped significant benefits from it, with the BRI set to further support economic development and prosperity in the country and beyond, latest analysis showed.

The UAE is participating in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the launch of the China-proposed BRI, which was put forward by President Xi Jinping in 2013, and the cooperation with over 150 countries, a report by the Emirates News Agency or WAM said.

"The BRI serves as a vital link to bolster economic, trade and investment interactions involving about 75 percent of the world's population," the report said. The initiative aims to establish a network of trade and infrastructure connecting Asia to Europe and Africa, with a shared goal of achieving development and prosperity.

The UAE enjoys extensive and diverse economic and trade partnerships with China, ranking among its foremost strategic allies on the global stage. Similarly, the Middle East nation maintains significant ties with the countries poised to contribute to the commercial routes of the Silk Road.

"The UAE holds a proactive and engaged membership as a founding participant in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, under China's leadership. This bank is committed to fostering development partnerships within the Asian continent and beyond," the WAM report said.

The UAE boasts advanced logistics capabilities, showcased by its expansive airports and global ports. These assets are complemented by its capacity to efficiently transport substantial cargo volumes, facilitating the seamless integration of land and maritime routes as part of the BRI.

The report said the UAE's active participation and endorsement of the initiative will further fuel trade, infrastructure development and transportation projects, while lowering investment costs.

The UAE has become an active partner in the BRI since the initiative was launched, leveraging its developmental capabilities, strategic location and pioneering economic role in the region. The initiative offers favorable opportunities for the UAE's regional and international developmental and investment aspirations.

The BRI has the potential to double the country's competitive advantage and develop its foreign trade, especially its re-export activity, according to the WAM report.

The UAE has already invested $10 billion in a joint China-UAE investment fund to support BRI projects in East Africa. In 2018, the UAE signed 13 memorandums of understanding with China to invest in multiple sectors in the Middle East country.

The UAE's trade with countries in Asia, Africa and Europe reached about $560 billion in 2022, accounting for 90 percent of the UAE's non-oil trade. China, India, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkiye, Japan, Oman and Kuwait are among the UAE's top trading partners. The UAE's non-oil trade with these countries grew by 20 percent in 2022 compared with 2021, latest industry figures showed.

Data from the first half of the year showed that the value of the UAE's non-oil trade with countries participating in the BRI reached $305 billion, accounting for 90 percent of the UAE's non-oil trade during that period, while trade grew by more than 13 percent compared with the first half of 2022.

"A remarkable 88 percent of the UAE's imports originate from countries actively involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, while 94 percent of the UAE's non-oil exports are destined for these nations and 92 percent of its re-exports are directed to them. These statistics constitute a vital underpinning for the successful implementation of the BRI in collaboration with all the countries contributing to the reinvigoration of trade among the regions," it said.

The BRI represents 30 percent of the world's GDP and projections indicate that the countries covered by the initiative will account for nearly two-thirds of the world's GDP by 2040, according to the report.

"It is essential to note that the initiative draws its inspiration from the ancient Silk Road. It establishes a new economic development zone in western China and presents an ambitious economic vision, aiming to construct a bridge that connects an economic circle in Asia and the Pacific in the east to an advanced European economic circle in the west," it said.

CHINA DAILY-EMIRATES NEWS AGENCY

Initiative: Speech sets blueprint for next decade of growth

From page 1

Leaders and observers said Xi's speech has provided the blueprint for the next decade of the high-quality development of the BRI framework and has highlighted the great achievements and contributions of the BRI in the first decade of its development.

The concrete actions pledged in Xi's speech have underlined China's sincerity in bringing more opportunities for sustained, green economic growth to developing countries.

Erik Solheim, former undersecretary-general of the UN and a keen observer promoting green development, noted that some local transportation facilities in Sri Lanka have embraced a major upgrade, attracting more foreign tourists, "thanks to China providing some of the expertise, knowledge and financial input".

In his speech, Xi announced that the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China will each set up a 350 billion yuan ($48 billion) financing window, while an additional 80 billion yuan will be injected into the Silk Road Fund to support BRI projects.

Solheim, who was present during Xi's speech, said it was "very moving" when the president said that China "can only do well when the world is doing well".

"That's exactly the right way of framing the relationship between nations," Solheim said.

"We are dependent on each other. There's no way we can solve any of the big problems in the 21st century unless we work together, as we want to avoid future pandemics, restart the economy after COVID, bring every single human out of poverty, (and) avoid climate change," he added.

In a bilateral meeting with President Xi on Wednesday evening, Kenyan President William Ruto said the eight major steps proposed in Xi's speech can further help Kenya and Africa achieve industrialization, agricultural modernization and economic integration.

Africanews Television commented, "As for China-Africa cooperation, one of the BRI's most significant features is its emphasis on green infrastructure projects and renewable energy development."

Liu Ying, director of the cooperative research department at Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, said that Xi gave a clear definition of the goals of global modernization in his speech, which is "to enhance peaceful development and mutually beneficial cooperation and bring prosperity to all".

"His speech has pointed the direction for global economic governance," Liu said.

"In today's world, the phenomenon of unbalanced and insufficient development is prominent, and anti-globalization thinking is surging," she added.

China's commitment to greater opening-up and building an open world economy as reaffirmed by Xi's speech was also noted.

Japan's Kyodo news agency highlighted key data outlined by the Chinese president — China's total trade in goods and services is expected to exceed $32 trillion and $5 trillion, respectively, from 2024 to 2028 — and praised the nation's move of removing all restrictions on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector, which was also announced by Xi in his speech.

Smart guide



Visually challenged torchbearer Cai Qionghui is guided by a robot dog on Thursday during the launch of the torch relay for the 4th Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. This is the first time a robot dog made an appearance in a large-scale sporting event to help athletes with disabilities. HUANG ZONGZHI / XINHUA

Reach: Chile had early role in 'Digital Silk Road' concept

From page 1

In this context, in 2015 and 2016, Latin American countries and China looked for ways to extend the BRI across the Pacific and make it reach the Western Hemisphere. And although not yet materialized, one of the first expressions of this was Chile's formal proposal to China in January 2016 to install an underwater fiber-optic cable from Valparaiso to Shanghai. This would have been the first internet cable connecting Asia and South America, and the first across the South Pacific. It was also seen as one of the very first manifestations of what would become known as the "Digital Silk Road".

China has long been Chile's No 1 trading partner. Chile was the first country in South America to establish diplomatic relations with China, in 1970. In 2005, it became the first individual country anywhere to sign a free trade agreement with China. Since then, Chile-China bilateral trade has increased eightfold, reaching about $61 billion in 2021. As much as nearly 40 percent of Chile's exports go to China. In addition, in recent years, China has also become a leading source of foreign direct investment in Chile. It was the biggest source of FDI in 2019, and again in 2021.

President Boric's state visit to China has thus provided an opportunity to continue to expand this flourishing relationship.

The author is a research professor at the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies and interim director of the Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future at Boston University. He was Chile's ambassador to China from 2014-17. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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TOP NEWS

Joint building of Belt and Road highlighted

China to further promote high-quality cooperation, share development opportunities, President Xi Jinping tells world leaders attending key forum in Beijing

MONGOLIA


Ukhnaa Khurelsukh

President Xi Jinping called on Mongolia on Thursday to play a greater role in advancing high-quality Belt and Road cooperation as a gateway linking Europe and Asia when meeting with Mongolian President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh.

Xi said that Mongolia, which was among the first to support the Belt and Road Initiative, is a natural partner in jointly building the Belt and Road.

Over the past decade, China and Mongolia have achieved greater synergy between their development strategies and witnessed encouraging results in cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, connectivity and livelihood projects, he said.

Xi said that the construction of the Belt and Road shares broad cooperation opportunities with Mongolia's "Steppe Road Program" development strategy.

He said that China is willing to uphold mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity with Mongolia, support each other in safeguarding core interests, and build a solid foundation for the China-Mongolia community with a shared future.

China will continue to help Mongolia revitalize its economy, promote the construction of relevant border ports in an orderly manner and open up new channels for connectivity between the two countries, he said.

As the China-Mongolia Desertification Prevention and Control Cooperation Center has been established, Xi said China is willing to continue supporting Mongolia's "Planting One Billion Trees" plan.

He also expressed China's willingness to expand China-Mongolia-Russia cooperation and steadily promote the construction of the trilateral economic corridor.

Khurelsukh congratulated China for the successful hosting of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, saying that its outcomes will contribute to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and give new momentum to global economic growth.

The two heads of state witnessed the signing of multiple bilateral cooperation documents in areas including cross-border railways, green and low-carbon development and the digital economy.

MO JINGXI

REPUBLIC OF CONGO


Denis Sassou Nguesso

President Xi Jinping called on Thursday for China and the Republic of Congo to explore new growth drivers for their cooperation in the digital economy and green development, while strengthening their partnership under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

Xi made the remarks during a meeting in Beijing with President of the Republic of Congo Denis Sassou Nguesso. He said the Republic of Congo is an active participant and important partner in the joint building of the Belt and Road.

The two countries have achieved tangible results in advancing cooperation by upholding the spirit of the Silk Road, which features peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness as well as mutual learning and mutual benefit, Xi said, adding that the successful implementation of projects such as the No 1 National Highway in the Republic of Congo is exemplary.

Noting that China and the Republic of Congo are true friends and good partners, Xi said that China values the friendship between the two countries and is willing to strengthen their pragmatic cooperation.

China appreciates the resolute support given by the Republic of Congo on issues related to its core interests and major concerns, and it supports the African country in safeguarding its independence, opposing foreign interference and adhering to a development path that suits its national conditions, Xi said.

China also supports the Republic of Congo in playing a greater role in international and regional affairs, and is willing to develop multilateral cooperation and coordinate with it to promote the construction of a more just and reasonable international order, he added.

Sassou Nguesso said the Belt and Road Initiative is a great project that provides the world with a new model of inclusive development.

Underlining that China is a major contributor to global economic growth, he said his country is willing to seize the opportunity of celebrating the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties next year to further bilateral relations.

The Republic of Congo firmly adheres to the one-China policy and looks forward to continuing mutual support with China, and strengthening pragmatic cooperation in infrastructure, green energy and other fields, he added.

CAO DESHENG

TURKMENISTAN


Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov

President Xi Jinping underlined on Thursday China's readiness to strengthen the alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and Turkmenistan's initiative to revive the Great Silk Road to make the ancient route a "road to happiness" in the new era.

Xi made the remark during a meeting with Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, national leader of the Turkmen people and chairman of the People's Council of Turkmenistan.

Xi said China is a reliable friend and partner of Turkmenistan, and advancing the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations is in line with the fundamental interests of both countries and the common aspirations of the two peoples.

China is willing to work with Turkmenistan to continue to uphold the principle of mutual respect and win-win cooperation, and to push for steady and long-term development of bilateral relations, he said.

Xi emphasized that mutual support is the essence of the China-Turkmenistan community with a shared future. China appreciates Turkmenistan's strong support on issues concerning China's core interests and major concerns. He pledged continuous support to Turkmenistan in safeguarding its national sovereignty, security and development interests and pursuing a development path that suits its national conditions.

Both sides should scale up trade and expand cooperation in areas such as healthcare, sports, tourism and culture. Efforts should also be made to hold mutual Cultural Year activities and enable the establishment of the Luban Workshop project in Turkmenistan at an early date, Xi said.

Berdimuhamedov said that China and Turkmenistan have a deep tradition of being good neighbors, and their friendship has remained strong.

The alignment between Turkmenistan's initiative to revive the Great Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative has greatly facilitated the connectivity and revitalization of both countries and the region, he said.

Both sides should carry forward their friendship, pass down the brotherly relationship from generation to generation and maintain mutual trust, understanding and support. They should also deepen economic and energy cooperation and promote people-to-people exchanges, he added.

The leaders of both countries witnessed the signing of bilateral cooperation documents, including an agreement on economic and technical cooperation.

XU WEI

CAMBODIA


Hun Manet

President Xi Jinping called on Thursday for China and Cambodia to maintain high-level strategic communication and carry out cooperation on joint building of the Belt and Road to promote common development.

Xi made the remarks during a meeting in Beijing with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China and Cambodia have respected, trusted and supported each other for shared growth, setting an example of big and small countries treating each other as equals and promoting mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, Xi said.

Both China and Cambodia are nations that value ties, and their ironclad friendship is unbreakable, he said.

Noting that the Belt and Road cooperation has brought tangible development opportunities to Cambodia, Xi said that China is willing to advance the synergy of the Belt and Road Initiative with Cambodia's Pentagon Strategy by adhering to the principles of "extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits".

Xi also emphasized the need to enhance collaboration within the "Diamond Hexagon" bilateral cooperation framework, and strive to build the "Industrial Development Corridor" and the "Fish and Rice Corridor" to allow more partnership projects to deliver benefits to the people.

China supports projects such as airport construction and cultural heritage restoration in Cambodia, welcomes more Cambodian agricultural products to enter the Chinese market, and encourages more Chinese tourists to travel to Cambodia, he said.

Hun Manet commended the keynote speech Xi made on Wednesday at the opening ceremony of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, saying it demonstrated Xi's strategic foresight. He said the major practical measures proposed by Xi will surely lead to greater success in jointly building the Belt and Road.

Cambodia firmly follows a policy of friendship toward China and firmly supports China's core interests, Hun Manet said.

He added that his country actively supports the important initiatives put forward by Xi, which provide important opportunities and platforms for promoting world peace and development.

CAO DESHENG

THAILAND


Srettha Thavisin

China and Thailand should be pacesetters in the high-quality building of the Belt and Road, accelerate the construction of the China-Thailand railway and expand cooperation in sectors including the digital economy, green development and new energy, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

During a meeting with Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin in Beijing, Xi underlined Beijing's support for Bangkok in following a path that suits its national conditions, saying that the two sides should continue to provide firm support to each other on issues concerning their core interests and major concerns.

Srettha, who took office in August, chose China as the destination of his first official visit outside the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. This fully reflects the high importance that Thailand's new government attaches to China-Thailand relations, Xi said.

China and Thailand should work together to keep adding new dimensions to their family-like bond and transform the traditional strengths of bilateral relations into a driving force for win-win cooperation, he said.

He urged heightened people-to-people exchanges and joint efforts in combating cross-border crimes such as telecom fraud and online gambling.

China will work with Thailand to strengthen cooperation within multilateral frameworks such as ASEAN, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism and the United Nations, Xi said, adding that the country is willing to share opportunities created by its large market and high-level opening-up, and inject positive energy into Asia's development.

Srettha said he sincerely admires President Xi's vision and China's achievements in poverty reduction, saying he stands ready to learn from China's governance experience.

He expressed the hope that both sides would deepen pragmatic cooperation in various fields, jointly build the China-Thailand railway, and move forward with the vision of interconnected development of China, Laos and Thailand.

Thailand will make every effort to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals in Thailand and welcome more Chinese companies to invest in and more Chinese tourists to visit the country, he said.

XU WEI

MOZAMBIQUE


Adriano Maleiane

President Xi Jinping said that China is willing to advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation with Mozambique and other African countries, and assist in their efforts to accelerate modernization when meeting with Mozambican Prime Minister Adriano Maleiane in Beijing on Thursday.

Xi also said that China is committed to implementing the three proposals that have been launched to enhance China-Africa practical cooperation such as the Initiative on Supporting Africa's Industrialization and sharing development opportunities and benefits with African countries.

Describing China and Mozambique as true friends and true brothers that stand together through thick and thin, Xi said he is glad to see that fruitful results have been achieved in their Belt and Road cooperation.

China is willing to deepen its traditional friendship with Mozambique and continuously push for new progress in developing the China-Mozambique comprehensive strategic partnership, the president said.

Xi said China supports the African country in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests as well as in pursuing a development path that suits its own national conditions.

He called on the two sides to deepen cooperation in areas such as energy and agriculture, and promote educational, cultural, local-level and people-to-people exchanges.

The president also expressed China's willingness to strengthen communication with Mozambique on multilateral platforms such as the United Nations and promote the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

Maleiane said the series of important initiatives including the Belt and Road Initiative proposed by China can help other countries eradicate poverty, promote economic growth and improve people's livelihoods.

Mozambique firmly adheres to the one-China policy, and hopes to learn from China's experience in modernization to better achieve its own development, he said, adding that his country wishes to deepen practical cooperation with China in all fields.

MO JINGXI

PAKISTAN


Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

President Xi Jinping stressed on Thursday the need to use the 10th anniversary of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as an opportunity to upgrade the project into a corridor for growth, livelihood, innovation, green development and openness.

During a meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in Beijing, Xi called for enhanced cooperation between Beijing and Islamabad on industrial parks, agriculture, mining and new energy, as well as the expedited implementation of major connectivity projects.

He noted that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has secured fruitful results over the past decade as it effectively promoted Pakistan's economic and social development and became a key signature project for jointly building the Belt and Road.

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperation partners and their friendship is iron-clad, with successive governments in Pakistan actively supporting and participating in the Belt and Road cooperation, he noted.

Xi emphasized that China appreciates Pakistan's long-standing and firm support for its core interests and will continue to support Pakistan in safeguarding its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, as well as choosing a development path that suits its national conditions.

He welcomed the export of more high-quality Pakistani agricultural products to China, while expressing the hope that Pakistan will ensure the safety of Chinese institutions and personnel in Pakistan.

China is willing to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan within the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization frameworks to promote regional unity and cooperation, and safeguard the legitimate interests of developing countries, he added.

