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Artisans integrate traditional materials, techniques into modern construction

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CHINA DAILY

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Chorus for peace



Protesters block the Manhattan Bridge in New York City in the United States on Sunday to push for a lasting truce in the Gaza Strip. Last week, Israel and Hamas agreed on a four-day cease-fire in Gaza, which halted a conflict that has killed thousands but was set to expire after Monday. GARDINER ANDERSON / REUTERS

Industrial firms keep making steady recovery

Better coordination between monetary, fiscal policies urged to stabilize Chinese economy

By OUYANG SHIJIA ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

China's industrial enterprises saw profits rise for a third straight month in October, an official survey showed on Monday, adding to a run of indicators pointing to a stabilizing economy.

Experts said they expect to see more such indicators in the current quarter and next year as policymakers have announced a series of measures to stabilize the overall economy, prop up the property sector and boost market confidence.

They called for a more supportive fiscal policy and strengthened coordination between monetary and fiscal policies, which will help further bolster the world's second-largest economy and defuse the risks associated with local government debt.

Their comments came as data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday that the profits of major industrial enterprises with annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan (\$2.8 million) went up 2.7 percent year-on-year.

Yu Weining, a statistician at the NBS, attributed the trend of continuous recovery in industrial profits to the steady rebound in industrial production and improved corporate profitability with a series of macroeconomic policies taking effect.

For the January-October period, the profits of major industrial firms fell 7.8 percent year-on-year to 6.12 trillion yuan, narrowing from the 9 percent drop in the first nine months, the bureau said.

In recent months, the country has pledged a series of measures to bolster the economy, including the approval of central government bonds worth 1 trillion yuan, steps to ease the property market and policies to boost the private sector.

Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said that revenues and profits of industrial enterprises both experienced growth in October, a further sign that policy support is helping the manufacturing sector recover.

"That is mainly due to the strengthened recovery of demand in the industrial goods market over the past few months, coupled with a

gradual improvement in industrial product prices and the low comparison base in the previous year," he said.

Zhou said he believes that industrial profits will continue to improve, considering the anticipated economic recovery in the coming months, the improvement in industrial product sales and prices, the strong performance of the high-tech manufacturing sector and the gradual stabilization of the real estate sector.

Zheng Houcheng, chief macroeconomist at Yingda Securities, said he expects the decline in industrial profits to narrow in the first 11 months, but added that industrial profits may continue to be impacted by rising energy prices.

The latest economic data showed signs of improvement in October, with factory output and retail sales growth accelerating, while China's foreign trade registered year-on-year growth.

Meanwhile, China's consumer prices reported negative growth and factory-gate inflation remained in negative territory in October, indicating that the recovery in demand is not yet solid, the NBS data showed.

Experts said the broader economy is still facing pressures from the housing correction and the sluggish external demand, saying more policy support is needed to shore up the economy.

"The key issue going forward is to stabilize the housing market," said Feng Jianlin, chief economist at Beijing POST Economic Consulting Co.

On the demand side, he said that policymakers should promptly introduce more policies supporting people's need for improved housing. On the supply side, the focus is on improving the financial conditions of real estate enterprises, he added.

Feng said it is advisable for the country to set an annual growth target of around 5 percent next year, similar to this year, which will help stabilize market expectations.

He said he expects to see a more supportive fiscal policy in the next few years. "To better drive economic growth, the focus should be placed on spending more on fields including education, healthcare, social security, eldercare and job training."

WORLD WATCH

By Wang Junsheng

Road map needed for solving Korean Peninsula issue

China has always attached importance to peace on the Korean Peninsula. Unfortunately, the development of the current situation is far away from that.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced its success in putting a reconnaissance satellite in orbit on Nov 21. The next day, the Republic of Korea decided to partially suspend the military agreement with the DPRK that was reached in 2018 following the inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang.

The DPRK's launch of a ballistic missile toward the sea likely failed on Wednesday night, hours after Seoul said it would resume front-line aerial surveillance.

The relationship between the ROK and the DPRK is becoming more tense. At present, the two sides have cut off all channels of communication, making it impossible to even engage in basic dialogue.

Not only has the DPRK conducted frequent missile tests, but joint military exercises between the United States and the ROK have become more frequent.

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Critical role played by supply chains in focus ahead of expo

By ZHONG NAN zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China's efforts to advance its industrial system will effectively bolster the global industry and supply chains, empowering both international and domestic businesses to capitalize on a multitude of market opportunities and boost their willingness to invest, said the head of China's top foreign trade and investment promotion agency.

Speaking ahead of the first China International Supply Chain Expo in Beijing, which will run from Tuesday through Saturday, Ren Hongbin, chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, said that China is firmly committed to upholding the public good aspect of industry and supply chains to fully support multilateralism.

"China is not only a beneficiary and defender of the integrated development of the global supply chain but is also an active explorer and builder of a new global supply chain system," he said.

He stressed that the role of global manufacturing and supply chains will continue to be crucial. A new wave of scientific, technological and industrial transformation

is imminent, and this will require major adjustments in the global innovation landscape and economic structure, he said.

Covering a total exhibition area of 100,000 square meters, the CISCE features five major supply chain service areas — smart vehicle, green agriculture, clean energy, digital technology and healthy life. The global gathering is expected to attract the participation of 515 domestic and foreign companies, as well as institutions.

Ren stressed that the scarcest resource in the world today is the market, and the size of the market determines the depth of division of labor, which in turn determines the level of industrial development. With a population of over 1.4 billion and a middle-income group of over 400 million, China's "magnetic attraction" for foreign investment is constantly strengthening, he said.

Lin Meng, director of the Modern Supply Chain Research Institute at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that China's endeavors to build a modern industrial system will improve the world's capacity to address potential supply chain disruptions in the future.

"This will ensure the seamless operation of the global economy in the face of challenges and uncertainties," said Lin.

Backed by the most complete industrial categories and the most comprehensive supporting system according to United Nations standards, China's manufacturing industry has ranked first in the world in terms of scale for 13 consecutive years, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the global share, making the country the "world factory" in the global supply chain, according to information released by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Moreover, China's high-end industries, such as electronics and electrical equipment, are increasing their footprints in the global business landscape. Its new energy industries, such as photovoltaics, are already world leaders.

Emphasizing the substantial risk posed by industrial decoupling to global economic recovery, Zhao Ping, dean of the academy at the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, underscored China's attractiveness to multinational corporations.

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KENYANS HEAD OVER HEELS AFTER TRIP TO CHINA

Acrobatics instructor's experiences reflect deep ties of friendship

By XIE SONGXIN and OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya

Mathias Kavita little knew 40 years ago that a journey to China would dramatically transform his life.

The then 13-year-old boy from Mombasa, Kenya, knew nothing about acrobatics until he and 23 other teenagers watched a film at the Chinese embassy in Nairobi, the African nation's capital. Kavita, a budding gymnast, had just won a national competition.

"Before traveling to China, we underwent orientation, which included watching films of acrobats recorded in China," Kavita



said at his office in Nairobi, which is strewn with equipment for acrobats, some of it imported from China.

Pictures of his past performances hang from the walls, and the office is also home to newspaper cuttings and posters of his past and upcoming shows.

The office is located in the Sarakasi Dome arena, which was built a decade before Kenya attained independence in 1963.

Kavita, who now works with

the Sarakasi Trust to tap young acrobatic talent, said: "As a gymnast back then, the films of acrobats we watched at the Chinese embassy was the first time I had seen such performances. I was particularly impressed by Chinese children performing moves I had never experienced before.

"This made me even more determined to travel to China and learn more."

See Performers, page 2



Online See more by scanning the code.

Rare birth



A staff member checks on a 2-day-old Sumatran rhino calf at the Way Kambas National Park in Lampung Province in Sumatra, Indonesia, on Sunday. The male calf, born to a 7-year-old female named Delilah, marks a milestone in the park's breeding program, as the Sumatran rhino is a critically endangered species with an estimated population of fewer than 80.

INDONESIAN MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY / AFP

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## PAGE TWO



## Performers: Professional training targeted

Acrobats perform in the *Haunted Circus* show at the Sarakasi Dome arena in Nairobi, Kenya on Oct 30. The shows have attracted global attention, and the performers have been invited to appear in Europe and across Africa. XIE SONGXIN / CHINA DAILY

### From page 1

Kavita has since become a top trainer in Kenya, having instructed more than 1,000 acrobats to perform in shows across the world.

"My training in China was instrumental, because it made me an international performer and a good teacher of acrobatics," he said.

In 1983, Kavita heard that the Chinese embassy in conjunction with the Kenyan government was looking for children to send for acrobatics training in China. Those selected would subsequently return to Kenya to work with the government in taking part in shows nationwide to make acrobatics popular among Kenyans.

Kavita had never traveled outside Kenya. After attending several auditions with some 200 students from other schools, he was among the 24 shortlisted to go to China. This was the first step in what turned out to be his long journey in acrobatics.

He has transformed acrobatics in Kenya by introducing the dynamic moves he learned in China 40 years ago into local routines.

As Kenya and China mark 60 years of diplomatic relations next month, few Kenyans can match Kavita's remarkable story of deep-seated friendship and mutual exchanges between the two countries.

### Excited group

In 1983, the group of 24 students could not hide their excitement on arrival in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province.

Kavita said that despite not being as developed as it is today, the city left a huge impression on him, as it was the largest he had visited. He loved its mix of urban and rural life, and was struck by the numerous bicycles, which were the main mode of transportation. "When we arrived at Guangzhou Acrobatic Arts Troupe School, we were greeted by the sight of a huge banner welcoming us," Kavita said.

As the weather in Guangzhou was warm, the Kenyans felt at home and found it easy to adapt to local life.

As the Guangzhou troupe was one of the best internationally known acrobatic groups in China, the young visitors immediately felt they had arrived at the school best suited for them.

The young Kenyan team members learned Chinese within three months, and Kavita said they could communicate well with their Chinese hosts.

As foreign students, they were allocated a teacher to help them learn the language and familiarize themselves with Chinese culture, and this assistance proved vital for them adapting to Chinese ways.

"In addition to the Chinese language teacher, an interpreter helped us communicate, so we managed to grasp the language quite quickly, because Chinese students and teachers at the school mingled with us," Kavita said.

However, with no previous experience in acrobatics, it was not all smooth going for Kavita and his colleagues.

He said the Chinese term "mama laile", which loosely translates as "mama is coming", was one of the first Mandarin expressions he learned. This was because during their early days in China, the Kenyans endured physical pain in order to become as flexible as young Chinese performers at the school.

