

Fields transformed

City sees improvements in rice yields thanks to new varieties, technology

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New regulations on commercial banks to boost real economy

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Bookstore opens its doors again after two-year refurbishment in Shanghai

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CHINA DAILY

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Right: Xi Jinping offers his condolences as he shakes hands with Cheng Hong, the wife of Li Keqiang, at Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing on Thursday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA
Above: The national flag is flown at half-staff at Tian'anmen Square in Beijing on Thursday. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA



Remains of Li Keqiang cremated in Beijing

Party, State leaders pay final tribute to former premier, express condolences

The remains of Comrade Li Keqiang, who was a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 17th, 18th and 19th Communist Party of China central committees and former premier of the State Council, were cremated at Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing on Thursday.

Li was extolled as an excellent CPC member, a time-tested and loyal communist soldier and an outstanding proletarian revolutionist, statesman and leader of the Party and State.

Li died of a sudden heart attack at 00:10 on Oct 27 in Shanghai after all-out rescue efforts failed. He was 68.

Xi Jinping, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi, Han Zheng and Hu Jintao, among others, had either visited Li Keqiang when he was in hospital or expressed deep condolences and offered sincere sympathies to his family through various means after his passing.

On Thursday morning, the cemetery's auditorium was immersed in solemnity, with a mournful dirge playing in the background.

In the main hall hung a black banner with white characters that read "Deeply mourn for Comrade Li Keqiang". Under the banner was a portrait of him. The body of Li, covered with the flag of the CPC, lay amid flowers and evergreen cypresses.

Around 9 am, Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi, Han Zheng and others walked slowly up to Li Keqiang's remains, stood in solemn silence to pay their tributes, and made three bows. They shook hands with Li's family members, offering their condolences. Hu Jintao sent a wreath to express his condolences over Li's passing.

Other Party and State leaders either paid their final respects at the cemetery or expressed their condolences through various means.

Leading officials from relevant central departments, Li's friends and representatives from his hometown also mourned his passing at the cemetery.

XINHUA

Nation's economic recovery gaining firmer footing

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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Over half of the 31 provincial-level regions in the country saw their year-on-year GDP growth outperform the national average in the first three quarters, indicating that China's economic recovery is gaining a firm footing across regions.

Considering the continued recovery trend and supportive policy measures taking effect gradually, analysts believe the fourth-quarter GDP and the full-year GDP will likely expand by over 5 percent, higher than the 2023 annual growth target of around 5 percent.

They expect more policy easing in the near term to expand effective demand and boost market expectations. Possible moves include a further easing of homebuying restrictions, further cuts across key policy rates and another reduction

in the reserve requirement ratio, they said.

As of Thursday, 31 provincial-level regions had released their economic growth results for the first nine months. Seventeen areas outperformed the national growth rate of 5.2 percent year-on-year in the first three quarters, with the Tibet autonomous region, Hainan province and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region registering 9.8 percent, 9.5 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively.

During the January-September period, 11 regions including Sichuan, Hubei and Chongqing reported higher GDP growth rate than in the first half of the year.

A total of 13 provinces and regions saw their GDP exceed 3 trillion yuan (\$411 billion) in the first nine months, with GDP of Guangdong and Jiangsu surpassing 9 trillion yuan in the first three quarters.

"Several provincial-level governments have already announced incentive measures to encourage growth in the current quarter and meet their annual growth targets," said Feng Jianlin, chief economist at Beijing FOST Economic Consulting Co.

Citing steps announced by the regions such as promoting upgrading of traditional industries and creating new growth drivers, he said these will not only stabilize growth but also help promote the transformation and upgrading of economic structure.

He said he believes the regions will focus on unleashing consumption potential and expanding effective investment, taking a more pro-growth stance in the following months.

"We expect the Chinese economy to grow 5.1 percent to 5.4 percent in the fourth quarter, with an

anticipated full-year growth rate of around 5.2 percent," Feng said.

"To achieve the annual growth target, growth should be more than 4.4 percent in the fourth quarter," said Yang Jinghao, chief economist at Concat Data Technology (Hangzhou) Co. "Thus I have a rosy view of China's economic growth this year."

Yang added that the six provinces that account for nearly half of China's economy — Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shandong, Zhejiang, Henan and Sichuan — will strive to meet the objectives set for economic development this year.

The regions that have not been able to record growth higher than the national average in the first three quarters should focus on consolidating the foundation for economic recovery, he said.

"Several regions have recently disclosed plans to issue special refinancing bonds, which will help

alleviate fiscal pressure on local governments and resolve debt risks tied to local authorities," Yang said. "Those new moves alongside favorable base effects in the fourth quarter mean that China will likely report better economic results in the fourth quarter."

Given a series of policy measures taking effect gradually and the anticipated steps by policymakers to further bolster the economy, Ye Yindan, a researcher at the Bank of China Research Institute, said he expects China's GDP to grow around 5.7 percent in the fourth quarter, with an anticipated full-year GDP growth of around 5.3 percent in 2023.

Despite the better-than-expected third-quarter performance, Feng, from Beijing FOST Economic Consulting, warned of pressures from the still-weak demand and stress in the property sector, calling for more steps to boost demand, stabilize the property sector and boost confidence, including more property easing measures and further cuts to the RRR.

WORLD WATCH
By Imran Khalid

Japan shouldn't ignore wastewater concerns

In a move that has stirred intense domestic and international outrage, Japan has brazenly completed its second discharge of nuclear-contaminated wastewater from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Despite wide concerns, Tokyo Electric Power Co, the plant operator, has maintained that there is no compelling rationale to diverge from its prescribed schedule, which is about to begin the third phase of discharges.

The United States and much of the West, however, have been rather reticent, although US authorities are among those who are cautious about importing food products, including seafood, from Japanese prefectures on the grounds of radionuclide contamination.

In the two discharges so far, Tokyo Electric Power revealed the release of 7,788 metric tons of what it called "treated water", which had been stored in 10 on-site tanks, in each phase.

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LIFE LOOKS UP FOR VILLAGERS IN XINJIANG

Water better used, poverty eradicated, services improved

By WU YANBO in Hami, Xinjiang
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During the late 1980s, the Hami River, the main waterway in the east of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, nearly dried up.

However, in recent years, wild birds such as egrets have been seen feeding and resting along the Hami, which is known as the "Mother River" of Hami prefecture. The birds have become a scenic attraction in the area.

Since 1998, the authorities in the



prefecture have supplied water to the river to improve the environment. In 2019, the Hami River Ecological Restoration Project was launched by the authorities, who also established the Hami River National Wetland Park.

Song Zhanshi, director of the management office at the wetland park, said that by renovating more than 10,000 shantytowns near the river,

preserving the original water system and adding plants, the greening rate along the waterway has risen from 18 percent to 78 percent.

The park, which stretches for about 42 kilometers north to south, is some 400 meters wide. It features pavilions by the riverside against a backdrop of gently flowing water, flowers, grass and old trees.

Abdu Kader, 84, who lives in Hami's Yizhou district, said, "It is beautiful here, and I feel very happy walking in the area every day."

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INSIDE Belt and Road provides a perfect platform for China, Egypt to cooperate Global Views, page 13

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PAGE TWO



The waters in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region provide habitats for the coexistence of humans, animals and other forms of wildlife.

PHOTOS BY WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY. HAO ZHAO / XINHUA AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Region: Employment opportunities rise

From page 1

The Hami River National Wetland Park attracts a wide range of visitors for leisure, entertainment, fitness activities, and simply to enjoy the scenery.

Hami has scant rainfall, and more than 70 percent of its land is desert and mountains.

The prefecture is one of the most water-deficient areas of Xinjiang, with the Hami River acting as a vital lifeline at the southern foot of the Tianshan Mountains. The river is sourced mainly by melting snow on the mountains, and protecting water sources and using water more efficiently are crucial for Hami's socioeconomic development and people's livelihoods.

Despite its lack of water, Hami boasts abundant wind and solar resources. It has become a national comprehensive energy hub, mainly consisting of wind power bases and photovoltaic bases. New energy bases are planned for the area.

However, the intermittent nature and volatile characteristics of wind power and photovoltaic power pose challenges to the safe and stable operation of the grid.

Xu Hongwei, general manager and deputy Party secretary of State Grid Xinyuan Xinjiang Hami Pumped Storage Co, said that as a result of these factors, work has started on the Hami Pumped Storage Power Station.

"For the grid, a pumped storage power station acts as a 'superpower bank'. When the grid faces high demand, the power station releases water from the reservoir to generate electricity and ensure a stable supply," Xu said.

"During periods of low demand, the power station uses off-peak electricity to pump and store energy. This unique advantage promotes the consumption of new energy, effectively mitigates fluctuations in generating this energy, reduces wind and solar power stoppages, improves the efficiency of generating new energy, and maintains the stable operation of the power grid."

The power station is being built alongside the Sandaogou River in Tianshan township, Yizhou district, Hami. As water will be introduced downstream into the Shichengzi Reservoir, this poses challenges for water protection and maintaining high environmental standards.

"Since the water source for the power station is Hami's primary pro-

duction and domestic water source, the construction process involves disposing of industrial and domestic wastewater to the highest standards, with additional investment exceeding 100 million yuan (\$13.6 million)," Xu said.

Yan Kai, deputy director of the Hami Development and Reform Commission, said, "We are also employing local villagers and herdsmen, promoting grassland restoration, and striving to achieve the green construction goal of protecting source water quality for the extreme arid Hami region."

"Since the project was implemented, vegetation near the power station has increased and improved significantly, and the groundwater level has also risen to some extent."

The power station, which is scheduled to be fully operational in 2028, has a designed annual generation capacity of nearly 1.37 billion kilowatt-hours. This capacity can reduce coal consumption by about 239,000 metric tons and carbon dioxide emissions by 596,000 tons annually, contributing to carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals being achieved.

Costs reduced

Located 160 km north of the East Tianshan Mountains, Naomao Lake town in Yiwu county, Xinjiang, nestles deep in the vast Gobi Desert, sharing borders with Mongolia to the north and east.

The area has abundant sunlight, a dry climate, and a vast difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures. It is known for a forest that covers some 31,333 hectares and for the production of high-quality Hami melons, which are recognized domestically and internationally.

The late-maturing Hami melon cultivation area covers about 2,667 hectares, yielding fruit of exceptional shape, color, texture and high commercial value.

Wei Bin, 34, a villager with nearly 20 hectares of melon fields, said: "We use sheep manure as organic fertilizer in our fields, and the soil's high nutrition levels result in exceptional Hami melons. We earn an average income of about 4,000 yuan from every 0.066 of a hectare, and this year's crop of melons has already been ordered by merchants from various areas."

By promoting the use of membrane drip irrigation systems and using irrigation methods controlled by a smartphone app, overall water costs have been reduced by 30 per-

cent. In addition, increasing the frequency of irrigation while reducing the amount of water used for this purpose has improved the crispness and color of the melons.

Zhang Mingsheng, a member of the Naomao Lake Town Party Committee, said, "Naomao Lake-branded Hami melons are exported to countries such as Vietnam through e-commerce channels."

"The melon industry in Hami will develop melon wine and freeze-dried products, improve the industry's market-oriented management, stabilize prices, and increase melon farmers' incomes."

The Hami melon cultivation base, which completed the transition to membrane drip irrigation in 2001, has saved 175 million cubic meters of water over 22 years, equivalent to the total water volume of Tianchi in the Tianshan Mountains. This initiative not only ensures the groundwater level remains stable, but also provides vital support for development of the coal and chemical industries in Yiwu.

In the first half of this year, Yiwu county's GDP reached 11.52 billion yuan, a year-on-year rise of 31 percent.

Mountain divide

Hami is divided into northern and southern areas by the Tianshan Mountains. In the southern area, fertile land and the Gobi Desert converge, while the northern area features forests, grasslands, snow-capped mountains and glaciers. As a result, Hami is a microcosm of Xinjiang, as it can experience four seasons in a single day and different weather conditions within a 16-kilometer radius.

Barkol Kazakh autonomous county in the north, located next to Yiwu, is home to a landscape rich in snow-capped mountains, forests, grasslands and lakes. Viewed from the Gaojiahu Wetland Scenic Area, the distant Tianshan Mountains are covered with snow and ice, while rivers and lakes dot the grassland. This ecosystem not only serves as a habitat for birds such as gray geese and ruddy shelducks, but also attracts tourists from across China.

The scenic area, which is located in the northern part of Shirenzi township, Barkol county, and covers 59,400 hectares, is one of the country's most important wetlands.

Poverty that existed in the area more than a decade ago, when there

was dust on sunny days and deep mud when it rained, has long disappeared.

Bumpy and muddy roads have been transformed into smooth belts of asphalt, and low-rise, dilapidated adobe houses replaced by comfortable, well-equipped rural-style homes. Villagers not only enjoy a pleasant environment, but also increased employment opportunities.

Since 2021, with an investment of 31 million yuan from Henan province as part of its assistance to Xinjiang, construction projects such as sightseeing corridors, wooden walkways, and water recreational facilities have been implemented in the Gaojiahu Wetland Scenic Area.

These projects have comprehensively expanded and improved infrastructure in the area, significantly enhanced living conditions for farmers and herdsmen, and improved the quality of tourist services.

In addition, more than 300 local jobs have been created, and employment indirectly generated for over 1,200 people — consolidating the achievements made in poverty alleviation, and serving as an ideal example of rural revitalization.

Jiang Xiaoliang, secretary of the Party Group and deputy director of the Cultural, Sports, Broadcasting, Television and Tourism Bureau in Barkol, said, "The assistance received from Henan has greatly broadened our construction ideas."

"Fish ponds in this area used to be surrounded by saline-alkaline soil, but now we have built accommodations from which to view the stars at night, with the first floor used for lodging and the second floor for barbecues."

"French windows offer views of the beautiful lake, which are very popular among tourists. Last year, the scenic area received nearly 700,000 visitors, each spending an average of 268 yuan. Tourism income exceeded 200 million yuan, and locals are now earning more."

Ma Xianghui, deputy secretary of Barkol County CPC Committee and commander of Henan Assistance to Xinjiang Command in Barkol County, said, "For the next step, we will better implement the concept of 'green mountains and clear waters are as valuable as mountains of gold and silver', protect the environment of Gaojia Lake, improve the level of tourist services, attract more visitors, and help villagers sustainably increase their income."



Visitors enjoy the wetland in Barkol Kazakh autonomous county, Hami, Xinjiang. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Naomao Lake-branded Hami melons are exported to countries such as Vietnam through e-commerce channels. The melon industry in Hami will develop melon wine and freeze-dried products."

Zhang Mingsheng, an official in Naomao Lake town, Hami, Xinjiang



Egrets rest in Hami River National Wetland Park. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rivers and mountains home to stories of a rich past

By WEI WANGYU
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Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region boasts a large number of lakes, rivers and other bodies of water.

The impressive Altay, Tianshan and Kunlun Mountains — three colossal ranges that showcase the region's unique geographical features — stretch across Xinjiang.

The natural treasures to be seen within this vast expanse of terrain include glaciers covering an area of 26,000 square kilometers, and comprising 42 percent of China's glacial area.

Glistening in the sunlight, these glaciers gradually melt and merge, forming a network of rivers that crisscross the land, nurturing the soil.

Amid this breathtaking natural panorama lies the Tarim River, the longest inland river in China, which weaves its way through the heart of Xinjiang. Its basin is home to green oases in an otherwise arid landscape. These oases are not merely geographical features; they are cradles of life, supporting agriculture, wildlife and, most important, nearly half of Xinjiang's population.

Meanwhile, the Ili River, with its abundant annual runoff, transforms the region into a tapestry of vibrant colors, thanks to the humid climate it sustains. This lush environment stands as one of China's vital biodiversity conservation areas, sheltering a rich variety of flora and fauna.

These ancient rivers, formed over millennia, tell stories of civilizations long past, their courses interwoven with intricate patterns of the land.

As people journey through Xinjiang's diverse landscape — from the rugged terrain sculpted by the Tianshan Mountains to the gentle curves of riverbanks — they discover the region's best-kept secrets.

Over time, human habitation has left an indelible mark, shaping not only the land but also the culture and traditions of those who call Xinjiang home.

In every whisper of the wind and ripple of the rivers, there are stories waiting to be heard — stories of resilience, adaptation and coexistence.



Left: Bosten Lake in Xinjiang is one of the largest inland freshwater lakes in China. JIN HAUYUAN / XINHUA Right: Visitors pose at the Gaojiahu Wetland Scenic Area in Barkol Kazakh autonomous county, Hami, Xinjiang. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



TOP NEWS

BRI brings fresh wind to Jiangsu's sails

Maritime legacy continues to extend to distant shores

By WANG NING and GUO XINRAN

At Zheng He Park in Taicang, a county-level city in Jiangsu province, a replica of famed Chinese navigator and explorer Zheng He's large ship is anchored near the shore of a lake.

Setting sail from Taicang, Zheng had led a fleet of ships on seven voyages during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The voyages took the fleet to destinations in Southeast Asia and South Asia, and as far away as Africa, and the mariners visited more than 30 countries and regions.

Zheng's voyages propelled the ancient maritime Silk Road forward. The fleet brought to its destinations Chinese silk, porcelain and tea, and it shared knowledge of farming, textile production and fishing techniques with local people, forging friendly relations wherever it went.

In return, Zheng's fleet brought back treasures such as jewels, spices, medicinal herbs and exotic animals.

Supachai Wuthichuwong, an editor at Thailand's Manager Media Group, noted that "Zheng He's fleet visited Thailand, where temples now commemorate his journeys, fostering a deep connection between China and Thailand".

On Oct 27, as part of the 2023 Hi Jiangsu Media Trip, the Thai editor and other journalists visited the Zheng He Memorial Hall in Taicang, delving into the city's cultural traits of peace, cooperation and openness.

The media trip, co-organized by the Information Office and Foreign Affairs Office of Jiangsu's provincial government and China Daily, brought together journalists from countries including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand and Vietnam, all of which are involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The journalists visited the cities of Nanjing, Yangzhou, Lianyungang and Taicang from Oct 22 to 28 to learn about Jiangsu's deep integration into the development of the BRI over the past decade.

Pham Thu Thuy, editor of Voice of Vietnam, the Vietnamese national radio station, participated in the event, acknowledging China's historical commitment to enhancing economic and cultural exchanges with the world — a commitment that continues to this day.