Kakar, who took office in August as the eighth caretaker prime minister of Pakistan, hailed the tremendous success of the BRI over the past decade.

He said the eight major steps proposed by Xi at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation will not only enhance global connectivity but also promote a fairer and more equitable global governance system, providing important opportunities for development in Pakistan and other countries.

Pakistan will always be a trustworthy and reliable friend of China and will never allow any force to undermine this friendship, he said.

XU WEI

NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK


Dilma Rousseff

President Xi Jinping said on Thursday that China welcomes the New Development Bank to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative in an effort to assist in the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and help more developing countries achieve modernization.

He made the remarks during a meeting in Beijing with Dilma Rousseff who assumed her post in March as president of the multilateral development bank, which was established in 2015 by BRICS, the grouping of emerging economies that currently comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Xi told Rousseff that China will continue to support the work of the Shanghai-headquartered NDB and facilitate her work in the country.

Recalling the signing of the agreement to establish the NDB during the BRICS Summit in Brazil in 2014, Xi said the bank has achieved remarkable results in recent years and has continued to grow.

Against the backdrop of intertwined risks and crises in today's world, the NDB should play its due role as an important emerging force in the international financial system, he said.

Xi urged the bank to make the global financial system more just and equitable, and effectively enhance the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries, thus building itself into a new type of multilateral development institution in the 21st century.

Rousseff said it is necessary for all countries to address common challenges with collective action amid the current international situation. Strengthening infrastructure construction and connectivity is crucial for developing countries to achieve common development, she said.

She noted that there has never been such an initiative as the BRI that can bring together more than 150 countries. The initiative and the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation will play a crucial role in global sustainable development and green growth, she added.

The bank shares similar principles and concepts with the BRI and is willing to actively participate in Belt and Road cooperation and make due contributions to world multipolarity and the reform of the international financial system, she said.

MO JINGXI

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WORLD

Economic corridor reshapes Pakistan

Second phase of project expected to help nation position itself as key hub for trade

By **XU WEIWEI** in Hong Kong and **KASWAR KLASRA** in Islamabad

Pakistan is undergoing a remarkable transformation propelled by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, a project under the Belt and Road Initiative that addresses the country's long-standing economic challenges and promotes sustainable development in its second phase, analysts have said.

The South Asian country has been and will remain one of the most important partners in and a beneficiary of the BRI, said Irfan Shahzad Takalvi, founder of Eurasian Century Institute, a think tank in Islamabad.

"The second phase of CPEC and the BRI would help Pakistan further manifest its position as an important, reliable, trade and commerce hub in the tri-regional space of South, Central and West Asia, a position that is already guaranteed through the infrastructure built in Pakistan during the first phase."

Muhammad Sami Saeed, Pakistan's interim minister for planning, development and special initiatives, told a BRI seminar in Islamabad on Oct 12 that the second phase of CPEC is progressing rapidly.

"CPEC has evolved from a mere connectivity project into a symbol of enduring regional cooperation, with significant implications for development and stability in the region."

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, who also spoke at the event, reaffirmed China's unwavering support for Pakistan in implementing CPEC projects.

The first phase of CPEC focused on energy and port infrastructure, which has laid the foundation for economic stability and growth in the region. The second phase will see 63 projects, valued at around $35 billion, completed by 2030, and these endeavors underscore the commitment of both nations to fostering regional connectivity and extending the corridor's reach to Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries.

"The day is not far when Pakistan, with the help of China, will become an economic destination for Chinese and other international investors," said Tahir Farooq, editor-in-chief of Daily ITTEHAD Group of Newspapers and the head of the Centre for Regional Connectivity with Shared Future.

Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-Civilization Research and Development in Pakistan, said Pakistan still faces multiple problems, including poverty and inflation, and it needs more rapid economic growth.

In addition, Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change, ranking among top 10 countries vulnerable to this phenomenon.

"The second phase of the CPEC and its commitment to high-quality development can help Pakistan to overcome both challenges, economic and climate change," Ramay said.

Green growth

High-quality development vision revolves around the philosophy of green development, green growth, and giving due importance to environment and climate needs, he said.

CPEC's Main Line 1, which traverses north to south of Pakistan, is to be upgraded. Attention is being paid to special economic zones, corporate agriculture, and social sector.

"It means massive opportunities for investment, enhanced economic activity and multiplied jobs," Ramay said.

The CPEC is set to become a major source of employment, with projections indicating that by 2030, approximately 2.3 million jobs will be created through this initiative, according to official estimates.

Ahmed Raza, an engineer at a coal-fired power plant in Port Qasim, Karachi, said: "Eight years have passed since I first joined the brilliant team of engineers at Huaneng Shandong Ruyi (Pakistan) Energy (Limited). Chinese companies have opened windows of opportunities for tens of thousands of young Pakistanis like myself."

Kaswar Klasra is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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MY BRI STORY

Burundi man reaps career success with hybrid rice

By **CHINA DAILY**

For two years, Evrard Ndayikeje had no job after graduating from university. But things changed in 2016 when he joined China's hybrid rice planting demonstration program.

Speaking fluent English, the smart and studious young Burundian man impressed Chinese experts at their initial meeting. He was then hired as their assistant and was taught how to grow Chinese hybrid rice.

"They changed my life in a short time," Ndayikeje said. "Before I met the Chinese experts in 2016, I didn't have work for two years after graduating from university, and I grew traditional rice on my family's land, but didn't have much production and didn't have money."

The East African country Burundi is known as the "heart of Africa" with a tropical climate and abundant rainfall. Its natural conditions are favorable to rice production, but Burundians have suffered from food shortages due to low rice yields.

China has been implementing technical cooperation programs in Burundi since August 2009, sending dozens of experts to the African country to help develop its agriculture.

"Our hybrid rice yields are twice as much as the local varieties," Chinese expert Jiang Daiming said. "Rice yields here used to be only 2 to 3 metric tons per hectare, while the introduced disease-resistant varieties can yield 4 to 5 tons per hectare, sometimes even 7 tons.

"It will be important to improve the local rice crop (yield) if production can be expanded in the future."

Agricultural cooperation with a view to reduce rural poverty in Africa has been an important area of China-Africa cooperation in recent years. During the 8th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in Senegal in 2021, China announced that it would implement the poverty reduction and agricultural development program with Africa over the next three years.

As part of the program, China plans to send 500 agricultural experts to Africa, set up joint centers for modern agrotechnology exchange, demonstration and training in China, and encourage Chinese institutions and companies to build demonstration villages in Africa to support agricultural development and poverty reduction.

In 2019, Ndayikeje won an award given by the Chinese embassy for the high production of Chinese hybrid rice, which reached 11 tons per hectare by that time. Previously, he could only harvest 3 tons per hectare before he managed to grow the hybrid rice.

The Burundian government also employed him as a member of the national committee for the development of the environment, agriculture and livestock in Bubanza Province, where Ninga village is located.

So far, at least 140 households in the village have planted 225 hectares of hybrid rice with an average annual income of $4,200 per household, and the villagers are now able to feed themselves.

Ndayikeje even named his first child Yang after his Chinese mentor Yang Huade. "So that I will always keep his kindness in mind," he said.

Xinhua and Zhao Ruinan in Beijing contributed to this story.



Farmers thresh hybrid rice in Kihanga, Bubanza Province, Burundi, on June 20. HAN XU / XINHUA



Kenyan students prepare to take the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway at a station on Oct 7. The Chinese-built railway has played a vital role in boosting connectivity in Kenya. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

Initiative vital to enhance connectivity

By **WANG MINGJIE** in London
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Experts have observed substantial collaboration between China and its partners over the past decade within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, resulting in successful outcomes in areas such as trade enhancement, financial consolidation, and cultural exchange.

Bert Hofman, former World Bank country director for China and current director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore, said: "The BRI has made a significant impact on connectivity, trade and investment, and enhanced policy coordination among countries that have joined the initiative. Financial cooperation is yet to be further developed.

"Though the numbers have been distorted by COVID and other external events ... it is clear that significant investments have been made," he added.

Bernard Dewit, chairman of Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and senior partner at Dewit Law Office, said: "The BRI is a great potential platform to promote multilateralism and policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity.

"Especially in a divided, multipolar world with many interconnected issues, we need to promote more connectivity, so we are able to overcome common challenges — the most important one being climate change — together," he said. "The BRI is already creating more people-to-people exchanges, which fosters mutual understanding."

> "Especially in a divided, multipolar world with many interconnected issues, we need to promote more connectivity, so we are able to overcome common challenges ... together."
>
> **Bernard Dewit,** chairman of Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce

He emphasized the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as a prime illustration of the trade facilitation enabled by the BRI. This initiative has significantly reduced the distance between China and the Middle East, shrinking it from a lengthy and uncertain 12,900 kilometers via sea route to a shorter, more secure land route spanning 3,000 kilometers.

Supporting Global South

Mario Cavolo, a longtime China observer and a nonresident senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, viewed the BRI as instrumental in supporting developing nations seeking growth.

"From my perspective having lived in China over 20 years, I've watched specialized economic zones and models prove tremendously successful in driving development," he said. Through the BRI platform, many countries, especially those in the Global South, have borrowed China's tested experiences in development, he added.

China has entered into over 230 cooperation agreements related to the BRI with more than 150 nations and over 30 international bodies, according to official figures.

Furthermore, financial cooperation has been strengthened. By the end of June 2023, the number of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank members had reached 106, and the bank had approved 227 projects with a total investment of $43.6 billion, according to a white paper released by China's State Council Information Office this month.

Cavolo said the challenge for the BRI is geopolitical forces seeking to contain China's growth, though recent tech advances show such attempts will ultimately fail.

Dewit said: "One clear area of cooperation could be the acceleration of green energy projects. Since 2015, around 44 percent of all BRI investments went into the energy sectors of its partner countries. Accelerating green projects worldwide will offer cooperation opportunities with the West and business opportunities for European companies."

Ten years on, assessments show the BRI has facilitated significant infrastructure, trade, and partnership gains, with experts agreeing that the initiative is well poised to contribute further to sustainable development in its next phase.

PNG woman finds golden grass to end poverty

By **YANG RAN**
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In the suburbs of Goroka in Papua New Guinea's Eastern Highlands Province, housewife Zaka Abori grows mushrooms with the help of Juncao technology.

"Growing mushrooms with Juncao not only provides delicious food for my family, but also increases my income, which was the dream before the help of Chinese experts," said Abori, who has been using Juncao to grow mushrooms since February 2020.

Abori is among locals who have found a new way to lift themselves out of poverty. Using Juncao has helped her to earn an annual income of 15,000 kina ($4,240), which is seven times the average annual income of families growing coffee plants and vegetables in the surrounding areas.

In 2001, the first China-aided overseas Juncao demonstration base was founded in Papua New Guinea. Over the past decades, Chinese experts have been promoting and carrying out training and demonstration of Juncao technology used in mushroom cultivation and livestock breeding in the Eastern Highlands.

Juncao refers to a herbaceous plant that can be used as a culture substrate for the cultivation of edible and medicinal fungi, wrote Lin Dongmei, deputy head of the China National Engineering Research Center of Juncao Technology, in her introduction of Juncao technology on the United Nations' website.

The Juncao technology was developed by professor Lin Zhanxi of Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University. Lin and his team have since introduced the technology to more than 100 countries and regions by conducting training courses on Juncao technology, constructing demonstration bases, and cooperating with related departments of the UN. This has also helped many countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative to be lifted out of poverty.

PNG newspaper Post Courier reported that the Juncao technology has been introduced to nine provinces and 17 districts in the country, benefiting more than 45,000 households.

"I know a few farmers who are making a living using this Juncao technology," Virginia Baunke, a student majoring in agriculture at the University of Goroka, said. "A model farm in the institution I'm studying at has already adopted this technology. Overall impression by locals using this technology is just awesome."

Abori said she will continue with mushroom growing and make it her career.

"I believe that with the help of the Chinese experts, poverty alleviation through the use of Juncao will not only be a success in Papua New Guinea, but also around the world," she said. "Thank you, Chinese experts!"

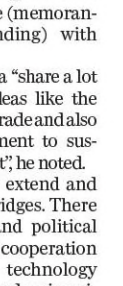
RIDING BRI OPPORTUNITIES

BRI a catalyst for Uruguay's infrastructure development

By **LI JINYI, JIAO JIE** and **ZHANG YUNBI**

The Belt and Road Initiative has further enriched the partnership between Uruguay and China, acting as a catalyst for infrastructure development and people-to-people exchanges, a seasoned Uruguayan diplomat has said.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Fernando Lugris, Uruguay's ambassador to China, said a number of significant infrastructure projects are being carried out in Uruguay.



Fernando Lugris

"The most important one ongoing is related to energy in order to boost the new big investments that we are receiving in the country. And this is being done by a Chinese company," he said.

In addition to large-scale projects, he underlined the significance of smaller endeavors, such as collaborations between museums and libraries and increased student exchanges at the people-to-people level.

"Uruguay's national library has become a member of an alliance of BRI national libraries, and they are exchanging ideas and experiences. Some of our key museums are part of the BRI alliance of museums," he said.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-proposed initiative. It aims to shore up interconnectivity and build trade and infrastructure networks on and beyond ancient Silk Road routes. It also aims to enhance people-to-people exchanges.

In a quick review of his nation's partnership with China on advancing the landmark vision, Lugris said his country is an active participant in the BRI.

"Uruguay was the first country to state clearly, at the level of head of state, our willingness to become part of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2016. And then we were among the first countries to sign the (memorandum of understanding) with China," he said.

Uruguay and China "share a lot of principles and ideas like the commitment to free trade and also the strong commitment to sustainable development", he noted.

"We are trying to extend and to establish more bridges. There is not only trade and political trust but also a lot of cooperation in science and technology among academies and universities," he said.

Lugris noted that the bilateral trading model has been effective and successful.

Receptive market

He said China's technological products have found a receptive market in Uruguay, while Uruguay's agricultural products are very welcomed in China.

This mutually beneficial trade dynamics has solidified China's position as Uruguay's main trading partner for the past 11 years.

The annual bilateral trade has achieved an exponential growth in recent years, reaching $7.44 billion last year, China's Foreign Ministry said.

China-Uruguay relations have entered a stage of mature and stable development, setting a good example of win-win cooperation between countries of different sizes and national conditions, observers have noted.

Looking ahead, Lugris expressed optimism about the future of China-Uruguay relations, saying "we are happy that China continues to lead and promote more spaces for cooperation".

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WORLD

Peace treaty lays base for bilateral ties

Forum outlines principles as Beijing and Tokyo mark 45 years of friendship pact

By **ZHAO RUINAN**
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Senior officials on Thursday called for Beijing and Tokyo to uphold key principles for peace and friendship outlined in a critical treaty between the two sides, in a bid to foster a bilateral relationship fitting for the new era.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

Adhering to the core principles outlined in the treaty, including noninterference in each other's internal affairs and opposition to any country seeking hegemony, remains essential for handling Sino-Japanese relations, said Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is also director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, in a recorded video speech for the 19th Beijing-Tokyo Forum.

It also holds "practical significance" in addressing the risks and challenges faced by the world today, said Wang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

As this year also marks the 45th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up, Beijing will further push for high-quality development and expand high-level opening-up, he said, adding that China welcomes Japan taking up a share of the enormous opportunities resulting from this trend.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida expressed congratulations on the forum in a letter.

Sun Yeli, deputy director of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, said that Sino-Japanese relations have flourished in the past 45 years, bringing tangible benefits to both nations and fostering prosperity and stability in Asia and the world.

China stands as Japan's largest trading partner, said Sun, calling for the two countries to strengthen economic cooperation, cultivate new avenues of growth, and achieve a higher level of win-win collaboration.

In 2022, the total trade volume between China and Japan reached $357 billion. According to official data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the end of last year, China's direct investments in Japan reached a cumulative total of around $5 billion, with a focus on manufacturing, electronics, and other sectors.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, in a recorded video speech for the event, said Japan and China have achieved remarkable progress in areas such as politics, the economy, and culture, as well as through exchanges of visits, as guided by the spirit of the treaty for the development of long-lasting peace and friendly bilateral ties.

Mounting challenges

It is crucial, especially at times with mounting challenges, for Beijing and Tokyo to engage in more dialogues, contributing to a constructive and stable Sino-Japanese relationship, she said.

At the forum, former Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda recalled the moment 45 years ago when he witnessed the exchange ceremony of the historical treaty.

"On Oct 23, 1978, at the prime minister's residence in Japan, my father, then prime minister Takeo Fukuda, and the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping witnessed the exchange of the two countries' treaty documents. At that moment, the treaty officially came into effect, and the two leaders embraced each other, sharing joy. I was right there witnessing this touching scene," he said.

Against the backdrop of the deepening global divisions and conflicts, revisiting and returning to the core principles of the treaty is the most urgent thing for the two countries to do, he added.

Du Zhanyuan, head of the China International Communications Group, one of the organizers of the event, highlighted the crucial role of people-to-people exchanges, especially youth exchanges between China and Japan, in enhancing mutual understanding.

The two-day forum is attended by officials, business leaders, and scholars from both countries, discussing Sino-Japanese cooperation in fields, including digital economy, regional security, and international collaboration.

The annual event was co-hosted by China International Publishing Group and Japanese nonprofit think tank Genron NPO.