Despite being strict and demanding a high level of discipline, Kavita said their acrobatics coaches in China were extremely understanding.

Every time his colleagues complained about the demanding rigors of acrobatics or of being homesick, the Chinese teachers told them fondly "mama laile" as a way of letting them know they would eventually be reunited with their families.

"Our teachers in Guangzhou were not only



tough, but also determined to push us beyond our limits. Over time, most of the moves that previously seemed impossible came naturally to us. The school was dedicated to our success, and this can be seen from the fact that we were assigned 16 acrobatics teachers during our two years of training in China," Kavita said.

He particularly remembers one of his teachers who was tough on him during class, but afterward invited him to his home to meet his children, greatly helping Kavita adjust to life overseas.

Due to their Chinese coaches' dedication and skills, the Kenyans mastered their acrobatics training within two years, and were ready to put on professional performances.

But Kavita and his fellow students continued to attend school in China to learn mathematics, English, geography, literature, art and Chinese. His favorite publication was a Chinese booklet titled *Say it in Chinese*, which he carried with him wherever he went.

His most memorable event during his time in China was a graduation performance at the Guangzhou Friendship Theatre, which was attended by ambassadors, officials, and foreign and local students in Guangzhou. Kavita also treasures his graduation certificate,



A young student trains on a trampoline at the Sarakasi Dome arena. Mathias Kavita offers instruction to children every Saturday. XIE SONGXIN / CHINA DAILY

"My training in China was instrumental, because it made me an international performer and a good teacher of acrobatics."

Mathias Kavita, an acrobat who works as a trainer in Nairobi, Kenya

Acrobats train under the guidance of Mathias Kavita in Nairobi. During their performances, they incorporate African routines with Chinese skills.

PHOTOS BY XIE SONGXIN AND WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY



which he keeps in a leather case in his office. "I really appreciate the fact that despite being trained in China, our instructors impressed upon us the need to include an African element in our performances, and always encouraged us to come up with African routines incorporated with the Chinese skills we learned," he said.

### Moves copied

When the group returned to Kenya in 1985, local acrobats started copying moves the students learned in China, such as jumping through hoops and performing handstands on stacked furniture, along with skating and lion dancing.

The group formed a national acrobatic troupe, which toured Kenya to perform at government functions and other events presided over by the African nation's then-president Daniel arap Moi. However, in 1989, Kavita left to pursue a career with another troupe in Mombasa, helping him transition from performer to trainer.

Due to a lack of facilities, his dream of teaching acrobatics was not fulfilled immediately. The shortage of public schools teaching acrobatics in Kenya was also a problem.

Kavita hoped that on returning home, the Kenyan government would build a school like the one in Guangzhou, but construction of such a school has not been started.

"I want to return to the Guangzhou Acrobatic Arts Troupe to see the progress it has made, meet the teachers who trained us, and acquire more knowledge to help me manage acrobatics in Kenya. I would love to advance my training skills and help take Kenya to the next level," said Kavita, who has not been back to Guangzhou since 1985.

China Daily contacted the Guangzhou Acrobatic Arts Troupe to talk to Kavita's coaches, but only one of them from his time with the troupe is still alive, and due to memory loss, he was unable to give a coherent interview.

By developing performances that combine Chinese and African acrobatics, Kavita's shows have attracted attention on the world stage, and his performers have been invited to appear in Europe and across Africa.

On weekdays, his students start arriving at the Sarakasi Dome arena as early as 7 am. When Kavita joins them, they rehearse their moves, which include balancing on unicycles while juggling balls, forming intricate human

pyramids, and practicing head-spinning summersaults and flips.

As Kavita puts them through their paces, he focuses on technique, progression, strength, balance and flexibility. He also injects fun into the lessons, and has created a friendly, close-knit group.

One of the group members, Moses Otieno, 27, has just returned to Kenya from Hebei province, where he undertook a four-month performance tour with six other Kenyan acrobats. Otieno said the tour made him appreciate the Chinese dedication to resources for acrobats and the amount of time spent on the profession.

His main wish is for more Africans to become familiar with Chinese acrobatics, as this will help them become professional performers, while offering the world a unique act that combines Chinese and African concepts.

Bryson Wandabwa Wangilwa, who started training with the children's program at Sarakasi Dome, said he decided to take acrobatics seriously after being encouraged by Kavita.

At the age of 19, he appreciates the chance to learn acrobatics at a professional level, because of the discipline and strong work ethic it has instilled in him. Even though Wangilwa had a different coach while training as a child, his performance has greatly improved since he joined Kavita's class last year.

"I was taught lion dancing by Kavita, who has encouraged me to include moves to create choreography that brings African and Chinese cultures together," Wangilwa said.

"I am encouraged by the coaches who take care of their families, pay school fees for their children, and earn a living from acrobatics. My dream is to be a circus performer, but before I can do that, I hope to get further training, in China if possible."

For dreams such as Wangilwa's to come true, Kavita said it is vital that the links forged between Kenya and China in acrobatics are carried forward to give young enthusiasts opportunities similar to those he had during his younger days.

"I believe that acrobatics is a career like any other, and that being professionally taught by Kenyan and Chinese acrobats can help many young people who are facing unemployment today," Kavita said.

"I plan to return to China to learn how to run a school like the one in Guangzhou. I hope to get a sponsor — government or private — to help me establish the school, as many young people admire what we do, but lack facilities for the proper training to make acrobatics a professional career."

He believes that acrobatics in Kenya, and Africa in general, pays well if performers are professionally trained. He has met many young people who want to train as professionals, but lack the facilities to do so. Instead, they end up staging impromptu performances at markets or major road intersections, but make little money from them.

Kavita also holds training sessions for schoolchildren during weekends, and is available to take private sessions with individuals, schools or organizations.

Eric Musyoka, one of Kavita's students, also feels that a decent living can be made from acrobatics, as long as professional training is given.

"Acrobatics has good potential to grow in Kenya, especially among jobless young people, because it can help them avoid lawless behavior. Acrobatics has changed my life, as apart from performing in various areas of Kenya, I have managed to travel to a number of countries, including a recent trip to Spain," Musyoka said.

Qiu Quanlin in Guangzhou contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at [otiato@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:otiato@chinadaily.com.cn)

## TOP NEWS

## Festival of friends

Members of the Chinese band Wutiaoren perform during the Friends from the East Music Festival at the Knockdown Center in New York, the United States, on Saturday. The festival was held on Saturday and Sunday, and featured performances by four Chinese bands. LI RUI / XINHUA



## China, ASEAN looking to green collaboration

Belt and Road's fruitful outcomes should be expanded, forum told

By XI TIANQI in Vientiane, Laos  
lindaxi@chinadailyhk.com

The Belt and Road Initiative has yielded fruitful, tangible outcomes over the past decade, and now is the time to look to green energy projects to maximize the initiative beyond connectivity, said officials from China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

They made the remarks on Monday in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, during the opening ceremony of a forum hosted by the Beijing-based ASEAN-China Centre. The theme of the forum is "Enhancing Connectivity and Sharing Prosperity: Achievements and Prospects of Aligning BRI with MPAC 2025".

MPAC 2025, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, was put forward by the 10 ASEAN member states in 2016 to boost regional connectivity.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the one-day forum, Saleumxay Kommasith, Laos' deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, said the BRI has made outstanding contributions to boosting regional connectivity and has promoted economic and trade development, investment, people-to-people exchanges and economic and social development among ASEAN countries.

Laos will be the rotating chair of ASEAN in 2024.

Saleumxay said Laos has benefit-

ed considerably from its collaboration with China, and has "responded to the BRI and achieved tangible results".

"Together with China, it implemented the China-Laos railway project, the Laos expressway project and the economic corridor project, which have made positive contributions to the strategy of 'changing a landlocked country into a land-linked country' in Laos," he said.

Saleumxay added that over the past 10 years, the BRI has not only promoted regional development in areas such as infrastructure, interconnection, economic development and investment cooperation, but has also facilitated the adoption of advanced science and technology. He said it has promoted social and cultural exchanges, personnel exchanges, tourism development and mutual understanding and trust among countries.

Shen Yueyue, vice-chairwoman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body, said that landmark projects, including the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, Cambodia's Golden Port Expressway, and the China-Laos Railway, have not only benefited local residents, but have also played a pivotal role in narrowing regional development gaps and promoting economic integration of the region.

Shen also highlighted the rapid development of China-ASEAN relations over the past decade, with trade volume expanding significantly and cumulative two-way investment exceeding \$380 billion as of July.

In 2022, China-ASEAN trade exceeded \$970 billion, up 11.2 percent year-on-year. In 2013, the figure was \$443.6 billion. ASEAN member countries are also home to about 6,500 Chinese companies.

Shen said she would welcome stronger collaboration in various fields, including youth, tourism, education, culture and think tanks, to foster people-to-people connectivity and enhance friendly relations between China and ASEAN. The 2024 China-ASEAN Year of Cultural Exchanges is seen as an excellent opportunity to promote mutual understanding and cultural ties.

## Greater connectivity

Thet Thet Khine, Myanmar's union minister for hotels and tourism, emphasized the benefits of enhancing ASEAN connectivity through improved physical, institutional and people-to-people links.

She highlighted the inauguration of the China-Laos Railway, which has served as a significant milestone in aligning MPAC 2025 with the BRI.

Khine also mentioned ongoing infrastructure projects, such as the

Myanmar-Laos power interconnection projects, which further exemplify the commitment to connectivity.

Shi Zhongjun, secretary-general of the ASEAN-China Centre, discussed the importance of innovation, stressing the significance of green and low-carbon development for sustainable and high-quality economic growth in the region.

He highlighted the need for cooperation in areas such as green infrastructure, green energy and green transportation, saying that dialogue mechanisms are being established to facilitate discussions between stakeholders in ASEAN and China regarding the application of smart technologies, the orderly and secure development of artificial intelligence, and other related topics.

Myanmar's Deputy Foreign Minister Kyaw Myo Htut emphasized Myanmar's dedication to cultural exchanges, personnel mobility and vocational education. Myanmar has actively participated in joint education projects with other ASEAN member countries, while also focusing on digital connectivity, maritime interconnectivity and the Maritime Silk Road.

Guo Yanjun, director of the Institute of Asian Studies at China Foreign Affairs University, stressed the importance of taking a cooperative approach that balances security and development.

Recognizing the challenges posed by regional conflicts and competition among major powers, Guo emphasized the need for regional peace and collaboration in addressing issues such as public health, climate change, food and energy security, and nontraditional security concerns. Regional peace and collaboration are crucial to the region's development and prosperity, Guo added.