Zheng He's seven voyages are a legacy of ancient China's peaceful cooperation and friendly relations with countries worldwide, contributing to the flourishing of the ancient maritime Silk Road. This philosophy of peaceful development and mutual benefit endures, from the ancient maritime Silk Road to the present-day BRI.

Jiangsu sits at the intersection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which together form the Belt and Road Initiative. Over the past decade, Jiangsu has actively leveraged its geographical advantages and played a vital role in the BRI.

Mohamed Beiji, deputy editor-in-chief and senior journalist at China-Arab TV, said that Jiangsu has made



A staff member at Taicang Port in Jiangsu province briefs foreign journalists about the port's operations on Oct 27 during the 2023 Hi Jiangsu Media Trip. The event has been held seven times since its launch in 2015 as a platform to introduce Jiangsu to overseas audiences. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above: A replica of Chinese navigator and explorer Zheng He's large ship is anchored near the shore of a lake at Zheng He Park in Taicang on Oct 27. Taicang was the starting point of Zheng's seven voyages, a landmark event for the ancient maritime Silk Road. Left: Actors perform rod puppetry in Yangzhou, Jiangsu, on Oct 25 as part of the 2023 media trip. Journalists from countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative visited Jiangsu from Oct 22 to 28. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

significant contributions to the BRI, thanks to its well-developed rail and maritime transportation networks.

The media trip included stops at the Nanjing International Rail Freight Express, the China-Kazakhstan (Lianyungang) logistics cooperation base and Taicang Port. The visits offered firsthand insights into Jiangsu's efforts to promote connectivity and trade among countries participating in the BRI.

According to data from Nanjing Customs, China-Europe freight trains from Jiangsu have reached nearly 80 cities in Europe and Asia. From January to September this year, Jiangsu's China-Europe freight line operated a total of 1,667 trips with total cargo value of 23.84 billion yuan (\$3.26 billion). This represents a year-on-year increase of 13.4 percent in the number of trains and a

13.5 percent increase in cargo value.

Port development is seen as crucial to promoting land-sea interconnectivity and ensuring the success of domestic and international trade under the BRI.

For example, Taicang Port has become one of the busiest ports along the Yangtze River, involving 219 routes and offering comprehensive coverage of domestic coastal regions and international access.

Over the past decade, Jiangsu's imports and exports with countries involved in the BRI have expanded from 1.16 trillion yuan in 2013 to 2.23 trillion yuan in 2022, with an average annual growth rate of 6.5 percent, data from Nanjing Customs showed.

Abdul Wajid Khan, a research scholar and journalist at Independent News Pakistan who participated in the media trip, said, "Jiangsu

will further increase its trade and economic relationship with countries involved in the BRI." It will also help them "modernize industrial sectors with the help of its high-tech industrial capacity", he added.

Furthermore, Jiangsu spares no effort in promoting cultural exchanges between countries participating in the BRI. Jiangsu's culture is something to take pride in, and Jiangsu should focus on enhancing its cultural outreach to the world, said Pham Thu Thuy, the Voice of Vietnam editor.

During the media trip, foreign journalists visited locations such as the Nanjing City Wall Museum, the Yangzhou Opera Theater and Lianyungang Old Street, allowing them to personally experience the rich historical and contemporary culture of Jiangsu.

Mohamed Beiji, the China-Arab



Online

See videos from four Jiangsu cities by scanning the codes.



Nanjing



Lianyungang



Yangzhou



Taicang

TV journalist, said, "The trip is a manifestation of Jiangsu's efforts to promote cultural exchanges."

Meanwhile, though the replica of Zheng He's ship may never set sail, the explorer's legacy continues with the ports of Taicang and Lianyungang, which remain bustling as they facilitate the transportation of goods and spread the principles of peaceful cooperation and mutual benefit to distant shores.

Contact the writers at wangning@chinadaily.com.cn

Wastewater: Japan's actions could irreparably damage ocean ecology

From page 1

The world is left watching with bated breath as Japan continues with this controversial move to dump nuclear-contaminated wastewater into the Pacific Ocean. Japan's actions are reminiscent of those of a rogue state, as it discharges its nuclear waste with apparent disregard for the well-being of its neighboring nations and its own citizens, even though the government professed care for food safety during the Group of Seven meeting of trade ministers in Japan on Saturday and Sunday.

The decision to discharge this contaminated water into the ocean is a cause for concern for several reasons.

First, it has the potential to cause irreparable damage to the marine

ecology and marine biology of the Pacific Ocean. The risk of contamination spreading beyond the Pacific Ocean also means that this issue is not just a local or regional one. It has the potential to affect global ecosystems and biodiversity. Furthermore, any radioactive contamination could have long-term effects on marine life, which could affect entire ecosystems and have subsidiary effects that might be felt for years to come.

Second, this decision sets a dangerous precedent that could lead to similar actions being taken in other parts of the world.

Third, there are concerns that the decision to discharge the contaminated water into the ocean has been taken unilaterally, without proper consultation with stakeholders. This raises questions about transparency and accountability,

and it could undermine efforts to promote responsible environmental management practices.

Safe and effective alternatives for disposing of water contaminated by nuclear material from the Fukushima power plant exist, including evaporation or underground storage. However, the Japanese government has chosen to discharge the water into the ocean, which is the "least expensive" solution and a speedy one. Japan's response to global concerns over the discharges has been far from convincing, leaving the international community anxious about the impact of the wastewater on the marine ecosystem.

Despite strong global opposition, Japan is pushing forward heedlessly, seemingly prioritizing its self-serving interests over the world's

Japan claims its nuclear-contaminated water meets international standards after treatment, but doubts persist. The so-called assessment of the International Atomic Energy Agency, marred by limitations and allegations of bias, falls short of proving that ocean disposal is the sole and best solution for handling the wastewater. The lack of independent verification of data and evidence provided by Japan also raises many questions.

Masanobu Sakamoto, president of the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives of Japan, has repeatedly expressed opposition to the discharge of treated radioactive water into the sea, demanding that his government take full responsibility for any negative impact on Japan's fishing industry.

Japan's actions are causing a cas-

cademic wave of consequences across the region, especially for its fishing industry. Experts warn that if Japan persists in its actions, this could invite further domestic and international opposition, potentially causing severe harm to Japan's seafood export market.

Japan's disregard of opposition is of significant concern, as the lack of criticism from the US and the West emboldens Japan to ignore the concerns of its people and the international community. While Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry claim that the water has been treated to meet regulatory standards, most Pacific island countries are deeply concerned about the potential consequences of the releases. The Pacific islands' connection to the ocean is fundamental to their

way of life, and they are rightfully alarmed by Japan's move to release contaminated water into the sea.

Japan's alliance with the US and the West provides it with an excuse to disregard opposition. The scandalous silence of the US and the West makes it easier for Japan to ignore the concerns of its people and the international community.

It is time for the US and the West to break their silence on this serious matter and ensure that Japan does not ignore such concerns. The dumping of nuclear wastewater into the ocean must be independently investigated, and there must be proper consultation with stakeholders to ensure that the most responsible and sustainable solution is chosen.

The author is an international affairs commentator and freelancer based in Karachi, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

White salt flats become black fertile fields

City in Jilin sees improvements in rice yields thanks to new varieties, better technology

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

Seven years ago, Wu Zaizhou took a gamble when he rented a swathe of poor-quality land for rice farming in Da'an county in Baicheng, Jilin province, and invested heavily in his agricultural venture.

"The quality of rice was not good, resulting in a loss of over 200,000 yuan (\$27,300)," Wu, 45, said.

However, thanks to advice from experts and the use of new agricultural technologies and improved rice strains, Wu's Zhaofeng Family Farm harvested around 3,800 metric tons of rice from 500 hectares this year.

Located in the west of the province, Baicheng has typical saline-alkali land, which is high in soluble salts.

Farming on such soil is widely recognized as a formidable challenge, resulting in significantly lower crop yields. Da'an has 222,500 hectares of arable land and 117,386 hectares of unused land. Saline-alkali areas account for over half the unused land.

In the spring of 2016, Wu rented 300 hectares of saline-alkali land in Honggang township to start commercial planting.

"At that time, water from the Nenjiang River had been introduced into the area to help improve the



An aerial photo shows part of Wu Zaizhou's Zhaofeng Family Farm in Baicheng, Jilin province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

quality of farmland," he said. "I invested around 3 million yuan to construct irrigation canals and ditches and to plow about one-third of the undeveloped land."

Wu planted rice seedlings on 100 hectares of his paddy fields, but only saw a yield of 1,000 kilograms per hectare.

His fortunes changed when experts from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology in

Da'an provided him with technical knowledge and saline-alkali-tolerant rice varieties.

With the guidance of the experts and through his own efforts, he successfully transformed the poor-quality land into fertile fields.

In 2021, he expanded his planting area to around 500 hectares.

Last year, he harvested 7,000 kg of rice from each hectare of land, earning over 1.7 million yuan.

"This year's yield increased to

over 7,500 kg, and with good marketing, I believe I can have a better income," he said.

In recent years, Baicheng has made every effort to solve the problem of soil salinity and become a role model in pursuing green development.

It has adopted measures such as soil modification, water diversion, development of saline-alkali-tolerant crop varieties and technological improvements to transform the

white salty flats into black fertile soil through a green ecological chain.

In the improved paddy fields, better quality mid-to-late maturing rice varieties can be grown, which has helped advance the "50-billion kilograms of grain production project" in the province.

"We have achieved multiple upgrades and iterations of agricultural technology," said Ma Wei, a researcher at the Rice Research

Institute of the Jilin Academy of Agricultural Sciences. "We can grow rice varieties on saline-alkali land with better quality and earn higher prices."

Over the past five years, a series of saline-alkali-tolerant rice varieties and simplified cultivation techniques promoted by the institute have been applied over 765,000 hectares of saline-alkali land in western Jilin.

This has resulted in an average increase in the rice yield of 510.8 kg per hectare and an additional output value of over 1 billion yuan.

In recent decades, Baicheng has added more than 20,000 hectares of arable land. Its annual rice yield ranked first in the province for nine consecutive years.

Li Hongcheng, director of the Black Soil Protection Monitoring Center in Zhenlai county, has been promoting mechanized rice planting that saves water, along with deep-fertilization technology.

"With this technology, we can accurately fertilize near the rice roots while transplanting seedlings, thereby reducing the amount of chemical fertilizers used," Li said.

The Jilin Academy of Agricultural Sciences proposed the use of large and medium-sized greenhouses to replace small ones.

It also recommended starting seedlings and transplanting them earlier, which helped solve the problem of low rice production, making it possible to grow high-quality and high-yielding rice varieties on saline-alkali land. Baicheng is expected to achieve a rice yield of 350,000 tons this year.

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Shandong park provides rosy outlook for villagers

By ZHAO RUIXUE

in Rizhao, Shandong
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Zhang Jicai, a villager in Rizhao, Shandong province, spends 10 minutes walking from her home to a rose-growing greenhouse at the Qufang Modern Agricultural Industry Park where she works.

In the clean and bright greenhouse in her village — Wujia Qufang, located in Juxian county — an array of roses from countries such as the Netherlands, France and Germany are ready to blossom.

"I work in a 'flower house' and live in a 'garden-like community,'" said Zhang, 36.

The community she lives in is a newly built one. She and 1,660 others in her village moved into two-floor villas and apartments in the community in 2020.

Facilities, including a kindergarten, a primary school, an after-school study room, a canteen for elderly people and a clinic, are well-appointed with exquisite landscaping.

"Years ago, young people in our

village went to cities to work, but now they are eager to return to the village because we can earn a decent salary by working in the park," said Zhang, adding that more importantly, young people who return can take care of their children and parents.

The creation of the agricultural park has brought about many changes in Wujia Qufang.

It has not only provided jobs for villagers, but has also boosted their collective income, said Dong Xueshan, Party secretary of the village.

The park, which received an investment from a company in 2018, now produces 4,000 metric tons of cherry tomatoes and 17 million fresh-cut roses annually. Besides offering jobs, the park also pays the villagers a dividend for its use of the land.

The roses grown in the greenhouse are high quality.

"The fresh-cut flowers can last for two weeks, about twice as long as regular roses," said Zhao Shanxing, chief engineer of the park. "For holidays such as Spring Festival and Val-



A villager prepares fresh-cut roses at the Qufang Modern Agricultural Industry Park in Wujia Qufang village in Juxian county, Shandong province. ZHAO RUIXUE / CHINA DAILY

entine's Day, the demand is high, with an average of 200,000 flowers sold every day."

This year, the park's best rose sales were during Qixi, the Chinese version of Valentine's Day, with customers preferring orange roses in particular, he said.

Because the current supply of roses cannot meet demand, the operator of the park is building two new flower bases to increase production.

"We plan to expand our cherry tomato and fresh-cut rose markets overseas next year," Zhao said.

As the village earns more from the industry, more services are being

provided to improve villagers' lives.

All of the 227 people above age 65 can enjoy breakfast and lunch for free daily in the village's daycare center for seniors.

"The reason for providing two meals is because young people have to go to work during the day, so they don't have time to take care of their parents. We encourage young people to have dinner with their parents, which is a traditional value of filial piety," Dong said.

The 700-square-meter center is equipped with a canteen, a clinic and sports facilities, and it has become a place where seniors gather to socialize.

Thorn pears reshape rural county's fortunes

GUIYANG — With the harvest season in full swing in Longli county, Guizhou province, verdant hills are being embellished by yellow, spiny Cili fruits, or thorn pears.

Called *Rosa roxburghii* in Latin, the thorn pear is rich in vitamin C and has various nutritional benefits. It is one of the iconic specialties of this mountainous area.

Yan Qihua, a 60-year-old villager in Longli, has grown thorn pears for over two decades and has witnessed how this prickly fruit has reshaped his hometown.

"Cili is hardly a common fruit and is difficult to preserve, so my wholesale business was once caught in a dilemma, and I had to find a way out," he said.

Eyeing industrial upgrades, he found the solution in deep processing.

"We began to process fresh fruits into candied products, which have a longer shelf life and added value," Yan said.

With the help of agricultural technology, he has dedicated the past two decades to exploring more approaches for candied thorn-pear manufacturing. As more residents hopped on the bandwagon, he established an agricultural cooperative to pool wisdom and share growth opportunities.

With thorn pear production having evolved into a pillar industry locally, the cooperative boasts an annual output of more than 450 metric tons, helping over 300 residents secure employment each year.

Yan's story exemplifies the concerted efforts of Guizhou in advancing the rural vitalization of distinctive industries. Recent years have seen the province scale

up support for the upgrading of the thorn pear industry.

A case in point is Huihui county, where boxes of thorn pears from neighboring Longli are processed by an assembly line into a juice beverage.

Known as Ciningji, the beverage is a result of cross-provincial cooperation in poverty alleviation. Its producer, Guizhou Wanglaoji Ciningji Industrial Development company in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, was established by Guangzhou Pharmaceutical Holdings.

Benefiting from Guizhou's favorable conditions for thorn pear planting and the company's advantages in processing and marketing, the beverage is gaining popularity among a wider range of consumers.

Guizhou has officially designated the thorn pear industry as one of its 12 major rural industries with local characteristics and advantages.

Data showed that as of the end of last year, the annual output of thorn pears in Guizhou had reached 15 billion yuan (\$2.09 billion), with the over 210,000 rural residents involved in the industry enjoying an increase in income.

Looking ahead, Hu Hongcheng, head of the provincial forestry commission, said that the province will step up efforts to expand the planting area, bolster the market presence and promote deep processing to help the thorn pears industry continue to thrive.

"We are striving to take more quality Guizhou products out of the mountains so they can reach the world," Hu said.

XINHUA

Language system translates ancient Chinese texts

By LI WENFANG in Guangzhou
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If foreigners learning Chinese think the modern language is difficult to grasp, they should be glad they don't have to learn classical Chinese. Ancient texts are far more challenging, and not easy for even native Chinese speakers to decipher.

Thankfully, a team of researchers from the South China University of Technology has made such work easier. The team has developed a large, artificial intelligence-powered language machine that automatically translates ancient Chinese texts into modern language.

The team won first prize in the international ancient Chinese machine translation contest during the Machine Translation Summit 2023 held in the Macao Special Administrative Region in September. The system could help enhance people's understanding of Chinese history and promote traditional Chinese culture, said Jin Lianwen,



Members of Jin Lianwen's team work at the South China University of Technology's deep learning and vision computing lab. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the professor who led the research team in their work at the university's deep learning and vision computing lab.

It could also help with data mining and analysis, and intelligent development and application related to ancient texts and relics, he said.

The massive system requires powerful computing capacity, which was a huge hurdle the team had to overcome during its

research, Jin said, adding that the team received multiple graphic processing unit servers from a cooperating company.

The machine translation is meant to provide classical Chinese enthusiasts with a convenient way to gain a general understanding of ancient texts, with Jin saying that authoritative publications should be the go-to sources for precise translations.

The major challenge in robotic ancient language translation was the lack of high-quality ancient language data, Li Bin, an associate professor in the linguistic technology department at Nanjing Normal University, told a seminar at the summit.

At present, such translation relies heavily on the professional knowledge of classical language experts.

Jin's team has also developed a system that recognizes and analyzes ancient Chinese text on pictures. The system automatically locates, extracts and arranges related texts in order. The texts

can then be punctuated and translated into modern Chinese using the aforementioned language system.

The algorithm for the system has been optimized to address challenges such as analyzing text on wrinkled or creased photos or those with low resolution.

In cooperation with Shanghai University and the Intsig Information Co, Jin's team has also created a system for analyzing and recognizing texts written in the language of China's Yi ethnic group.

Classical text translation technology, when combined with text recognition technology, can facilitate ancient text digitalization and understanding.

When joined by powerful AI technology such as ChatGPT, it can become an interactive system for understanding ancient texts.

The team will continue its research on ancient text understanding and protection, Jin said, adding that sufficient computing capacity will be necessary for further research.



Farmers harvest thorn pears in Xiangcha village, Longli county, Guizhou province, on Sept 1. YUAN FUHONG / CHINA DAILY



Voyah, the premium marque of China's State-owned automaker Dongfeng Motor, opens its first showroom in Denmark on Oct 26, while starting sales of its Dream MPV in European countries.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Dongfeng Motor's premium marque ramps up its profile on international stage with new showroom

By CAO YINGYING

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Voyah, the premium marque of China's State-owned automaker Dongfeng Motor, expanded its presence on the global stage in late October by opening its first showroom in Denmark.