Automated task



Bipedal robots move containers during a demonstration at Amazon's "Delivering the Future" event at its robotics research facility in Sumner, Washington, on Wednesday. JASON REDMOND / AFP

Marine concerns



An expert from China (right) talks to an International Atomic Energy Agency official about the marine products collected for inspection in Iwaki City, Fukushima, Japan, on Thursday. China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said China believes the IAEA should shoulder responsibility for monitoring Japan's nuclear-contaminated water discharge from the Fukushima nuclear plant. THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

Border wall plan meets resistance

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston
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More than 100 groups and nonprofit organizations have sent a letter to US President Joe Biden asking him to stop the plan to waive environmental laws to quickly build a border wall through Starr County in South Texas.

"We write to express our profound dismay and opposition to [Homeland Security] Secretary [Alejandro] Mayorkas' waiver of 26 federal laws to rush the resumption of border wall construction in Starr County, Texas," reads the letter signed by 120 organizations that was sent on Oct 16. "We must make clear that there is no legal requirement to waive laws that protect vulnerable border communities and wildlife in the appropriations language or elsewhere."

Homeland Security announced on Oct 5 that it was waiving the environmental regulatory laws to build 20 miles of border wall in Starr County. It is the first time the Biden administration waived so many laws to expedite border barrier construction.

Biden was critical of then-President Donald Trump's border wall project and pledged in his 2020 presidential campaign that he wouldn't build "another foot" of wall. He signed an executive order on his first day in the office to halt any construction of such a wall, saying that it was a waste of money.

But Biden said the law required continued certain wall construction because Congress appropriated money for it in 2019.

"I tried to get to them to reappropriate it, to redirect that money," he said. "They didn't. They wouldn't. And in the meantime, there's nothing under the law other than they have to use the money for what it was appropriated. I can't stop that."

When asked whether he believes the border wall works, Biden answered, "No."

However, Cesar Hernandez, a law professor at Ohio State University who grew up near Texas' southern border, wrote on The Hill that Biden is wrong, and Congress didn't require more border wall construction.

"The law is clear that the money 'shall be authorized.' It doesn't say that the money must be spent," Hernandez said of the bill in February 2019.

"Just before the year [2019] ended, Congress passed yet another budget bill. It again set aside $1.4 billion for border wall construction. This time it specified that the money 'shall be available only' for 'construction of a barrier system along the southwest border.'"

"But it said nothing about a requirement," Hernandez said. "If Biden truly thinks the border wall is misguided, or even if he just thinks he ought to keep the promise he made, his administration should put up a fight rather than blame Congress."

The letter pointed to a government report released last month on environmental damages caused by the erected border walls.

The report by the US Government Accountability Office stated: "From 2017 through January 2021, federal agencies built about 450 miles of barriers along the US Southwest border. To expedite construction, they waived federal environmental and other laws. The construction harmed some cultural and natural resources, for example, by blasting at a tribal burial site and altering water flows."

In Arizona, an ancient spring well was dried up when the government pumped millions of gallons of underground water to mix the cement to build the border wall, and many saguaro cactuses were downed for the same purpose. In Texas, the living conditions of already endangered ocelots became more precarious because of the constructed wall.

According to the report, only 62 percent of barrier miles were built on federal lands. The rest was appropriated from private land. In Starr County, residents are worried that their land would be grabbed by the government to build the wall.

Teacher Nayda Alvarez lives in a tiny alcove west of Rio Grande City. She painted the words "NO BORDER WALL" on her roof after federal officials in the Trump administration first slated the borderlands where her family's homes are for border wall construction. She sued to prevent her land from being taken with the help of a nonprofit.

She had a couple of years of "stress free" life after Biden took office. Now, her guard is up again.

Debralee Rodriguez, executive director of the Valley Land Fund, which owns the Salineño Wildlife Preserve in Starr County, told Border Report that she received a letter from Homeland Security assuring that the border wall construction wouldn't be on their property.

But she still worries that the noise and lights and activity of nearby construction will drive away the rare birds that people travel from across the world to see.

"We will not have a wall on our 2.5 acres. But that's not to say that there's not going to be neighboring properties that are going to be so fortunate," Rodriguez told Border Report. "Any time there's construction or fragmentation of any land nearby, it's going to be detrimental to the wildlife in the area."

Starr County is part of the Border Patrol's Rio Grande Valley Sector. It had nearly 300,000 encounters of migrants in fiscal year 2023, which ended on Sept 30.

Starr County Judge Eloy Vera told Border Report that western Starr County, where the new border wall is slated to begin, has few encounters, according to law enforcement information he's been told.

"They should be building it in Del Rio, or El Paso — somewhere where they're crossing by the thousands, not by tens or twenties like they're doing in that area of Starr County," he told Border Report.

FM voices opposition to West's interference

By **WANG QINGYUN**
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Some Western countries are attacking China based on disinformation while disregarding their own serious human rights issues, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said following the meetings of the Third Committee of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Earlier this week, some Western countries, including the United Kingdom, attacked China over human rights during the meetings, while more than 70 countries, including Pakistan, voiced opposition to interfering in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights.

Issues relating to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet are China's internal affairs, Pakistan said in a joint statement, opposing the politicization of human rights and double standards.

A total of over 100 member states voiced their support for China at the meetings, Mao said on Thursday.

"The attempts of a handful of Western countries to hold back and contain China under the pretext of human rights once again ended up in failure," Mao said at a regular news briefing.

The international community needs to work together to tackle the various crises and challenges facing the world.

Yet, "a handful of Western countries, including the UK, based on disinformation and Cold War mentality, are wantonly provoking confrontation on multilateral platforms", she said.

'Systemic racism'

"These countries are turning a blind eye to their serious human rights issues, including systemic racism, racial discrimination and violation of migrants' rights, and show no repentance for the serious human rights violations they had committed during the colonial era," the spokeswoman said.

Mao urged the UK to address these issues and stop politicizing human rights issues.

The Chinese people are confident in the path they have chosen and proud of the achievements they have made, and will stay committed to the chosen path, she said.

China, which was reelected as a member state of the UN Human Rights Council for the 2024-26 term, will continue to uphold common values of humanity, actively participate in the international human rights governance and promote sound development of the global cause for human rights, Mao said.

Ailing US drugstore chains close many locations

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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US drugstore chains are closing hundreds of key locations due to slowing sales, fewer prescriptions being filled, and rising thefts, leaving some small communities without nearby access to essential medicine.

Rite Aid, one of the country's biggest pharmacy chains, with approximately 2,200 stores in 17 states, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Oct 15. It will close 154 stores in more than 10 states, it announced on Oct 18.

The 61-year-old company has nearly $4 billion of debt and pays $200 million in interest a year, according to court documents. But it has secured $3.45 billion in new financing from some of its lenders.

Rite Aid had more losses from this June to Sept 2 than it did during its previous fiscal year. It posted $5.65 billion revenue and a net loss of $1.02 billion. In 2022, it had $5.9 billion in sales and a net loss of $331 million.

It has also faced stiff competition from rivals CVS pharmacy, the largest US chain, and Walgreens, which are expanding their healthcare services.

Rite Aid faced lawsuits that alleged it played a key role in fueling the opioid epidemic that swept through America, killing 645,000 people from 1999 to 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The drugstore closures mark a difficult time in retail for pharmacies as prescriptions make the stores most of their money, but drug and prescription prices have been lower in recent years, cutting into profits.

Walgreens announced that it will shut 150 stores in the US and 300 in the UK this year. It has already reduced store hours and cut corporate jobs in a first round of cuts aimed at reducing $800 million by 2024.

Between 2018 and 2020, CVS closed 244 stores. In 2021, the company said it would close 900 stores by 2024.

When drugstores close in small towns or cities, it can be detrimental to older people's health if they can't get access to medicine and fail to take their pills, a 2019 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found.

The research noted that 1 of every 8 pharmacies that closed between 2009 and 2015 were in low-income neighborhoods or were independent.

Pharmacies that dealt with consumers on public insurance — which does not raise as much funds as private plans — were most likely to shut.

From 1980 to 2022, the number of independent pharmacies has fallen by nearly 50 percent, according to data from McKinsey and Co, a consultancy firm.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, drugstores were able to rake in cash by supplying vaccines and drugs associated with strengthening the immune system and warding off the virus. But the pandemic also caused foot traffic to drop, as customers stayed at home and didn't shop.

After the pandemic, many drugstores have been battling large-scale theft — dubbed "retail shrink" by the industry. Those losses cost retail stores $94.5 billion in 2021 — up from $90.8 billion in 2020 — according to the National Retail Federation.

Carol Spieckerman, a global retail analyst and president of consultancy firm Spieckerman Retail, told China Daily that "retail theft" is rife.

Most of the country's largest pharmacies sell health aids and household items like shampoo and toothpaste, putting them in direct competition with Walmart, Target, Dollar Tree and Amazon, which often have lower prices.

To stay afloat, at least two pharmacies have started to offer primary care services in locations where consumers lack access to a doctor or pharmacy, according to CNN.

CVS acquired health insurer Aetna in 2018 in a $69 billion deal. Its in-store "Minute Clinics" offer urgent care; its "HealthHubs" provide medical care.

In 2021, Walgreens took a majority stake in primary care network VillageMD, which provides healthcare services and access to a doctor.

As of January, VillageMD had more than 680 locations across the United States, including 200 next to Walgreens' drugstores.

John Driscoll, executive vice-president and president of US Healthcare, Walgreens Boots Alliance said in a statement: "With Walgreens and VillageMD's combined expertise in pharmacy and primary care, patients have a convenient location in their community."

Agencies contributed to this story.

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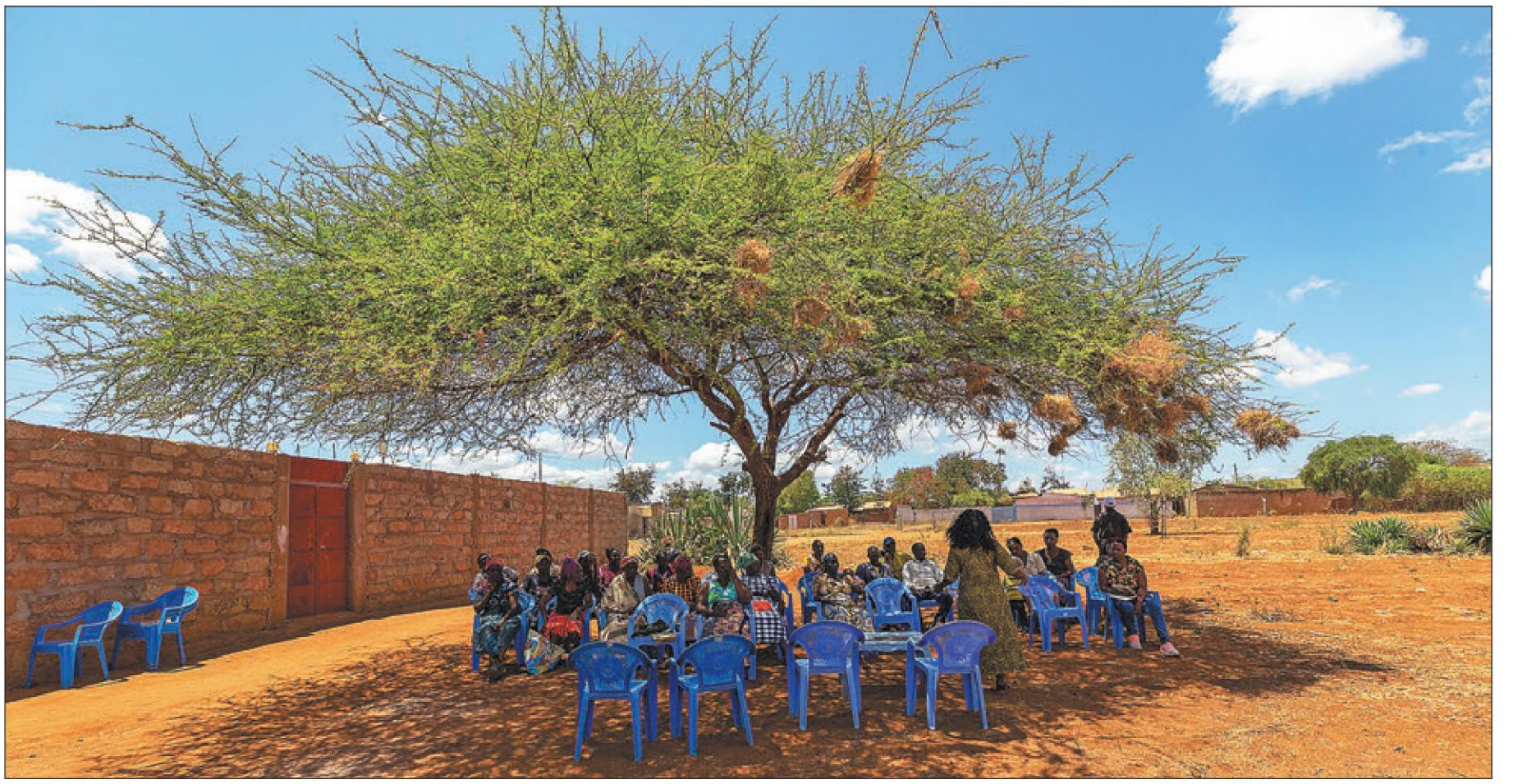
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GLOBAL LENS





Left: Farmer Phoebe Mwangangi (left) helps to train other farmers in Makongeni village of Makueni County, Kenya, on Sept 14, as part of smart agricultural practices.
Right: Children wait to draw water from a borehole in Makueni County, Kenya, on Sept 14. **Below:** Farmers of the Aimi me Bidii Self Help Group gather under an acacia tree in Makongeni village before a training session on Sept 14. PHOTOS BY XIE SONGXIN / CHINA DAILY







Left: Farmers of the Aimi me Bidii Self Help Group practice digging zai pits, a dryland farming technique that helps maintain soil and water resources via holes or troughs, at a demonstration farm in Makongeni village on Sept 14. **Right:** Workers at a local farm water vegetables on Sept 14. The farm owner sank a borehole last year to mitigate climate change challenges, growing a variety of vegetables which he supplies to Makindu market in Makueni County.

Sowing green seeds of success

Farmers invest in smart agriculture to fight climate change

By **EDITH MUTETHYA** in Makueni, Kenya
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Faced with the reality of climate change effects that have seen crop yields and livestock production reduced significantly, leaving many families with increased cases of malnutrition, farmers in Makueni County, covering the arid and semi-arid parts of Kenya, are embracing climate-smart agricultural practices to improve their harvests.

The smart agricultural practices and innovations are geared toward water harvesting, soil conservation and deep tillage with minimum soil disturbance. The practices include planting drought-tolerant crops, adopting agro-forestry, using agriculturally certified seeds and constructing terraces.

Farmers have also organized themselves into village-based self-help groups, under a Poverty Alleviation Resource Center.

In each group, farmers usually gather on a farm of one of their members or in a demonstration field, where they are trained to replicate the sustainable practices on their own plots.

The farmers are trained on new, innovative farming methods, improved seed varieties, agro-nutrition and value-added measures, in which they are able to come up with different types of green approaches and solutions.

The local farmers who use the new methods of farming have confirmed that their yields have improved significantly, reaping harvests even during minimal rainfall. They also expressed strong commitment to practice viable methods during the upcoming rainy season and were optimistic that their yields will continue to improve.

Through the training, many farmers who had questions about dealing with reduced yields and severe drought learned about the current climate change crisis as well as their expected roles in adapting to the latest challenges.





From left: Kambua Andrew, a farmer from Manyani village and a mother of nine, feeds a calf on Sept 14. She keeps livestock for milk production, which helps her with income for buying water and daily necessities. Andrew explains on Sept 14 latest farming practices she adopted for her plot.

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BUSINESS

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Apple CEO upbeat on Chinese app developers

By **MA SI**
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Chinese app developers have the potential to repeat their global success stories in the era of spatial computing with Apple Inc's augmented reality device Vision Pro, its Chief Executive Tim Cook said.

"We already have a group of developers working out of Shanghai (for Vision Pro). We've already seen some of the things coming out and they're going to blow away. We're so excited about it," Cook said in an interview with China Daily at an Apple store in Chengdu, Sichuan province, earlier this week.

Apple has a lab in Shanghai to provide developers with hands-on experience to test their apps on Apple Vision Pro hardware and get support from Apple engineers.

This was Cook's second trip to China this year, highlighting the importance of the country to the US tech heavyweight as a crucial market, key supply chain center and an innovation engine.

Chinese app developers, Cook said, can repeat their global success stories on the company's visionOS platform in future, just as they have already done on Apple's iOS app store.

"I can't wait to see who and how they will be successful (in the future)," he added.

The remarks show that Chinese developers are not only important to Apple's current iPhone ecosystem, but are also key to the company's future innovation ecosystem of AR, experts said.

China has advantages in terms of its market, technology and talent, and its innovation-driven development strategy will help the nation become more important to the growth of global tech giants such as Apple, said Bai Ming, deputy director of international market research at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

On Wednesday, Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao met with Cook in Beijing, where they discussed Apple's development in the country and the Sino-US trade relationship, the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement.

China will firmly promote high-standard opening-up and continue to expand market access, the ministry quoted Wang as saying in the statement.

China welcomes multinational companies, including Apple, to achieve win-win development, it added.

Apple values the achievements made in its 30-year development in China and supports the governments of the United States and China in strengthening communication and dialogue, maintaining and developing stable bilateral economic and trade relations, and creating a favorable environment for practical cooperation between enterprises, Cook said.

Luxshare Precision Industry, a Chinese electronics company, has told China Daily previously that it is preparing to make the Apple Vision Pro, which will be available in the market early next year.