## Multipronged approach needed to tackle extreme weather in Hong Kong

By WU KUNLING in Hong Kong  
amberwu@chinadailyhk.com

158.1  
millimeters

Hong Kong needs a multipronged approach to cope with extreme weather and reduce carbon emissions, scholars said.

They made the remarks after a study, which was released on Monday, found that the city could witness stifling hot night temperatures and heavier rainfall over more days in a year in the coming decades amid worsening extreme weather conditions.

The study, jointly conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong's School of Architecture, the University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, revealed that between 2020 and 2049, Hong Kong's 10-year average annual number of hot nights — with a minimum temperature of 28 C and above — is expected to go up by 50 percent to 48 days.

The longest duration of consecutive hot nights per decade will increase from an average of eight days annually in the 2011-20 period to 10 days in the decade ending 2049, with the maximum consecutive hot nights reaching 15 days.

Areas that might be badly affected by hot night temperatures by the 2040s include Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Kowloon, the northern and southern parts of Hong Kong Island, and the airport region.

Ren Chao, an associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture at Hong Kong University, who participated in the research, said that five consecutive days of intense heat will increase the risk of death by 6.66 percent among vulnerable groups.

Ren pointed out that at present, the number and distribution of temporary night shelters in Hong Kong are inadequate. According to experts, the government has to pay more attention to effective allocation of medical resources and enhancement of community services.

The research also predicted that Hong Kong will witness a new record of 230 millimeters of hourly rainfall in the 2040s, 40 percent higher than the current record of 158.1 mm, which was set in September.

Jimmy Fung Chi-hung, chair professor in the Department of Mathematics and the Division of Environment and Sustainability at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, warned that the

Current record for rainfall in an hour in Hong Kong, which was recorded in September.

Research predicts HK may see hourly rainfall of 230 mm in the 2040s, an increase of 40 percent

chance of landslides and severe flooding will significantly increase as extreme rainfall becomes more intense and frequent.

The situation would also further test the disaster preparedness and emergency response capabilities of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's government and local residents.

Apart from concerns about extreme rainfall, which has been addressed in the Hong Kong SAR government's latest Policy Address, the research team suggested heightened attention should be given to hot weather, which will also have significant impact on livelihoods and public health.

To tackle extreme weather conditions, the study recommended that the government regularly reviews and updates standards for extreme weather based on latest scientific knowledge.

Protocols for dealing with extreme weather, such as flood prevention measures in flood-prone areas, should also be developed in advance. To deal with the new situation, permanent support measures and services, such as more heat shelters, need to be implemented, the scholars said. While planning new urban settlements, particularly in the Northern Metropolis and the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands, the government should take into account the potential impact of extreme weather.

The city aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, according to the Hong Kong Climate Action Plan 2050. Experts said the Hong Kong government should harmonize its action plan with the latest study to update its roadmap to zero carbon emission.

In the meantime, the city should work harder to reduce carbon emissions, which require more energy-saving efforts, such as green transport, reducing waste and increasing recycling behaviors, the study said.

## Winter cleanup



People clear snow from a car in Ispereh, northeastern Bulgaria, on Sunday. The Bulgarian government declared a state of emergency in large parts of the Balkan country after heavy snow and powerful winds caused power outages, road closures, traffic accidents and travel delays. BULGARIAN NEWS AGENCY VIA AP

## Expo: Country has evolved into more of an exporter

From page 1

The country offers a comprehensive supply chain support system, well-developed infrastructure, a vast market and effective government policies that foster innovation, she said.

With China ascending the value chain, it has evolved into more of an exporter than an importer of intermediate goods utilized by manufacturers in other regions. This development enhances connectivity

and, consequently, boosts the competitiveness of global supply chains, according to a report released by banking and financial services group HSBC earlier this year.

Honeywell International Inc, which has set up a large booth at the CISCE's pavilion of clean energy chains, expects to leverage the expo as a platform to work with more industry partners to build a supply chain ecosystem with resilience, agility and sustainability.

China's decarbonization goals

provide opportunities for technological innovation and application for businesses in the supply chain to strengthen sustainable development practices, said William Yu, president of Honeywell China.

Similar views were expressed by Eddy Chan, vice-president of FedEx Express and president of FedEx China. "The CISCE plays a pivotal role in expanding international trade. Through the grand event, we aim to demonstrate our differentiated services and solutions in network and

capacity development, fortifying import supply chains, unlocking opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, and catalyzing cross-border e-commerce and other business forms," he said.

The company announced a new flight service between Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and Guangzhou, the capital of South China's Guangdong province, on Nov 1, facilitating swift connections between Vietnam and other markets in Asia, Africa and Europe.

## Stability: All parties should join hands to realize peace on peninsula

From page 1

While the ROK and the US are strengthening their alliance, China-ROK relations have fallen to their lowest ebb since they established diplomatic relations in 1992. All kinds of strategic dialogues between China and the ROK have been suspended, and the special envoys in charge of the Korean Peninsula affairs for the two countries have only communicated by telephone twice since the government of President Yoon Suk-yeol took office.

In order to realize peace and stability on the peninsula, all parties should work in the following direction.

First, inter-Korean dialogue needs to resume as soon as possible. To this end, humanitarian exchanges should be resumed, such as the reunion of separated families.

Second, all parties should work together to reduce military confrontation. To this end, the DPRK should stop its frequent missile tests as soon as possible, and the military exercises of the US and the ROK should also be stopped.

Third, China-ROK relations should be put back on the right track as soon as possible. To this end, China and the ROK should respect each other's core interests,

especially by not interfering in each other's internal affairs, and by insisting on not targeting a third party when developing their relations with other countries.

As to China's role, there are three "unchanged" aspects.

First, China's position on the denuclearization of the peninsula remains unchanged. Although China has rarely mentioned the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula officially since 2018, this position has not changed, because the denuclearization of the peninsula is in China's interest.

Second, China's position to strengthen communication and

cooperation with the ROK and the US to resolve the Korean Peninsula issue has not changed. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Six-Party Talks, which also involved Russia and Japan. Under the framework of the Six-Party Talks, China and the ROK have cooperated very closely. Today, China is still very clear that the related peninsula problems must be resolved through cooperation with the US and the ROK.

Third, China still hopes to maintain the traditional friendship between China and the ROK. But the last thing that China wants to see is the trend of camp confrontation and another Cold War, which

was also one of the main driving forces for the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the ROK in 1992.

In other words, the ROK should also take China's concerns into consideration.

First, what China is most concerned about is that US-ROK military cooperation must not affect China's core security interests and must not interfere in China's resolution of the Taiwan question.

Second, China and the ROK should strengthen communication on resolving the Korean Peninsula issue. The two countries' special envoys in charge of Korean Penin-

sula affairs should strengthen their communication, and the ROK should not try to marginalize China's role.

Third, the think tanks of the two countries should work together, in particular on drawing up a road map of how to resolve the Korean Peninsula issue, and later encourage the two governments and those of other relevant countries to participate in turning it into a blueprint.

Ideas matter, and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula requires a common idea and plan.

The author is a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' National Institute of International Strategy. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

# CHINA

In May, when Taiwan rock band Mayday announced concerts on the Chinese mainland, some 300,000 tickets completely sold out within a mere five seconds across all booking platforms. That not only illustrated the band's great popularity but also indicated a high level of demand that highlighted the rebirth of China's live concert market.

"I refreshed the ticketing website nonstop, but every time I clicked to purchase, it was already sold out," said Jia Jun, a student at the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

Jia added that he had tried every venue where the band was playing, but the results were the same.

He wasn't the only one who had a hard time getting a ticket. It became a common experience among fans, with topics such as "Mayday ticket frenzy" and "Who got Mayday tickets?" trending for several weeks on social media.

Data from the Damai ticketing site shows that more than 1 million people were interested in attending Mayday's concerts in Shenzhen. However, the three shows, on July 7, 8 and 9, could only provide a maximum of 144,000 seats, meaning only 14 people out of every 100 who applied would have the opportunity to attend.

Those who couldn't get tickets found another way to celebrate the return of the band to the tech hub — by singing along in areas outside the open-air stadium.

"I know that there are many fans outside who can't enjoy the concert with us in the venue. When we performed here last time, we never expected we would have to wait more than 1,000 days to return and meet you again," said Ashin, Mayday's lead singer, during one of the Shenzhen concerts. "Let's be quiet for a second to listen to their (the fans outside) voices."

COVID-19 delivered a severe blow to China's live performance industry for the past three years, as large groups of people were strongly discouraged by strict social distancing regulations.

Nearly 9,000 shows were canceled or suspended in the first three months of last year, when the country was affected by the third wave of the outbreak, according to the China Performance Industry Association.

## Competition rising

However, since various performances and live shows resumed at the start of the year, big stars have headed back on the road again and competition for tickets has become fierce.

Shenzhen witnessed the largest concert boom in recent years.

"Venues are already fully booked till early next year," said Zhou Baomin, director of the Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism and Sports Bureau of Nanshan district, where the Shenzhen Bay Sports Center is located. "The concert market has been much better this year."

In fact, approximately 38 pop music concerts will have been held in the city from March to the end of the year, ranking Shenzhen third among mainland cities, behind Shanghai and Guangzhou, also in Guangdong, which are number one and two respectively.

Considering its proximity to Hong Kong and Guangzhou, which is only a 60-minute drive away, the concert boom in Shenzhen had already solidified the city's reputation as a thriving music and entertainment hub.