With the official unveiling of its showroom in Copenhagen on Oct 26, Voyah's Dream MPV model is now available for sale in European countries.

Lu Fang, CEO of Voyah, said: "As a member of the national team in the new energy vehicle sector, Voyah is dedicated to introducing products that combine driving performance and smart technology to the global market. We aim to lead technological advancements in the global auto industry through self-developed technology while creating a new calling card for Chinese foreign trade."

The showroom in Denmark's capital city blends modern simplicity with Voyah's "Chinese elegance", incorporating elements from Nordic nature and the European nation's fairytale culture while providing a comprehensive car-purchasing experience for customers, including test drives, customization, delivery and maintenance services.

The Dream MPV offers advantages in terms of spaciousness and comfort, making it suitable for Europeans' personalized use, such as outdoor activities and camping.

The export version has been optimized for European drivers with specific enhancements in handling and infotainment.

Extensive testing was conducted over various terrains and environments in countries like Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark, while the infotainment system was developed with a simplified, user-friendly interface and local applications to align with user preferences.

The model obtained European Whole Vehicle Type Approval (EWVTA) earlier this year, allowing it to be mass-produced and registered for use in EU member states.

Voyah exhibited the luxury electric MPV along with the Free SUV and Passion sedan at the 2023 eCarExpo in Copenhagen from Oct 27-29.

As Europe's largest electric vehicle fair, the 2023 eCarExpo broke all records with 150 EV models from 25 brands attracting 21,600 visitors.

Alexander Bachmann, head of product at Voyah in Denmark, said that although Voyah is a new player in Europe, it is backed by the expertise of Dongfeng Motor, which has more than 50 years of experience in vehicle production and sold more than 3.8 million vehicles last year.



From left: Voyah showcases the Dream MPV, Free SUV and Passion sedan at the 2023 eCarExpo in Copenhagen in late October. Alexander Bachmann, head of product at Voyah in Denmark, introduces the vehicles at the expo.

"Voyah products are competitive, and we believe they are a strong value option in the Danish premium market," Bachmann said at the expo.

"The combination of high quality, technology, electric range, high level of comfort and the design make the cars a strong and complete offer in the market, and our dealer network covers the entire country," he added.

Measuring 5.3 meters in length, the seven-seat electric MPV Dream is built for a big family, a luxurious business shuttle and to be used as a mobile office.

With a 108-kilowatt-hour battery pack, the Dream can run 482 kilometers on one charge. It can generate 489 horsepower, a top torque of 620 Newton meters and top speed of 200 km per hour.

Meanwhile, the Voyah Free SUV, which became available for sale in Denmark earlier this year, has a 106 kWh battery pack and a range of 500 km.

It is equipped with four-wheel drive, and with 489 horsepower and a top torque of 720 Nm, it goes from 0-100 km/h in 4.4 seconds, with a top speed of 200 km/h.

The company's Passion sedan will be introduced to the Danish market in the coming months.

The model's performance includes a range of up to more than 600 km, top speed of around 210 km/h and acceleration from 0-100 km/h in 3.8 seconds.

Continuous expansion

The three-year-old Voyah marque embarked on its international journey in February 2022, making it the youngest Chinese brand to enter the European market. It started with a launch in Norway in February and later debuted in Finland before branching out to Denmark.

Since delivery of the Free model in December, Voyah has sold more

than 5,000 units overseas.

According to the expansion plan, Voyah will hit the market in the Netherlands, Poland and Bulgaria in November, followed by Germany, France, Italy and other countries in 2024.

Voyah's international expansion is a microcosm of the growth of the Chinese automotive industry.

China has replaced Japan as the No 1 vehicle exporter since the first quarter of this year.

According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, the country's vehicle exports totaled 3.39 million units in the first three quarters, up 60 percent year-on-year. Of them, NEV exports reached 825,000 units, up 110 percent year-on-year.

Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association, estimates that China's vehicle exports may reach 5 million units this year, up from 3.11 million in 2022.

When talking about the advantages of Chinese NEV exporting overseas, Voyah CEO Lu said: "China has the first-mover advantage to export. Whether in terms of electric technology or smart technology, we are relatively ahead."

"Secondly, there's an advantage in the indus-

A Voyah Dream on display at the 2023 eCarExpo in Copenhagen in October.



trial chain. We have a complete new energy industrial chain, from chips and electronic controls to motors, making China a comprehensive hub. This is also why Tesla chose to establish a factory in China.

"After decades of development, China's auto industry has formed a solid understanding of traditional auto technology. For example, Voyah, when competing with luxury brands like BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi, demonstrates strong competitiveness in terms of handling, safety, smoothness and comfort."

Chinese elegance

High-end auto brands need to have strong product offerings while showcasing a unique identity and heritage — and Voyah is no exception.

In Zhuang Zhou's *Xiao Yao You (Wandering Beyond)*, the mythical Kunpeng is a legendary giant bird that symbolizes freedom and boundlessness.

Voyah incorporates that concept into the brand's colors, logos, products and visual elements, creating a concept known as "Chinese elegance" that blends traditional Chinese culture with modern design principles.

"We draw inspiration from the grace of Chinese cultural philosophy, the essence of modern industrial aesthetics and the innovation of Chinese technology," said Lu.

"This presents a more confident, elegant, and distinctly Chinese aesthetic, continually meeting the demands of contemporary consumers for NEVs in terms of safety, comfort, respect, delight and sophistication."

Technological strength

Voyah's achievements can be attributed to its strong focus on

technology and unwavering commitment to product development.

The brand has amassed a number of patents, with 2,503 filings accepted, averaging more than 800 per year and leading the way in NEV patent growth.

It has introduced cutting-edge technology, including the ESSA and SOA intelligent electric drive systems, and has taken the lead in areas such as NEV platforms, powertrains, electronic architecture, batteries, body and chassis.

Its technical expertise has vaulted Voyah to the forefront of intelligent development, creating a new benchmark for China's automotive industry.

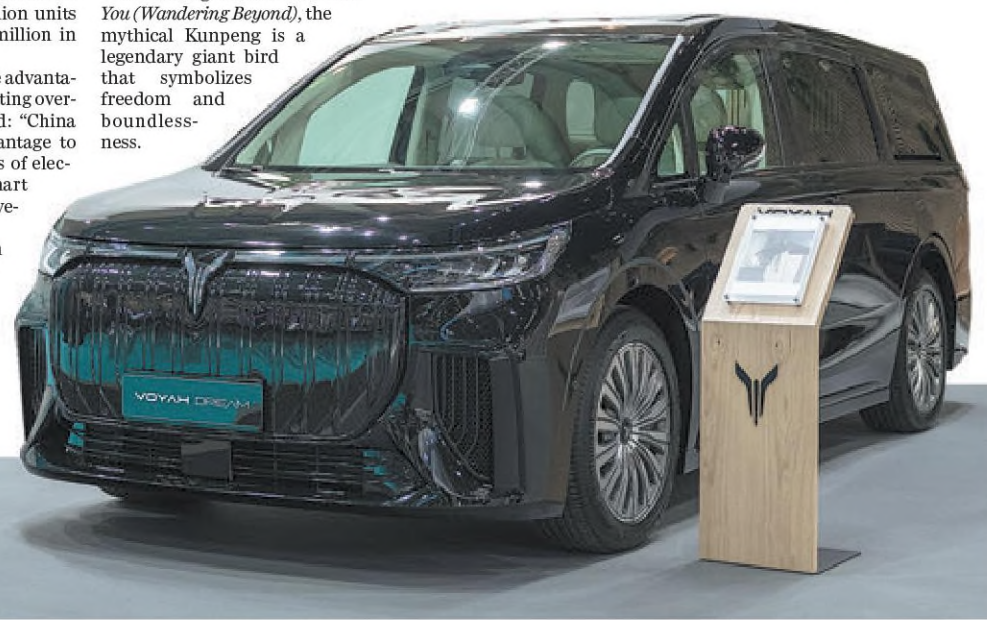
According to statistics released by Voyah on Nov 1, the marque delivered 6,067 vehicles in October, up 138 percent year-on-year and 21 percent month-on-month. Its sales have achieved consecutive increases since June.

During the January-October period, its sales jumped 107 percent compared to the same period last year.

The 2024 Dream was launched on Oct 12 and garnered 10,507 orders on the first day. It went on to accumulate more than 18,000 units of sales just 18 days after its market debut.

Lu said that Voyah has entered a new phase of rapid development after achieving its goal of launching products in three segments (MPV, SUV and sedan) within three years.

Voyah is making efforts to expand production capacity and shorten delivery times. With the plug-in Passion to be launched in November, the brand is expected to see further sales growth, Lu said.



ADVERTORIAL

WORLD

Evacuees enter Egypt as bombing continues

JERUSALEM/GAZA — The first group of evacuees entered Egypt since the Palestine-Israeli conflict broke out, as Israel continued bombings on the densely populated Gaza Strip.

On Wednesday, through the Rafah border crossing, the only lifeline for people seeking to leave the conflict-ravaged enclave, the first group of some 500 foreign passport-holders and some 80 injured people entered Egypt, according to Egyptian and Palestinian sources.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Thursday that the country will help evacuate about 7,000 foreigners and dual nationals from the Gaza Strip.

In a meeting with foreign diplomats, Ismail Khairat, Egypt's assistant foreign minister, said Cairo was preparing "to facilitate the reception and evacuation of foreign citizens from Gaza through the Rafah crossing".

The Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital, Gaza's only facility offering specialized treatment for cancer patients, was forced to shut down on Wednesday because of lack of fuel, leaving 70 cancer patients in critical situation, the Health Ministry said.

The World Health Organization welcomed Egypt's decision to accept the injured and sick people from Gaza for treatment in Egyptian hospitals.

On Thursday, Hamas said 195 people had been killed in Israeli strikes this week on the Jabalia refugee camp, the biggest in the territory.

The number of Palestinian casualties in Gaza has now reached over 9,000, according to the Gaza-based health ministry. More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said during a visit of armored troops deployed on the Gaza border that Israel would continue coordinated strikes on Gaza from the air, ground and sea, and the military has taken action to expose tunnels to "deal heavy blows to enemies within".

The military also announced that at least 15 soldiers were killed in the past day in three separate incidents in the northern Gaza Strip.

In the United States, President Joe Biden suggested a humanitarian "pause" on Wednesday as House Speaker Mike Johnson said he plans to hold a vote on a stand-alone Israel aid bill despite a Congressional Budget Office report showing it could increase the federal deficit.

In the first major legislative action under Johnson, House Republicans unveiled their bill on Monday, seeking to provide \$14.3 billion for Israel. The House could vote on the bill and pass it with Republican support as soon as Thursday. But it is unlikely to become law, as it faces stiff opposition in the Democratic-controlled Senate and the White House has threatened a veto.

XINHUA—AGENCIES



Civic groups stage a rally in protest against Japan's release of radioactive water from the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant into ocean, in Seoul, South Korea, on Thursday. AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP

Experts call for halt to toxic water discharge

Japan starts a new round of release amid criticisms at home and abroad

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo

Civic groups and experts called for an immediate halt to the discharge of contaminated water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant into the ocean and the establishment of an international monitoring mechanism that will be effective over the long term.

Japan started the third round of nuclear-contaminated water discharge from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant on Thursday, despite numerous objections at home and abroad.

Approximately 7,800 metric tons of nuclear-contaminated water will be released into the sea during this round of discharge.

Dozens of Japanese citizens from multiple civic groups attended a rally in Tokyo on Wednesday, demanding that Tokyo Electric Power Company, or TEPCO, the operator of the crippled Fukushima plant, immediately halt the ocean discharge.

Yuya Kamoshita, a Fukushima resident who was forced to evacuate to Tokyo, said he believes that simply monitoring the situation is not enough and that the release of contaminated water should be stopped.

"I don't want to eat contaminated fish or vegetables. Even mushrooms and wild foods harvested in Fukushima are still contaminated and cannot be shipped," said Kamoshita, head of a group of plaintiffs seeking damages from TEPCO and the Japanese government.

"I think Japanese and Chinese people share the same concern about not wanting to consume

food that has been contaminated by radiation. It's natural for Chinese people to be concerned about Japanese seafood because if the radioactive water goes into the sea, the contamination spreads."

"We're all saying, 'Stop it, stop it,' but I think the voices of those who are saying 'stop' need to get louder," Noriko Mukasa, a 72-year-old resident of Chiba prefecture, said.

On Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular news conference that Japan has already discharged 15,600 tons of nuclear-contaminated water into the Pacific, transferring the risk of pollution to the world despite domestic and international opposition, which is extremely irresponsible.

The "safe and transparent" discharge plan claimed by the Japanese government is not convincing, Wang added.

Concerns voiced

Chen Xiang, an associate research fellow with the Institute of Japanese Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that Japan should allow stakeholders to conduct on-site investigations, which is crucial for understanding the potential environmental hazards resulting from the ocean discharge of nuclear-contaminated water.

Allowing stakeholders to conduct these tests not only serves as an effective oversight, but also as a precautionary measure, he said.

Although TEPCO said the water has been diluted and the concentration of radionuclides is within regulatory requirements, simply

lowering the concentration of radioactive substances does not eliminate the danger to humans, said Masashi Goto, a former nuclear power plant engineer.

"The amount of nuclear-contaminated water released from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in the first round of discharge is greater than the average amount of nuclear wastewater released by all the nuclear power plants in Japan annually in the five years prior to the Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011. Even if the contaminated water is diluted, it will still have an impact on the marine environment," Goto, who is also a member of the Citizens' Commission on Nuclear Energy, said.

The IAEA only stated that the data provided by TEPCO meets safety standards, but did not confirm the safety of ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) treated water.

"Furthermore, the current research on the effects of human exposure to nuclear radiation is still incomplete. In this context, TEPCO's claim that diluting and discharging nuclear-contaminated water into the sea is safe is not scientifically sound," Goto said.

Moreover, the International Atomic Energy Agency is an organization established to facilitate the development of nuclear power plants, but it lacks credibility in supervising the safety of nuclear-contaminated water discharge, he added.

"Japan experienced a nuclear accident that resulted in a large amount of radioactive substances being generated, so the government has an obligation to make every effort to minimize the impact of the nuclear accident on the environment. However, the government has been neglecting this duty," he said.

Yellen: Decoupling of two economies would be 'disastrous'

By HENG WEILI in New York

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday that a decoupling of the American and Chinese economies would have "disastrous effects".

"A full separation of our economies, or an approach in which countries including those in the Indo-Pacific are forced to take sides, would have significant negative global repercussions," Yellen said. "We have no interest in such a divided world and its disastrous effects."

She made the remarks at the Asia Society in Washington 10 days before leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries gather in San Francisco for an annual meeting Nov 11-17.

US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to hold talks on the sidelines of the meeting.

"First, the United States began as an Atlantic nation, but we have long been a Pacific one as well," Yellen said in the speech. "We see this clearly in California, where President Biden and I will head later this month to host APEC Economic Leaders' Week. ...

"In California, as elsewhere across the country, our ties to Asia are evident — from the influence of the over half of California's immigrant population arriving in the past decade who were born in Asia, to the competition and collaboration with Asia driven by Silicon Valley over decades," she said.

"Second, the Indo-Pacific region is at the center of the 21st century global economy. The region contains half of the world's population, and it is generating about two-thirds of global growth," she said.

"As we look toward APEC later this month, let me state unequivocally: Claims that America is turning away from the Indo-Pacific are wholly unfounded. We are deepening our economic ties across the region, with tremendous potential benefits for the US economy and for the Indo-Pacific," Yellen said.

The secretary highlighted what she called three US priorities that are "shaping an economic strategy in the region that is fit for this current moment: increasing trade and investment, bolstering our economic resilience, and cooperating on global challenges". She said the US approach to the region would be centered on "securing our national security interests and advancing human rights".

Yellen also said that the US sees economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific as "crucial to bolstering our supply chain security".

"Our critical supply chains are too vulnerable to risks, as the disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed," she said.

"Across sectors from auto parts to electronics, the US is importing more from key partners like India and Vietnam, as well as from Mexico, and is less dependent on one single country, in this case, China," Yellen said.

"It's natural that a richer country would less often serve as a base for final assembly. So, China was always expected to see shifts in its export patterns as it grew richer, just as Japan did in the 1980s," she said.

As Washington shifts its China policy through a string of economic measures that include tariffs and restrictions on technology exports and outbound investments, Beijing has accused the United States of stifling China's growth and curbing its rise.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies said last month, however, that US export controls have affected American industry in two major ways: the loss of market demand in China for leading-edge chips and their associated technologies, as well as retaliatory controls and sanctions by China.

"Additionally, the Chinese government has been working to convince domestic technology firms to source their inputs domestically rather than from US suppliers. This threat of designing-out US critical technological inputs threatens US industry en masse," said the analysis.

Nvidia CFO Colette Kress said in June that long-term restrictions on China will impact "our future business and financial results" and that the American semiconductor industry will suffer "a permanent loss of opportunities".

Like Nvidia, chip designer Advanced Micro Devices also relies on its massive consumer-chip sales to China to fund its research and development of data center technology.

Yellen also talked about her trip to Beijing in July, where she met with Chinese economic officials.

"The visit led to the launch of Economic and Financial Working Groups, which provide ongoing channels to discuss macroeconomic and financial policies, work towards specific goals, and ultimately put our relationship on a surer footing," she said, noting that each group recently met for the first time.

Lia Zhu in San Francisco and agencies contributed to this story.

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Presiding at UN, China pushes for cease-fire in Gaza

By MINLU ZHANG

at the United Nations

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China has assumed the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council for November, with a focus on the situation in Palestine and Israel.

The situation in Palestine and Israel tops the Security Council's agenda in November, said Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN.

"It is imperative to promote a cease-fire and halt the fighting, prevent further civilian casualties, prevent a larger-scale humanitarian disaster and prevent the conflict from spilling over," he told reporters at a news briefing on the work of China's presidency of the Security Council.

Zhang said that China has been actively working for a cease-fire, peace and talks, while calling for calm between the parties.

"In the face of the current situation, what the Security Council needs to do is to take responsible

and meaningful action to build greater consensus, make practical efforts, and send clear signals for the realization of a cease-fire, the protection of civilians and the alleviation of the humanitarian crisis," Zhang said.