Luxshare has landed Apple's order for the AR device and will be the latter's contract manufacturer, like Foxconn is for iPhones.

The achievement showcases Chinese suppliers' prowess in advanced manufacturing and their important position in Apple's supply chain.

As Apple celebrates the 30th anniversary of its presence in China, the company said it is expanding its commitment to strengthening communities in rural China with an additional 25 million yuan ($3.4 million) contribution to the China Foundation for Rural Development.

This brings Apple's donation to the foundation to 150 million yuan during the past decade, according to the company.

The fresh funding will help farmers learn technical skills to grow their businesses, and support students and teachers in rural classrooms by providing technology and digital education resources, Apple said.

"Education is one of the most important things that we can collaborate on here," Cook told China Daily. "My background is from rural education. And I've always thought that if you could have rural and urban education be equal, that would make a remarkable difference to the rural community."



Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, talks with students at a school in Ya'an, Sichuan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Report: Digital workshops flourishing

China has built nearly 8,000 digital workshops and smart factories, with its industrial internet's core industry value exceeding 1.2 trillion yuan ($167 billion), according to the annual report on the innovation and development of the industrial internet, which was released by the China Academy of Industrial Internet. Currently, 31 provincial-level regions across the country have launched industrial internet development policies or action plans.

Guangdong subway to link Pearl region, GBA

South China's Guangdong province is improving its subway system to create better connectivity between the Pearl River Delta region and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The East Ring metro links two cities in Guangdong: Guangzhou, the provincial capital, and Foshan, a key transport hub. It will connect six intercity railway lines, ushering in a seamless connection between high-speed railways and aviation. State builder China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd is constructing a 10-kilometer section linking Guangzhou South Railway Station and Dashi Railway Station. Once operational, a subway ride from Guangzhou South Station to Baiyun International Airport will take just a half-hour to complete.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 344 billion yuan ($47.91 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity in the banking system reasonable and ample, the People's Bank of China said in a statement.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

HIGHER GROUND



A booth promotes 6G technology during an expo in Shanghai earlier this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shanghai all in for new-type infrastructure

Three-year action plan to spur projects crucial to city's digital transformation

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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220 billion yuan
total investment that construction of the new-type infrastructure facilities in Shanghai will require

Shanghai will advance construction of new-type infrastructure to help accelerate its digital transformation and further elevate its core competitiveness, according to a three-year action plan (2023-26) released by the municipal government on Thursday.

By the end of 2026, a new-type infrastructure framework should be built in Shanghai as new technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, 5G and digital twins should be more extensively integrated into the city, according to the plan.

Gu Jun, director of the Shanghai Municipal Development & Reform Commission, said the construction of new-type infrastructure is an important way of expanding effective investment and helping Shanghai realize timely deployment in new sectors within the digital economy.

These new infrastructure projects are vital for Shanghai's digital transformation, as they can help the city become more technologically competitive, he said at a news conference on Thursday.

Construction of the new-type infrastructure facilities in Shanghai will require 220 billion yuan ($30 billion) of initial investment, of which 120 billion yuan will be capital derived from the public.

According to the definition provided by the National Development and Reform Commission, new-type infrastructure includes information infrastructure represented by 5G and the internet of things, converged infrastructure such as that using big data and AI, as well as basic innovation facilities supporting scientific research and technological development.

Specifically, a network of 5G-Advanced — the next step of 5G evolution — and a 10-gigabit optical network, should be set up in Shanghai by 2026 to increase internet connectivity speeds and further reduce latency. Construction of high-performance computing and high-quality data infrastructure should be sped up to support the innovative applications in AI models and blockchain.

Shanghai will promote construction of special industrial 5G networks in key areas such as civil aviation, Zhang Hongtao, deputy director of Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization, said during Thursday's news conference. The city will also accelerate its forward-looking mapping in satellite internet and 6G communications technologies, Zhang said.

Meanwhile, the world's largest infrastructure cluster featuring the most comprehensive services system should be launched in Shanghai by 2026 to support the development of frontier industries such as chipmaking and humanoid robots. An ultra-large urban intelligent devices system covering the areas of transportation, logistics, education, medical services and eldercare should be established to nurture more new business models, the plan stated.

The action plan covers 30 major tasks and an additional 10 demonstration projects.

Construction of facilities for basic scientific research is one of the 30 major tasks to be completed, which includes building core laboratories for international ocean drilling and independently developed controllable intelligent computing facilities.

While basic scientific research venues such as the Shanghai Synchrotron Radiation Facility, which provides powerful X-ray beams for research and industrial development in the disciplines of biology, physics and material sciences, have opened green channels for technology companies, other similar facilities in Shanghai will be available to companies to support their innovation plans, said Peng Song, executive deputy-director of the Shanghai Science and Technology Innovation Promotion Office.

The Shanghai Data Exchange should introduce new businesses covering industrial data, government procurement and international purchases. Intelligent devices in Shanghai should be connected more conveniently and efficiently. To serve that goal, more than 20 million IoT neuron nodes should be built in Shanghai by 2026, according to the plan.

Fine-tuned policies spark realty recovery

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai
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China's housing market led by first-tier cities is showing signs of regaining stability on the back of recent supportive measures, indicating the current downturn in home prices might have been checked for now, paving the way for a mild recovery, industry experts said on Thursday after reviewing the latest data.

In September, China's top four cities — Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen and Guangzhou in Guangdong province — extended year-on-year recovery in prices of new homes, which rose by 0.7 percent but were flat month-on-month.

In month-on-month terms, pre-owned home prices there rose by 0.2 percent, the first positive growth after four months of continuous declines.

In smaller Chinese cities, however, prices of new homes and pre-owned homes showed different trends, according to data published by the National Bureau of Statistics on Thursday.

Out of the 70 Chinese cities tracked by the NBS, 45 reported year-on-year declines in new home prices in September. In August, 44 cities had reported such declines, said Shen Yun, senior statistician with the NBS' urban division.

The decline in the average home price index has slowed in September, suggesting the series of policies on home purchases introduced since August have started to produce positive effects, said Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution.

"The measures have had a positive effect on both the market performance and market expectations, thus promising stabilization of the home price index in the coming months," Yan said.

New home prices in 31 second-tier cities slipped 0.3 percent month-on-month on average in September, but grew by 0.2 percent year-on-year.

New home prices in 35 third-tier cities slid 0.3 percent month-on-month, but dropped 1.4 percent year-on-year.

"September data showed the decline in the home price index has been curbed with first-tier cities taking the lead in recovery," said Yan.

It appears the home price index has gone past the most pessimistic moment, and efforts should be made now to consolidate the existing positive effect of supportive policies in the fourth quarter, so as to push the index toward stability and recovery, Yan said.

In September, housing policies were adjusted or eased as many as 144 times, a record for this year so far, according to data from the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center.

"With the policy measures starting to produce positive effects, the housing market is seeing improvements," said Chen Xiao, a senior analyst with the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center, adding the recovery trend is more evident in the pre-owned housing market.

Experts: China may further cut its US debt holdings

By **LIU ZHIHUA** and **ZHOU LANXU**

China may continue to cut its US debt holdings amid global worries over shrinking liquidity and safety risk of the assets and the country's ramped-up efforts to diversify its foreign exchange reserves, experts said on Thursday after reviewing the latest data from the US Treasury Department.

US data showed that China, the second-biggest foreign holder of US Treasury securities, cut its holdings for five consecutive months to August to $805.4 billion, just shy of the existing low of $801.5 billion reached in May 2009.

China slashed its holdings at a time when both Japan and the United Kingdom — the largest and third-largest foreign holders of US debt, respectively — increased them. Japan increased its US debt holdings by $3.7 billion to nearly $1.12 trillion and the UK by $35.7 billion to $698.1 billion.

"Part of the reason (behind China's moves) is the horrific performance of US Treasury bonds in the past three years," said Hong Hao, chief economist at GROW Investment Group. From the peak period to now, the prices of US longer-term bonds have plunged by roughly 50 percent, Hong said.

"Other reasons are related to how China has become more sophisticated in foreign exchange reserve management. There is an allocation toward agency bonds with higher yields, and China has allocated more resources for the Belt and Road Initiative," Hong said.

Experts said there is a supply-demand mismatch in US Treasuries, making the US debt outlook more worrying.

"US debt faces huge pressures of being sold off, due to the increasingly large supply of US Treasuries, the possible deadlock of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party on new year spending levels, and the US Federal Reserve's tapering of monetary stimulus," said Wang Youxin, a senior researcher at Bank of China.

"Besides, against the background of rising geopolitical conflicts, holding too much of dollar-denominated assets could mean higher exposure to geopolitical risks.

"Reducing holdings of US debt while increasing holdings of strategic resources like gold and crude oil will increase safety of assets for China."

China, Wang said, is expected to continue to diversify its asset holdings to improve asset safety and profitability.

Experts also warned that the abuse of the dollar's hegemony status by the United States has severely damaged global trust in the greenback, leading to an irreversible trend of de-dollarization in the world.

Yang Haiping, a researcher at the Institute of Securities and Futures, which is part of the Central University of Finance and Economics, said reduced Chinese holdings of US debt became necessary to protect asset safety against the background of the global trend of de-dollarization and the increasing presence of the renminbi in cross-border settlements.

Besides, uncertainties in China-US relations and the high US fiscal deficit also justify the reduction in Chinese holdings of US debt, he said.

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BUSINESS

Smart home appliances to help buoy consumption

Shoppers show increasing demand for high-quality, labor-saving products

By FAN FEIFEI
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Intelligent home appliance products, such as robot vacuum cleaners and smart dishwashers, have seen booming sales and are enjoying rising popularity among Chinese consumers, which industry experts said will likely become a new engine driving consumption growth.

Chinese shoppers have shown increasing demand for high-quality home appliances, fueled by the iteration and upgrade of product functions and technologies, and a series of supportive measures to spur consumption gradually taking effect, said Zhao Meimei, assistant president of Beijing-based consultancy All View Cloud, which focuses on home appliances.

Zhao expects the domestic home appliances market will see recovery of growth this year, which is likely to reach 3 to 4 percent. AVC said revenue of China's home appliances sector stood at 708.1 billion yuan ($96.8 billion) in 2022, down 7.4 percent year-on-year.

Intelligent home appliances saw robust sales during the recently concluded combined Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holiday. Online retailer Suning.com said sales of smart dishwashers and robot vacuum cleaners surged 154 percent and 83 percent year-on-year, respectively, during the eight-day break, while transaction volume of 80-inch and above televisions skyrocketed more than 200 percent from a year earlier.

Chinese home appliance manufacturers, including Ecovacs Robotics and Midea Group, are eyeing the high-end robot vacuum cleaner sector and beefing up efforts in the research and development of cutting-edge intelligent navigation technology.

Qian Cheng, vice-chairman and CEO of Ecovacs, said the company invested 740 million yuan in R&D last year, an increase of 35 percent year-on-year, adding that he is upbeat on prospects for the domestic robotic vacuum cleaner market.

Currently, Ecovacs owns 300 brick-and-mortar stores across the nation, and it will accelerate steps to expand its offline retail channels and strengthen cooperation with social media platforms. The Suzhou, Jiangsu province-based firm recently unveiled its new series of robot products for floor cleaning, window cleaning and air purification.

Moreover, its sales from overseas markets rose 26.5 percent year-on-year in the first half. The company will also increase investments abroad and optimize its product structure.

Midea has launched a series of floor-cleaning robot products equipped with intelligent navigation technology and high-precision LiDAR, which uses laser light to measure distances and map surroundings, and is commonly used in autonomous driving vehicles.

The market penetration rate of floor-cleaning robots in Chinese urban households has been growing steadily, rising from about 3 percent in 2017 to nearly 10 percent in 2022, according to a research note from investment bank China International Capital Corp Ltd.

Experts said the increasing popularity of intelligent vacuum cleaners featuring voice control and smart navigation functionality has driven global demand for such products.

China has rolled out a raft of measures to restore and expand consumption, including bolstering purchases of green and smart home appliances in rural areas amid the country's broader push to revive recovery momentum and stabilize the economy.

"The smart home appliances industry is now developing by leaps and bounds, thanks to advances in the internet of things, big data and other technologies," said Zhang Yanbin, an independent researcher in the home appliances sector, adding that with people's increasing requirements for more exquisite lifestyles, the artificial intelligence-enabled smart home sector has a promising future.

In addition, AVC said sales revenue of smart dishwashers amounted to 6.72 billion yuan during the January-August period, up 6.5 percent compared with the same period of last year.

Chinese shoppers have attached great importance to safety and health, and prefer to buy premium and intelligent home appliances supported by innovative technologies, which will help further unleash the potential of consumption and bolster the upgrade of the traditional home appliance manufacturing industry, said Liang Zhenpeng, an independent consumer electronics analyst.

"The recovery of consumption has gathered pace and the intelligent home appliances industry will witness a notable rebound this year," said Wang Hongji, general manager of the white goods business department at research company China Market Monitor Co Ltd.

Wang said small and medium-sized home appliance enterprises should improve their competitiveness by launching new, environmentally friendly and intelligent home appliance products to cater to consumer demand, especially in rural areas.



An employee of China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp inspects a tunnel on the Jinhua-Jiande High-speed Railway project in Zhejiang province in September. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Early bond issuance high on NPC agenda

By ZHUANG QIANGE
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With more policy effects to be witnessed during the rest of this year and early next year, the expected early issuance of local government special bonds will continue to drive infrastructure investment, paving the way for the nation's economic growth, experts said.

Their comments followed an announcement made at a meeting of the National People's Congress Standing Committee last week stating that the Standing Committee of the 14th NPC will convene its sixth session from Friday to Tuesday in Beijing, with the proposed agenda covering reviews on proposals of the early issuance of the newly added local government special bonds.

As a strong possibility exists for early issuance, experts said it will be conducive to efficient planning in terms of future bond issuances, helping meet funding requirements of key projects nationwide, and improving the effectiveness of funds.

Considering that the nation will see more stabilizing policies take effect at the end of this year and the beginning of next, it is expected that some local government special bonds in 2024 will continue to be issued in advance, and the proportion will be near the upper limit, said Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International.

China's fixed-asset investment grew 3.1 percent year-on-year in the first nine months, with infrastructure investment rising 6.2 percent on a yearly basis, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Wednesday.

Citing the figures, Long Chaocan, an investment consultant with China Galaxy Securities Co Ltd, said that due to a relatively high comparison base last year and deflationary factors, infrastructure investment — which seemed flat compared to previous quarters this year — was actually strong in the third quarter, effectively mitigating the impact of the sluggish real estate sector.

"Due to the time lag from the bond issuance to actual use, and with the early issuance of the new bond, infrastructure investment in the fourth quarter and early next year will still see strong support and continue to play a role in supporting the nation's recovery," Long said.

Since the beginning of this year, local special government bonds have strongly supported key infrastructure projects such as municipal buildings, industrial parks and transportation facilities, which is reflected by progress reports of major builders nationwide.

China Energy Engineering Corp Ltd said in an online statement on Wednesday that its unit in Zhejiang province launched a low-carbon wharf project at Meishan Port in Ningbo last week amid the State-owned enterprise's latest push for green transformation.

The project, which will be powered by five sets of 6.25-megawatt wind turbines, is capable of generating 5,917 kilowatt-hours annually upon completion, reducing carbon emission by 22,600 metric tons a year, CEEC said.

In terms of highway construction, China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, a unit of China Railway Construction Corp, said in a project progress report that an expressway linking Lianyungang and Suqian in Jiangsu province reached a milestone as the section between Shuyang county and Suyu district in Suqian has recently entered service.

The 47.7-kilometer section is part of the local government's efforts to boost the urbanization progress of Suqian's outlying regions, and facilitate integrated development of the city, which is located in the Yangtze River Delta region, said Sun Jian, project manager with CR24.

In Yiwu's Suxi township, Zhejiang, the company is also engaged in the construction of a 133-hectare international transportation hub. The hub, which is supported by the Ningbo-Jinhua Railway — itself also under construction — will serve as another major terminal of the nation's trade and improve links between countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, CR24 said.

Upon completion, the project will be able to function as a land freight port for commodities that arrive via both rail and highway, and provide services including Customs inspection, container processing, logistics and warehousing, it added.

UnionPay continues to enhance payment experience in Hong Kong

By YUAN SHENGGAO

UnionPay's global promotion campaign, named Hello Hong Kong, is currently in full swing, captivating audiences globally. This campaign has already made a significant impact by attracting the attention of tourists and business visitors from various corners of the globe.

Strong presence

UnionPay, as an established payment brand among Hong Kong merchants, is welcomed by many foreign visitors.

Currently, with more than 200 million UnionPay cards issued in 78 countries and regions outside the Chinese mainland, and the successful introduction of more than 170 UnionPay-standard wallet products in over 30 countries and regions, these cards and wallets provide convenient accessibility for transactions at merchants and ATMs in Hong Kong.

UnionPay's presence in Hong Kong has reached impressive heights, with nearly every merchant in the city now offering support for UnionPay cards and UnionPay mobile payment solutions. Keeping up with the dynamic landscape of mobile payments, UnionPay International is actively promoting the development of a comprehensive and integrated mobile payment ecosystem in Hong Kong. Notably, the UnionPay QR Code has emerged as a prominent player in this landscape, and more than 110,000 local merchants have already embraced this convenient and secure UnionPay mobile payment method.