"Everyone's enthusiasm for attending concerts has been unleashed after three years of COVID-19. Many people who had not planned to watch live concerts are now affected by social media publicity and friends, and have joined the rush to grab tickets," said Chen

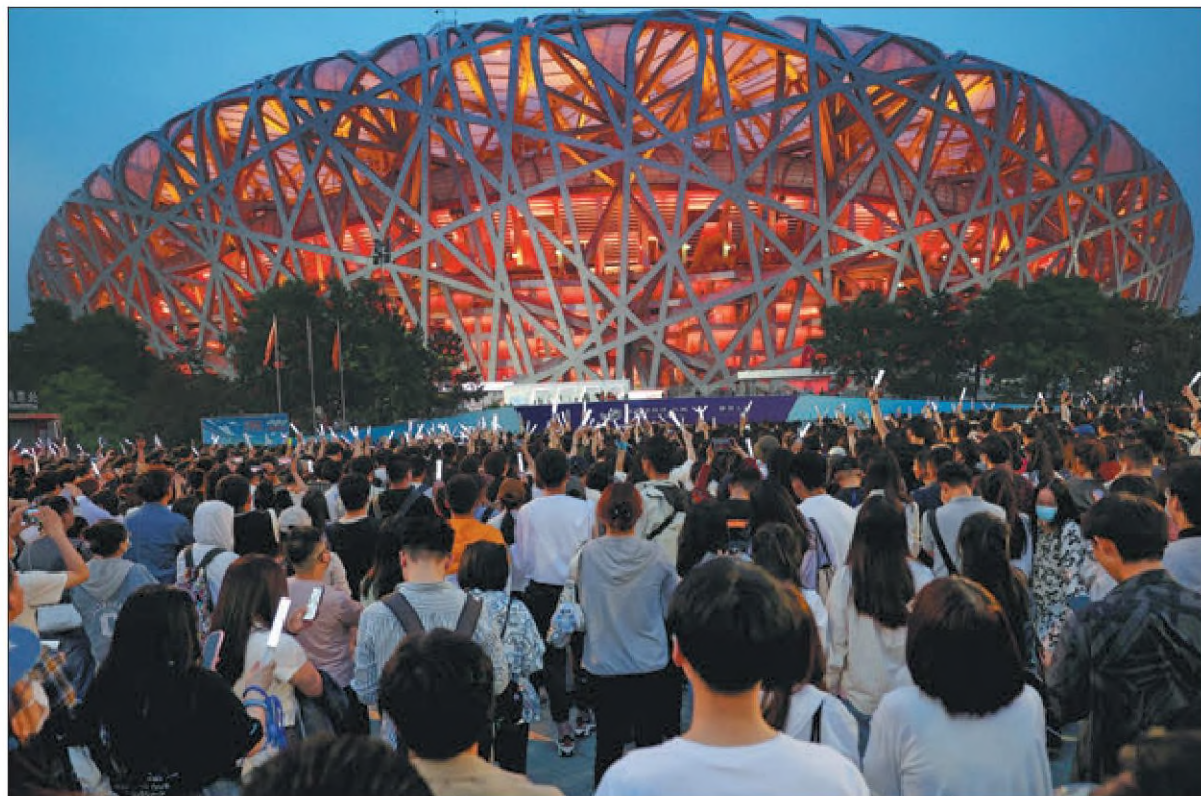


Left: Pop singer Wu Bai sings at a concert in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, on Sept 23. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Right: Singaporean singer JJ Lin (center) performs in Shenyang, Liaoning province, on Aug 23. ZHANG PENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



# Live performances becoming a hot ticket after COVID-19

The concert sector's reemergence after the epidemic is helping to stimulate economic growth. **Wang Xu** reports from Shenzhen, Guangdong province.



Clockwise from top: Fans of the music band Mayday, who failed to get tickets to the concert, gather outside the National Stadium in Beijing in May to listen to songs and support the band. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY Fans of singer Jay Chou take photos before his concert in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. WU YUNSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY Mayday supporters display images of band members in Beijing. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Yu, CEO of a booking agency in Hong Kong.

Chen added that as in-person concerts appear to be in strong recovery mode, the "concert economy" has become a buzzword for

the culture and tourism industry.

Data from Meituan, one of China's largest online retail companies, shows that during the Mayday concerts in Shenzhen, sales of alcoholic beverages in the surrounding

area doubled from the usual numbers. Beer and wine were the most popular, with sales rising by 120 percent and 167 percent, respectively. Outside the venue, orders for sunscreen, mosquito repellent, and

other products rose by 90 percent, while fan sales doubled and sales of Yakult also rose twofold.

The inventory of related products in nearby warehouses sold out two hours before the concert

started, and emergency stock replenishment was needed to meet the subsequent demand.

Feng Rao, director of the Ma-fengwo Tourism Research Institute in Beijing, said that experiencing the local culture, visiting popular attractions and enjoying local cuisine during performance intervals are popular activities among young people, boosting the use of local transportation, accommodations, dining and shopping.

"I have come to Shenzhen for the pop concerts several times this year because of an incredible experience I don't want to miss," said Li Xiaolan from Pingtan, Fujian province.

"The city has become a hot spot for concerts, and I couldn't resist the opportunity to see my favorite artists perform live. The energy and excitement in the air are palpable, and being surrounded by fellow fans who share the same passion is truly exhilarating."

## Related sectors booming

Lin Jialin, an assistant professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, said the economic ripple effect of the concert boom is evident in the retail and hospitality industries. Meanwhile, Shenzhen's concert economy is attracting tourists from other cities and provinces, further stimulating the growth of the accommodations, transportation and catering businesses.

"Shenzhen, with its rapidly growing population and relatively young demographic, has become a hot spot for concertgoers, and the surge in attendance is not only benefiting the entertainment industry but also having a positive impact on various sectors of the local economy," Lin said.

She said cities that understand and respond to the needs of young people can gain a comparative advantage in the development of cultural tourism and in the competitive landscape of the new business model of "concerts plus retail".

"Shenzhen's concert boom is a testament to its resilience and ability to adapt to changing consumer demand, making it a vibrant and dynamic city in the cultural and entertainment sectors," she said.

In 2020, when President Xi Jinping met with representatives and experts in education, culture, health and sports at a symposium in Beijing, he said, "We should continue to put social benefits first, unify social benefits with economic benefits, deepen reform of the cultural system, improve planning and policies for the cultural industry, and constantly expand the supply of high-quality cultural products."

Zhou from Nanshan said Shenzhen's focus on the cultural and tourism sectors, and its positive approach to meeting the material and cultural needs of its population, has positioned the city as a leading destination for concerts and live events so as to deliver the results for Xi's requirements.

"By catering to the preferences of young people and continuously expanding the supply of high-quality cultural products, Shenzhen is strengthening its position as an international consumption center city and also driving economic development," he said.

"We hope the performance market will not only bring direct economic benefits, but also improve the visibility of the city and showcase its favorable business environment to attract more tourists and potential investors."

Wang Tianhui in Shenzhen contributed to this story.

Contact the writer at wangxu@chinadaily.com.cn

## REPORTER'S LOG

# New rules needed to stop scalpers and help fans see their heroes



Wang Xu

Like many people, I love live music shows, where the electrifying energy of the crowd meets the raw talent of the artists on stage. There is an undeniable magic that transcends the ordinary.

During the COVID-19 epidemic, I found solace in streaming con-

certs and virtual performances, but it was a bittersweet substitute for the real thing because nothing compares with the exhilaration of being in the same physical space as your favorite artists, surrounded by fellow fans and feeling the music come alive in every fiber of your being.

The thrill of being swept away by the music, singing along with thousands of fellow fans and creating unforgettable memories is an experience like no other.

However, as various performances and live shows have resumed in China since the start of the year, an unfortunate shadow has loomed large amid this exciting atmosphere: the disheartening reality of ticket scalping.

I'm no stranger to the battle to grab a ticket online, but the experience of getting a ticket for Jay Chou's concert in Hong Kong this year, when all 140,000 tickets for the seven shows sold out in just 1 second, left me shocked.

To get a ticket, I turned to scalpers. They said they were not bothered at all by "real-name registration" — an anti-scalping regulation that requires tickets to carry the attendee's name and ID number.

Most of them told me: "ID cards are not necessary; the requirement for ID cards is just a rumor. Even tickets without real names can be used, but there are certain rules that need to be followed."

One scalper even assured me not

to worry too much as "everyone conducts business with integrity".

To dig deeper, I contacted a business insider. They told me that after concert tickets are released, they generally flow to several places: the concert team; the organizers; local fan clubs; official websites; and scalpers.

According to my source, scalpers often acquire tickets from the organizers because the regulatory authorities impose certain restrictions on ticket prices, and by sell-

ing through scalpers, the responsibility for high prices can be shifted to them.

Ticket scalping is illegal, but enforcement is always challenging as scalpers often find ways to bypass regulations or operate in a gray area, making it difficult to crack down on their activities effectively.

However, if there is collusion between organizers and scalpers, then stricter laws and regulations are needed, along with more resources for enforcement, including some serious ways of monitoring ticket sales platforms, investigating scalping activities and imposing penalties on those who break the rules.

# International cooperation accentuated by supply chain

Event organizers aim to support Chinese companies' growth on the world stage



中国国际供应链促进博览会  
China International Supply Chain Expo (CISCE)

By WANG JINHUI  
wangjinhui@chinadaily.com.cn

The China International Supply Chain Expo kicks off in Beijing on Tuesday, striving to bolster international cooperation in industry and supply chains and contribute to the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Highlighting "Connecting the World for A Shared Future" and hosted by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, or CCPIT, the expo covers an exhibition area of more than 100,000 square meters and has set up six major sections: Smart Vehicle — Make Travel More Convenient; Green Agriculture — Make Food Safer; Clean Energy — Make the Earth a Better Place; Digital Technology — Make Innovation More Dynamic; Healthy Life — Make Life More Wonderful; and Supply Chain Services — Make Cooperation More Efficient.

It integrates functions of trade promotion, investment cooperation, innovation and communication to showcase the practical ecosystem of supply chain services and provide participants with cutting-edge technologies, novel products and services through immersive experiences.

There are an array of key events including an opening ceremony, six themed subforums, supply-demand matchmaking meetings, industry seminars and new product launches.

Ren Hongbin, chairman of the CCPIT, said the current global industrial system and industry and supply chains boast a diversified layout, regional cooperation, green transformation and accelerated digitization.