"The fundamental way out of the Palestinian-Israeli issue is the implementation of the two-state solution, and any solution to the current situation cannot deviate from the two-state solution, let alone be imposed on Palestine," the ambassador said. "The future of Palestine should be decided by the Palestinian people themselves."

The presidency of the Security Council rotates among the 15 member states of the council monthly. China last held the rotating Security Council presidency in August 2022.

The Security Council has faced criticism for its perceived slow response to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

According to the Hamas-run health agency, more than 9,000 Palestinians have been killed

and 32,000 injured since Israel launched a military operation in Gaza, while more than 1,400 people in Israel lost their lives, the vast majority in the Hamas attack on Oct 7.

"As the rotating president of the Security Council, China will respond to the calls of the international community and work with all parties concerned to promote responsible and meaningful collective action by the council in a timely manner," Zhang said.

Zhang emphasized that, based on the current situation and tasks facing the Security Council and the expectations of all parties, China will "push the Security Council to take action, fulfill its responsibilities under the UN Charter, demonstrate its commitment, promote the easing of tensions, and support diplomatic efforts".

"We should urge the council to focus on the root causes, look at the complex problem of the intertwining of the development deficit and the security deficit, and explore ways to solve it from

a broader perspective," he said.

"We should push the Security Council to improve its working methods, strengthen unity and cooperation, enhance its authority and efficiency, and respond more effectively to the current complex situation," said Zhang.

Regarding the reform of the UN and cooperation between China and the organization, Zhang emphasized that the UN derives its strength from its member states, and their cooperation is crucial to tackle challenges.

China supports UN reform, especially for the Security Council, said Zhang, emphasizing the need to reflect the emergence of developing countries and enhance their representation.

At the news briefing, Zhang also introduced the Lu Ban Lock, one of the souvenirs China has prepared for the members of the Security Council. The Lu Ban Lock is a Chinese puzzle toy named after the legendary master carpenter Lu Ban. When arranged properly, all parts of the lock can be inseparable from

one another without the need for nails, ropes or other connections.

"It is like the difficult problems currently facing the Security Council, which can be effectively resolved only through careful observation and analysis, the use of scientific methods and patience and confidence," said Zhang.

"China expects the members of the Security Council and the general membership to work closely together, just as the components of the Lu Ban Lock do, and to work together to promote positive results in the work of the Security Council," he said.

The Security Council will also consider issues related to Syria, Yemen and Bosnia-Herzegovina this month, according to Zhang. It will take action on the UN assistance mission in Sudan, the UN mission in the Central African Republic, and the extension of the authorization of sanctions on Somalia, as well as hold its annual regular dialogue with the commissioner of the UN peace-keeping police, he said.

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GLOBAL LENS



Left: A Palestinian man sells water on donkey-drawn carts, as drinking water and fuel become increasingly scarce, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday. MAHMUD HAMS / AFP
Right: Palestinian workers prepare bread before selling it to people queuing outside a bakery in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Oct 29. ABED RAHIM KHATIB / AP **Below:** People peer outside behind a metal mesh that covered the window of a building that was hit by Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday. MOHAMMED ABED / AFP



RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

Killing of children in Gaza not 'collateral damage', head of UN Agency for Palestine Refugees says

The killing of thousands of children in Gaza cannot be "collateral damage", said Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner-general of the UN Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), on Monday.

Nearly 70 percent of those reported killed in Gaza are children and women. Save the Children, an international nongovernmental organization, reported that nearly 3,200 children have been killed in Gaza in just three weeks. This surpasses the number of children killed annually across the

world's conflict zones since 2019, he said. "This cannot be 'collateral damage'."

Churches, mosques, hospitals, and UNRWA facilities have not been spared. Too many people have been killed and injured while seeking safety in places protected by international humanitarian law, he told the Security Council.

Two weeks of full siege followed by the trickle of aid last week mean that basic services are crumbling and that medicine, food and water, and fuel are running out. The streets of Gaza have started

overflowing with sewage, which will cause a massive health hazard very soon, he said.

In the latest blow, the communications blackout over the weekend has aggravated the panic and distress of people, he said. Lazzarini said there must be strict adherence to international humanitarian law. This means civilians and civilian infrastructure, including UN premises, schools, hospitals, places of worship, and shelters hosting civilians, must be protected all over the Gaza Strip and at all times. This is not an option, it is an obligation.

"All lives are precious. Palestinian lives need to be protected just as the lives of people in any other country," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a news briefing on Tuesday, adding that the pressing priority now is to fully implement the UN General Assembly resolution, stop the fighting, prevent further deterioration of the situation and avert an even worse humanitarian disaster.

XINHUA



Above: Palestinian children walk hand-in-hand past destroyed buildings in Gaza Strip on Monday. MOHAMMED ABED / AFP **Left from top:** Palestinian children play at a camp in Khan Younis in Gaza Strip on Oct 27. RIZEK ABDELJAWAD / XINHUA **Right from top:** Palestinians collect bags of dried pulses from a UN-run aid supply center in Deir al-Balah in Gaza Strip on Oct 28. MOHAMMED ABED / AFP **Right from top:** A medical worker checks on a premature Palestinian baby who lies in an incubator in a hospital in Gaza City on Oct 22. MOHAMMED AL-MASRI / REUTERS **Workers transport humanitarian supplies in a hospital in Khan Younis in Gaza Strip on Oct 29. RIZEK ABDELJAWAD / XINHUA**

BUSINESS

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New rules to bolster banks

Tier-based norms for capital aim to boost regulations, alignment with global standards

By LIU ZHIHUA
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New regulations on capital of commercial banks are expected to enhance their risk management as well as improve their service quality, thus boosting the real economy, experts said on Thursday.

On Wednesday, the National Financial Regulatory Administration unveiled a new set of regulations over commercial banks' capital management, which will take effect on Jan 1, offering transition periods for banks to meet less provision and information disclosure requirements.

The new regulations aim to capture the spirit of the recently concluded Central Financial Work Conference, and comprehensively strengthen financial regulation, the administration said.

The conference said it is imperative to accelerate the building of a nation with a strong financial sector, comprehensively strengthen financial regulation, improve the financial system, optimize financial services and effectively forestall and defuse financial risks.

According to the new rules, a differentiated regulatory system for commercial banks' capital will be established. Banks will be divided into three tiers based on their total assets and complexity of business profiles to match with different regulatory programs for capital.

The relevant measures for first-tier banks, or those with a large asset size or relatively large cross-border business, will be in line with



Employees work at a commercial bank in Hai'an, Jiangsu province. XU JINGBAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

international standards.

Banks with relatively smaller assets and cross-border business are categorized under the second tier. They will be subject to relatively simplified capital regulatory measures.

For even smaller banks that have no cross-border business, the capital requirements will be further simplified and guide them to focus on serving the county-level economies and small businesses.

The new rules will replace the current administrative measures adopted more than 10 years ago. The adjustments aim to address new issues emerging in commercial banks' capital management in recent years, as the country's economic and financial facets as well as risks faced by commercial banks have changed, an NFRA official said.

In addition, as a member of the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, the primary global standard-setter for prudential regulation of banks, China must ensure its banking sector aligns with the Basel III Accord the committee had announced in 2017, the official said.

Wen Bin, chief economist with China Minsheng Bank, said the new measures consider both the need to align with international standards and the existing domestic situation, which will be conducive to further refining banks' risk weight calculations and risk management.

"The new measures will help commercial banks optimize their business structure, improve management and governance, and build up data and digital infrastructure," Wen said.

"At the same time, thanks to the transition period, the new rules won't bring about much capital pressure on banks."

Zeng Shengjun, a senior researcher at the Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based Greater Bay Area Financial Research Institute of Bank of China, said the Central Financial Work Conference has clarified requirements on strengthening financial supervision.

He predicted that commercial banks would increase credit support for areas such as technology, green development, small and medium-sized enterprises, and eldercare.

Meanwhile, credit will be further standardized and tightened for certain areas, including those with overcapacity and high energy consumption, he said.

Foreign investments to face fewer restrictions

By ZHONG NAN
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China will take a number of measures to eliminate hidden barriers affecting foreign investment access, aiming to ensure equal access for both domestic and foreign capital in sectors not included in the negative list in accordance with the law, said the Ministry of Commerce on Thursday.

Speaking at a weekly news conference in Beijing, Shu Jueting, the ministry's spokeswoman, said that the government will completely remove restrictions on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector and expand market access for global capital in the modern services sector.

A negative list refers to specific areas or sectors where foreign investors are not allowed to operate. They can operate in areas not appearing on the list.

Despite the inflow of foreign investment declining on a yearly basis during the first nine months, Shu said that the total amount in this category still remained at a relatively high level over the past decade.

"In particular, the number of newly established foreign-funded enterprises had grown rapidly, confirming the enduring enthusiasm of such companies for long-term investments in China," said the spokeswoman. "We are confident of the ongoing positive progress of attracting foreign investments."

Shu said the ministry will work with other government branches to introduce corresponding detailed regulations to local governments to guarantee the effective implementation of various policies, providing foreign enterprises with a greater sense of accessibility, after China unveiled 24 targeted measures to boost foreign capital inflows in mid-August.

As the sixth edition of the China

International Import Expo will be held offline from Sunday to Nov 10 in Shanghai, Shu said that preparations for this grand event are almost complete. Guests from more than 150 countries, regions and international organizations will attend the expo. Within the pavilions, products from 72 countries and international organizations will be displayed.

The enterprise exhibition segment has drawn participation from more than 3,400 companies representing 128 countries and regions. It now covers a record-breaking exhibition area of 367,000 square meters, featuring the largest presence of Fortune Global 500 companies, industry leaders and innovative small and medium-sized enterprises compared to previous editions, the ministry said.

Apart from being a key avenue for foreign firms to launch new products, technical solutions and services, the upcoming CIEE will be an advanced platform to showcase China's support for economic globalization and its resolve to further open its markets to the outside world, said Wang Wen, executive dean of Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.

This will send an exceptionally favorable message to foreign enterprises, Wang said.

Since the beginning of this year, numerous multinational company executives have repeatedly shown a strong interest in coming to China. They have engaged in discussions with business partners and held meetings with Chinese officials.

For instance, Commerce Minister Wang Wentao met with Tim Cook, CEO of US tech giant Apple Inc, and Severin Schwan, board chairman of Swiss healthcare company Roche Holding AG in Beijing in mid-October, encouraging foreign firms to share in the benefits of the Chinese market and achieve mutual development.

COOPERATION

Trade with Latin America set to soar

By ZHU WENQIAN
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China, Latin America, and the Caribbean states will build a community with a shared future and further strengthen economic and trade cooperation, officials and business leaders said on Thursday.

They made the remarks during the two-day 16th China-Latin America Business Summit in Beijing. This was China's maiden institutional economic and trade promotion platform for Latin America that was held for the first time in the national capital.

"We will continue to strengthen cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank and drive the development of China-Latin American economic and trade cooperation toward a larger scale, broader fields and higher level," said Ren Hongbin, president of the China Council for the Promo-

tion of International Trade.

Beijing is building itself into an international center of consumption, and the city will continuously improve the scale and quality of economic and trade cooperation with Latin America, hoping to jointly deepen cross-border tourism cooperation, said Yin Yong, mayor of Beijing.

During the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held last month in Beijing, Chinese and Latin American enterprises signed 26 project cooperation agreements involving a total value of \$6.23 billion.

Latin America is one of the key regions for cooperation between China and developing countries. Currently, China is the second-largest trade partner of Latin America, and Latin America is the second-largest destination for Chinese foreign investment, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Last year, the total value of

trade between China and Latin America reached \$485.8 billion, up 7.7 percent year-on-year. China's exports of mechanical equipment and new-energy products to Latin America have maintained rapid growth, the Commerce Ministry said.

Representatives of China and 26 Latin American and Caribbean states attended the summit. During the opening ceremony, the China-Latin America and the Caribbean Business Cooperation Beijing Initiative was unveiled.

According to the initiative, the two sides will boost exchanges and cooperation in digital economy, including digital transformation of traditional industries, and advance agricultural cooperation, as the two sides are highly complementary in agriculture, and the prospect for cooperation is promising.

China and Latin American countries will also reinforce cooperation



A shopper at a market in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, takes a picture of flowers imported from Colombia. HONG ZEHUA / XINHUA

in culture and tourism by supporting tourism cooperation and developing new sustainable tourism routes and products.

The two sides will also tap the potential of the green economy by strengthening cooperation in clean energy, low-carbon transportation, energy-saving buildings, green technology and climate actions, as per the initiative's proposed roadmap.

Ana Maria Ibanez, vice-presi-

dent of the Inter-American Development Bank, said she is impressed by Beijing's transformation since she last visited China 18 years ago.

Latin America aims to become a clean energy powerhouse and help the world meet its net-zero goals. Clean energy transformation requires minerals, and Latin America is expected to export minerals worth \$50 billion annually by 2050, she said.

exchanges between companies, thereby enhancing the overall mining investment environment. Specialized platforms and mechanisms to deepen cooperation should be set up, he said.

Wang Tiangang, director of the center for geological survey cooperation for the Americas and Oceania at the CGS' Nanjing branch, told the Tianjin conference that Latin America is a globally significant supplier of mineral resources. In 2020, nearly 80 percent of the world's lithium carbonate exports came from the region, while the region's iron ore contributed around a quarter.

With demand for minerals, particularly lithium, rising, Latin America's mining sector is expected to have more cooperation and communication with other regions, Wang said.

Justina Botto, an official from Argentina's embassy in China, told the Tianjin conference the country looks to garner support of China and collaborations with Chinese partners as part of its efforts to diversify the industrial structure in

natural resources and mining. Argentina, Botto said, also seeks to attract investments from Chinese companies.

Botto said China and Argentina have had a close partnership in geological exploration and relevant scientific studies. Botto highlighted the long-standing cooperation between the CGS and Argentina's geological departments, which has made significant progress in areas like geochemical research, lithium resource investigation and geothermal resource research.

Argentina is the fourth-largest lithium producer globally, with untapped potential to elevate its global ranking in lithium mining and resource utilization, Botto said.

Chinese investment in battery production lines in Argentina has strengthened extraction of local lithium resources and manufacture of batteries in Argentina, which helped enhance Chinese firms' position in the global industrial chain, Botto said.

Briefly

Largest LNG storage tank operational

China's largest liquefied natural gas storage tank, with a storage capacity of 270,000 cubic meters, was put into operation at Sinopec Qingdao LNG Receiving Terminal on Thursday, said its operator China Petroleum & Chemical Corp, also known as Sinopec. The tank has an additional gas storage capacity of 165 million cubic meters, which can meet the gas demand of 2.16 million households for five months during the heating season, to ensure sufficient gas supply in the country.

Humanoid robot work prioritized

China aims to build an innovation system for humanoid robots by 2025, with breakthroughs made in a number of key technologies such as the "brain, cerebellum and limbs" to ensure the safe and effective supply of core components, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said in a guideline on Thursday. In the development of the robots, it aims to cultivate two or three globally influential ecological enterprises, and create two to three industrial development clusters by 2025.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 194 billion yuan (\$27.02 billion) in 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. A reverse repo is a process by which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Evergrande debt risks 'controllable'

Developer's woes not affecting economic stability, experts say

By LIU ZIZHENG and LIU ZHIHUA

Risks resulting from China Evergrande Group's debt problems are currently controllable and will not affect the overall stability of the nation's economy, experts said on Thursday.

The comments came on the heels of the latest announcements made by the company on its financial troubles.

Evergrande Real Estate Group Ltd, a main arm of Evergrande, said in a statement late Tuesday that as of the end of September, its unpaid debts totaled approximately 280.83 billion yuan (\$38.37 billion), with its overdue commercial bills standing at 206.08 billion yuan.

On Monday, the developer said that the High Court of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has further postponed the hearing of its winding up order to Dec 4.

Li Peijia, Bank of China's senior analyst and team leader of finance researchers, said Evergrande's embattled debt position, though worrying, could be eased if its large number of physical assets and affiliated companies are handled smartly.

"Risks stemming from the company facing China's financial system are mostly measurable and controllable," Li said.

Business profile and potential spillover risks in the case of Evergrande are very different from those in Western countries, she said, add-



A file photo shows a housing project developed by China Evergrande Group in Xiangyang, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ing that the company has few derivative financial products and its total liabilities account for a low percentage of China's overall bank loans.

Li said if the developer can manage its assets well in the future, debt woes can be alleviated to some extent.

However, Li warned that the developer's debt situation may affect upstream and downstream relevant market entities. Players

concerned in this case should remain vigilant and conduct risk management accordingly.

The recently concluded central financial work conference urged for measures to promote a virtuous cycle between the finance and real estate sectors, including a better regulatory system for real estate enterprises and fund management, macro-prudential management of real estate finance, and equal treat-

ment for different types of real estate enterprises in meeting their reasonable financing needs.

City-specific targeted policies should be adopted to better support both rigid housing and housing improvement demands, the conference statement said.

Zhao Xiuchi, head of the Department of Land Resources and Real Estate Management at the Capital University of Economics and Busi-

ness, said she expects China to accelerate the establishment of a virtuous cycle in the real estate sector by introducing more policies and exploring possible methods, as many Chinese property developers are facing liquidity stress due to the recent adjustments in China's property market policies.

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Shanghai facilitates payments for expats

By HE QI in Shanghai heqi@chinadaily.com.cn

An additional 36,000 point of sale (POS) machines will be installed or upgraded in Shanghai to enhance its payment service and better serve the upcoming sixth China International Import Expo, said the local government.

Such machines, which will be arranged citywide and able to accept domestic and overseas credit/debit cards, aim to make payments easier for visitors.

The machines will cover tourist destinations, communities with foreign residents, shopping venues and transportation hubs.

"Over 90 percent of the urban area will see the installation of such POS machines," said a government statement.

The People's Bank of China, the central bank, held a meeting last week to facilitate payment services for foreign visitors.

The PBOC said its local-level units should enhance digital payment services, such as allowing foreign-registered handsets or e-wallet accounts to pay in China.

The digital payment trend in China, supported by online payment providers like Alipay and WeChat, has received praise from foreign visitors.

"When I first arrived in 2013, I had only my credit card and some cash. Back then, not many shops accepted foreign cards," said Frank Shankar Koirala, a cashmere retailer and manufacturer from Nepal. Koirala, who has participated in the CIIE three times, is preparing for the event's upcoming edition.