UnionPay has successfully established a strong presence in various sectors, including transportation, catering and retail in Hong Kong. For instance, UnionPay has partnered with major transportation services such as Kowloon Motor Bus, Long Win Bus, Citybus and Trams, allowing UnionPay cardholders to conveniently access these services. This collaboration ensures that travelers using UnionPay cards can enjoy a hassle-free journey throughout Hong Kong.

Promotions for Disneyland

Hong Kong is always a city full of uniqueness and surprises, and the same can be said of UnionPay. Recently, UnionPay has launched a series of promotional activities in Hong Kong to welcome global tourists.

UnionPay's commitment to enhancing customer experience extends beyond widespread merchant support. Collaborations with renowned establishments, such as the esteemed Hong Kong Disneyland, further contribute to the overall appeal of UnionPay.







UnionPay payment convenience expands across Hong Kong, allowing all merchants including renowned restaurants and enchanting Disneyland to accept transactions.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

UnionPay International Hong Kong and Hong Kong Disneyland Resort have recently forged a multi-year strategic alliance, cementing UnionPay's position as the official card sponsor of Hong Kong Disneyland. This exciting collaboration promises an array of promotions that will span an extensive period from now until Nov 15, ensuring a truly magical experience for visitors.

To ensure that guests enjoy a more enchanting experience at the resort, eligible UnionPay cardholders are entitled to exclusive discounts on meals, accommodations, entertainment and shopping during their visit to Hong Kong Disneyland. Guests can even enjoy exclusive discounts of up to 31 percent off on hotel packages, which include a pair of two-day general admission park tickets and a two-night deluxe room accommodation at the Disney Explorers Lodge. In addition, guests will receive a special photo gift by using their UnionPay cards, UnionPay mobile QuickPass or UnionPay QR codes.

The check-in window spans across Christmas and Chinese Spring Festival, from now until Feb 16, 2024. Visitors can use the package to explore the world's first and the largest "Frozen" themed land, World of Frozen, which is set to open on Nov 20.

Disney Explorers Lodge invites guests to embark on a thrilling adventure, immersing themselves in exotic surroundings, vibrant cultures, and tantalizing discoveries that have served as inspiration for countless cherished Disney stories. It perfectly embodies the lodge's motto of "ad explorare et somniare," which translates to "to explore and dream."

The renowned financial services provider further unveiled a range of compelling offers for UnionPay cardholders in Hong Kong Disneyland. The offers include a HK$5 ($0.68) discount with minimum net spending of HK$100 in a single transaction at designated outdoor vending carts, and a HK$50 discount with minimum net spending of HK$500 in a single transaction at designated merchandise stores in the resort.

According to UnionPay, there are numerous attractions in various theme parks at Disneyland, and they will continue to offer excitement. One day may not be enough to explore the entire resort, so the two-day tickets included in the hotel package are perfect. Coupled with dining and shopping discounts, the UnionPay card truly enhances guests' experience.

UnionPay added that more rounds of promotional campaigns will be launched to cater to the diverse needs of cardholders in the future.

More exclusive offers

Apart from Disney, Hong Kong brims with a plethora of thrilling attractions, among them the awe-inspiring Sky100 Hong Kong Observation Deck. Nestled on the 100th floor of the towering International Commerce Centre, this vantage point offers an exhilarating experience like no other. Ascending to a staggering height of 393 meters, visitors can relish in unobstructed 360-degree vistas of the region, including the iconic Victoria Harbour. To sweeten the deal, UnionPay cardholders can revel in up to a remarkable 40 percent discount on standard tickets until Oct 31. Come and partake in Hong Kong's most unforgettable celestial escapade, available all year round and at any hour of the day.

Renowned as a shopping paradise, Hong Kong beckons visitors not only for sightseeing but also for indulging in retail therapy. UnionPay understands this desire and is offering a special discount to cardholders interested in purchasing trendy sports-inspired clothing. From now until Nov 8, cardholders can enjoy discounts at the outlets of Marathon Sports, Catalog and GigaSports in Hong Kong. To avail of this offer, cardholders simply need to spend the designated amount. So, whether you are exploring the city's attractions or looking to update your wardrobe, take advantage of this limited-time discount and satisfy your shopping cravings in Hong Kong.

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The 35th International Business Leaders' Advisory Council for the Mayor of Shanghai, or IBLAC, attracts participants from China and abroad. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Economy metropolis positions itself for the future

Shanghai is further enhancing its business environment to better serve global investors

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Shanghai's economy has continued to recover, maintaining overall stable and positive momentum, reflecting strong resilience and vitality, according to officials.

Gong Zheng, mayor of Shanghai, who participated in the 35th International Business Leaders' Advisory Council for the Mayor of Shanghai, or IBLAC, on Sunday, said that the Shanghai government has implemented a range of measures aimed at fostering confidence, stimulating demand, maintaining stability and facilitating development throughout this year and Shanghai's major economic indicators maintain stable growth.

Established in 1989, the IBLAC has developed into a valuable platform for Shanghai's officials to engage with business leaders and shape strategic policies.

This year, the IBLAC, themed on "changes and new opportunities: making Shanghai a more robust and resilient international metropolis", saw participation of nearly 40 executives, scholars and industry experts.

Through fruitful discussions and knowledge sharing, all the participants showcased their profound understanding of the city's development and offered valuable suggestions on how Shanghai can achieve greater heights in terms of quality development.

According to Gong, the first three quarters of this year have seen steady growth in the total import and export volume of goods.

This growth has been accompanied by the improvement of market expectations and corporate confidence, resulting in a burst of vitality in the market. The average number of newly established enterprises per day is 1,888, a year-on-year increase of 42 percent.

Additionally, fixed asset investment, private investment and industrial investment have all achieved double-digit growth.





This year, the IBLAC, themed on "changes and new opportunities: making Shanghai a more robust and resilient international metropolis", sees participation of nearly 40 executives, scholars and industry experts.

> Despite facing uncertainties and challenges, the fundamental long-term outlook for Shanghai's development remains positive, and the overall trend toward high-quality development has not changed."
>
> **Gong Zheng**, mayor of Shanghai

The consumption sector in the city has fully recovered, with retail sales of consumer goods showing a year-on-year increase of over 10 percent.

At the same time, the cultural and tourism market has returned to the level of the same period in 2019.

Shanghai also reported strong results in emerging industries from January to September.

The output value of emerging industries such as new energy vehicles, new energy and high-end equipment maintained double-digit growth. Significant progress has been made in the field of high-end manufacturing, with the successful commercial operation of the C919 domestic large aircraft and the successful sea trial of the first domestically-produced large-scale cruise ship, according to Gong.

"Despite facing uncertainties and challenges, the fundamental long-term outlook for Shanghai's development remains positive, and the overall trend toward high-quality development has not changed," said Gong.

"We have the foundation, the conditions and the confidence to continue driving the sustainable improvement of the economy, strengthening endogenous growth, enhancing social expectations, and resolving risks and hidden dangers. We are committed to achieving the goals and tasks of economic and social development for the whole year and striving for better results."

According to the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Statistics, the city's GDP in the first half of the year increased by 9.7 percent year-on-year, reaching over 2.1 trillion yuan ($287.04 billion).

Gong said that ever since 2017 when Shanghai launched the first version of the reform plan for optimizing the city's business environment, a total of 951 measures have been rolled out. Foreign companies have prospered from these measures.

In the future, Shanghai, whose reform plan moved into its sixth edition in January, will refer to the World Bank's new evaluation system for business environments, which was introduced in May, to come up with more major reform measures. Shanghai's strong recovery and continued commitment to promoting the green transition, artificial intelligence, biopharmaceuticals and digitalization have strengthened the confidence of global investors this year.

Since the beginning of this year, Shanghai has added a total of 49 regional headquarters of multinational companies and 20 foreign-funded research and development centers.

The city is now home to a total of 940 foreign-funded R&D centers and 551 regional headquarters of multinational companies.

Major foreign investment projects such as Tesla's energy storage super factory and the Boston Science and Medical Technology Industrial Base have also been signed and implemented.

Apart from providing suggestions and exchanging ideas on the development of Shanghai, a vision statement was signed by members of the IBLAC to reinforce IBLAC's value and position, confirming its role as a platform for exchanging ideas, enhancing mutual understanding and promoting partnerships.

"IBLAC believes in engaging constructive dialogues in response to a complex and ever-changing global environment for businesses to break boundaries, manage challenges and identify opportunities for a substantial growth with Shanghai," said the statement.

The 36th IBLAC will be held on Sept 22 next year to support Shanghai to expand cooperation, and deepen the construction of Shanghai as an international hub for scientific and technological innovation in the new era.

Gong said that Shanghai will mark the 10 anniversary of its construction as a globally influential tech innovation center in 2023.

"International entrepreneurs have a broad vision and wisdom, and many of them are leaders in the tech field.

"We believe that they will continue to have valuable suggestions to share with us," said Gong.

What they say



Shanghai has been a major hub for innovation and has traditionally been the gateway to the West. It is a city with an open, global mindset.

Over the past decades, Shanghai has been making every effort to encourage innovation. Businesses are now looking forward to the local government providing more help to international companies to interact with domestic innovators by providing working space, financing and policy support.

Shanghai has been incentivizing the establishment of open innovation hubs to expedite innovation via stronger industry collaboration and with more efficient resources. Many members, including Roche, have taken bold actions in this area, which I believe will contribute enormously to Shanghai's strategic goal of building a global innovation city.

Severin Schwan, *chairman of the Board of Directors of the Roche Group*



Shanghai's vibrancy has been, and will continue to be, an important part of Prudential's journey in China. It's a dynamic, modern city with efficient social and financial infrastructure, leading research and innovation institutions, and talented and skilled people who have always impressed me on my visits.

Shriti Vadera, *chairperson of Prudential Plc*



Shanghai's advanced digital environment is a technological innovation beacon. The city has embraced cutting-edge technologies, creating a dynamic environment conducive to creativity. Such a favorable environment is critical in today's quickly changing global landscape, where digitalization is essential to growth.

Equally noteworthy is Shanghai's transparent and investment-friendly regulatory environment. This factor has played a crucial role in attracting domestic and international businesses, positioning the city as a hub for commerce and innovation. It's a testament to the city's commitment to facilitating economic growth and collaboration.

Stefan Paul, *CEO of Kuehne + Nagel Management*



As Shanghai takes a leading role in the energy transformation and decarbonization measures, the city's reputation as a successful economic and sustainable metropolis will only grow and be rewarded by all stakeholders.

Juergen Tinggren, *chairman of the board of directors of Bekaert*



We have every confidence in Shanghai's ability to capitalize on new opportunities and enhance its standing as an international financial center. This is precisely what it has done for the past 35 years.

Mark Tucker, *group chairman of HSBC*



OMRON is committed to deepening its presence and continuously driving technological innovations in the industrial sector in Shanghai. In the future, IBLAC will serve as a bridge between global companies and the Shanghai government, further expanding the world's business network to Shanghai.

Yoshihito Yamada, *chairman of OMRON Corporation*



Shanghai is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Asia, and I think that's because Shanghai IBLAC has provided a lot of support for the activities of our foreign companies and encouraged investment to enter Shanghai and the markets in each industry.

Jun Ohta, *CEO of Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group*



As one of the world's leading technology companies, we have strong expertise in the main growth area of digitalization and sustainability: industry, infrastructure, mobility and healthcare. We look forward to working with you as Shanghai sets out to become a global capital for digitalization.

Roland Busch, *president and CEO of Siemens AG*



With zero emission areas, collaborations with other cities, and a focus on cleaner mobility, Shanghai has solidified its position as a global sustainability leader that will help create a greener future.

Robert Maersk Uggla, *chair of the board of A.P. Moller - Maersk*



Shanghai is China's business and trade center and is focusing on positioning itself as a global center for scientific and technological innovation.

Robert Ford, *chairman and CEO of Abbott*

Yuan Shenggao

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COMMENT

Editorials

Cordiality and cooperation characterize relations between Beijing and Moscow

President Xi Jinping talked with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing on Wednesday.

Putin has attended all of the Belt and Road forums, demonstrating Russia's unswerving support for the China-proposed initiative. To date, the two heads of state have met 42 times over the past decade, consolidating the strong working relationship and deep personal friendship between the two leaders.

The exchanges between the two heads of state have been both the anchor and the compass for China-Russia relations. They have ensured the sustained and steady development of bilateral ties by providing a top-level design and strategic guidance. This has been especially important, given the rapidly changing international landscape, and the need for the two sides to enhance their coordination on bilateral and international issues.

Following the blueprint drawn by the two leaders, China-Russia cooperation has flourished in recent years. It encompasses a wide range of fields, such as the economy, trade, investment, energy, science and technology, as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Bilateral trade, which hit a historical record in 2022, is expected to set a new record this year, reaching $200 billion.

The strong China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership has also established itself as an important diplomatic and strategic asset shared by both sides as the two countries provide valuable strategic support to each other on multilateral platforms such as the United Nations, the G20 and the BRICS mechanism.

With the United States-led West adhering to a zero-sum mentality and stoking bloc competition and confrontation to contain China and Russia, it is only natural that the two countries should opt to strengthen their mutual support on issues concerning each other's core interests. Not to mention that the two countries share the same or similar views on hot-button regional and international issues as well as global governance. As Xi said, it is not an expediency, but a long-term policy to develop China-Russia relations featuring permanent good-neighborly friendship, comprehensive strategic coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Although the West tries to portray otherwise, both countries have repeatedly stressed their relations do not target any third party. In an increasingly turbulent world, the steady and reciprocal China-Russia ties have set a good example for relations between countries. In contrast, the cobwebbed Cold War shenanigans of the US and its allies are stoking geopolitical tensions and creating ever greater global uncertainty.

Just because the US chooses to remain stuck in the past, and insists on playing its zero-sum games targeting the two countries does not mean the rest of the international community should tag along with Washington. The determination of Beijing and Moscow to maintain close and cordial ties should be viewed as a welcome stabilizer amid Washington's ruinous attempts to maintain the US' hegemony in the face of a tide of change sweeping the world.

Washington gives in to its dark side

The United States Department of Commerce announced a raft of new rules on Tuesday in a bid to "plug loopholes" in the existing restrictions on advanced computer chips and chip-making equipment it launched last year.

In addition to cutting off Chinese companies' access to specific advanced chips from such US chipmakers as AMD and Nvidia, two Chinese chip designers, Moore Threads and Biren Technology, have been blacklisted, and licensing requirements for exports of advanced chips and equipment have been expanded to dozens of other countries which allegedly present risks of diversion to China.

The aim is to elbow China further away from the semiconductor industry's cutting-edge technology.

The excuse, as has been the case since the Donald Trump days, is still the umbrella formula of national security plus human rights. "The goal is the same goal that has always been, which is to limit China's access to advanced semiconductors that could fuel breakthroughs in artificial intelligence," said US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.

AI capabilities empowered by supercomputing and advanced chips have broad military applications. And Raimondo said that the stricter export controls are meant to control such "transformational" technology even though the slowdown in Chinese capability around high-level AI can have societal benefits and be "used for goodness" as the Joe Biden administration has acknowledged.

Everything else aside, the US government is clearly taking full advantage of its dominance in new and emerging technologies to keep the upper hand in what it regards as decisive competition with China. Its continuous moves to deny China access to US technologies and equipment is only part of its attempt to suppress Chinese technological progress, especially in the semiconductor field. The attempt serves the strategic purpose of winning the strategic competition with China.

The Joe Biden administration has never stopped stressing that it has no intention to choke the Chinese economy. But it seems ready to do whatever it takes to do just that. The Chinese ministries of commerce and foreign affairs were correct in pointing out that US and other Western companies are also among the direct victims of the latest measures. AMD and Nvidia know it. ASML knows it.

And the US Semiconductor Industry Association, which is still "evaluating the impact", has stated: "Overly broad, unilateral controls risk harming the US semiconductor ecosystem without advancing national security".

While the fabricated national security and human rights narrative may work for a while, its abusive use will hurt both countries, and impede global technological advancement in the end.

Everyone knows the enormous potential of new technologies, including AI, to improve people's livelihoods. US politicians accuse Beijing of using them for evil ends, but it is just they that have chosen to dwell on the dark side.

West false champion of human rights

The speeches made by representatives of a number of countries at the Third Committee of the 78th United Nations General Assembly in New York on Wednesday should be a wake-up call to some Western countries to refrain from groundlessly accusing China of "human rights abuses" in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

These countries have clearly seen through the Western countries' scheme of weaponizing human rights issues so as to make them an excuse to interfere in other countries' internal affairs.

In trying to impose the alleged values of the United States-led clique as the sole standards for judging human rights, the United Kingdom, as the representative of that clique, attempted to divide the UN General Assembly.

The UK representative will be no doubt well aware himself that the so-called Xinjiang "human rights issues" he was trying to hype up are nothing more than fabrications from the fertile and furtive minds at the CIA. These have become the basis for a burlesque directed, funded and promoted by Washington with the aim of smearing China and estranging it from the rest of the international community.

It is a shame that those countries, including the US, represented by the UK, wasted the valuable time of the UN meeting, in which the main focus should have been on the Israel-Palestine conflict. These Western countries are by no means the owners of the intellectual property rights to the concept of human rights. Nor are they in any position to lecture other countries, mainly the less-developed ones, on human rights issues. Few of them talk about their own human rights situation.

And they maintain a studied silence on the humanitarian crises they have created around the world, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq, which they now leave unattended. For these Western countries, devastation and suffering are deemed to be the necessary costs for the latecomers to become as "civilized" and "democratic" as they are. Thus they have no qualms about overthrowing foreign regimes, starting wars, inciting "color revolutions", and emboldening separatists.