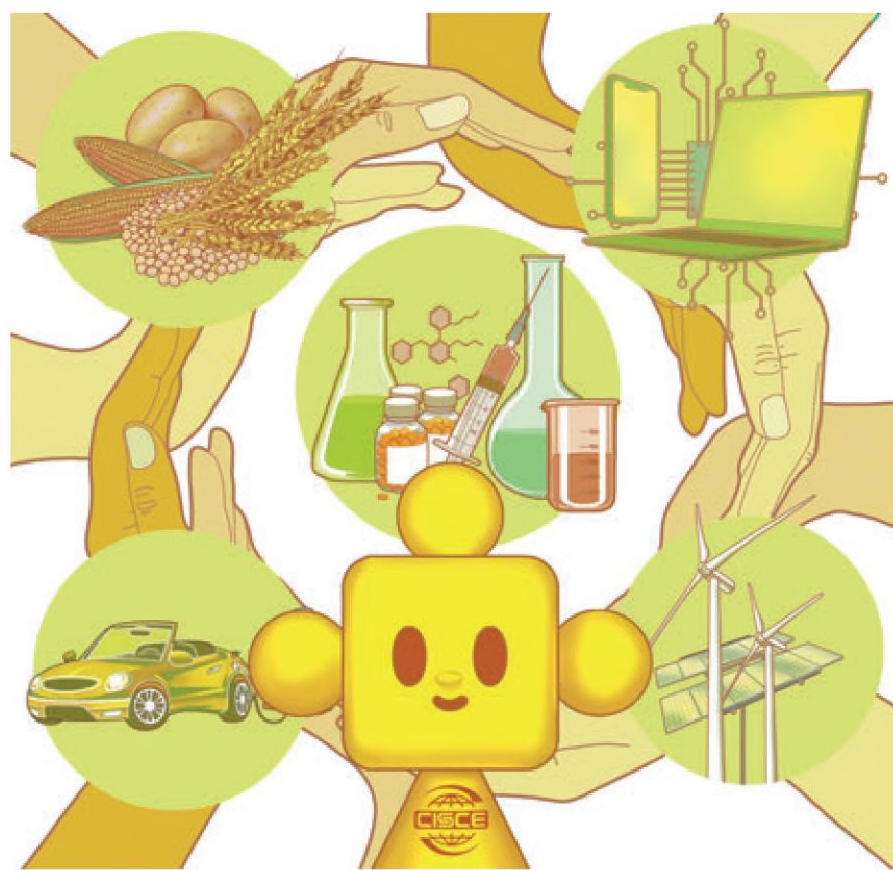
"China is willing to work with countries around the world to seize the opportunities of the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, and jointly build a secure, stable, smooth, efficient, open, inclusive and mutually beneficial system for global industry and supply chains," Ren said.

He said the expo acts as the vanguard of building an open international cooperation platform that connects the upstream, middle and downstream resources, facilitating communication among large, medium and small enterprises, and boosting collaboration among industry, academia, research and application.

In terms of facilitating the development of domestic circulation, the expo showcases China's high-level technological innovation and integration of industries, which is conducive to attracting global innovative resources, enhancing the intelligent, green and integrated development of industries and accelerating the construction of a modern industrial system.

To enrich global engagement, the expo gathers new products, technologies and services related to the chains, and will promote the industrial division of labor, resource allocation, innovation cooperation and achievement sharing, Ren added.

The expo is responding to the urgent desire of the international business community to maintain the stability and smooth opera-



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

tion of the industry and supply chains. The number of international exhibitors accounts for 26 percent of the total, involving more than 50 countries and regions.

A large number of Fortune Global 500 enterprises, China's top 500 companies, China's top 500 private companies, "specialized, refined, new and innovative" enterprises and "hidden champions" — small but highly successful companies in specialized markets — are participating in the expo. The CCPIT will also release the Global Supply Chain Promotion Report, which analyzes the development trends of the global supply chain and puts forward suggestions on boosting technological innovation, open cooperation, interconnection and inclusive development.

Zhang Shaogang, vice-chairman of the CCPIT, said the industry and supply chains are a vital global public product that connects the global flow of capital, industry and technology, adding that building a stable and smooth system for global industry and supply chains is the responsibility of the international community.



任鸿斌

China is willing to work with countries around the world to seize the opportunities of the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation...

Ren Hongbin, chairman of the CCPIT

"The holding of the expo is important to deepening the participation of Chinese enterprises in the global industrial division of labor, strengthening the open cooperation of industry and supply chains and promoting the construction of a modern industrial system; and it also provides a new platform for communication and cooperation to ensure the stability and smoothness of the global industry and supply chains in the post-pandemic era," he said.

"We have coordinated the resources of CCPIT's 30 overseas representative offices, 925 local investment promotion agencies at all levels and industry-specific investment promotion agencies. We have also received strong support from Chinese embassies and consulates abroad, as well as 393 bilateral business cooperation mechanisms established by the CCPIT worldwide," Zhang said.

"We have organized a series of roadshows and signing events in 15 provinces and cities such as Beijing and Tianjin. We have conducted overseas roadshows in 30 countries and regions including the United States, Canada, Germany and Brazil," he added.

# Nation has stabilizing influence

By WANG JINHUI

As a responsible member of the international community, China is both a beneficiary and maintainer of global supply chain integration, and will continue to optimize its industrial system and support the operation of the global industry and supply chains.

Boasting the world's most concentrated and comprehensive industrial system, China produces more than 220 kinds of industrial products, encompassing all the categories on the United Nations' industrial classification list. The added value of the nation's manufacturing industry accounts for nearly 30 percent of the world's total, while its scale has ranked first in the world for 13 consecutive years. Made-in-China brands include its high-speed railway, power equipment, construction machinery and shipbuilding.

China has a population of more than 1.4 billion, of which the middle-income group accounts for 400 million, possessing huge market potential worldwide.

Adhering to its high-level opening-up, China has expanded its market to the world as a major trading partner with more than 140 countries and regions, and has been the world's second-largest importer for 14 consecutive years.

Wu Shengrong, head of the department of exhibition at the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, said that since the beginning of this year, the CCPIT has received visits from hundreds of executives from multinational companies, and they generally have a positive outlook on the Chinese market and plan to increase investment in the country.

"The Belt and Road Initiative marked its 10th anniversary this year, and China is ramping up efforts to boost the development of global industry and supply chains under the BRI," said Wu. "Over the past 10 years, Chinese companies have carried out a series of industrial investment cooperation projects in countries and regions involved in the BRI, covering such sectors as agriculture, energy, infrastructure, digital economy and new energy vehicles."

He added that China strives to enhance the resilience of the global industry and supply chains, pointing out that in 2022 the country assumed the rotating presidency of the BRICS bloc and issued an initiative to strengthen supply chain cooperation with 12 specific measures to enhance their interconnectivity.

During 2022's International Forum on Resilient and Stable Industrial and Supply Chains, China and six other countries jointly launched the initiative for international cooperation, calling on all countries to build a more equal, inclusive and constructive partnership.

# Global focus defines expo's practical goals

By WANG JINHUI

The China International Supply Chain Expo, which kicks off in Beijing on Tuesday, provides a specialized, authoritative and international platform for exchanges, negotiations, mutually beneficial cooperation and win-win outcomes between Chinese and foreign exhibitors.

Embraced by participants, the expo reflects the common expectation and proactive efforts of the global business community to maintain the stability and smooth operation of the industrial and supply chains.

Foreign exhibitors account for about a quarter of the total number, including Fortune Global 500 companies and leading enterprises from 55 countries and regions. Companies from the United States and

Europe are particularly prominent, accounting for around 36 percent of the foreign presence, which also includes South Africa, Canada, Japan, Vietnam, African Union countries and exhibitors from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Top executives from more than 30 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry leaders, including Honeywell, AstraZeneca, Tesla, Google and Bosch, are expected to discuss issues such as clean energy, green agriculture, healthy living, smart cars, digital technology and supply chain services.

Zhang Shaogang, vice-chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, said the council has organized forums or roundtable dialogues in partnership with institutions such as the

Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey and the China-US Chamber of Commerce to facilitate in-depth exchanges on the construction of a stable and smooth system for global industrial and supply chains.

Internationalization is another highlight of the expo, with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, International Trade Center, International Chamber of Commerce and other organizations serving as supporting units.

UNCTAD will hold seminars on the 2023 Least Developed Countries Report and other related events during the expo, while the United Nations Development Pro-

gram, International Labor Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and another 18 international organizations are attending.

The heads of those organizations, along with those from 11 other international groups, including the Baltic and International Maritime Council and the International Road Transport Union, will deliver speeches or participate in interactive discussions at different forums.

The supply chain expo provides a broad stage for companies to showcase new achievements and practices in international cooperation. For example, the All-China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives is displaying various achievements in agricultural supply chain cooperation projects carried out jointly with foreign

companies; the China National Offshore Oil Corporation is spotlighting its cooperation with partners such as ExxonMobil and representative multinational companies from the upstream, middle and downstream sectors; and China National Pharmaceutical Group Corp is jointly hosting an international cooperation exhibition area in the health industry with GE Healthcare from the US.

During the expo, Qualcomm is joining forces with Xiaomi, iQiyi and other leading domestic internet companies to demonstrate cross-industry integration cases. Charoen Pokphand Group is showcasing China's practice in the full industry and supply chains of agricultural products and food under the "from farm to table" model, and Bosch, together with partners such as WeRide and Hesai Technology, is jointly exhibiting the core links of their supply chains.

## What they say



Finance is the lifeblood of the real economy, and insurance serves as a shock absorber and stabilizer for the industry and supply chains. Maintaining the stability and smooth operation of the industry and supply chains is an important mission of the insurance industry in serving the new development pattern of domestic and international dual circulation. PICC Group will implement the requirements of the Central Financial Work Conference and shoulder the mission of 'People's Insurance, Serving the People' while always keeping in mind the greater interests of the country and contributing to the stability and smooth operation of the industry and supply chains. Best wishes for a successful expo!

Wang Tingke, Party secretary and chairman of PICC Group



Currently, the global supply chain is accelerating its upgrade toward a greener, smarter, more capitalized and integrated direction. China Energy Engineering Group will follow the trend, grasp the momentum, seek changes and work together with partners to stabilize, secure and strengthen the supply chain. We will comprehensively deepen supply chain innovation, enhance supply chain resilience and jointly build a safe, stable, green, low-carbon and efficient integrated supply chain system. We wish the first supply chain expo every success.

Song Halliang, Party secretary and chairman of China Energy Engineering Group



Global trade and global supply chains have created jobs, value and opportunities over the past 30 years. China is a great example of this. Trade is also an important driving force for procuring greener and cleaner products. 'Connecting the World for a Shared Future,' the theme of the China International Supply Chain Expo, highlights the potential of the international supply chain for bringing people together and creating prosperity today as well as in the future.

Robert Maersk Ugula, chairman of A.P. Moller-Maersk



We are delighted to participate in the first China International Supply Chain Expo. As the world's first supply chain-themed expo, this event stands as a novel platform fostering high-level opening up, and offers opportunities to enhance global collaboration throughout the supply chain. Connecting the world for a shared future. I wish the China International Supply Chain Expo a great success!

Jakob Stausholm, chief executive of Rio Tinto



Supply chain security is the foundation for China's economic transformation, upgrading and high-quality development. The automotive industry has an extensive industry chain, wide coverage and large development space. Geely is committed to forefront technological innovations such as automotive safety, green development, human-computer interaction, intelligent driving and onboard chips. The China International Supply Chain Expo provides a great opportunity for global automotive supply chain enterprises to communicate and cooperate, making significant contributions for better and faster development of the automotive industry.