"I moved to China after 2020 and started using Alipay and WeChat regularly," Koirala said.

Referring to Shanghai's efforts in POS machines, Koirala said he welcomed the move as "it benefits business people like me".

"I own a shop here and have foreign clients; payments using foreign cards were a headache. But with the new POS machines, doing business will be more convenient," Koirala said.

Shanghai has been sparing no effort to expand consumption and develop itself into an international consumption hub.

As the nation is deepening its reform and opening-up and promoting high-quality development, Shanghai is creating more landmarks for consumers and improving its business environment to attract more consumers, said Gong Zheng, mayor of Shanghai, in August.

The metropolis will ramp up efforts to this end and build itself into a global consumer destination, Gong said.

Sony to expand presence in China, eyes growth in entertainment

By FAN FEIFEI

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Japanese consumer electronics company Sony Group Corp will intensify efforts to expand its presence in China through technological innovation as it banks on the entertainment sector to further tap the immense growth potential of the world's second-largest economy, a Sony senior executive said.

Sony has continuously increased its investment in China, with its businesses spanning electronics, film and television, music, games and animation, said Takehito Soeda, vice-president of Sony China, adding that he is bullish on the development prospects and huge potential of the Chinese market.

He emphasized that China plays a very significant role in global industrial and supply chains, given the country's super-large market and complete industrial chain system. "Apart from manufacturing, we also have a layout in research and devel-

opment and services in China."

Sony has witnessed China's reform and opening-up in the past few decades, Soeda said, while noting that China has made remarkable achievements in economic growth and, in recent years, announced a series of new measures to bolster digitalization and technological innovation.

"We have paid great attention to China's fast artificial intelligence and 5G technology development and its dual carbon goals — peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060 — which highly coincide with our development goals," he said, adding that sustainable development has become one of the most important engines driving China's economic growth.

Sony has always attached great importance to the Chinese market, which is of great significance in the company's global layout. The company will strengthen its cooperation with local partners and the cultivation of local talent, as well as con-



Takehito Soeda

tribute to the optimization and upgrading of China's industrial structure, according to the company.

How to leverage cutting-edge digital technologies to promote the high-quality development of

industries presents a new opportunity for the company's future development, Soeda said.

Sony is also betting big on the entertainment business in China, hoping to integrate Chinese cultural products with their foreign counterparts, and build a bridge for entertainment and cultural exchange between China and the rest of the world, he added, expecting more policies to be rolled out targeting the entertainment segment in China.

It has established a studio for virtual cinematography in Shanghai by cooperating with Chinese partners, providing crystal light-emitting diode (LED) display systems,

professional cameras and monitors. Soeda said the company wants to bring more global cutting-edge technologies, applications and the latest products to China.

In addition, China's efforts to develop strategic emerging industries will inject new impetus into the high-quality development of the country's economy, and provide new opportunities for multinational corporations to develop in China, the company said.

At the upcoming sixth China International Import Expo in Shanghai in early November, Sony will showcase its latest innovative technologies and achievements in the field of sustainable development, such as environmental protection, public welfare and accessibility.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, foreign direct investment used in the manufacturing sector in the first three quarters of this year rose 2.4 percent year-on-year, with FDI in high-tech manufacturing up 12.8 percent.



Q&A WITH CEO

Editor's Note: With strong policy support, unremitting technological innovation and industrial upgrading, China's economic recovery continued to gather steam in the third quarter, with its GDP expanding by 4.9 percent from a year earlier, leading to a

5.2-percent year-on-year growth in the first nine months. China Daily presents a series of Q&As with top multinational corporation executives, discussing their perspectives on the Chinese economy and how they will position future business in China.

China vital engine for global economic growth



Pei Hong
interim president of
Astellas Greater China



Nancy Wang
country manager at LinkedIn China



Hannah Ha
Asia chair of Mayer Brown



Aldous Wong
chair and president of Asia-Pacific
business and global executive board
advisor at Halma plc

Q1 Given the complex current global economic and geopolitical situations, how do you position the Chinese market in your overall global business radar? What's your outlook for China's economy and your company's operations in the country for this year and next?

PEI: Although the global situation is complicated with some uncertainties, our confidence in China remains unchanged. As a global pharmaceutical company that entered China in 1994, Astellas had been a witness and beneficiary of the significant changes and opportunities in the Chinese market. In the pharmaceuticals sector, China has always been a vital market for Astellas' global growth and has now risen to be one of our global strategic markets based on its strong performance and strategic significance. China presents us with market potential, as well as opportunities to promote and accelerate innovation with our global expertise.

WANG: Over the past few years, LinkedIn's B2B business has achieved considerable success in China. Our talent solutions business has grown five-fold in the last eight years, while LinkedIn Marketing Solutions has doubled in size. Amid an ongoing global economic slowdown, we are glad to see that Chinese foreign trade continues to demonstrate its competitive advantages. Exports have become an important engine driving economic growth.

Given the uncertainties in the global business environment, Chinese companies seeking global development are also facing evolving challenges, which pose new requirements for their capabilities and competitive advantages in all dimensions, from global strategy formulation to local organization and talent team building, from brand marketing to operation compliance.

We will continue to have a presence in China and remain committed to helping China-based enterprises achieve their international business goals, tapping into LinkedIn's global professional network of more than 1 billion members across the globe, and through our talent, marketing and learning solutions.

HA: China remains a strategic market, not only for our firm and our clients, but also for the world. Chinese businesses are constantly adapting to change and we've witnessed their efforts to invest overseas and expand into new markets. Mayer Brown continues to serve companies seeking to expand their global footprint by advising them on the legal complexities and opportunities as they map their investment efforts in unfamiliar jurisdictions. We believe there's still strong demand for legal skills like ours, where our experience in cross-border transactions, coupled with a strong understanding of Chinese culture, enables us to act as a bridge for our clients as they navigate the risks.

WONG: Given that 20 percent of the global population is in China, growing and investing in China and the wider Asia-Pacific region are essential if we are to fulfill our purpose of building a safer, cleaner and healthier future for everyone, every day. Our strategy, "Grow in China, accelerate APAC", focuses on China as the core to accelerate our organic and inorganic growth. The opening of our Halma APAC Integrated Production and R&D Center this September is a strong proof point of our strategy and long-term commitment. It will be part of our growth enabler to accelerate innovation, collaboration, partnership and localization.

Q2 Are you confident about the Chinese economy over the long run? How would you rate your confidence in the Chinese economy?

PEI: We have strong confidence in China's economy. With its continued efforts to boost the economy post-COVID-19 and a persistent policy of high-quality development, we believe that China will see more vitality in its economy in the future.

At Astellas, we are committed to turning innovative science into value for patients. The demand for high-value, patient-centric healthcare solutions in those areas is on the rise, mostly driven by a large population and spending on healthcare, as well as increasing public awareness of health. In addition, we see China's strong commitment to innovation, and the innovation and creative potential of the whole society should be unleashed to the greatest extent. Innovation is the backbone of the pharma business. It is very encouraging for Astellas as a global innovator to further accelerate patient-centric innovation in China.

WANG: Today, as the global economy seeks to accelerate its restart, we are delighted to see that China has maintained its leading position. According to the latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics, China's GDP grew by 5.5 percent year-on-year in the first half of this year. As we enter the second half, many international organizations and institutions, including the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have raised their expectations for China's overall economic growth in 2023. China continues to be an important growth engine of the global economy.

We are confident in the long-term growth of China's economy. We believe that China's opening-up measures, continuous optimization of the business environment, sci-tech innovation, globalization of local business and other government efforts contribute to its economic growth.

HA: China has experienced exponential growth over the past decade and it is time for the economy to transition beyond manufacturing into a more mature and sustainable model. We are fully confident about China's long-term growth story, given the robust and supportive domestic policies in place and the entrepreneurial spirit and drive of the people. All these factors will continue to propel the economy and help China weather any short-term challenges. Sustainability is one example of positive change, and we have seen ambitious targets for China's transition plan as well as efforts to grow related industries such as electric vehicles, green finance, renewable energy and more.

WONG: At Halma, we build our strategy for decades, not days. The Asia-Pacific, especially China, is a strategic market and growth engine for Halma for the next decade and beyond. We think that the Chinese market has huge potential and opportunities.

The "Healthy China 2030" plan sets out China's hugely ambitious long-term commitment to solving the challenges brought about by industrialization, urbanization, an aging population and the increasing prevalence of chronic lifestyle diseases. We provide leading technologies and digital solutions in health assessment, therapeutic solutions and life sciences. They can help our customers in China meet rising healthcare demands, tackle preventable diseases, and contribute to improved patient outcomes. In this way, we will live our purpose and build a healthier future for everyone in China.

Q3 China's economic policymakers have assured greater efforts to attract foreign capital, widen market access and ensure a level playing field for both domestic and foreign companies. In this context, what new policy measures do you expect from Chinese authorities in the near future?

PEI: We appreciate the consistent progress regarding the business environment in China. For a global company, a more market-oriented, rules-based and internationalized business environment that will not only bolster the continuity of business operations, but also inject momentum into the pharmaceutical market, is always expected.

As one of the most important emerging pharma markets, China is dynamically transforming toward enhancement of its innovative healthcare system, beyond its size of market growth.

In my opinion, an established reward system for innovation will boost the high-quality development of this industry, push forward an industry upgrade, and ultimately improve the health of the Chinese people. We expect more efforts to expand patient access to innovative drugs, and a continuously improved business environment, which will give us stronger confidence to turn innovation science into value for patients in China at a faster pace.

WANG: China's commitment to high-standard opening-up and an improved business environment for foreign investment has boosted the confidence of MNCs including LinkedIn. We believe in the potential, resilience and long-term sustainability of the Chinese economy.

We are excited that China's government officials have made efforts to strengthen global cooperation and support Chinese enterprises to go global. We look forward to seeing more policies and initiatives that further promote China's opening-up and closer international cooperation.

We will take advantage of the business opportunities arising from these measures and continue to support Chinese companies to take up a significant position in the global market and contribute to China's high-quality development.

HA: It's vital to continue to have the kind of legal structures that can help to promote both inbound and outbound investments and to foster an environment that allows for innovation. We have seen several encouraging signs of such frameworks and expect more to come.

For example, with cooperation increasing within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, mechanisms have been proposed to drive the digital economy and facilitate data transfers to reduce compliance costs for businesses. This can be particularly helpful to Hong Kong companies with a Chinese mainland presence.

In addition, we've also seen an increase in intellectual property rights protection in general, in terms of patent applications, foreign company innovation patents registered and an increase in IP royalty trade. Building trust in such areas will encourage more companies to bring their technological know-how to China and positively drive innovation.

WONG: As the world's second-largest economy, China has demonstrated strong resilience despite the challenging political and business environment. China reaffirmed its commitment to high-level opening-up and emphasized the need to make greater efforts to attract and utilize foreign capital, widen market access, promote the opening-up of the modern services sector, and grant foreign-funded enterprises national treatment at the annual Central Economic Work Conference held in December 2022.

Today, China is one of the world's biggest investors in renewable energy sources. From efforts to keep the sky blue and the water clear, green development is now a key strategic policy for China. By providing technologies that monitor and protect scarce natural resources, we help our customers create a more sustainable future.

Q4 As China continues to pursue high-quality development through a homegrown path to modernization, what is the vision for your company's business in the country over the long run? What business opportunities do you foresee emerging as part of the process of Chinese modernization?

PEI: There has been high-quality development in China's pharmaceutical market, changing from one dominated by generic medicines to one driven by innovation, with strong and beneficial policies of the Chinese government transforming the entire industry.

Astellas sets a strategic focus on the breakthroughs of oncology, innovative drugs and therapies. We have been accelerating the introduction of our innovative drugs and improving access to benefit Chinese patients.

We will continue to focus on market development, industrial upgrades, innovation and creativity, quality, efficiency enhancement, and so on. We will also continue to work with government and local partners to lead the innovation and service upgrade of the Chinese healthcare industry toward the achievement of "Healthy China 2030" and support the high-quality development of the Chinese economy.

WANG: In the context of China's pursuit of further modernization, we believe that globalization has become an increasingly important strategic direction for more and more Chinese companies, which unleashes LinkedIn China's business potential.

In 2023, we shifted our local business focus to assisting companies operating in China in finding skilled international talent and marketing their products and services overseas.

Our business mainly focuses on these three areas: LinkedIn Talent Solutions helps Chinese companies create competitive international talent strategies and achieve more efficient talent-hiring; LinkedIn Marketing Solutions supports Chinese enterprises in accurately reaching their target audience in overseas markets and creating a cohesive brand and marketing effect; LinkedIn Learning Solutions helps Chinese companies promptly identify and empower employees with essential skills and respond swiftly to market changes.

According to data from third-party research institutions, there will be approximately 59,000 Chinese go-export companies establishing branch offices in overseas markets with 4.5 million employees by 2024. These companies are our target customers. Thus, we are fully confident in the future development of our business in China.

HA: In terms of opportunities, we've seen many sovereign wealth funds setting up dedicated funds to invest on the Chinese mainland, and we've also heard of interest from Middle Eastern funds looking to invest in high-tech and renewable energy industries. With our networks and connections in the Middle East and the work we've done advising Middle East clientele on their legal presence in China and beyond, we expect further inflows on this front. In the Greater Bay Area, we expect the insurance sector to grow further, given the large population and low penetration rate. Mayer Brown works with nearly 400 insurers and insurance-related entities worldwide and we anticipate a future increase in services, contracts and merger and acquisition activity in the sector.

WONG: We see many new emerging trends and interesting opportunities where Halma's companies could play substantial roles, including safety technologies that power the clean energy transition, eye care, smart wastewater technology and digital health.

These new trends are what we're keen to tap into globally and in China, as they're highly aligned with our purpose of growing a safer, cleaner and healthier future for everyone, every day. I believe that we will see more such opportunities in the China market while it continues to pursue high-quality development, which also explains our strategy here — Invest in China, empower APAC growth.

Q5 Could you share with us one or two of your successful business or personal stories in the process of growing with China?

PEI: We will continue to leverage China's favorable policies, and work with the government and all partners to accelerate our life-changing innovations at a faster pace over the next three to five years. This will enable us to address highly unmet medical needs in China.

WANG: Recent LinkedIn data show that the skill sets for jobs have changed by around 25 percent since 2015, and this number is expected to reach at least 65 percent by 2030 due to the rapid development of new technologies such as AI.

We believe that AI will accelerate workforce learning and increase the importance of skills. According to LinkedIn Data Insight, companies that support upskilling and embrace AI will have the most success in attracting and retaining top talent.

Adopting a skills-first approach to talent management is the best way to expand talent pools, upskill current employees, and build workforce agility. To support this approach, we brought LinkedIn Learning Solutions to the Chinese market in July this year, helping employees of Chinese companies to comprehensively improve in-demand skills.

To help Chinese companies promote the learning and development of AI skills, LinkedIn will open up the top 10 most popular AI-related courses among global companies for free to Chinese enterprise users before Dec 15, 2023.

HA: I started working as a trainee solicitor in the early 1990s when there was an increasing interest in inbound investment in China. I assisted clients in forming numerous cooperative joint ventures and equity joint ventures in various industry sectors. We were one of the pioneers from Hong Kong working with our colleagues on the mainland. We have continued that journey since — from mergers and acquisitions to helping clients navigate the regulatory environment. It is amazing how the growth and development of China's legal and regulatory system have helped to craft my professional journey.

I'm also grateful to be in Hong Kong, which serves as a gateway into the mainland with close links to the Greater Bay Area. I have the privilege to witness all the new developments and be the first on the ground to help clients in capturing the opportunities, both inbound and outbound.

WONG: Since the reform and opening-up, China has experienced the largest and fastest urbanization in world history. Safety is one of the top priorities in both the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and the 2035 long-term target. Our safety sector brings advanced safety technologies, including fire detection and suppression, people and vehicle flow monitoring, industrial access control and much more. We leverage global technologies across a range of critical industrial and logistics operations for cities in China, enhancing their abilities of urban governance, as well as protecting people and assets at work.

COMMENT

Editorials

Using its status as a piece on US chessboard to advantage, Japan spreads its military wings

Some "anonymous diplomatic sources" in the Japanese government told the Japanese media that Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to the Philippines from Friday is aimed at enhancing "deterrence through regular joint training exercises with the United States" in face of "China's territorial claims in the East and South China seas". They deserve credit for their straightforwardness, if not bluntness.

In stark contrast, the hypocrisy of Kishida-style diplomacy is evident in the Kishida government's actions, as it moves toward turning Japan into a permanent robotic piece on Washington's geopolitical chessboard to help the US contain China.

The Kishida government even copies Washington's diplomatic discourse in its statement on the objectives of the Japanese prime minister's three-day visit to the Philippines, and Malaysia, claiming he "will confirm cooperation in maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law as well as in ensuring a world where human dignity is protected".

As a matter of fact, Tokyo seeks to strengthen the US' rules and maintain the US' hegemony in the region by pushing the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries to the forefront to confront China, so the US can play its dirty geopolitical games from behind the screen.

During Kishida's visit to Manila, the two sides will reportedly negotiate a bilateral treaty to increase

security cooperation and facilitate joint military drills, and hold talks on a "Reciprocal Access Agreement" which they hope to sign early next year.

The treaty is intended to facilitate the transfer of defense personnel between the two countries for training and disaster relief operations while relaxing restrictions on the transportation of weapons and supplies. It will be Japan's first RAA with a member state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the third after the agreements with Australia and the United Kingdom that took effect earlier this year. This means Japan is taking advantage of it doing the US' bidding as an opportunity to open new channels for expanding its military presence overseas, citing China as their common threat.

Kishida and the Philippine leader, media reports say, will also talk about Tokyo's delivery of defense equipment to Manila under a framework of official security assistance established in April this year. That is expected to include more large patrol vessels for the Philippine Coast Guard to help improve the latter's capability to respond to China's actions in the waters of the South China Sea. Tokyo gifted Manila two such vessels last year.

However, Manila should realize that Tokyo is doing nothing but turning it into a US pawn which will help Washington enjoy advantage in its geopolitical rivalry with Beijing. It should also know which party will be left high and dry once China and the US find their way to peaceful coexistence.