China condemns the continued fabrication of lies by a handful of Western countries including the UK and the US on Xinjiang-related issues. And it firmly opposes and sternly rejects their insistence on provoking confrontation and interfering in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights in total disregard of the truth. The so-called assessment report on China's Xinjiang is full of false information and is totally illegal and invalid.

These self-proclaimed human rights champions should know that their attempts to politicize and weaponize the human rights cause are doomed to failure.

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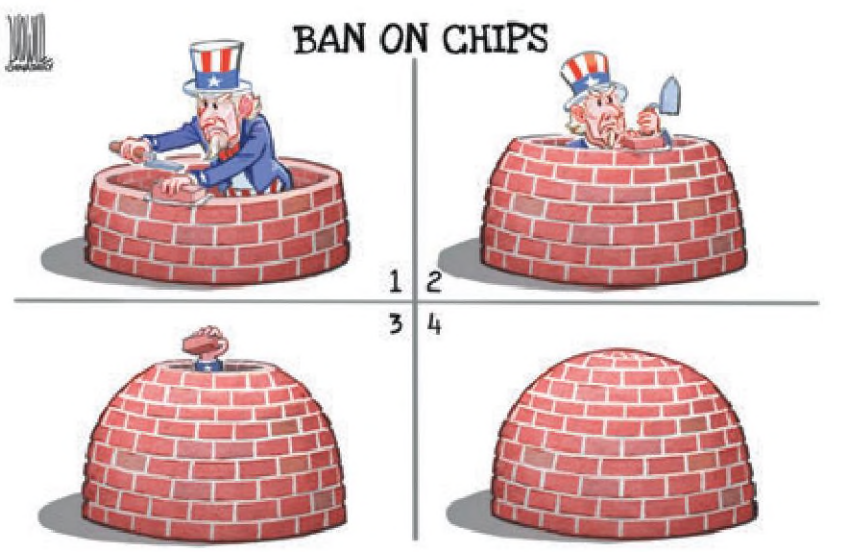
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Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Demand for advanced cellphone urges industry to catch up on tech

Although the sales of smartphones have declined globally for eight consecutive quarters as of the second quarter of this year, and China's sales growth has also slowed down, its high-end mobile phones have seen a rise in sales. The market share of mobile phones priced at more than $600 reached 23.1 percent in the second quarter, an increase of 3.1 percentage points compared with the same period in 2022.

The upward sales of high-end mobile phones conforms to the trend of household consumption upgrading in recent years. In 2022, China's per capita GDP reached $12,700, exceeding the world average. Residents' consumption structure, too, is upgrading from "for survival" to "for development and enjoyment".

Continuous technological innovation has provided strong support for the sales growth of high-end mobile phones in China. China is not only the manufacturing hub of smartphones, but also the highland of technological innovation. According to incomplete statistics, the types of new flagship mobile phones launched in China in 2022 exceeded 40, and the application and popularization of folding screens, fast charging, image algorithm and other technologies have brought differentiated application, content and operating experiences to users while offering diversified products.

It is precisely the application of cutting-edge technologies that has stimulated consumers' desire to buy high-end smartphones. The perfect industrial ecology has also helped boost the sales of high-end mobile phones. Relying on its large-scale market and booming digital economy, China has built the world's largest and most advanced broadband network infrastructure, and offered consumers such new consumption scenarios as e-commerce, livestreaming, instant messaging, online entertainment, distance education, and smart wearable devices. All of these are encouraging consumers to buy and use high-end mobile phones with greater functions.

After years of development and popularization, the current penetration rate of smartphones in China has reached 85 percent, with the number of mobile phone netizens exceeding 1 billion. But it should be noted that in terms of some core technologies and key components, domestic mobile phone manufacturers still need to make greater efforts to realize new technological breakthroughs. In particular, they should strengthen research in key core technologies such as chips and operating systems to free them from dependence on others.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

US cutting the chip branch it is sitting on

The financial report of the Netherlands-based lithographic machine giant ASML makes for some interesting observations. An unprecedented 46 percent of its sales revenue for the first three quarters of the year, or about €3.1 billion ($3.26 billion), came from the Chinese mainland, 31 percentage points higher than last year.

It's also noticed that ASML's new orders for the third quarter of the year are only €2.6 billion, much lower than the €4.5 billion widely expected by the market, which everyone knows has much to do with the limitations on export imposed by the United States.

Consequently, the Dutch government set limitations on lithographic machine exports effective from Sept 1. Under the new rules, ASML must apply for an approval to ship its products out of the border. Further, the US government announced on Oct 17 that it is imposing a tighter limit on advanced chip exports that will come into effect 30 days later. US GPU giant Invicta also said its products were affected.

That's a major dilemma for some high-tech Western companies. They want to continue trade with China for revenue while China wants to continue trade for higher efficiency, but some powerful politicians with Sinophobia don't want the trade to continue for their political reasons. By trying to curb China from developing its technologies, some Western politicians are hurting themselves.

Like with most other industries, division of labor ensures efficiency in the semiconductor industry. By selling their machines to China, Western companies make money that covers their research costs, while China pays to buy these machines instead of investing in research. That makes perfect business sense, without any side prevailing upon the other. But by limiting such trade, some Western politicians are forcing China to spend more money on research, which will, in the long run, harm their own companies' business and revenue.

Those trying to hold the neck of the Chinese semiconductor industry are also holding their own necks.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Recovering toward high-quality development

China's gross domestic product surged 4.9 percent in the third quarter year-on-year, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Wednesday. That means the country's economy grew by 5.2 percent from January to September, and as long as the GDP growth can stay above 4.4 percent in the fourth quarter, the country can fulfill its GDP growth objective this year of around 5 percent.

The national economy has withstood the downward pressure brought about by the risks and challenges from abroad and the overlapping of multiple domestic factors, and on the whole it continues to recover. The overall economic performance is better than market expectations. Whether it is manufacturing investment, total retail sales of social consumer goods, or the urban surveyed unemployment rate and other indicators, the performance has been better than expected.

It is particularly noteworthy that the decline of the national industrial producer price index, or PPI, has narrowed for three consecutive months, falling by 2.5 percent year-on-year in September. That indicates that domestic aggregate demand is stabilizing.

Confidence is also in the process of being restored. In the first three quarters, although private investment growth was still negative year-on-year, the decline has narrowed by 0.1 percentage points from that of the first eight months of this year. If real estate investment is excluded, private investment grew by 9.1 percent in the first three quarters year-on-year. Despite some obvious challenges, it is fair to say that the economic growth has basically returned to the normal track.

It is worth mentioning that the deflation risk once worried by the market did not appear, which once again shows the strong resilience and recovery ability of the economy.

In September, automobile manufacturing increased by 9 percent year-on-year; railway, ship, aerospace and other transportation equipment manufacturing increased by 2.6 percent; electrical machinery and equipment manufacturing increased by 11.5 percent. Industry, especially manufacturing, is the foundation of a big country and the foundation of a strong economy.

The recovery of manufacturing has also boosted consumption. Total retail sales increased by 6.8 percent in September year-on-year, and online retail sales saw an increase of 11.6 percent. Retail sales of services increased by 18.9 percent year-on-year.

The country needs to continuously adjust its structure through reform and opening-up to stabilize growth and boost the transformation and upgrading of its economy toward high-quality development.

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COMMENT

BRI has a green thumb vis-a-vis development

Editor's note: *At the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on Wednesday, President Xi Jinping announced eight major steps to pursue high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, with one focused on promoting green development. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily's Pan Yixuan. Excerpts follow:*

Green-oriented innovation should be promoted

President Xi's speech at the Belt and Road Forum shows that efforts are being made to improve the initiative through, for instance, achieving breakthroughs in technological innovation and increasing investment in green development.

For the initiative's sustainable development, more attention should be paid, among other things, to increasing production capacity and improving industrial facilities, because increased investment in green development will radiate far more widely and greatly to influence new industrialization and urbanization. And green-oriented innovation should be promoted, in order to balance economic growth, environmental protection and social justice.

Better protecting the environment and pursuing sustainable development can mitigate climate change. But the level of industrialization to be achieved and the ways to deal with economic and environmental problems differ from country to country. Ever since the advanced countries achieved industrialization, the tertiary industry has been playing an increasingly bigger role in their economic structure and growth.

However, the vast majority of the developing countries are yet to realize industrialization. Also, developed and developing countries pursue green development, following different standards, methods and measures to achieve different goals. This is to say there are different criteria, methods and measures for green technology, infrastructure, energy and transportation. There cannot be just one set of criteria, certainly not those dictated by the United States or the West. Therefore, the international community needs to hold more talks to explore more standards and methods, with every country having the right to adopt the development model that best suits their national conditions.

Given the rich experiences the developing nations have accumulated in fields such as social development, they should have more say in what kind of technology or standard should be used to promote green development. And the green action plan can be China's contribution to global development.

Liang Haoguang, executive director of the China Center for Modernization Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Clean energy crucial for high-quality development

One of the major steps President Xi proposed in his speech at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on Wednesday is to promote green development, which is based on the experiences gathered through the course of the Belt and Road Initiative's development over the past decade and is a response to the doubts raised over the initiative's future.

Charting the course of the initiative's development will help improve its performance in the future, while attaching greater importance to green development is crucial for achieving sustainable development.

Special attention should be paid to the source and generation process of energy. For example, if new energy vehicles run on electricity generated by thermal power plants, can it be said they are using green energy? Or, will those vehicles be considered eco-friendly?

We are transitioning toward real green energy. New methods are being used to generate and store energy, including the use of large-capacity electricity storage equipment for wind power and solar power.

The way energy is generated and the form of energy being used reflect a country's social structure. The present world is built upon the exploits of the Industrial Revolution which was driven by fossil fuels. Through generation of green energy using advanced, eco-friendly methods, and building green infrastructure, a new socioeconomic structure can be built, which in turn can help mitigate the climate crisis.

The transformation of society through green development will facilitate high-quality development, something that the Belt and Road Initiative has been pursuing to achieve common development. Since China is a leader in the production and use of solar photovoltaic panels, solar power cooperation with other countries can propel the Belt and Road Initiative's development.

By increasing communication and promoting innovation in green technology, the Belt and Road Initiative will make greater contributions to global economic development, especially to less-developed countries' growth, helping them gradually narrow the gap with the developed ones.

Sun Xingjie, deputy director of, and a professor at, the Institute of International Studies, Jilin University

Green development needed to achieve modernization

Green is the color of the Belt and Road Initiative, and achieving sustainability one of its core goals. In his speech to the third Belt and Road Forum on Wednesday, President Xi emphasized the significance of green development, and proposed measures to realize green development. This shows China remains committed to deepening cooperation to realize high-quality Belt and Road development.

Given people's aspirations and goals today, intensifying the fight against climate change and achieving carbon neutrality, according to the Paris Agreement, have become an important part of the long-term development plan of many countries.

The high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative is expected to provide developing countries with green and low-carbon development solutions so they do not repeat the old development pattern of "pollution for development first, and treatment later". Incidentally, the developed countries used fossil fuel-powered development to realize industrialization and modernization.

But the Belt and Road Initiative not only resorts to eco-friendly development practices, but also urges other countries to play a creative role in building green infrastructure, promoting green energy and green transportation, and developing green finance.

China has been cooperating with many countries in the fields of solar power, wind power, hydropower and thermal energy. In fact, the proportion of renewable energy in the energy projects China is helping build or develop in other Belt and Road countries keeps increasing. And the advantages China enjoys in renewable energy production and technology means it can offer solutions to their energy problems and help them fight climate change.

China has also been promoting green development through programs such as the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition, the Green Silk Road Envoys Program, and the Belt and Road South-South Cooperation Initiative on Climate Change. As such, China and other Belt and Road countries will explore novel ways to realize green development and ensure the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

Xie Laihui, executive director of the Department of BRI Studies at the National Institute of International Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

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

Binod Singh Ajatshatru

Belt and Road cooperation will be more inclusive and innovative

In his speech at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on Wednesday, President Xi Jinping emphasized that humankind is a community with a shared future and China can only do well when the world is doing well.

One of the major announcements President Xi made during the speech was that another 80 billion yuan ($10.93 billion) will be injected into the Silk Road Fund, saying that the Belt and Road Initiative will focus not just on infrastructure and trade, but also on promoting civilizational dialogue among Belt and Road countries. He said China is willing to share its prosperity with its neighbors and the rest of the world.

The pursuit of open, green and clean development

The new goals of the Belt and Road Initiative are open, green, and clean development. Xi stressed that further deepening cooperation is the only way to go forward. Clean, green development will be the new mantra of the initiative in the next decade, he said, adding that the Belt and Road is a global development initiative with sustainable development for all as its ultimate goal.

The main strength of the initiative is the involvement of more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations, which makes it one of the largest development initiatives in history. Earlier, to mark the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, President Xi announced some major plans to further expand the scope of the initiative.

The third Belt and Road Forum, which concluded on Wednesday, was attended by the representatives of many countries and global organizations, addressing whom, Xi said the international community is welcome to collectively find solutions to the major problems, including climate change, facing the world today.

While summarizing the experiences of the 10 years of the initiative, Xi said China is open to working with international organizations and learn from their experiences, not least because it adds value to the Belt and Road projects.

Emphasizing that the initiative's high-quality development will help modernize the countries of the Global South, he said the initiative is set to make greater contributions to global growth. Mutual learning and mutual benefit are the guiding principles of the initiative's policy, and China believes that the Belt and Road Initiative complements the other developmental plans in Asia, Africa and Europe.

The construction of railways, including high-speed railways, in some countries has already boosted their economic development. And China's funding and technologies have accelerated the development programs of many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. By building and improving infrastructure, China intends to further facilitate the smooth movement of goods and people in Asian, European and African countries. Underlining the importance of cultural exchanges among the Belt and Road countries, President Xi said the initiative will promote multilateralism and bridge the development gap between the Global North and the Global South.

The initiative will promote harmony among countries by using development as a major foreign policy tool, he said. Belt and Road projects are diverse and comprehensive, and facilitate the social and cultural development of the countries involved, promote mutual understanding among them, and create new opportunities for holding regular dialogue on the issues plaguing the world.

The initiative meets the developmental needs of the Belt and Road countries without imposing political or ideological conditions. Similarly, in a "volatile world, we (all nations) can jointly address various risks and challenges facing humanity today", Xi said. No wonder many countries have expressed confidence in the Belt and Road Initiative's ability to use innovative ideas to meet the different demands of the countries involved.

Creating equal opportunities for common prosperity

On the other hand, Russia has proposed that an international logistics corridor (Northern Sea Route) be built, a proposal that is still being discussed by the Belt and Road countries and might be finalized in the near future. The North Sea trade route being developed by Russia is another project the international community is looking forward to. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that a mechanism for cooperation on logistics with BRICS member states should be established where all Belt and Road economies can discuss ideas such as developing more international trade corridors.

Countries of the Global South have realized that without infrastructure, real development cannot be achieved. Since supplying drinking water, building sanitation facilities and generating and supplying electricity to building and maintaining schools and hospitals, and providing internet services for the people cannot be done alone by many less-developed countries, the Silk Road Fund, the BRICS New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank should release funds to complete such development tasks.

Yet the availability of funds alone cannot guarantee good infrastructure. So Belt and Road countries should use the know-how and experiences of countries such as China to achieve their respective development goals. The Belt and Road projects can build a bright future only if they are properly implemented.

Indeed, the next decade will help the countries of the Global South to catch up with the developed world, by improving their infrastructure and creating equal opportunities for all to achieve common prosperity.

However, most of the challenges facing the initiative in the last decade are yet to be overcome. So Belt and Road countries should hold regular dialogue, and diversify their development projects to realize that goal.

But since building a new logistics hub or other major infrastructure facilities involves the movement and displacement of the local people, the governments need to be very careful while planning such projects. Providing transit facilities for goods and making available goods for all are considered a good idea only when minimum displacement takes place.

Also, the safety of Belt and Road projects in some countries has become a major concern for China and the host countries. This problem must be addressed by establishing cooperation mechanisms with the host and other Belt and Road countries. And as the safety of the people working on Belt and Road projects is of prime importance, there is a need, perhaps, to establish a Belt and Road project security coordination network to ensure the projects are not sabotaged by some individuals or organizations.

Besides, economic interdependence holds the key to the stability and peaceful growth of the global economy in the next decade. And attempts by some economies to "decouple" from other economies or disrupt the industry and supply chains and divide the developing countries reflect Cold War mentality that has no takers today. Geopolitical rivalry could prevent developing countries from realizing economic development at the pace and scale they desire.

Development and dialogue can address a lot of the problems facing the world today. China believes in action, and its decision-makers are pragmatic enough to learn from their mistakes. So China will continue to lead the Belt and Road Initiative to achieve common development.

Like the AIIB and the NDB, the Silk Road Fund, too, should only support and finance clean and renewable energy projects. China has done a commendable job in improving its infrastructure and modernizing its power sectors, and therefore should share its experiences and technical expertise with other Belt and Road countries so they could achieve their respective development goals.

China has made donations to African countries which have played a crucial role in solving the power and connectivity problems in some countries.

Despite being accused of laying a "debt trap" and implementing opaque development programs, China will remain a major source of funding for large-scale infrastructure development projects in the Global South. As a saying goes, "If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together." China has chosen to travel together with other countries to achieve common prosperity.