Li Shufu, chairman of Geely Group



Promoting energy transformation and ensuring energy security are our common pursuits. The hosting of the first China International Supply Chain Expo will help promote technological innovation and industrial upgrading in the field of clean energy, and boost high-quality and sustainable development of energy and electricity. It will help maintain the stable and smooth operation and win-win cooperation of the global supply chain, enhance the high-level industrial foundation and modernization of the industrial chain, and realize the bright prospect of jointly building, promoting and sharing green development.

Xin Bao'an, chairman of State Grid

## WORLD

# China, Kenya celebrate 60 years of ties

Foreign policy shift to East helps African nation regain dignity it had lost to West

By EDITH MUTETHYA  
in Nairobi, Kenya  
edithmutethya@chinadaily.com.cn

As Kenya and China celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year, both countries count enormous benefits accrued over the decades.

To date, China is Kenya's largest trading partner and biggest source market, and is responsible for major infrastructure projects in the East African country.

Benedict Wachira, secretary-general of the Communist Party of Kenya, said the relationship has been growing stronger especially since 2003, when then-president Mwai Kibaki shifted Kenya's foreign policies toward the East as opposed to the traditional West.

The new focus saw Kenya regain the dignity it had lost to the West, Wachira said, in addition to getting support from China to construct modern infrastructure projects that have facilitated the country's economic growth.

"The relationship between China and Kenya is based on dignity, solidarity and mutual respect, unlike its relationship with the United States and Europe, which is exploitative."

Unlike Western countries that tied their support to strict conditions such as human rights issues, democracy and political interference, the Chinese came and dealt with Kenyans as equals, not as subordinates, he said.

"Western countries would demand that the government reduce funding to education, healthcare and agricultural extensions and increase funding to human rights, failure to which they would not build or finance a project," he said, adding that China, on the other hand, focuses on the project, adhering to its policy of noninterference in other countries' internal affairs.

The Chinese infrastructure development work has drawn praise even in remote parts of the country, he said.

If government engineers asked villagers to select a contractor for a road project, with options including British, Indian, Chinese and Kenyan providers, even the oldest villager would recommend a Chinese contractor, he said.

Thika Superhighway, the first major project constructed by Chinese contractors in Kenya, is a testament to the quality of Chinese work. The road is in great condition, and has never been repaired, 10 years after it was inaugurated.

The 50-kilometer stretch links the capital Nairobi with the country's second-most industrialized town of Thika, easing transportation of raw materials and finished products.

Wachira also underscored the Chinese-built Standard Gauge Railway, the biggest project undertaken by the country to date and one of



Benedict Wachira

the key projects under the Belt and Road Initiative in Kenya.

"Many times the trains are fully booked, meaning many people rely on the railway because it is safer, faster and affordable."

China has constructed about 115 km of road bypasses in Nairobi, including the 27-km Nairobi Expressway, the 453-km Lamu-Garissa Road and 300 km of informal settlement roads in the city, the Africa Policy Institute said.

This is in addition to Kipevu Oil Terminal in Mombasa Port, Lamu Port, Liwatoni Floating Bridge and Thwake Dam, among others.

## Affordable, quality goods

Besides infrastructure development, China has provided affordable and good-quality goods to Kenya, Wachira said.

"Traders across all Kenyan cities and towns trade in affordable, brand-new Chinese products. Previously, we used to import second-hand products from Europe and the US, which in terms of dignity was not a good thing."

The deepening China-Kenya relationship has seen a significant increase in the number of Chinese tourists to Kenya, and China could surpass the traditional bases of Germany and the United Kingdom in the near future, he said.

China is Kenya's sixth-biggest tourism source market and the second-biggest source market from Asia, according to Kenya's Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife.

If China had not helped Kenya, the latter would still be under the West's control, Wachira said.

"The World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) would still be telling us what to do and what not to do, and we would not be truly an independent country in terms of economy," he said.

As with many others, Wachira refuted the US' smearing on China's relationship with Kenya and other African countries.

"The US wants its own discomfort with China to be transferred and propagated by all others, including Kenya, but it has not been working," he said.

On the Western criticism that China offers infrastructure projects without regard to how African countries would use them to develop their own self-sufficient economies, Wachira said the Chinese government does not impose project design or origination.

"The Chinese come and support our plan, so if there is a failure of any project it's not the Chinese, it's the government and the person who was in charge of the project development," he said.



A man fills up jerry cans with water as residents use donkeys to transport water to their homes in Xochimilco town, Mexico City, Mexico, on March 21. SILVANA FLORES VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Mexico City battles severe water crisis

By SERGIO HELD and GERMAN SANCHEZ in Bogota  
For China Daily

Mexico City is enacting various strategies to combat severe water scarcity, as a years-long lack of rainfall continues to impact the local water supply.

The water crisis is a direct result of falling levels of rain within the Cutzamala System, which supplies the city of nearly 10 million people, and of its primary water source, the Valle de Bravo reservoir. Levels at the reservoir have fallen significantly after years of limited rainfall.

"Mexico currently has a major problem in terms of water due to climate change," Sandra Lopez, a researcher at the public policy research center Mexican Institute for Competitiveness, said.

"But it can also be very much linked to the country's management problems, since we have different factors, such as the fact that not enough resources and financing have been allocated to management."

"This, for obvious reasons, means that the population and Mexican society in general is experiencing water stress, which we are only just identifying as a potential problem."

The water shortage affects about one-fourth of the population in the Mexican capital, which is witnessing

daily water disruptions in various areas, making it difficult for residents to undertake essential tasks such as cooking, cleaning and bathing.

"In the neighborhood where I am, they start to cut off the water supply at about 11 am. It comes very slowly," Sergio Ramos, a clerk at Navy car wash in Mexico City, said. The water supply only lasts seven or eight hours a day, he said.

## Conservation efforts

Amid the continuing crisis, the federal, state and city governments are urging citizens to conserve water by fixing faulty faucets and taking shorter showers. These actions, aimed at reducing consumption, could contribute to extending the city's water supply.

With the scarcity projected to last until May, water conservation efforts will have to continue for some time.

Some citizens are actively employing measures such as using rainwater or bottled water, while the government is pursuing additional strategies, including reducing water consumption in public buildings, implementing innovative water-saving devices, and formulating a strategy to augment the city's water supply.

Educational initiatives are also underway to raise water conservation awareness.

"The Cutzamala System dams are at low storage levels due to the lack of rain and the drought in the country," said Mexico City Water System, which manages the city's drinking water supply. "In this context, at the same time there have been low levels of storage in the tanks that distribute water in the Azcapotzalco district."

The National Water Commission, or Conagua, explained that there is a 29 percent deficit in the country's reservoirs, compared with historical data for November.

"Regarding rainfall, Conagua's National Meteorological Service shows that from Jan 1 to Nov 12, 2023, Mexico recorded 23.3 percent less rainfall than the historical average for that period," Conagua said in a statement.

Collaborative efforts to save water and ensure universal access to this essential resource are crucial.

Lopez said the problem lies in the fact that most of the aquifers in Mexico City are already overexploited.

One of the proposals is for coordination among the industry, government and civil society to generate knowledge and actions for the recharge of aquifers, she said, but the government has failed to do this.

The writers are freelance journalists for China Daily.

## Leaders behind Sierra Leone attack held

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone — Sierra Leone's president said most of the leaders of attacks on the country's main military barracks and prisons had been arrested and normalcy had returned across the country after a 24-hour curfew was relaxed to a dusk-to-dawn lockdown.

The attacks early on Sunday morning surprised residents and security forces in the West African country.

"We will ensure that those responsible are held accountable," President Julius Maada Bio said on national television.

"As your commander-in-chief, I want to assure everybody who is resident in Sierra Leone that we have overcome this challenge."

Earlier, the government said security forces had repelled "renegade soldiers" who attempted to break into a military army in the capital Freetown during the early hours of Sunday.

The individuals not only attacked the military barracks at Wilberforce but also other locations in the capital, including the Pademba Road Correctional Center, which led to the escape of prisoners, Bio said.

It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties in the attack on the barracks or during the gunfire in Freetown on Sunday.

The country's former president Ernest Bai Koroma said in a statement that a military guard assigned to his residence in the capital was shot point-blank, while another was "whisked away to an unknown location".

Koroma did not say who shot the guard. He condemned the killing and the attack on the barracks.

"I am deeply concerned that once again our beloved nation could be subject to such insecurity," he said.

The West African country's civil aviation authority urged airlines to reschedule flights after the curfew was declared, while a soldier on its frontier with neighboring Guinea told Reuters they had been instructed to shut the border.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

## Luxon sworn in as NZ's PM, vows to rebuild economy

By KARL WILSON in Sydney  
kartiwilson@chinadaily.com.au

Eight weeks after elections, New Zealand's new government headed by Prime Minister Christopher Luxon was sworn in on Monday.

Luxon, a former businessman who has only been in politics since 2020, has an unenviable task ahead of him, as he tries to rebuild the country's economy while balancing a three-party coalition government, political analysts and commentators say.

The two junior coalition partners will share the deputy prime minister's role, with New Zealand First party leader Winston Peters for the first half of the parliamentary term and ACT leader David Seymour taking over for the remainder.

The new Cabinet will have 20 members: 14 National ministers, three ACT ministers and three New Zealand First ministers.

In a congratulatory message sent to Luxon on Monday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang said he stands ready to work with the new government led by Luxon to maintain high-level



Christopher Luxon

exchanges, strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation and enhance friendly exchanges.

The two sides should push for new progress in the bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership and greater benefits for their people, Li said.

China and New Zealand are each other's important partners, he said, and the bilateral ties have long been at the forefront of China's relations with Western countries.

Richard Shaw, a politics professor at Massey University in New Zealand, said the cost of living will be the key focus of the new government.

But as was the case with the previous government, "there are relatively few levers the government has at its disposal to influence this," he said. "The government's primary response will be via tax cuts, which may fuel rather than dampen demand."

On foreign policy, Shaw said he did not expect any major changes.

Geoffrey Miller, a geopolitical analyst at the University of Otago in New Zealand, said Luxon's National Party, with its business-friendly position and strong rural base, "should help to keep in check the more ideologically driven, pro-US position likely to be taken by Winston Peters who will be looking to resume the 'Pacific Reset' strategy he began as foreign minister in 2018".

"China remains New Zealand's biggest trading partner by some margin and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future," Miller said.

"We should expect an economic-focused foreign policy from the new government, which will dovetail with voters' concerns over cost of living issues."

Alistair Crozier, executive director of the New Zealand China Council, said China remains a very important bilateral partner for New Zealand, a fact that has been recognized by successive governments in the country over the past 20 years and more.