Washington obligated to call for cease-fire

The Israeli airstrikes on the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza on Tuesday and Wednesday reportedly claimed hundreds of lives, igniting a fresh round of global condemnation of Israel for further worsening the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave.

Since the conflict broke out on Oct 7, the death toll on both sides has crossed 10,000 with casualties disproportionately high on the Palestinian side. In a tit-for-tat retaliation against Hamas, Tel Aviv has effectively turned Gaza into a living inferno. It's time that Tel Aviv heeded the call of the international community and stopped its collective punishment of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

True, the ongoing conflict was triggered by Hamas' brutal attacks on southern and central Israel. But the ruthless manner in which Israel is retaliating shows it is hell-bent on punishing Palestinian civilians, killing thousands of them, mostly children and women, to avenge the Hamas attacks. Worse, Israel has rejected all calls for a cease-fire, showing it is ready to defy the international community, including the United Nations, to exact revenge on innocent Palestinian civilians.

So far, Israel has allowed only a trickle of humanitarian aid to enter Gaza through the Rafah checkpoint between Egypt and Gaza, which is far from enough to provide medical treatment for and feed the more than 2.3 million Palestinians trapped there.

The situation in Gaza is deteriorating by the

minute as Israel steps up its ground offensive. The United Nations, the UN Security Council in particular, should play its due role in safeguarding world peace and stability. Unfortunately, the United States has been preventing the UN, including the Security Council, from passing any resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire by vetoing or threatening to veto it.

The resolution the UN General Assembly passed on Friday calls for an "immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce", not a cease-fire, in Gaza and "continuous, sufficient and unhindered" provision of lifesaving supplies and services for civilians trapped inside the enclave. Despite that, Israel has not stopped bombarding Gaza; instead, it has intensified the ground offensive, and has allowed only a fraction of the humanitarian aid required to save lives and provide sustenance for the people pulverized by the bombings in Gaza.

The Joe Biden administration should realize that the continuous, senseless Israeli bombing will not end the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. It could, instead, spread the conflict throughout the Middle East, and even beyond, dealing a heavy blow to the global economy, which is already foundering on the road to recovery.

The US should act more responsibly in the UN Security Council and not veto any resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire between Israel and Palestine, in order to ensure the safety of civilians.

Doublespeak, contradiction at their worst

Foreign Minister Wang Yi's latest visit to the United States indicates the thawing of Sino-US relations — not least because during the visit he met with US President Joe Biden and his top aides, and reached an agreement on arranging a meeting between the two countries' leaders on the sidelines of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco later this month.

But just as it appeared Sino-US relations were stabilizing, Washington was back playing its provocative geopolitical game across the Taiwan Strait, and thus interfering in China's internal affairs.

By sailing its destroyer, USS *Rafael Peralta* (along with Royal Canadian Navy frigate HMCS *Ottawa*), through the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, the US is ostensibly signaling its support for the separatist Democratic Progressive Party authorities in the Chinese island of Taiwan. That is a gross violation of the one-China principle.

This is the third joint "transit" of US and Canadian military vessels through the Taiwan Strait since June, and instead of helping improve Sino-US ties, they will damage Washington's credibility, and escalate tensions across the Strait.

In fact, Wang had stressed in a meeting with representatives of the US strategic community last week that the road to San Francisco won't be smooth. Hot on the heels of Wang's visit, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen received a letter urging her to toughen her approach toward China and

take measures to implement US President Biden's recent Executive Order on restricting US investment in China.

The Aug 9 order authorizes the Treasury to prohibit or restrict US investments in Chinese enterprises involved in sectors such as semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technologies and certain artificial intelligence systems. Despite Beijing's "strong dissatisfaction, resolute opposition" and "solemn representations", China hawks in US Congress have said the latest move against China is "too soft" and "porous".

The Oct 10 letter from the chairman of the so-called House select committee on China urged Yellen to implement the executive order as soon as possible and as broadly as possible.

And now comes another US move challenging China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. One can understand the US' anxiety over whether and how it can outcompete China in what in Washington's eyes is a decisive decade. But not everyone in Washington's policy circles believes overly broad investment controls will not hurt the US too. Washington's adventurous military maneuvers and not-so-covert support to the separatist forces in Taiwan, seemingly to trigger a conflict, will also not leave it unscarred.

The future of Sino-US relations is win-win cooperation and fair competition, or there is no future at all.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Financial sector indispensable to high-quality development

As a tone-setting policy conference for the development of the financial sector, the two-day central financial work conference that concluded in Beijing on Tuesday has attracted extensive attention. The conference is the highest-level meeting in China's financial sector. The conference has usually been held every five years since 1997, when it was first held as national financial work conference.

The once-in-five-years conference is held in a different economic environment and background each time, though each conference focuses on deepening financial reform, controlling financial risks and promoting the financial sector to serve the economy.

This year's meeting focused on building China into a financial power,

emphasizing that the financial sector is the lifeblood of a nation's economy and a crucial component of a country's core competitiveness. It is imperative to accelerate the building of China into a country with a strong financial sector, comprehensively strengthen financial regulation, improve the financial system, optimize financial services, and effectively forestall and defuse financial risks.

It also stressed that China will remain committed to the path of financial development with Chinese characteristics and boost the high-quality development of its financial sector. From an external perspective, the rise of global conservatism underlines the importance of national security. Internally, the financial market is fraught with complexity, weak internal risk con-

trols and corruption in some areas. China's financial sector needs to be further strengthened to effectively promote breakthroughs in the real economy, especially in the high-tech industry. The financial sector also needs to be further regulated to make due contributions to economic stability and people's livelihood, so as to achieve a balance between security and development.

Building China into a country with a strong financial sector raises explicit requirements for the country's financial market and financial institutions. It points out not only the direction for the future development of China's financial sector, but also how its overall political and economic development should be combined with the financial sector.

— BEIJING NEWS

Politicized 'bulk buying' of problematic seafood

The world's largest economy has finally kept its word. The superpower, known for breaking promises, has tried to offset China's ban on Japanese seafood by buying 1 metric ton of scallops from Japan after a G7 trade ministers' meeting it led in Sakai, Osaka, called for repealing the ban on Japanese seafood over nuclear contamination concerns.

Reports said that US soldiers stationed on vessels and in military bases in Japan will be fed the seafood. Yet, it is more than laughable for US ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, to call that "bulk buying". Compare that with the more than 100,000 tons of scallops that Japan reportedly exported to

the Chinese mainland in 2022.

The US' diplomatic strategy lacks sincerity. It's always trying to pit one nation against another to retain its hegemony, but whether nations are allies or rivals, the US remains insincere to both. Anybody who remembers the US' trade frictions with China in recent years will know how the US signed a deal one day only to tear it up the next day, while almost all its allies will remember how the US cheated them to maximize its own interests.

That is why the fact that the US bought anything, such as the 1 metric ton of scallops, is an exception coming from a country that is known to support its friends with just words, and not deeds.

In 2022, the US-led G7 announced the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment with a promised investment of \$600 billion, but has any nation seen any dollar coming from Washington yet?

Of course, the act of purchasing Japanese seafood despite risks of nuclear contamination is a foolish deed that might threaten the lives of US soldiers. But then, how does it affect the lords in Washington so long as they don't need to step on US military ships or stay for months in submarines. For US politicians, both the interests of the country's friends and the health of its soldiers are expendable.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Northeast China becoming strategic fulcrum

The central authorities convened a meeting last week to review "The Guideline on Policies and Measures to Further Promote a New Breakthrough in the Full Revitalization of Northeast China in the New Era". The region has rich resources, relatively strong industrial foundation, unique geographical advantages and huge development potential. In short, the region occupies an important strategic position in the overall development of the country.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Northeast China revitalization policy. The revitalization of Northeast China in the new era will create new development opportunities. But formulating and introducing a package of supporting policies is necessary to give full play to the comparative advantages of the region, and support it to blaze a new path in high-quality development.

The role of Northeast China in

safeguarding China's national security as well as food, energy and industrial security, and promoting high-quality development must be fully understood.

While the authorities should strengthen the role of Northeast China as a strategic fulcrum by providing more support and stimulating its endogenous strength, governments at different levels must promote innovations in the industrial sector by investing more in science and technology including in R&D, work together to upgrade the traditional manufacturing sector, foster strategic emerging industries and strengthen new growth drivers.

As for Northeast China, it should promote large-scale farming, and increase overall grain production and supply. And all departments must coordinate to improve ecological conservation, always keeping in mind that more trees mean more

development strength, and protecting forests means protecting wealth.

At the same time, as urged in the meeting, immediate steps should be taken to generate clean energy such as wind and solar energy, and build a grid that can integrate and store wind, solar, thermal and nuclear power. There is also a need for local governments to improve the education system and provide more support for universities and colleges in the region, so as to improve people's education quality and level, and leverage the talents thus developed to push for the full revitalization of Northeast China.

In the meeting, the central authorities also said that efforts should be made to improve the political environment so as to boost people's confidence in development. Officials at all levels should work toward that end.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Thorsten J. Pattberg

China has to better protect culture for security

The world has made remarkable advances in high-tech, such as artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing, as well as the life sciences. We travel into space, we build driverless cars, we carry a thousand libraries in our pockets, and our chickens are gene-manipulated so they won't fall sick.

The world is less aware, though, about the strides we have taken in the realm of humanities.

To simplify things, let us refer to the realm of humanities — cultures, languages and the arts — as the “fifth dimension”. Culture is separate from four-dimensional material civilization.

Many things we previously thought as objective and real have now turned, figuratively speaking, fictile, relative and debatable. The humanities dictate history, laws, values, languages, communication and all relations.

The phenomenon of social construction

in the West is known to all. Combined with its advanced machines and computers, the West can now erase a faith or religion, make a country gay, turn a woman into a man and vice-versa, lie through its teeth when reporting a big event, and, most importantly, separate human beings from the world. I am talking about cyberspace, parallel universes, role-playing games, mass media and fiction.

Everything is a construct, and often what matters most is who came first. When the Europeans discovered the Americas, they could do whatever they wanted with the land and the Indigenous peoples: “You are the sheriff, he is the professor, I am the priest.”

When the United States attacked Japan in 1945, Japanese samurai warriors complained that the Americans were illiterates, and were not qualified to practice sword-play, or use bows and arrows. Every “foreign devil” could hold a rifle and kill all the samu-

rais of Japan from a safe distance.

Today, the Americans construct everything in Japan from distance: markets, media, entertainment, politics, education — you name it, they do it.

The West has built great portals to the “fifth dimension”. The plan is to regulate and create identities, histories, ideologies and make-beliefs for us from a distance. It is like watching a group of Western hackers on the computer screen committing a crime.

When our Chinese engineers inspect their partner infrastructure projects abroad, especially in Belt and Road countries, they report back that Westerners have already logged in with their alternative realities, instigating the local people, invoking racist and anti-Chinese sentiments. They are disrupting relations, freezing bank accounts and spreading fake news. They close China's Confucius Institutes, ban Chinese degrees, and slander

Chinese companies without any basis.

Another shocking fact, especially for older readers, is that technologies can make virtual images, voices, videos, books and persons look and sound real. What are the facts? Truth is laughed at. Celebrities are manufactured. To make what you think is valuable and real, you need patents, property rights and other protective measures. Think of a five-dimensional legal system.

To overcome these barriers, China needs to do certain things. Culture is vital to national security too. That's why China has to better protect Chinese culture. Therefore, the future of Chinese culture now largely depends on how that culture is constructed, regulated and expanded.

The author is a German writer and cultural critic. The opinions expressed here are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

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Rejecting call for cease-fire means killing more civilians

Leaders who have refused to call for immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip have become an accomplice to war crimes as a total of 8,805 people, including 3,650 children and 2,252 women, have been killed in Israel's bombardments over the past three weeks. The numbers are rising rapidly.

The situation has become so dire that UNICEF, the United Nations agency for children, said on Tuesday that “Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children. It's a living hell for everyone else”. Almost half of Gaza's 2.3 million population are children.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees, told the UN Security Council on Monday that the entire population of Gaza is becoming “dehumanized”. He decried Israel's “collective punishment” and said that a cease-fire has become a matter of life and death for the 2.3 million people.

The reckless, brutal bombing in densely populated areas has been truly appalling. On Tuesday, Israel claimed that it eliminated a Hamas official during its air strike in Jabalia refugee camp. No one knows whether the Hamas official was actually killed, but for sure dozens of innocent people, including children, were reportedly killed in the raid.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Tuesday denounced Israel's bombing around the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital, the main cancer facility in Gaza where services are no longer functional after Israel severed electricity supply (along with water, food and medicine supplies) to Gaza, and restricted the entry of medicine and other supplies. In some hospitals in Gaza, doctors had to operate patients in the hallways, without anesthesia.

Despite the tragedy playing out in Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dismissed global calls for a cease-fire or temporarily halt the fighting to enable emergency aid deliveries of food, medicine, drinking water and fuel. This is despite the warning by International Criminal Court's Prosecutor Karim Khan that blocking humanitarian aid could be a war crime.

The US administration has been an enabler of the humanitarian crisis. The HuffPost reported on Oct 13 that US State Department officials instructed staff to make sure press materials do not include three specific phrases: “de-escalation/cease-fire”, “end to violence/bloodshed” and “restoring calm”.

The US is one of the 14 countries which last Friday voted against Jordan's motion at the UN General Assembly, calling for a sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities. An overwhelming 120 countries, including China, voted for the motion in a powerful message by the international community.

Washington has fully endorsed Israel's military operations in Gaza. On Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was speaking at a Senate hearing for \$14.3 billion in military assistance to Israel when he was disrupted by angry protesters, not once but multiple times with their palms painted “bloody” red and repeatedly yelling “cease-fire now” and “you have blood on your hands”.

The US insists that a “cease-fire will only benefit Hamas”. But for the rest of the world, a cease-fire will help save countless, innocent lives in Gaza.

The White House's indifference to the suffering of Palestinian people is shocking. US President Joe Biden challenged the accuracy of the death toll in Gaza instead of condemning the slaughtering of civilians, prompting the Palestinian health ministry in Gaza to publish the full list of names with ID numbers of the more than 6,000 people killed.

Calling for a cease-fire has also become politically incorrect in parts of Europe. Paul Bristow, a Conservative MP, was fired on Monday from his government job at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology after urging British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to call for a “permanent cease-fire” in Gaza.

But like US leaders, Sunak was also alone as demonstrated by the half a million people pouring into the streets in London on Saturday in support of Palestine and calling for a cease-fire.

History will prove that those who refused to call for immediate cease-fire have blood on their hands.

Li Bing

West's development plans face uncertainties



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Improving infrastructure connectivity is the most significant contribution of the Belt and Road Initiative to regional and global development in the 10 years since its launch. Belt and Road projects have galvanized about \$1 trillion investment in diverse infrastructure sectors. The projects have also created more than 420,000 jobs and helped lift about 40 million people out of poverty, mainly in developing countries.

This prompted developed economies to launch various initiatives involving substantial investment, although the initiatives continue to face formidable challenges in implementation.

A series of infrastructure initiatives, including the United States' “Build Back Better World”, the European Union's “Global Gateway”, and the G7's “Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment” targeting the Global South, have been launched by the developed world in an attempt to counter the Belt and Road Initiative.

The developed world has vowed to invest huge amounts to promote these initiatives. For example, the G7 leaders pledged to mobilize \$600 billion by 2027 for the PGII projects, and work out ambitious blueprints to make the initiative a success.

Also, at the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September, a group of G20 member states launched the “India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor”, with the aim of improving economic connectivity between the Indian sub-continent and Europe via the Middle East.

While the initiatives, including the IMEEC, may sound promising, the reality is different. Western countries have failed to give a clear list of funding sources, with several projects indicating a preference for leveraging private investment despite the disinterest of private investors to put money in such projects in developing and less-

developed countries because of the slow and low returns and high risks.

The West has also been facing serious funding shortage even for domestic infrastructure projects. An American Society of Civil Engineers report says there is \$2.6 trillion infrastructure investment gap while the Joe Biden administration has pledged only \$550 billion for projects under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act plan.

Domestic infrastructure development projects in EU countries, too, are facing funding problems. Additionally, the EU has a €470 billion (\$497.12 billion) shortage a year through to 2030 in its climate fund which could undermine its fight against climate change, and €65 billion shortage in its digital economy fund, which could derail its digital economy infrastructure development plan.

Firm promises but slow action has become a typical characteristic of the West. The developed economies promising to provide climate financing for developing countries to help the latter adapt to and mitigate climate change is a typical example of such a promise, said Republic of the Congo President Denis Sassou Nguesso at the “New Global Financing Compact Summit” in France in June. Sassou Nguesso said developed countries pledged to provide \$100 billion annually to assist developing countries in addressing climate change, a goal that has remained unfulfilled since its establishment in 2009.

Development is at the heart of China's reform and opening-up. In the 45 years since the launch of reform and opening-up, infrastructure connectivity has played a vital role in fueling China's fast-paced economic growth.

In a report “For the Common Values and Dignity of All Humanity: China's Practice of and Contribution to Global Human

Rights Governance”, published on Sept 19, 2023, China has underscored the role of development, saying it is key to solving almost all problems; it is the foundation for human rights protection and essential to making people happy.

China is ready to share its Belt and Road experience, as well as its overall economic development policy with countries of the Global South so they can take a leaf out of it, if they want to, and apply it to boost their development. Yet China is a big supporter of every country choosing the development model that best suits it.

The Belt and Road Initiative has helped boost development and alleviate poverty in many countries of the Global South. China has helped various developing countries in implementing more than 6,000 livelihood projects, boosting local development, and built agricultural technology demonstration centers in more than 30 countries. It has also nurtured nearly 20 million development talents in more than 160 countries, with special focus on vocational education through initiatives such as the “Lu Ban Workshop”, which has trained a large number of skilled workers in over 20 countries.

Western countries are increasingly turning their dislike for the Belt and Road Initiative into efforts to mobilize funds for infrastructure projects in the Global South. As the saying goes, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery”. Indeed, the Western economies have been trying to counter the Belt and Road Initiative by launching initiatives that seem like the China-proposed infrastructure connectivity plan.

According to the World Bank, the global infrastructure investment demand is projected to reach \$94 trillion by 2040, with a funding gap of nearly \$18 trillion, which means investment in infrastructure in developing countries could become a new,

powerful driver of global development.