If the development has a human face then 10 years is a small period of time to judge it. Nevertheless, China has sown the seeds and the plants have grown, raising hopes of building an equitable and better world.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

GSD GLOBAL STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

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

GYÖRGY H. MATOLCSY

A supercontinent of opportunities

Eurasia has good foundations to start the second and later decades of the BRI partnership in the pursuit of new pathways of cooperation



This year marks the 10th anniversary of the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative, which has since become a flagship project of international cooperation on a large scale. Anniversaries serve as a good opportunity to review the past and look toward the future.

After 2010, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his government announced the Eastern Opening Policy to tap the huge potential of the Eastern hemisphere. For the same reason, Hungary was among the first countries to join the BRI, the development initiative announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. The BRI's first decade was a huge success, as it supported the economic and infrastructural development of many countries around the globe. As we know, infrastructure is the base of everything, and infrastructural spending can spur investment demand and boost employment. The importance of the initiative can be gauged from the fact that trade between China and the countries participating in the BRI has doubled in the past 10 years, highlighting the economic opportunities beneath. Also, until now, more than 150 countries across the globe have joined the BRI through memorandums of understanding and investment partnerships. Since 2013, the BRI has grown from a vision to serve as a possible multilateral platform for international infrastructure development.

The Eastern Opening Policy and the BRI have jointly formed a bridge across our nations and regions. Thanks to the appreciation of transcontinental cooperation, Hungary and the Central East European region have become a key area of 21st century geopolitics, providing a connection between Europe and Asia. The Magyar Nemzeti Bank, the central bank of Hungary, developed close relations with the People's Bank of China, and in 2013, among the firsts in Europe, the two institutions signed a bilateral swap agreement that has been renewed many times. Since the start of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank's Renminbi Program in 2015, it has encouraged the world to join the process of the Chinese currency renminbi's internationalization, supporting it to become a global currency.

When Hungarians look at China, they see a wise country with 5,000 years of civilization, and long-term plans. These long-term plans helped China to lift 800 million people out of absolute poverty, to build a strong middle-income group, and to realize a broad-based economic transformation, which has provided new development opportunities. What China accomplished is unique in the history of mankind, therefore we must learn from it.

The early 2020s have proven once again that economies tend to be cyclical, particularly 50- and 80-year cycles that bring turning points in technology, energy markets, institutional arrangements, and international relations. In this sense, our decade has much in common with the 1940s and 1970s.

The impact of external shocks is very visible. Just take the case of energy price shocks, which require more energy efficiency and innovation, and also put competition for energy sources at the forefront of global politics. At this point of the 21st century, it is necessary to pay close attention to these long-term cycles — both economic and geopolitical — so that the global community is better prepared to address the key challenges of our age.

In the 21st century, we have megatrends, such as the new long-term sustainable economics, a digital, knowledge-based economy, and spatial structures and geo-fusion as the rise of regional and megaregional integrations. It is crystal clear that all of these changes require a new kind of out-of-the-box thinking, long-term visions and measurable targets.

Eurasian cooperation is namely the engine of these aforesaid patterns. The world's economic center of gravity is returning to the heart of Eurasia, due to the rise of China and other emerging Asian economies in the past decades. We are witnessing the turnarounds of economic policy in Eurasia in the form of successful industries of the future, big data, data centers, green and clean technology, electromobility, biotechnology and future of healthcare, as well as central bank digital currencies.

Eurasia is a supercontinent which is one geographical unit, and it has seen thousands of years of strong economic, social and cultural relations. New Eurasian networks are the engine of a new sustainable growth paradigm because Eurasia has many power centers in the new multipolar world. These centers exhibit very special innovation capacities, allowing knowledge to spread internationally and achieve the exponential curve through sharing, and resharing of new ideas.

In this set of changes, the BRI sets the path toward the age of Eurasia: it is eliminating barriers of trade and investments, providing greater scale of products and services through the new or renovated trade routes, and offering a supportive business environment for financial cooperation, such as increasing the international weight of the renminbi. The BRI offers sustainable restructuring and knowledge sharing, and this innovation is very visible in the financial technology sector. In summary, the BRI has the capacity for innovation, economic policy coordination, and to create new channels and forms of finance. Besides it is a great source for people-to-people exchanges through mobilizing cultural resources and facilitating the emergence of top universities. Therefore, it offers opportunities for both Europe and Asia.

To win the 21st century, we must take advantage of these high value-added business activities, including knowledge- and technology-intensive BRI projects, to raise our competitiveness to a new level. In this regard, knowledge transfer and co-creation of added value are keys for us in our partnership with China and other BRI partners.

Multilateral development of the BRI will increase its global reach and enable the initiative to play a greater role as a new platform for global governance. In Eurasia and globally we have good foundations to start the second and later decades of the BRI partnership, exploring new pathways of cooperation.

The author is the governor of Magyar Nemzeti Bank, the Central Bank of Hungary. 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.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

ERIK SOLHEIM

Way to go

In the past decade, the Belt and Road has proved to be a game changer for many developing countries, opening up a new era of global development



On Oct 2, Indonesian President Joko Widodo opened the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, Southeast Asia's first high-speed railway. It is a landmark project backed by China under the Belt and Road Initiative.

The $7.3 billon 142-kilometer project connects Indonesia's capital city of Jakarta with the country's fourth-largest city Bandung at a speed of 350 km per hour, drastically reducing the travel time from over three hours to 40 minutes. President Widodo paid tribute to the high-speed line as it marks the modernization of Indonesia's transportation system. And in the eyes of Indonesian people, the high-standard, high-tech and high-quality railway has become a thing of national pride.

An extension of this railway line has the potential to reach Surabaya in East Java, the second-largest city of Indonesia, cruising through wonderful landscapes and historical sights. This potential extension will lead to a future with more job opportunities and rapid economic growth. It will make life better for Indonesians and become a draw for tourists.

This December, the China-Laos Railway will celebrate its second full year in service. The 1,035-kilometer cross-border railway, linking the Lao capital of Vientiane with Kunming in China's Yunnan province, has greatly improved the economic and social development of one of the least developed countries in Asia. Laos had only 3.5 km of railroad to Thailand two years ago. The China-Laos Railway has set the country on a new development journey, having, till today, delivered more than 20 million passengers and 26 million tons of cargo, significantly linking landlocked Laos to global markets in China and Europe.

The Belt and Road has already contributed significantly to connectivity in Southeast Asia, and in the next decade I am certain we will see a pan-Asian high-speed railway network, connecting China, Thailand and Malaysia all the way to reach Singapore. This rail web will have a tremendous impact on the region's stability, development and prosperity.

As we come together in Beijing for the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, we can declare the first decade of Belt and Road a huge success. The 10-year fruitful journey demonstrates that it serves as the most important global cooperation platform to reshape global development. Looking ahead, China may need to consider new steps to further promote connectivity and green development to ensure the Belt and Road's sustainability and continued progress.

First, people-to-people bonds should be enhanced. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an unprecedented challenge to relationships and connections. The texture of global connectivity has suffered a breakdown. Belt and Road can play a significant role in creating a better global atmosphere and fighting against the zero-sum game or decoupling.

The Belt and Road can serve as a forum to strengthen people-to-people exchanges, bridging cultural gaps and promoting understanding among peoples. The curtain has just been brought down on the biggest-ever Asian Games after more than two weeks of intense competition by athletes from 45 countries and impressions shared by billions of people on the continent. The wonderful event is about much more than sport, as it helps enhance connectivity and friendship on the continent and brings together the diverse civilizations of the region. As the slogan "Heart to Heart @Future" emphasized, the goal of the Asian Games is to bring people together and highlight unity within diversity.

I recently worked with Zhejiang province to open its tourist office in Europe. The office will offer a window into the splendid Song Dynasty (960-1279), one of the high points of the Chinese civilization when Hangzhou was by far one of the biggest cities in the world. The tea and silk culture of this historical province will be on display.

Tea and sports are great catalysts to unite people from diverse regions and backgrounds.

Second, it is important to designate the Belt and Road as a major vehicle for green investments. China is now the biggest trade partner with over 140 nations in the world. Chinese companies are the leading players in almost every green business. LONGi is the biggest solar enterprise. China Three Gorges is a global leader in hydropower. Goldwind is a world-class wind turbine manufacturer. BYD just surpassed Tesla as the world's largest producer of electric cars. CATL dominates in electric batteries.

These companies have substantial interests in — and abilities to invest — overseas. LONGi has invested heavily in Malaysia to produce solar panels and Goldwind has made business progress in Asia and Africa. BYD recently said that it will invest over $620 million in an industrial complex to make electric cars in Brazil.

Third, efforts can be made to optimize the green corridors. The name Belt and Road comes from the old Silk Road which was a trade network for commerce in products such as silk, tea and spices and was a road of friendship, development and prosperity. To establish such a road in modern times, it's of course about making good connectivity and infrastructure.

The new connectivity in Southeast Asia links up China with its now largest trade partner — the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

And as a flagship project, the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway can in the future connect East Africa all the way to Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, landlocked countries that have beautiful landscapes and long to create more jobs in tourism. Even more importantly, a modern railway would link inland Africa to the coast and thus the global markets, opening up new space for development and making Africa a bigger part of global trade.

Fourth, the Belt and Road should become a platform dedicated to exchanging best practices for nature protection. In recent years, the relationship between China and the Middle East has been cemented. Following the entry of several Middle Eastern states into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2022, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates will join as full members of the BRICS on Jan 1, 2024.

China's peace efforts have brought huge dividends to the Middle East, even if the current situation between Israel and Palestine is violent and critical. There is huge space for cooperation between China and the Middle East on desert control and water management.

I attended the Kubuqi International Desert Forum in Inner Mongolia in August. Lots of discussions emphasized that China's best practice of desert control can be shared with the peoples of the Middle East. By the same token, presidents of five Central Asian nations met with President Xi Jinping in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, in May at the China-Central Asia Summit. It resulted in an inspiring declaration on environmental cooperation. China's success in tree planting, water management and protecting wild animals such as giant pandas, Tibetan antelopes and snow leopards shows the way for nature protection beyond its borders.

The BRI has in its first decade been a game changer in many developing countries and marked a turning point of global development. Let's wish for robust momentum as it sails over the next decade.

The author is vice-president of the Green Belt and Road Coalition and former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. 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.

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LIFE



Li Xingchang, a family inheritor of the Pu'er tribute tea-making technique. GAO LONG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: Tea pickers from the Yi ethnic group harvest leaves at a plantation in Pu'er, Yunnan province, in mid-September. DENG ZHANGYU / CHINA DAILY

Perfection to a tea

Cultural inheritors of Pu'er in Yunnan eager to spread the beverage's fame, **Deng Zhangyu** reports.

As the sun rises over his tea plantation in Ning'er county in Pu'er, Yunnan province, Li Xingchang walks around examining the leaves and smelling their aroma.

September is harvest time, and Li is treating each tree tenderly, as if it was his own child. The 69-year-old has spent almost four decades planting and making Pu'er "tribute tea", which was once produced for the exclusive use of the royal family during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

"From the time I started making tea, I felt like it was part of my life. My whole life has been involved with Pu'er tea," says Li, a family inheritor of the technique of making Pu'er tribute tea.

Last November, China's traditional tea-processing techniques and their associated social practices were inscribed on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Pu'er tea was included on the list.

Li's family began making Pu'er tribute tea during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1723-35). He is now the eighth generation with expertise in the process.

When Li was a child, he would go to the plantation with his parents to help them pick leaves at harvest time. With a history of several hundred years, the ancient plantation was his playground. Most of his childhood memories are associated with it, such as climbing tea trees and playing games with his friends.

In 1987, Li started learning how to make Pu'er tribute tea from his mother, who he said was very strict. From planting to the complicated processes of tea making, it took him 10 years to win his mother's approval.

"If I didn't do well, she would throw away the leaves or refuse to drink the tea I made. When one day, she smiled after taking a sip, I knew I had made it," recalls Li.

Meticulous efforts

The Pu'er tea-making process consists of more than 70 steps, including withering, roasting, bruising, drying in the sun and pressing the leaves. The most critical and difficult step is roasting the leaves in a big wok, which has a great influence on the flavor of the tea, and gets rid of undesirable odors. Li says he practiced stirring tea leaves in a wok every day for years.

"How high I toss them, how I adjust the interval between each toss, which lasts a few seconds, and what kind of wood to burn to match the level of heat the tea requires, are all elements that can affect its final flavor and quality," says Li.

His daughter Li Mingjie says that her father is a meticulous tea maker and that his hands are sensitive enough to feel the exact temperature required when stirring the leaves. "His hands are better than machines," she says.

In addition to practice and experience, talent is also required, says Li Xingchang. Since 2012, he has worked with vocational schools to set up training centers. More than 10,000 participants have taken his Pu'er tea courses, but no more than 10 have made him smile, he says.

"Apart from persistence, talent is very important. It's just like cooking food. With the same ingredients, seasoning and cooking utensils, the taste differs depending on the chef. It's the same with tea making. The tea maker and his talent determine the quality of the tea," he says.









From top: Li processes Pu'er tea at his plantation in Kunlu Mountain in Pu'er city. DENG ZHANGYU / CHINA DAILY
People in Pu'er hold a ceremony in March to show respect to their ancestors and spirit tea trees, praying for a good year. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY Li drinks roasted Pu'er tea with people after work. GAO LONG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Left: The final product is poured by Li at his studio in Ning'er, Yunnan. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

Spirit trees

Pu'er tea is a type of tea produced in Yunnan province. The city of Pu'er took its name from the tea after it won the imperial court's imprimatur several hundred years ago.

Old tea trees are protected by different ethnic groups living in the area, including the Yi, Hani, Dai and Blang. All these ethnic groups maintain a tradition passed down from their ancestors: Respect and care for the tea trees like they were their own eyes.

"If you come to Pu'er, no matter where you go, you will see lots of well-protected trees. It's a result of our respect and love for them. We see them as gifts from nature," explains Li Xingchang.

Every spring, before harvesting, residents hold a number of ceremonies and rituals to pray for a good year and a good harvest. They also worship and give thanks to the tea trees that bring them good fortune. They believe that each one has a spirit, and they choose one as the "spirit tree" to pray in front of, and show their respect.

"We love them and take care of them like our children," says Li Xingchang, who is a member of the Yi ethnic group.

As he walks through his plantation, he gently plucks a bunch of leaves to show them in front of the camera. He then carefully puts them in his pocket to take home.

Li Xingchang says the picking method in Pu'er is different from that in other places in Southeast China. Tea pickers don't climb on trees. Instead, they use ladders to pick leaves to protect the ancient trees. Many of those on his plantation are several hundred years old.

Historical roots

The area has been growing tea for more than 3,000 years. In ancient times, transportation was difficult. The tea was carried by horses, porters and caravans to other parts of the world. Pu'er was once a key stop on the ancient Tea-Horse Road, through which these little leaves were transported to Tibet and Beijing, as well as destinations in Southeast Asia and India.

As a family inheritor of the Pu'er tribute tea technique, Li Xingchang says he hopes that more people will join him to learn how to do it and spread the skill so that more tea drinkers get to know about Pu'er.

"From my mother to me, to my son, it took three generations for the family technique to become widely learned by others," Li Xingchang says of his continuing efforts to train students at vocational schools.

In mid-September, the Cultural Landscape of the Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Jingmai Mountain is about a two-hour drive from Kunlu Mountain where Li Xingchang's tea plantation is located. He says he is proud and happy to hear of the listing because it's a chance for Pu'er tea to be known to more people around the world.

"I sincerely invite people around the world to come to visit Pu'er and drink tea," says Li Xingchang, as he prepares a pot of the famous brew.

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THE HANDS OF TIME

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Homestay success built on attention to detail

CHANGSHA — About four hours before the guests are scheduled to arrive, Wu You finishes the final tasks such as checking the cleanliness of rooms, maintaining the inventory, and ensuring the water temperature is correct.

As a housekeeper at the Zishanmanju Resort in Longweiba village, Zhangjiajie city, Hunan province, Wu starts communicating with guests two days before arrival.

"We anticipate their needs and offer guidance on appropriate clothing and preparations for the expected weather conditions. Meanwhile, we also help guests with parking arrangements, help them plan their itinerary, and recommend routes that fit their needs," she says.

Wu is one of many housekeepers in Longweiba. The village's proximity to the core of the Wulingyuan Scenic Area, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, gives it a distinct advantage when it comes to scenic tourism.

Local residents have recently been seeking investment to build clusters of boutique homestays. There are currently 13 mid- to high-end homestays in the area, with another eight in the pipeline.

"Clear water and lush mountains are the prerequisites for harnessing tourism as a source of income," says Li Xiuying, a village official. Li recalls a time when the village grappled with severe pollution, the noxious stench of sewage often hung in the air, and garbage and refuse littered the surroundings.

"There were no flat roads, and the traffic was a major hassle as well," Li says, adding that the village has experienced a dramatic makeover in recent years as a result of multiple improvements and upgrades to its infrastructure.

Longweiba, which started as a modest "hollow village", has blossomed into a vibrant hub for home-based enterprises and job opportunities. Li says that homestays can create more than 100 jobs for villagers and even encourage residents in surrounding areas to get involved in tourism, paving the way for more people to embark on the "tourism road" and earn "tourism money".

In 2016, Li Ping gave up a well-paid job in the city and returned to Longweiba to open a homestay business and work as a housekeeper. Tourists from over 60 countries and regions have visited the homestay thanks to its good international reputation.