Stephen Jacobi, executive direct-

or of the NZ International Business Forum, said the new government has "an ambitious policy program made up of three parties election commitments".

"This is going to be a lot of work and difficult to implement, especially as they aim at the same time to cut government spending by reducing the size of the public service and deliver a sizeable tax cut," Jacobi said.

Shaw said New Zealand has never had a three-party coalition before, and there is "considerable room for tensions to emerge" given Luxon's inexperience, the historical antipathy between the two deputy prime ministers, and the policy differences between the parties.

Jacobi said the new government will be working off the basis of separate and detailed coalition agreements among the three parties.

"Luxon has expressed confidence that the three parties and their leaders are fully aligned around delivery," he said.

Xu Wei in Beijing contributed to this story.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

## Sichuan showcased



A Sichuan Opera actor interacts with the audience at a cultural exchange event in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sunday. The event, themed Cultural China Splendid Sichuan, showcases traditional Chinese culture and Sichuan's local culture. LI ZHIQUAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Briefly

### CANADA 4 Chinese students killed in vehicle crash

Four teenagers and a woman died on Saturday following a two-vehicle collision in Toronto, Canada, police said on Sunday. The Chinese Consulate General in Toronto has confirmed the four teenagers aged 15-17 are international students from China. Police said the crash occurred on Highway 60, near Hidden Valley Road, at about 11:10 pm between a westbound Mercedes SUV and an eastbound Ford SUV. The teen-

agers were inside the Mercedes and pronounced dead at the scene, police said, and the woman, 42, driving the Ford, succumbed to her injuries after being transported to hospital.

### FRANCE 6 teenagers in court over 2020 murder of teacher

Six teenagers went on trial on Monday, accused of involvement in the beheading of French history teacher Samuel Paty by a suspected extremist in 2020. One of the minors is a 15-year-

old girl who allegedly told her parents that Paty had shown caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in a class. She will be charged with false accusation, after it was established that she was not in the class that day. Paty, 47, was killed outside his school in a Paris suburb by an 18-year-old assailant who was shot dead at the scene by police.

### BELGIUM 27 schools closed due to bomb alert

Numerous Belgian schools in Brus-

sels and the central Brabant region will remain closed to students on Monday after a bomb alert was issued late on Sunday evening, the Wallonie-Bruxelles Enseignement administration body said on its website. The 27 schools, which the organizing authority decided to close "in strict compliance with the precautionary principle", are being inspected by the police with further information expected throughout the day.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

# WORLDUS

## Meta spokesman put on Moscow's wanted list

Russia also vows retaliation over Moldova's 'hostile' decision to join EU sanctions

By REN QI in Moscow  
renqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Russia has added the spokesman of US technology company Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, to a wanted list, the state-run TASS news agency reported on Sunday.

TASS said Meta communications director Andy Stone was included on the list on Sunday, weeks after Russian authorities in October classified Meta as a "terrorist and extremist" organization, opening the way for possible criminal proceedings against Russian residents using its platforms, Agence France-Presse reported.

Meta's main social platforms

were both banned in Russia shortly after Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine in February last year.

In March 2022, the Russian investigative committee said it has opened a criminal investigation against the "illegal actions of Meta's employees" and mentioned Stone, saying he had "lifted a ban on calls for violence against the Russian military on its platforms" and was thus inciting extremist activity.

Meta didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

### Warning issued

In a separate development, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Moscow views Moldova's decision to

join European Union sanctions against it as a hostile step aimed at destroying ties with Moscow and will retaliate.

The Russian denunciation was issued in response to a vote in Moldova's parliament to alter its legislation as required for its bid to join the EU.

The 62 deputies of Moldovan President Maia Sandu's Party of Action and Solidarity backed the legislation, ensuring its passage in the assembly in Chisinau.

Among its provisions are regulations concerning action to be taken against individuals and institutions subject to sanctions imposed on Russia.

"We regard this as yet another hostile step by the Moldovan leadership, which is fully integrated into the anti-Russian campaign of the 'collective West,'" the

Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The European Commission this month recommended starting membership talks with Moldova and Ukraine, subject to endorsement from an EU summit in December.

### Attack thwarted

On the frontline, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Sunday they thwarted a Ukrainian attack on Russian regions involving at least 24 drones.

It also said Russian air defenses shot down two Ukrainian S-200 surface-to-air missiles that were meant to hit land targets. The missiles were shot down over the Sea of Azov, it said.

The Kommersant newspaper said that flights were delayed or canceled at Moscow's main airports

because of the drone attack.

The Ukrainian air force said their military destroyed eight of nine attack drones launched overnight by Russia on Sunday.

The attack, which the air force said was launched from the south-east, came a day after what Ukrainian officials said had been Russia's largest drone attack in the conflict.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that the country needs more air defenses to protect its grain export routes as well as regions bordering Russia.

Addressing an international summit on food security in Kyiv, Zelensky said Ukraine would be supplied with vessels by its foreign partners to accompany convoys of cargo ships from Ukraine's ports to guarantee their security.

"Air defense is in short supply," Zelensky said. "But what's

important is that we have agreements, we have a positive signal and the corridor is operational."

In the United States, Mike Turner, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee of the US Congress and a Republican, considers approval of an aid package to Ukraine unlikely before the end of the year.

Bloomberg said earlier citing lawmakers that Ukraine might not receive new US aid until the middle of December and maybe longer.

However, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pledged support in a letter to Zelensky that she shared on social media, saying the commission would make available 50 million euros (\$54.8 million) for "quick repairs and upgrades of infrastructure in Ukraine's ports".

Agencies contributed to this story.

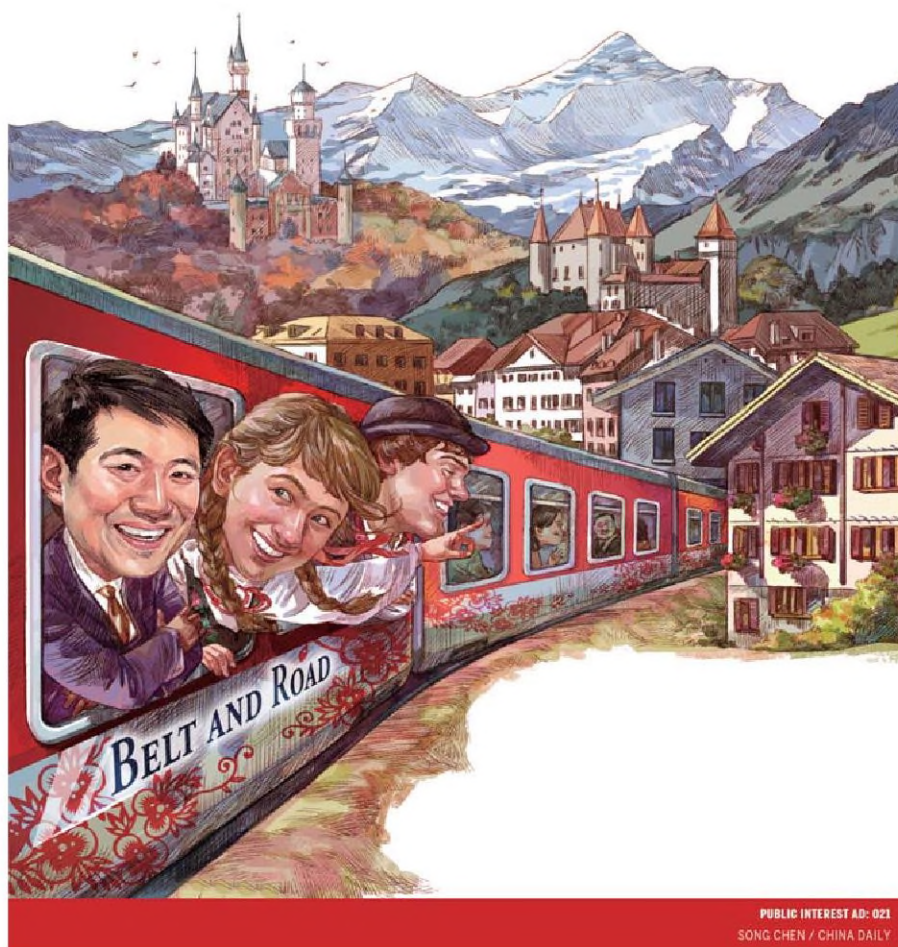
## Farewell to Rosalynn Carter



Members of the Carter family depart after a repose service for former US first lady Rosalynn Carter at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in Atlanta, Georgia, on Monday. The former first lady died on Nov 19. She was 96. BRYNN ANDERSON / REUTERS

## The Belt and Road Initiative Connectivity and Cooperation

Accelerating construction of the Belt and Road will help to promote economic cooperation, strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations and promote world peace and development. It is a great undertaking that will benefit people around the world.



PUBLIC INTEREST AD-021  
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## Biden to skip UN's COP28, a major climate meeting

By MINLU ZHANG in New York  
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

US President Joe Biden, who has called climate change "the ultimate threat to humanity", won't attend the United Nations' major climate change summit that begins Thursday in Dubai.

A White House official, who asked to remain anonymous to discuss the president's schedule, didn't give a reason why Biden won't appear at the two-week summit.

The White House said Biden would send a climate team, including Special Envoy John Kerry, climate adviser Ali Zaidi and clean energy adviser John Podesta.

Senior White House aides indicated that Biden's attention is currently focused on addressing issues such as the war between Israel and Hamas, The New York Times reported.

The 28th session of the United Nations Conference of the Parties on climate, known as COP28, will bring more than 70,000 delegates from nearly 200 countries together in Dubai to negotiate climate change, making it the biggest

“Anyone who willfully denies the impact of climate change is condemning the American people to a very dangerous future.”

US President Joe Biden

annual COP yet held under the 1992 UN framework convention on climate change.

Earlier this month, Biden released an assessment on the state of climate change in the US and said the issue was affecting all regions in the US.

"Anyone who willfully denies the impact of climate change is condemning the American people to a very dangerous future," he said.

The COP is an annual UN event where the world comes together to combat climate change, including

limiting global temperature to 1.5 C, assisting vulnerable communities in adapting to climate change impacts, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

During his presidency, Biden has participated in both COP summits. In 2020, he visited Egypt, and in 2021, he attended the Glasgow summit, where he expressed regret for the US withdrawal from a global climate pact during the Trump administration.

The two-week COP28 conference is hosted by the United Arab Emirates, a major oil and gas-producing country. COP, or "Conference of the Parties" represents the nations that agreed to a climate change framework drafted by the UN in 1992.