And as David Sacks, a fellow at the think tank Council on Foreign Relations, said of the BRI, “it is important to note that it is addressing a real issue, namely the urgent and unmet need for infrastructure investment”.

Yet Western economies are becoming more inclined to view things through a “zero-sum game” lens rather than engaging in win-win cooperation. They have been trying to tarnish Chinese investments in Belt and Road countries, especially African countries, by claiming they are environmentally unsustainable and “debt traps” for the host countries.

In reality, however, as the Green Silk Road gains momentum, the sustainability of China's infrastructure projects is becoming even more evident. Besides, the proportion of host countries' Belt and Road-related debt is minimal. According to the “Debt Justice” report in the United Kingdom, the 49 African countries whose data are available owe only 12 percent of their external debt to China compared with 35 percent to Western private institutions. And while Chinese loans come with an average interest rate of 2.7 percent, Western loans charge an interest rate of 5 percent.

Perhaps Western countries should take a moment to reflect. In fact, it would be beneficial to both them and the African countries if they redirect their efforts toward cooperation in infrastructure development and develop a win-win relationship with China and the host countries.

The author is an assistant research fellow at the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global 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.

ONG TEE KEAT

Banking on amity

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of China's principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness in neighborhood diplomacy, the glue binding China-ASEAN relations must be nurtured to unleash game-changing deeds

Ten years on, China's neighborhood diplomacy has become a model of partnership featuring amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness.

As 2023 is drawing to a close, China's renewed interest in amity vis-a-vis its neighbors in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations makes the 10th anniversary more commemorative and meaningful, even more because it coincides with the 20th anniversary of China's accession to



the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

The TAC, which is the foundational peace treaty for ASEAN, was established in 1976. It embodies the universal principles of peaceful coexistence and friendly cooperation among its member states and beyond. In retrospect, China was among the first countries outside ASEAN to accede to the treaty in 2003, followed by the rollout of China's principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness in neighborhood diplomacy 10 years later.

It shows consistency on the part of China in upholding its commitment to promoting perpetual peace and cooperation in its global engagement over the decades. This has later evolved into three global initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative — that embrace the entire humanity. Within two decades after China's accession to the treaty, the emergence of the three global initiatives has taken the shared aspirations of the TAC to a higher plane.

Complementarity of the three initiatives in the pursuit of enduring peace and prosperity through cooperation in development has proven a viable alternative to the prevailing international order which is characterized by an ailing global governance.

From the Chinese perspective, development and security can never be mutually exclusive. Development is seen as the basis for security, while security sets the conducive environment for development. Indeed, there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

While acknowledging that development needs are universal, solitary development across any region is no guarantee to collective security. Conversely, it's the wisdom of amity which encapsulates the willingness to share the development dividends that will deliver peace.

The lofty ideal of building a global community with a shared future epitomizes the wisdom of sharing — be it in the wealth of expertise, experience or fruits of prosperity — from the perspective of Chinese philosophy. This goes far beyond the notion of "prosperity-neighbors" as the BRI is a global endeavor. It goes beyond the close neighbors of China.

In this context, the Global Development Initiative serves as an enabling development architecture that promotes trans-border cooperation in sustainable development, aligning it to the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda. Alongside the BRI, the Global Development Initiative starkly contrasts the working principles of both the Global Gateway initiated by the European Union and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) sponsored by the G7. Both are largely motivated by the private investment returns.

Undeniably, the amity has remarkably transformed the regional landscape of infrastructure and logistical connectivity in ASEAN. The China-Laos Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway could not have been possible, had the projects not been motivated by the sustainable amity underpinning the BRI.

This crucial element in the neighborhood diplomacy of China is now all set to



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

As we usher in the second decade of the BRI, more green initiatives centered on low carbon sustainable development are now the new priorities on the ASEAN development agenda, ushering in a new age of development for the well-being of its 670 million people.

scale greater heights and explore more dimensions of the ASEAN's development needs, following the announcement of eight major steps at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

As we usher in the second decade of the BRI, more green initiatives centered on low carbon sustainable development are now the new priorities on the ASEAN development agenda, ushering in a new age of development for the well-being of its 670 million people.

Unlike the "hard connectivity" involving physical infrastructure that warrants heavy capital outlay, the eight major steps

promised capacity building and skill empowerment to meet the societal needs of the BRI partner countries, thus adding a new dimension of "soft connectivity" to the mammoth initiative.

Parallel to this, the "small yet smart" programs related to livelihood assistance are anticipated to emerge in numbers to benefit millions of people across the Global South, including ASEAN.

The programs might sound small and micro in size as compared to the gigantic development projects in the past. Nonetheless, this is an important move looking set to help reshape the competitiveness of the BRI partner countries. All these could not have been possible had it not been for the consistency and persistency in upholding the amity, and the creativity to translate it into game-changing deeds.

In hindsight, the initial shared aspiration of pursuing amity between China and ASEAN could have been merely motivated by the contemporary needs for promoting peace and prosperity across the region. Little had the TAC's founders and signatories envisioned that this has gone a long way in unleashing enormous potential of multidimensional development in the region of over 2 billion people.

Be that as it may, we can ill-afford to take the established amity for granted. While we celebrate the 10th anniversary of China's neighborhood diplomacy alongside the first decade milestone of the BRI, the element of amity which remains central to the China-ASEAN relations must be properly nurtured with care and sensitivity, more so against the backdrop of widening global trust deficit amid the prevailing international order.

The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for the Asia-Pacific and former transport minister of Malaysia. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

NABIL FAHMY

A perfect platform

BRI with mutual respect and shared interests is helping China and Egypt to cooperate for mutual benefits as well as security and development for mankind



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Egypt is today the largest recipient of Chinese investment in the Arab world. The economic cooperation between the two countries has created thousands of job opportunities...

Emirates were invited to join Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa in an expanded BRICS. It was noteworthy that China was one of those supporting the addition of these new members, because it would provide the BRICS group with a wider and more diverse platform to speak and legitimately compete in international economic affairs.

Equally if not more strategic is the Belt and Road Initiative, first presented by President Xi Jinping a decade ago in a speech in Kazakhstan and then very shortly afterwards in Indonesia — the Silk Road Economic Belt coupled with the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road for infrastructure connectivity to facilitate trade and movement of goods and services. On Oct 17 and 18, China hosted the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. The initial emphasis was on high-quality development and the evolution of the thinking into calls for stronger mutual trust, more cooperative mechanisms and a better connectivity network, linking land, sea, air and cyberspace. There has also been a call for promoting international industrial capacity cooperation and cultural exchanges including people-to-people engagements imperative for sustained growth, understanding and cooperation.

In following the BRI from a Middle East perspective, I vividly remember President

Xi's participation at the China-Arab Summit in Saudi Arabia about a year ago, during which substantial economic investment and trade agreements were reached. But what resonated most in my mind was his speech before the summit where he emphasized "mutual respect and shared interests". These phrases did not fall on deaf ears and were instrumental, well beyond economics and trade, in China later hosting the Iran-Saudi Arabia political talks and the successful conclusion of the framework agreement reached.

Reflecting on the development of Egyptian-Chinese economic cooperation, political relations between the two countries have always been good, particularly with Egypt being the first Arab country that established diplomatic relations with China; even economic relations have increasingly gained momentum.

Egypt is today the largest recipient of Chinese investment in the Arab world. The economic cooperation between the two countries has created thousands of job opportunities, as the BRI approach is greatly consistent with Egypt's national 2030 economic program which has a very significant infrastructural and logistics component. In the same context, the Chinese trade and development zone in Egypt presently attracts 145 companies with investments of over \$1.7 billion. And China has provided financing for Egypt's new electric train facility.

Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli represented his country at the third Belt and Road Forum, being accompanied by several ministers. The delegation concluded a number of framework agreements, including upgrades to airport facilities, expanding Chinese investments in green hydrogen facilities and agreeing on arrangements to creatively deal with accumulated debt for developmental purposes.

The BRI and the commitment to "mutual respect and shared interests" will provide a healthy platform for China and Egypt to cooperate for their mutual benefit as well as security and development for mankind.

The author is former foreign minister of Egypt and a visiting senior fellow at Peking University's Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

After the travel restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted earlier this year, I resumed making frequent trips to China in late summer. I first visited Chengdu in Sichuan province, which I found to be meticulously developed and yet very appreciative of its environmental character and features. I am now in Beijing for a diverse series of events and intellectual engagements, some cultural and others related to geopolitics. Yet I already sense a vibrant, engaged society,



recognizing the challenges ahead but confident about being able to address them, including the much-discussed problems in the real estate sector and the capacity of China to continue to be an engine of global economic growth.

China has become a significant factor in world affairs, trade, economic and otherwise.

First and foremost is the increasingly shrill tone of North American pundits vis-a-vis China, openly portraying it as the most strategically threatening adversary and withholding technological cooperation such as in the supply of microchips to Chinese manufacturers like Huawei, albeit without advocating a complete decoupling of North American and Chinese economies. Decoupling can be detrimental to both sides.

This has even fueled differences between the United States and the European Union on trade and technology exports, with the former calling for increased EU tariffs on steel and aluminum products from China. A phone call between the US secretary of state and his Chinese counterpart recently was described as "constructive", but has not yet led to concrete steps to recalibrate relations.

Second, China is growing as an economic power, and with that comes a growing political footprint and geopolitical role. In the past, it was more common and comfortable to frame China's position within the "developing world and China grouping". Many of China's positions remain consistent with those of developing countries. However, I believe one can constructively conclude that China has also outgrown this positioning and is now more comfortable, more capable of playing a bigger leadership

role in the world community, and more willing to do so in a multidisciplinary fashion.

What really surprises me is that many in the West seem surprised by the emergence of China as an international factor to be reckoned with, even though it has been a gradual, incremental strategic process. In his seminal book on China, Henry Kissinger, former US secretary of state and former national security advisor, clearly underlines that the Chinese thought process is fundamentally strategic and laments that is not

frequently the case in the US.

Another reason for my surprise at the West's surprise is that China has been quite transparent in rolling out its readiness and intention to take on an increasing leadership role. China has developed and actively promoted a number of strategic initiatives and proposals as many countries complained about economic inequalities and disparities or the failure of the Bretton Woods System to respond to their development needs. Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

LIFE

Producing the goods

This year's Beijing International Cultural and Tourism Consumption Expo didn't disappoint, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Jack Boama from Ghana was surrounded by eager Chinese consumers clamoring to buy the distinctive products he brought from his homeland to a recent cultural and tourism consumption expo in Beijing.

"They showed great interest in our products and purchased a lot of them," says Boama, who has been promoting Ghanaian specialties in China for more than five years.

The cocoa bean and avocado butters, black soaps, and handmade artworks — ranging from straw and leather bags to ceramics and drums — piqued the interest of many customers during the Beijing International Cultural and Tourism Consumption Expo, which opened on Oct 20.

"They are all made from natural elements typical of our country's resources, and can all be used in daily life," Boama says.

Boama attributes the increasing popularity of his country's products to modern Chinese customers' preference for natural goods and a simple lifestyle.

"Their travels have also given them a taste for exotic artworks," Boama says, adding that Chinese travelers who buy from him often hang African art at home for decoration or keep it as collectibles.

He has taken part in many promotional events around China over the years, at places including Shanghai, Changsha, provincial capital of Hunan province, and Hefei, the capital city of Anhui province.

"The Chinese market is good," Boama says, adding that the Belt and Road Initiative has played a positive role in facilitating the trade of souvenirs and goods between China and Ghana.

Boama was among representatives from 350 companies and organizations involved in selling cultural products and tourist experiences that were present at the Beijing expo.

They ranged from companies involved in selling products and tourist services, to ones offering travel equipment and AI and robotic solutions for travel. The event was hosted by the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism.

Some 20 provinces and autonomous regions from around the country, as well as 18 overseas exhibitors, including France, Sri Lanka, Serbia and Thailand, showcased what they have to offer at the expo.

Exquisite handmade scarves, rugs and ethnic costumes exuded a strong South Asian vibe at the Pakistani booth.

"Chinese consumers recognize high-end products, and appreciate their value," says Yang Han, sales manager of a Zhejiang-based company mainly specializing in the trade of handmade products from Pakistan.

"They are drawn to delicate handicrafts, such as silk embroidery, as well as the fact that every single piece is one of a kind," Yang



Top: Visitors inquire about food and skin-care products from the Republic of Mali at the recently held Beijing International Cultural and Tourism Consumption Expo, where representatives from 350 companies and organizations promote cultural specialties and tours. **Above left:** A counter with wine from France. **Above right:** A counter sells herbal products from Thailand. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“Chinese consumers recognize high-end products, and appreciate their value. Many of our customers have traveled the world, and they understand different cultures.”

Yang Han, sales manager of a company trading handmade products from Pakistan

says, adding that most of his customers have given him positive feedback, especially for Pakistani rugs.

Yang's company has seen consistent growth in the sale of Pakistani goods in China over the past decade, which he attributes to both the sophisticated taste of Chinese consumers and the good relations between the two countries.

"Many of our customers have traveled the world, and they understand different cultures," Yang says.

Moreover, the Chinese government has given vigorous support to Yang's business, such as favorable customs and tax policies, which he says has facilitated the import of the handicrafts his company sells.

"This, in turn, helps ensure the

craftsmen in Pakistan live a quality life," Yang says.

At the Serbian booth, coffees, chocolates and crystals were on display, attracting a continuous flow of visitors.

"A considerable number of Chinese consumers have warmed up to the country's products, especially brand-name coffees," says Zhang Wenjie, who helped receive visitors to the booth on behalf of the Serbian national industry and commerce federation.

General sales of Serbian-brand coffee in China have been trending upward over the past eight years, Zhang says.

Even during the past three years, in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, sales continued growing

slowly but steadily — at between 3 and 5 percent annually — he adds.

Participation in the expo is part of Serbian efforts to expand the presence of its products in the Chinese market, Zhang notes.

China offers a favorable duty-free policy on many Serbian products. "It has been a great incentive for us, as it helps cut costs, and we have been seeing more enthusiasm in trade," Zhang says.

At the Thailand counter, a Thai salesperson called Sarah was answering questions from enthusiastic Chinese visitors.

"We brought 10 products from Thailand this time," says Sarah, who speaks fluent Chinese.

As one of the most popular outbound destinations for Chinese

tourists, Thailand has many products, especially herbal products for skin problems, which are very popular among Chinese travelers.

This prompted Sarah and her team to bring Thai products closer to consumers here.

"We'd like them to be able to get our products on their doorstep, without having to travel far," Sarah says.

She says that Thai herbal products have enjoyed brisk sales during her participation in multiple promotional events this year, including those in Shandong and Sichuan provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

"We'll certainly participate in more events like the Beijing expo, if more opportunities present themselves," she says.

Nalika Kodikara, minister-counselor of commercial affairs with the Embassy of Sri Lanka in China, also attended the Beijing expo to highlight what her country can offer as a tourist destination.

"This is a good time for Chinese tourists to visit Sri Lanka, as we have a preferential policy to welcome Chinese tourists," Kodikara says.

Visa-free entry for Chinese travelers has been approved by the Sri Lankan government and has been in effect since last month, she adds.

Chinese travelers have shown enthusiasm for the wildlife, landscapes, history and heritage of Sri Lanka.

"They love to visit our spice gardens and tea plantations," Kodikara says.

"Since March, we have seen a tremendous increase in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Sri Lanka," she adds.

Now there are five direct flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu in Sichuan province, Guangzhou in Guangdong province and Kunming in Yunnan province. The Chinese account for the third-largest group of international tourists to Sri Lanka so far this year, Kodikara says.

During the recent third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in China, the two sides spoke positively of the progress of bilateral cooperation on culture and tourism.

In a joint statement from the forum, the two sides said they will continue to encourage their citizens to travel to each other's countries and provide assistance for each other to expand tourism. Both sides agreed to encourage better air connectivity. Sri Lanka is ready to introduce more policies to facilitate tourism, while China is ready to provide facilities to build a Sri Lankan Buddhist pagoda at the Baima Temple in Luoyang, Henan province.

With government support on both sides, Kodikara is confident that more Chinese travelers will visit Sri Lanka and play a bigger role in promoting tourism and its economy.

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Hunger games in Beijing, without subtitles

The nose runs. Feet smell. English is a funny tongue, but it gets the job done. The only other language I speak fluently outside my country is body. And I was getting by until one day I made it to China.



Moumita Mukherjee
Second Thoughts

Sanskrit and Tamil, two of the world's oldest languages, are said to have significantly influenced the ancient Chinese language. Even today, the character *mi* in both Tamil and Chinese translates as "you", while the word Mandarin, which is China's official language, has its etymological roots in the Sanskrit word *mantrin* (royal counselors). Both the ancient Indian languages were part of my bachelor's course in comparative literature, but they didn't come in handy when my smattering of Chinese was met with

blank stares at every *fanguan* (restaurant) and *shangdian* (shop).

The sheer futility of my efforts was exasperating, and I decided to fall back on my trusted body language. I was so convinced that this would work that I advised a colleague, who also hails from my hometown, to ditch her not-so-reliable translation apps and gesticulate instead. We quickly realized that playing dumb charades with the unsuspecting *fuwuyuan* (servers) wasn't exactly the smartest idea.

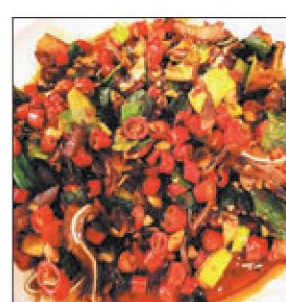
The two of us got chased down an alleyway for (inadvertently) not paying for our meal; were almost thrown out of a beer-and-barbecue joint for having seemingly shocking food preferences; and we definitely scared for life our pepper-shy "Bong" taste buds.

For those uninitiated in Indian media terminology, "Bong" is a term fondly used to describe the colonized, cosmopolitan Bengali — the English-speaking, Continental

food-craving native of the eastern Indian state of West Bengal. Once a parochial label, "Bong" has now become a self-appellation of pride through a hint of humor and self-reflexive irony.

So, it was my birthday. My colleague, as generous as she is, decided to take me out for dinner and drinks. I watched with newfound admiration as an archetypal Bong girl, comfortable with only cash or card transactions, effortlessly scanned a QR code and ordered food at a restaurant during her first month in Beijing. She even got us cocktail refills with a synchronized set of gestures and facial expressions. Certain that she had paid for everything too, we walked out of the restaurant after our meal.