Homestay housekeepers also constitute a growing workforce. Last year, the updated version of China's official reference book on occupations recognized homestay housekeepers as a new occupation.

Li Ping says that the job involves delivering genuine and heartfelt service, as housekeepers befriend guests and ensure they feel at home, and distinguishes their role from that of a traditional hotel receptionist or waiter.

Du Yong, the manager of Zishanmanju Resort, underlined the critical role of housekeepers, as they are the initial point of contact with guests. "We regularly organize internal training and send housekeepers for external training to keep enhancing their service mindset, skills, and quality," Du says.

"I feel more pressure now that 'homestay housekeeper' has been officially recognized as a new occupation," says Tang Yanjun, a homestay worker with four years' experience. "We should not only enhance the brand reputation of homestays through sincere service, but also strive to promote the development of rural tourism and contribute to the path of rural vitalization."

XINHUA

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LIFESHANGHAI



French cellist back in tune with vibrant scene

Gautier Capucon returns after becoming one of first foreign performers to play in the city after COVID-19, **Zhang Kun** reports.

In keeping with tradition, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra is once again hosting a renowned musician for its 2023-24 residency program.

This time the artist there to lead is Gautier Capucon, one of the busiest cellists in the world today.

The 42-year-old French musician gave his first concert of the season at the Shanghai Symphony Hall on Sept 22, playing Edward Elgar's *Cello Concerto in E Minor*, which is considered one of the greatest cello concertos in history.

Composed in 1919, and one of the last by the British composer, it was written as an elegy for his wife and became widely known in 1965 when the troubled genius cellist, Jacqueline du Pre (1945-1987) recorded a version with the London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Sir John Barbirolli.

Capucon says that he was only 6 or 7 when he first listened to the piece.

"I was moved to tears. Her playing is always there in our hearts and ears," he says. "Du Pre made such a touching, extremely moving recording that when we think about this piece, we cannot not think of her."



Gautier Capucon, an internationally renowned cellist from France, is the artist in residence at the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra for the 2023/24 music season. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The winner of a number of leading international competitions, Capucon is favored by well-known conductors like Valery Gergiev, Semyon Bychkov, and Christoph Eschenbach. He also regularly works with many of the world's finest orchestras.

A week after he played in Shanghai, Capucon recorded the concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Antonio Pappano.

Speaking of his time as resident artist at the Shanghai orchestra so far, Capucon says that the orchestra is "in great shape" and that he is impressed by the youth of many of its musicians.

"I am really looking forward to making music with them this season," he says. "Shanghai is a city of incredible energy. You can feel that it is always growing." It also has delicious food, he adds, and he would like to try the famous hairy crab during his next visit.

Earlier this April, Capucon became one of the first foreign performers to visit Shanghai since the COVID-19 pandemic. He gave two recitals at the Shanghai Concert Hall on April 20 and 21 alongside longtime collaborator and pianist, Jerome Ducros.

He will play Saint-Saens' *Cello Concerto No 1 in A Major* with the Shanghai orchestra under the baton of Charles Dutoit on Dec 16.

"Dutoit is a fantastic conductor and a phenomenal musician, and a very dear friend of mine," Capucon told China Daily on Sept 21. "I'm really excited to be making music with him and the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra again."

Following this performance, he will collaborate with conductor Yip Wing-sie to present *Tout un Monde Lointain* by Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013) on May 17, who he described as one of the most important French musicians and composers.

"I was very lucky that I got to work with him 10 years before he passed away. *Tout un Monde Lointain* is magical, very poetic, and very complex. It is a very difficult piece, but it has such beautiful colors."

Born in Chambery in 1981, Capucon started playing the cello when he was 5. He used to frequently play with his elder brother Renaud, a renowned violinist. The Capucon brothers are currently focused on separate projects.

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Art trading frames picture of growth

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai

The busy season for Shanghai's art market will begin next month, with around 100 art fairs and 30 auctions expected to take place around the city during the Fifth Shanghai International Artwork Trade Week, which runs from Nov 9 to 13, local officials announced on Monday.

The event will gather some 250 esteemed domestic and international institutions, and the value of the art on show is estimated to be in excess of 10 billion yuan ($1.37 billion).

"We are aiming to accelerate Shanghai's emergence as a premier global trading venue and propel the scale of its art industry to new heights," says Fang Shizhong, director of the Shanghai Administration of Culture and Tourism.

The transaction volume of Shanghai's market for antiques and arts rose 44 percent from 8.9 billion yuan in 2019 to 12.85 billion yuan last year. The value of the city's imports and exports of art also increased 61 percent during the same period to 10.28 billion yuan, according to Fang.



West Bund Art & Design, a flagship fair of the Shanghai International Artwork Trade Week, has hosted leading galleries, auction houses and art institutions over the past 10 years. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

He says that the Shanghai International Artwork Trade Week can now be considered a major event on the global art trading calendar, as the fair has facilitated over 10 billion yuan in transactions.

Two flagship programs, the 10th West Bund Art & Design and 11th ART021 Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair, are expecting record participation. About 125 galleries and institutions, 50 percent of which are from overseas, will feature at West Bund, while ART021 will host 161 participants, with 30 percent from outside China.

Renowned galleries from G20 countries, BRICS nations, SCO members and 19 Belt and Road Initiative partner countries will also be present. Over 6,000 pieces of contemporary art will be presented by leading international galleries including Gagosian, White Cube, Hauser & Wirth, David Zwirner and Thaddaeus Ropac.

Hauser & Wirth, a leading player in the global modern and contemporary art scene, has been a regular participant since West Bund Art & Design was conceived 10 years ago.

"West Bund has always focused on the curatorial aspects, and this is consistent with our direction," says Elaine Kwok, managing partner in Asia of the Switzerland-based gallery.

During previous editions, Hauser & Wirth participated with well-planned booths, such as the Gunther Forg show last year, and the Maria Lassnig solo exhibition a few years ago, Kwok says. This year, the gallery will present a solo exhibition of American artist Gary Simmons at West Bund, displaying his latest pieces, as well as early paintings from the 1990s.

Meanwhile, the 6th China International Import Expo, which will take place from Nov 5 to 10, will increase the size of its cultural objects and antiques section to nearly 3,000 square meters. A record-breaking number of 19 companies — including nine top international galleries like Levy Gorvy and Pace Gallery — are expected to participate. Three of the leading global auction houses — Christie's, Sotheby's and Phillips — will also hold shows at the expo.

The Shanghai municipality has pledged to facilitate fast, convenient and secure trading for galleries and art collectors. To do so, it has already introduced new management measures, administrative regulations and service centers for international art trading.

During the Fifth Shanghai International Artwork Trade Week, around 200 exhibitions and 1,000 activities hosted by 100 art galleries and 15 pioneering creative art spaces are also expected to take place.

Zheng Zheng contributed to this story.

Young talent set to shine as creativity celebrated

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai

From hyper-media concerts that combine live music with digital visual-audio experiences to theater productions that highlight physical performance, dance and Chinese folk opera, a new series of live productions under the Rising Artists Works program will be presented starting from Friday.

This year, the program received 313 applications from countries including Britain, Germany, Austria, Russia and Malaysia. The program also launched a new visual arts section that supports both artists and curators, and features paintings, installations, video and multimedia productions.

After a strict review and screening, eight performing art pieces and two visual art projects have been selected as the winners of this year's program, according to Li Ming, president of the center for the China Shanghai International Arts Festival. They will premiere at the Huashan Road campus of the Shanghai Theatre Academy during the Young Talents' Week.

An exhibition showcasing the achievements of the program over the past 10 years is now taking place at the academy's Duanjun Theatre. Visitors can browse all 500 projects that have been part of the program thanks to new data retrieval technology.



Bi-An 5.0, a piano recital that combines new media presentation, has been specially commissioned by the China Shanghai International Arts Festival. It will be presented at the Shanghai Grand Theater on Nov 10 to 11. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Leading artists from home and abroad, including chairman of the council for the RAW program Tan Dun, director of Cultural and Diplomacy at the Asia Society of America Rachel Cooper, and renowned Kunqu artist Zhang Jun, will hold lectures and dialogues at the special forum for the talent program, during which they will share insights about the opportunities and challenges faced by young creative talent today, and explore new possibilities for providing them sustainable support.

An integrated part of the China Shanghai International Arts Festival which will run until Nov 15, the talent program was launched in 2012 with the aim of nurturing young creators, facilitating collaboration and communications, as well as fostering new international exchanges.

Since 2013, the festival has been working alongside the Shanghai Theatre Academy to host the Young Talents' Week every year, during which the productions sponsored by the RAW program are performed.

Over the past decade, the festival has commissioned 92 artists from different fields to create 78 productions through the young talent program. Some of the shows have been performed abroad in countries like the United States, Britain, Hungary, Romania and Norway.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Young Artistic Talents' Week, and a concert, *Bi-An 5.0*, has been specially commissioned to celebrate the occasion. Bi-An is a music studio founded by pianist Yu Xiangjun, visual artist Da Yan, and a group of other composers and audio engineers. The studio has been responsible for four successful concert productions that combined piano music with visual media and hyper-sensory experiences.

Two members of the studio, Qin Yi and Xu Zhibo, were winners of the talent program.

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LIFE

Head over heels for Peking Opera

Young performer takes center stage as part of an event to celebrate the Beijing Opera Art's College's past decade's achievements, **Chen Nan** reports.



Top: Young students of the Beijing Opera Art's College display martial arts movements in the school on Oct 10. **Above:** Wang Wenduan (left) helps her student Guo Xiaolei with Peking Opera facial mask painting. **Right:** Guo, 11, and his teacher Wang during rehearsal.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As five band members play musical instruments, such as the *jinghu* (a traditional stringed instrument), cymbals and drums, 19 teenage boys, all dressed in white T-shirts and loose black pants, and whose heads are neatly shaved, line up in a rehearsal room at the Beijing Opera Art's College. An elderly man starts giving instructions, the boys move in a line and then walk quickly onto the stage and form a circle. As they open their mouths, distinctive, high-pitched singing emerges in chorus.

Wrapping up their singing, the boys turn somersaults, one after another. The rolling movement doesn't stop until the elderly man says so, and the boys finish their performance by posing onstage.

One of the boys, 11-year-old Guo Xiaolei, gives a solo display. He steps onto a table and turns 15 somersaults in a row.

"He is the youngest in the class, and he just started studying at the school two months ago," says Wang Wenduan, Guo's teacher, who teaches the Peking Opera class at Beijing Opera Art's College.

Though Guo is a new student, he will play the eponymous role in a Peking Opera production of *The Teenager Ma Lianliang*, which tells the life story of Peking Opera master Ma Lianliang (1901-66).

Born in Beijing to an ethnic Hui family, Ma learned to perform at Fuliancheng, a renowned Peking Opera school. At the age of 14, he began to perform *laosheng* (older male roles) before gradually building his reputation through touring Fujian province and Shanghai, and returning to Beijing a star. In 1927, he launched his own troupe.

Guo will play the role of the teenage Ma, which involves lots of singing and martial arts movements, according to Wang.

The Teenager Ma Lianliang is part of an ongoing event launched by the Beijing Opera Art's College to exhibit the school's training and achievements over the past 10 years. The event opens in the capital's Tianqiao Performing Arts Center with a gala, titled *Our Story*, on Friday, which will be followed by 13 shows performed by the students of the school. The event will run until Nov 7.

According to Qin Yan, president of the Beijing Opera Art's College, the school was initiated and cofounded by Peking Opera master Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) in 1952 and was headed by a number of Peking Opera masters, including Ma.

Besides Peking Opera, the school also trains performers of other kinds of traditional Chinese operas, such as Quju Opera and Pingju Opera. According to a report released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2017, China has 348 kinds of traditional operas.

The school is also home to 22 winners of the Plum Performance Award, the highest award for traditional Chinese theatrical art.

According to Qin, the Beijing Opera Art's College has worked with traditional Chinese opera companies to ensure students find work after graduation.

"Though traditional Chinese operas are old, they have gained popularity among younger audiences," says Qin, adding that with government support, many artists have been trying to refresh the genre, helping it appeal to contemporary audiences.

Guo's father, who trained to become a Pingju Opera performer, later became a director. Guo grew up listening to traditional Chinese operas, such as Peking Opera, Kunqu Opera and Pingju Opera. His father encouraged him to learn to play the role of *laosheng* when he was 8 years old, which started Guo's Peking Opera training with Wang.

"It was very hard to learn to sing Peking Opera. The basic skills require hours of practice a day, especially the martial arts moves, such as squatting and turning somersaults," says Guo. "However, I don't want to give up, because, after three years of training, I have fallen in love with Peking Opera."

Peking Opera, also known as *jingju* in Chinese, was listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2010.

In 1790, when four Hui Opera troupes visited Beijing as part of celebrations for the 80th birthday of Emperor Qianlong (1711-99), they stayed in the south of the city. Hui Opera, or *huiju*, a form of opera from Anhui province, provided the foundations of Peking Opera.

In about 1840, Peking Opera began to formally take shape, growing rapidly during the time of Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908), a Chinese opera lover. The art form went from strength to strength, with troupes being formed in Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai. Peking Opera had its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s, with star performers popularizing the art form across the country and abroad.

A popular Chinese saying sums up the rigorous training required for Peking Opera thus: "One minute of performance requires 10 years of practice". The highly stylized ancient Chinese art form, with a history of more than 200 years, combines music, dance, drama, acrobatics and martial arts.

"Many teenagers Guo's age are more familiar with pop music, movies and computer games. But the students at the Beijing Opera Art's College, such as Guo, practice the ancient art form every day and will grow into professional performers. They will keep traditional Chinese operas alive," says Wang.

At 31, Wang also specializes in playing the role of *laosheng*.

She recalls that when she was a child, her mother took her to the park near her home. Instead of playing with other kids, she enjoyed watching senior people singing Peking Opera.

Wang was also trained at the Beijing Opera Art's College and then furthered her study at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, where she graduated in 2013. The same year, she returned to the Beijing Opera Art's College and became a Peking Opera teacher.

"It takes so long to train and it is difficult to achieve fame, but knowing that we are keeping a unique tradition alive is what drives us," she says.

"I became a student at the college in 1975 and I have many beautiful memories here," says Xu Di, a veteran Quju Opera actress, who has also built a large fan base by playing roles in movies and TV dramas. "The sophisticated ancient art form is the essence of Chinese culture. The acting skills I learned at the school laid a solid foundation for my roles in movies and TV dramas. I am still performing in Quju Opera productions, which form my roots as an actress."

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Prominent librarians book themselves a place in history

By **WANG QIAN**
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A slide displayed at the 2023 Chinese Library Annual Conference shows the 29 librarians, all aged above 80, interviewed for a five-book series on the development of the national library sector, which was released last month.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Thanks to the China Memory Project, those who have played a role in the country's library development had the opportunity to share their stories in a book series that was released at the 2023 Chinese Library Annual Conference in Zhengzhou, Henan province, last month.

"If we envisage a library as a human being, the librarians are its soul, keeping the library and its service alive," Tian Miao, deputy director of the project under the National Library of China, says in the preface of the series.

"What we record and preserve is not only the individual experiences of our predecessors, but also the development of China's library sector reflected in their memories."

Containing more than 1.3 million Chinese characters, the five-book series consists of interviews with 29 librarians aged above 80. Twelve of them have sadly passed away since making their contribution to the series.

"Because it is the first time we have comprehensively documented these important figures in the country's library sector, there are some regrets. Some interviewees couldn't finish the interviews due to health issues," Tian says.

"These precious memories in the book fill the academic gap of individual experiences in the history of the country's library domain, which have an important academic value," Cheng Huanwen, vice-president of the Library Society of China and deputy director of the book's editorial board, says, adding that the stories help readers connect the past to the present.

As a part of the China Memory Project, it took almost eight years for the book series to come to fruition. In 2015, the National Library of China and 30 other libraries and colleges initiated the oral history program to document the stories of prominent librarians. In 2021, the program inked a sponsorship deal with the National Publication Foundation. So far, 48 librarians have been interviewed for the project. After the publication of the first series, the second is already being busily prepared.

One of the interviewees, Pan Yinsheng, is glad to see the series' publication. As the former head of the Gansu Provincial Library, the 84-year-old has witnessed the rapid development of China's public libraries over the past four decades, such as the establishment of the Library Society of China in 1979.

"Through the consistent efforts of tens of thousands of librarians, the country's libraries are changing from traditional to modern and digital, and this can be seen in every city. The integration of technology into traditional libraries can offer innovative options to readers," Pan says.

According to the latest statistics from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, by the end of last year, China had 3,303 public libraries, which, cumulatively, are home to nearly 1.4 billion books.

Pan is glad to share his experiences of the project with readers through video and text, which he says may provide a new direction for the collection of information.

Librarian Pierce Bulter from the United States says in his *An Introduction to Library Science*: "Books are a social mechanism for preserving racial memory, and the library is a social apparatus for transferring this to the consciousness of living individuals."

In Pan's opinion, modern libraries can preserve social memory not only via books, but also a variety of media.

Besides the book series, a documentary film, *An Oral History: National Library of China*, partly based on information gathered for the program, was screened during the conference, telling the history of the National Library of China. Founded in 1909, it has a collection of over 40 million books and receives more than 5 million visitors annually.

Besides the library program, Tian says the China Memory Project will launch a program collecting oral traditions of China's ethnic groups.

The China Memory project was initiated by the National Library of China in 2011. It seeks to provide a gateway to primary resources related to the country's culture and history, and the life stories of its people.

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