"Maidan, maidan," a waitress ran behind us screaming. My colleague was baffled, because *maidan* in our mother tongue — and in a few other Indian languages — means play-



Stir-fried bacon and mushroom at the eatery serving Hunan cuisine. MOUMITA MUKHERJEE / CHINA DAILY

ground. Thanks to my few lessons in Chinese, I knew the waitress was asking us to clear the check. It turned out that the eatery, which had recently opened, was yet to integrate its ordering and payment systems, and customers were

required to pay by scanning a separate QR code.

Once bitten, twice shy? Nah, not Bongs.

A couple of weeks after the *fauz pas*, we decided to try out a Japanese-style *yakiniku* (grilled meat) restaurant in Beijing. A waitress escorted us to our table and, using a voice translation app on her phone, inquired if we had dietary or religious restrictions. My colleague vigorously shook her head, drew imaginary circles with her hands and said, "We eat all meat." The waitress rolled her eyes, rushed to her fellow workers and showed them something on her phone. They chorused, "*Meiyou, meiyou*", suggesting that the restaurant didn't serve what we wanted, and gestured that we must leave. It took us a bewildering few minutes to understand that the app on the waitress' phone had translated "all meat" into *gourou* (dog meat), leaving everyone horrified.

My views about translation apps vindicated, we decided to hone our gesticulation skills before our next food adventure — *gan la* (dry and spicy) Hunan cuisine.

Now, in Bengal, the use of chili peppers is frugal. Any typical meat curry is prepared with two to four green or red chilies, depending on the quantity cooked and the flavor desired. By comparison, Hunan food is bold (when bold is a euphemism for your burning innards). We learned it the hard way. Our stir-fried bacon and mushroom came buried in ultrahot peppers, because — you guessed it — our animated hand movements and facial expressions were all unintelligible to the waitress.

It's about time we either take some serious lessons in Chinese, or someone invents a mind-reading pill.

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LIFESHANGHAI



Shanghai Book Mall reopens on Oct 28 after a two-year refurbishment project. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Start of a fresh, new chapter

Bookstore back in business as it opens its doors again after two-year refurbishment, **Zhang Kun** reports in Shanghai.

Shanghai Book Mall, arguably the largest bookstore in the city, celebrated its reopening on Saturday, after a refurbishment project that kept it closed for two years.

The seven-story building is home to half a million books, according to Niu Yefang, president of the Shanghai Xinhua Media Co., the parent company of the bookstore.

"My parents used to bring me to the book mall and let me pick the books that I wanted when I was a kid, so I decided to bring my own daughter and hope she can find the same joy of reading like I did," one customer said, as she browsed through the picture books section on the fourth floor with her 5-year-old daughter on the first day of business at the newly refurbished bookstore.

Shanghai Book Mall, located on downtown's Fuzhou Road, is not just a brick-and-mortar bookstore, but is closely connected to the memories of local residents, and of great significance to the cultural life of the city, Niu told the media during a preview a day before the reopening.

Fuzhou Road was one of the four main roads in downtown Shanghai leading to the Huangpu River when

the city firstly opened up as an international harbor some 180 years ago. From the 1840s onward, it was dotted with bookstores and publishing houses. It is known as the "street of culture".

One of the top 10 cultural landmark projects in Shanghai, the Book Mall opened at No 456 Fuzhou Road on Dec 30, 1998. The building covered a ground area of 3,713 square meters and, while the bookstore occupied the seven bottom stories, the floors above were occupied by the offices of the Shanghai Century Publishing Group Co.

By 2021, the publishing house had moved to a new publishers' park in the suburban Qibao town in Minhang district, where it was provided with larger offices and new facilities. That same year, on Oct 19, the whole building was shuttered for refurbishment.

"It has been two long years, and the people of Shanghai have looked forward to the return of their favorite bookstore," Niu says. A bookstore is different from any other business, he says. "You might come across a book, or simply a paragraph in a book, that changes your life forever. I don't believe any other business is

You might come across a book, or simply a paragraph in a book, that changes your life forever. I don't believe any other business is capable of having such a great impact."

Niu Yefang, president of the Shanghai Xinhua Media Co.

capable of having such a great impact."

Inspired by the metaphor for books as "the lighthouse for one's life", Yu Ting, chief architect of the makeover project designed the new facade to look like the pages of a book, which will light up brightly in the evening.

He also made sure to retain people's memories of the original building. A relief on the original facade had a Chinese proverb that read, "diligence is the path up the mountain of knowledge" in several different languages. That wall was partly preserved and erected in the ground floor lobby. A column in the original building was also preserved on the second floor.



"I hope visitors who come across it as they stroll through the bookshelves will be happily surprised," Niu says.

The book retail business has gone through drastic changes since the opening of Shanghai Book Mall in 1998. At that time, it was known as one of the largest centers for the publication, distribution and retail of books not only in China, but also in the whole of the Far East.

The book mall covered a business area of more than 10,000 sq m, is said to have housed so many titles that the number was equivalent to that of the total number of books published in China over a two-year period.

"You could find a lot of books that are not available in other book-

stores," Niu recalls. The large mall, unprecedented in China at the time, equipped with the latest computerized search system changed the widely accepted national perception of bookstores, which were usually street-side shops of about 100 sq m. "Quite a few other cities followed suit and built their own large-scale bookstores with similar structures and business models as Shanghai Book Mall."

Now that the internet has fundamentally changed people's reading habits and book-buying behavior, brick-and-mortar bookstores are in urgent need of making changes.

Niu believes an important mission of the bookstore is to initiate new connections between books and readers, through interpersonal communications and in-person events.

As part of the refurbishment, the architect had part of the ceilings on the third and fifth floor removed to open up two vertical halls that can host chamber concerts, mini-theater performances and other events. The high open halls also invite natural light into the mall.

The Writer's Study on the second floor was designed to bring writers closer to readers. Every three

months a new writer will be featured in this section, where their creations are showcased alongside a selection of books that either have given them inspiration, or they have enjoyed reading and want to share with others. Reading events and book launches will also be held there.

On the seventh floor, a new Shanghai Illustration Art Center has opened with the inaugural exhibition named *Hello, Shanghai*, featuring work by Norwegian illustrators Mari Kanstad Johnsen, Bjorn Rune Lie, and Kristin Roskifte, who participated in a 17-day artists' residency program organized by Magikon Publishing from Norway and Shanghai International Children's Book Fair in 2019.

During their stay, the three artists immersed themselves, as keen observers, into Shanghai, uncovering its distinctive allure and documenting their experiences.

Being exhibited are paintings showing their perception of Shanghai as a global metropolis, as well as a hub of diverse cultures in an ever-evolving world.

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Swedish photo museum lifts shutters on first Asian outpost

By HE QI in Shanghai
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Fotografiska, a Swedish contemporary museum of photography, art and culture that originated in Stockholm, opened a branch in Shanghai on Oct 21.

Located in a four-story historical landmark building, overlooking Suzhou Creek, it is Fotografiska's first outpost in Asia.

It includes exhibition spaces, a concept store, a restaurant and a bar that will open until 11 pm every day to cater to the after-work crowd.

"It was always obvious for us that we wanted to be in Shanghai in order to be in China. We think that China has made huge contributions to the vocabulary of imagery and visual language, and we want to be where much of this comes from," says Yoram Roth, chairman of the Fotografiska Group.

Founded in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2010, Fotografiska also has branches in Tallinn in Estonia, New York in the United States and Berlin in Germany.

Christian Devillers, managing director of Fotografiska China, says that the brand concept revolves

We think that China has made huge contributions to the vocabulary of imagery and visual language, and we want to be where much of this comes from."

Yoram Roth, chairman of the Fotografiska Group

around encouraging people to visit the exhibitions before discussing what they've seen with friends over coffee or a meal.

"We think that going to an exhibition should be like going to the



movies. So, come and visit a show, and then have a drink to talk about it," he says.

According to Devillers, the lounge space located on the upper levels of the center is inspired by

the Nordic lifestyle and serves organic wines and a variety of other beverages. The restaurant downstairs will be more contemporary in nature, and offers alfresco dining along the river and the street.

"The public in Shanghai is younger; we will have to take that into consideration in terms of the type of exhibitions we do, the food we serve, the products we retail," Devillers adds.

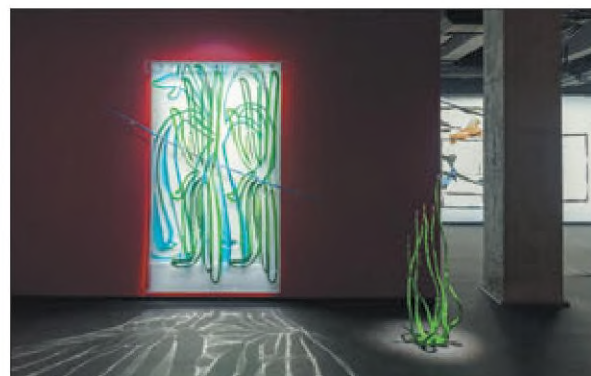
Finding the ideal location to set up the Swedish brand's Shanghai outpost was not easy, he says.

"It is hard for us to share the space with others, because we want

to be able to change the layout, move the restaurant, and expand an exhibition when we need to," he says, adding that finding the historical building next to the Suzhou Creek was lucky, as it resembles the site of the original museum in Stockholm.

The opening shows feature the work of four outstanding artists: Feng Li, Edward Burtynsky, Fan Xi, and Samson Young.

Devillers says that Fotografiska will focus on working with young, emerging photographers, as well as those already well-established in Shanghai.



From left: Visitors are touring a solo exhibition of artist Feng Li at Fotografiska in Shanghai; another artist Fan Xi's work; and the concept store at Fotografiska. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE



By CHINA DAILY

For many people, the perfect career would be one in which they do what they love to make a living, but in reality, not many have either the luck or the luxury to do so, given financial concerns and other considerations. Freelance digital cartoonist Lian Zongbo is fully aware of the pitfalls, but decided to take the plunge and chase his dream, anyway.

After graduating from the South China Agricultural University in 2010, he started as a junior animator at a company in Guangzhou city, Guangdong province, but after six years of mediocrity in the industry, Lian was becoming jaded with life.

"I'd struggled for quite some time at my company. Most of my work was childish. I was looking to do something I was really into," the 36-year-old says.

A huge basketball fan growing up, and adept at a range of drawing methods, Lian discovered a niche market in sports artwork. "I doodled a lot when I was young, daydreaming of becoming a manga legend like Akira Toriyama one day. Then I fell in love with basketball later, and would mimic Kobe Bryant's moves all day long," he explains.

In early 2016, he had the idea of combining his interests. Lian started drawing illustrations based on the NBA and shared them on social media platforms like Sina Weibo and Instagram, but the sporadic feedback initially dampened his enthusiasm.

"I would tag many big sports accounts to no avail, which motivated me to try harder, because I was too proud to admit failure," he says, jokingly.

In January 2017, about a year after he started, he received the message on his Instagram account that would change his life forever. Sent by Conscious Basketball, a team of artists based in the United States that produces art related to the sport, the message invited Lian to display his work at art shows in the US.

Vince Chang, founder of Conscious Basketball, later explains that he came across Lian's work on Pinterest and that to him, what separated Lian from the others was that he was a multifaceted creator. He also had "the illustration skills and the ability to develop in-depth concepts," and his background in animation allowed his work to cross

Drawing inspiration from passion

Basketball cartoonist able to follow dreams as his work gains popularity



Top: An artwork by Lian Zongbo showing legendary NBA players. Above left: A comic strip by Lian featuring NBA stars LeBron James and Giannis Antetokounmpo. Above right: A cartoon self-portrait by Lian. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



over into different mediums, from still to motion.

Lian happily accepted the offer, seeing it as a boost to morale. "To be honest, I was on the brink of giving up on the idea of doing basketball illustrations," says Lian, who goes by the handle "Boblian1206" on Instagram.

The group also shared social media marketing strategies that helped him get the ball rolling.

Lian began visualizing everyday stories from the league, and adding

memes to them. His narrative approach quickly won him a growing number of enthusiasts, including former NBA superstar Dwyane Wade.

"Dope." This was the comment Wade once left on a comic strip about the 2019-20 season's MVP race between LeBron James and Giannis Antetokounmpo. The dialogue-free episode ends with the victorious Greek Freak (Antetokounmpo's nickname) watching James running after a goat, which represents a sports

acronym that stands for the "Great-est of All-Time".

Through experiments like this, Lian developed a humorous and varied style and managed to overcome cultural barriers with his paintbrush.

"Sports itself is a universal language. And drawing is my medium. You can easily resonate with your audience if the content and creativity are there," he says.

As his name became more familiar in the global basketball commu-

nity, more commissions started coming Lian's way. A few months after receiving that fateful message from Conscious Basketball, Lian quit his job and started making basketball-themed artwork full time.

Today, the freelancer has over 210,000 followers on Instagram and Sina Weibo, and regularly creates illustrated and animated content for professional sports teams, brands and media agencies.

Jin Tianyu, social media director of NBA China, says that he thinks

highly of the cartoonist. "We see great value in Lian's art," Jin says. "His remarkable imagination has grabbed the spotlight in the basketball world. It is only logical that we reached out to partner with him."

One of the illustrations Lian produced for NBA China is the huge piece that has been decorating a wall at the company's new office in Beijing since 2021. Featuring 75 well-known NBA players, the drawing has won the hearts of many pundits and fans.

"This is amazing. I looked at it for 10 minutes," wrote one Instagram user with a handle "scjunglist" after seeing it online.

Looking back, Lian summarizes his career as a process of defying the odds.

He says that he was obsessed with manga as a teenager, but that his parents teased him about his passion, never thinking that he would make a career out of it one day.

"And then there were the cold shoulders I got on social media early on," he says. "But I hung in there, and succeeded."

His childhood hobby has now turned into a promising career that has given Lian a more comfortable life, including a large apartment and a brand-new car.

Every morning, he watches NBA matches before turning the highlights into memes and illustrations.

"This is a dream come true. The most satisfying thing isn't the pay, but being able to work with some of my favorite brands, which affords me the freedom to be creative," he says, adding that he earns much more than before.

He says that being consistently creative is the hardest part. "Sometimes I have to rack my brains (to be creative)," he says. "You have to closely follow what's going on in the game, and try to relate that to memes and trending topics."

When asked if he has any advice for others who also want to change jobs to pursue their passions, Lian advises prudence and rational thinking.

"I wouldn't tell people to abandon their current jobs if they are not ready. Financial insecurity could result in anxiety that might bog them down," he says. "Rather, I'd tell them to make full use of their spare time to explore their passions. Be calm; hone your skills. One day it will all pay off."

Yan Weijue contributed to this story.

HK artisan values allure of traditional instrument

HONG KONG — Choi Chang-sau still vividly remembers his first encounter with his master. Over 70 years ago, his father, who ran a musical instrument shop, entrusted him with returning a *guqin*, a plucked seven-stringed musical instrument, that he had repaired, to its owner. The recipient was a gentleman named Xu Wenjing, who had settled in Hong Kong in search of treatment for an eye ailment.

Little did Choi know that this encounter would ignite a lifelong love affair with the *guqin*, an instrument that has resonated through Chinese history for over three millennia.

Xu was a virtuoso in *guqin* performance, the interpretation of ancient scores, and the art of making the instrument, and Choi found himself irresistibly drawn to its allure. In displays of youthful rebellion, he occasionally skipped school to seek the wisdom of his newfound mentor. Through a stroke of fate and the recommendation of a renowned *guqin* artist, Choi was

eventually accepted as Xu's apprentice, embarking on a transformative journey that would shape his destiny.

As Xu's eyesight faded, his hands became the vessel through which the ancient secrets of the *guqin* were transmitted. Choi learned to decipher the intricate nuances of the instrument's curved surface with his fingertips, and honed his ability to discern the subtle characteristics of the wood, its thickness, imperfections, and tonal qualities, simply by listening.

The *guqin* is one of the earliest plucked instruments in China. Among the four arts revered by ancient scholars — *qin* (the *guqin*), *qi* (the game of Go), *shu* (calligraphy), and *hua* (painting) — the *guqin* holds the esteemed position of being the first.

Xu was an adept of the Zhe School (named after the region in Zhejiang), a distinguished lineage emerged during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), and he inherited the venerable tradition. As its torchbearer, Choi then assumed the weighty responsi-

bility of preserving its cultural essence for future generations.

From selecting the finest wood to shaping the instrument, carving the soundboard, hollowing the resonance chamber, polishing, lacquering and stringing, the process of making a *guqin* is undertaken by a single maker. This is a distinctive feature of Choi's craftsmanship.

The completion of a single *guqin* requires an average of 200 hours of meticulous work. To graduate, Choi's apprentices must finish making three instruments and their "graduation certificate" takes the form of a brown apron emblazoned with the words "Choi Chang-sau Qin Making Society".

This society is Choi's institution for teaching and conducting research into the *guqin*. Located on the fifth floor of a building in Shek Kip Mei in Hong Kong's western Kowloon district, it consists of a reception room and two work spaces. The tools and wood are mostly provided by Choi.

Much of the wood used here is over a century old. It comes from a

wide range of sources, including old beams, pillars, doors and wooden furniture salvaged from demolished houses, and even fenders from the docks or old bridge planks purchased from San Francisco.

Since it is the most crucial component, knowing how to find quality wood is one of the most important aspects of heritage preservation. Despite already having a substantial supply of century-old timber, whenever Choi hears of an old building being dismantled, he becomes a treasure hunter.

While wood is essential to *guqin* making, having woodworking experience is not a prerequisite to becoming one of Choi's students. The first requirement is to be able to play the *guqin*.

He believes that people who cannot play will struggle to discern quality and the key to preserving ancient methods lies in having a deep understanding of music, he says.

The physical structure of the *guqin* was formalized during the Wei (220-265) and Jin (265-420)



Choi Chang-sau, 90, a *guqin* maker, sitting in his workshop in Hong Kong. CHEN DUO / XINHUA

dynasties, around 1,800 years ago. Even today, surviving Tang Dynasty (618-907) melodies can be faithfully reproduced, with the musical notations transcending the passage of millennia.

Since the 1960s, Choi has made around 250 *guqin*. Now aged 90, he

spends most of his time overseeing his apprentices as they make instruments of their own, and, within the confines of his modest workshop, this old art form continues to enjoy new life.

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