Countries that signed the agreement commit to efforts aimed at stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions and averting "dangerous" human interference with the climate system. The objective is to transition away from fossil fuels, which contribute to the rising temperatures of the Earth.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Musk: China always focused on growth

By MINGMEI LI in New York  
mingmeili@chinadailyusa.com

China is a nation full of smart, hardworking people, and one that has been historically focused on its growth and development, Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk said during a recent interview.

Musk, who visited China in June and met with President Xi Jinping during an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in San Francisco in the United States earlier this month, shared his positive impressions about China in the latest episode of the Lex Fridman Podcast.

Fridman, an artificial intelligence researcher at MIT focusing on autonomous vehicles, human-robot interaction and machine learning, engaged in a two-hour conversation with Musk on various topics including conflicts, AI, aliens and the relationship between China and the US.

"I've spent a lot of time in China and met with the leadership many times," Musk told his host, while participating in the podcast for the fourth time. "The sheer number of really smart, hardworking people in China is incredible," he said, adding that there are far more smart and hardworking people in China than there are in the US.

During his trip to China in June, Musk met with several senior Chinese officials and also visited Tesla's super factory in Shanghai.

"We are happy with our progress in China. It's going very well," he told Xinhua News Agency on his arrival for a welcome dinner for President Xi organized by friendly organizations in the US last week. Musk further told Xinhua that he hopes China and the US can work together for global prosperity.

Speaking with Fridman at the podcast, the Tesla CEO, who is recognized by Bloomberg as the world's wealthiest individual, lauded China's remarkable development in terms of its transportation infrastructure.

"They've got a lot of energy (to build)... The train stations, the buildings, the high-speed rails, everything... it's really far more impressive than what we have in the US."

Musk said that people should explore the architecture of Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, and visit Xi'an to understand China's storied history. He also mentioned that the Chinese language is among the oldest written languages in the world.

China has, historically, been "internally focused", and works hard for its growth and development," he said. "They've not been acquisitive," he said.

"From what I've seen, and I think most people who understand China would agree, people in China think about China 10 times more than they think about anything outside of China, so it's like 90 percent of their consideration is internal."

Musk also compared the Taiwan island and Hawaii from a geopolitical perspective. "China does feel very strongly about Taiwan... From their (Chinese people's) standpoint, it (Taiwan) is like one of the states (provinces/regions)... but more significant than Hawaii (in the US). And Hawaii is pretty significant for us."

Musk said he believes that China is not "acquisitive" and will never invade other countries.

"That (not being acquisitive) is a shared principle, I guess," he added.

Agencies contributed to the story.

### CHINA DAILY USA

#### NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com  
readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

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usa.chinadaily.com.cn

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#### WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108  
529 14th Street NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

#### SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900,  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

#### SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100  
Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

#### HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100  
Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

#### CANADA | TORONTO

471 Yonge Street, 10th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

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# LIVING HERITAGE

Editor's note:

There are 43 items inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage lists that not only bear witness to the past glories of Chinese civilization, but also continue to shine today. China Daily looks at the protection and inheritance of some of these cultural legacies. In this installment, we find out how China's architects and artisans continue to build on tradition, seeking new ways to implement ancient techniques and natural materials.

## CARVING OUT A LEGACY

Artisan woodworkers seek a way to integrate traditional materials and techniques into modern construction. **Fang Aiqing** reports.



The Lan Su Chinese Garden in Portland, Oregon.



A handicraft paper museum in Tengchong, Yunnan province.

Wood, artisans, and exquisite craftsmanship passed down for thousands of years. These constitute the key elements of traditional timber-framed structures, such as those that form magnificent royal palaces like the Forbidden City in Beijing and simple traditional quadrangle dwellings in Beijing, or Huizhou-style houses with white walls and black-tiled roofs in Anhui, Zhejiang and Jiangxi provinces.

Usually, a traditional Chinese wooden building uses large components, such as columns, beams, purlins and *dougong* (interlocking brackets), to frame the structure, and *sumiao* (mortise and tenon joinery) structures to tightly join together the components.

The projecting part, *sun* (tenon), and the concave part, *miao* (mortise), seem to bite each other, with each being supported while contained, making the structure stable but flexible, strong and pliable enough to withstand earthquakes.

In 2009, Chinese traditional architectural craftsmanship for timber-framed structures was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Yet, while traditional craftsmanship retains, and emanates, a romance that seems to bring us closer to nature, it is bordering on the impractical in the modern world, where reinforced glass skyscrapers and utilitarian, concrete city blocks are dominant.

At a time when the trend toward taller, larger and stronger buildings seems ubiquitous, there is a group of people determined to keep wood relevant. What does wood, they ask, as an architectural material, and the artisanship that has been cherished for generations mean for today's world?

Historic glory  
Born to a carpenter's family in Suzhou in 1949, Lu Yaozu started to learn woodwork from his father at the age of 16.

Drawing lines on wood and using a set of more than 100 tools, he started with the basics — chopping, sawing and chiseling.

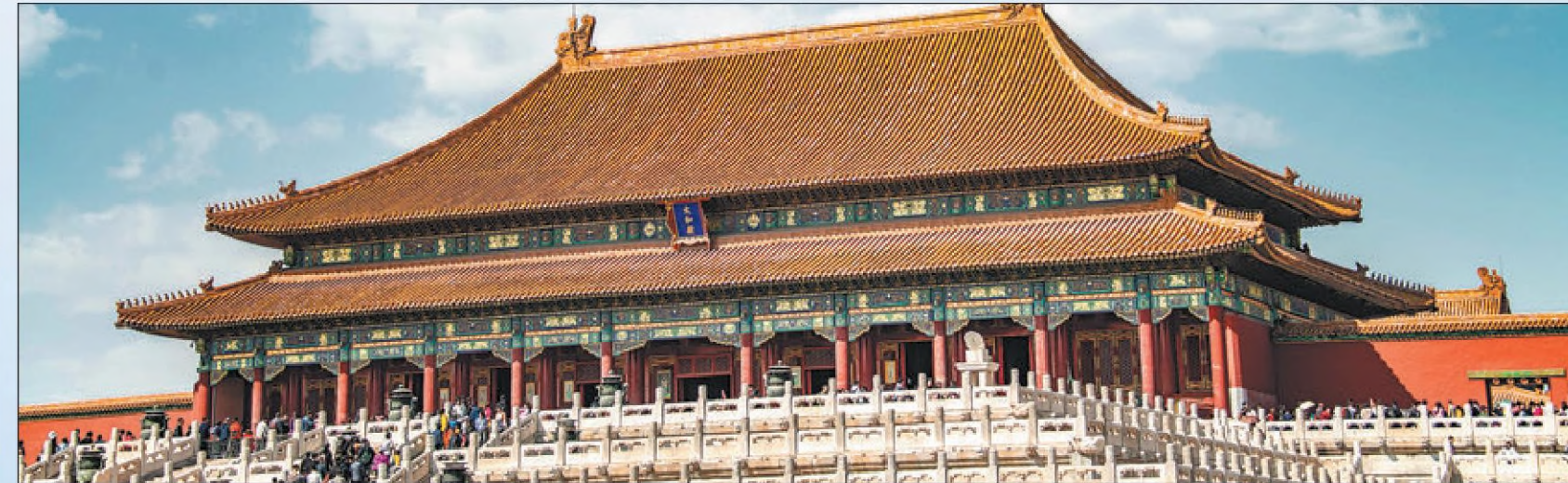
In a career spanning nearly six decades, the craftsman has not only devoted to design and construction, as well as restoration of ancient architecture, but he has also helped "export" the city's classic gardens through projects like the Ming Xuan, the Astor Chinese Garden Court of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Lan Su Chinese Garden in Portland, Oregon, the United States, as well as other projects in France, Japan and Singapore.



Center: The Hall of Supreme Harmony of the Forbidden City is a prime example of the traditional timber-framed structures that have withstood the test of time. Left top: The roof of the hall is decorated with figurines at the end of its diagonal ridges. Left: A model of *dougong* (interlocking brackets) on display at the National Museum of China. Right: Two projects showcase architect Hua Li's attempts in injecting new life into traditional craftsmanship of timber-framed structures. YANG SHAOCHUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY AND PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Lu is the fifth-generation inheritor of his family's expertise, belonging to the "Xiangshan group" of carpenters, named after the area in Suzhou. The Xiangshan carpenters use materials sparingly, avoid redundant decorations and encourage innovation through shape and structure, says Meng Lin, associate professor at the School of Art, Soochow University, and author of a monograph on the Xiangshan carpenters.

Their technique is one of the four schools of the craft recognized by the UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2009.



Center: The Hall of Supreme Harmony of the Forbidden City is a prime example of the traditional timber-framed structures that have withstood the test of time. Left top: The roof of the hall is decorated with figurines at the end of its diagonal ridges. Left: A model of *dougong* (interlocking brackets) on display at the National Museum of China. Right: Two projects showcase architect Hua Li's attempts in injecting new life into traditional craftsmanship of timber-framed structures. YANG SHAOCHUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY AND PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The other three skill sets, mainly used in building residential structures, stem from Beijing, ancient Huizhou (part of Anhui and Jiangxi provinces) and southern Fujian province.

One noted name among the Xiangshan carpenters is Kuai Xiang of the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), who is attributed as being one of the key figures behind the design and construction of the Forbidden City.

His name is particularly associated with today's Tiananmen Rostrum, which used to serve as the front gate of the royal palace and the three main halls, including Taihe Dian (Hall of Supreme Harmony), where major imperial ceremonies were held.

The Taihe Dian is noted for its grandeur, with its double-eaved, hip roof covered with more than 80,000 golden glazed tiles, supported by an intricate beam structure and 72 columns.

The beam structure and the columns and transferring the weight of the roof evenly to the columns, are 650 sets of *dougong*, each with layers of criss-crossed, upside-down small arches (*gong*) and blocks (*dou*) to hold the arches, among other modular parts. This forms the shape of an inverted triangle.

The roof is, notably, decorated with figurines of an immortal and 10 monsters at the end of its diagonal ridges, the one and only example in ancient Chinese architecture, indicating it was the highest-level palatial construction in the royal palace.

Back in Suzhou, however, this same carpentry was applied in pursuit of a delicate Jiangnan (south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River) temperament that is synonymous for the elegant and uncluttered lifestyle favored by ancient literati.

Here, the overhanging eaves have a feeling of lightness, making this "magic" of turning heavy, straight logs into curved, delightful shapes a challenge to any

master of carpentry, according to Xu Jifan, Lu's nephew and the sixth-generation inheritor of the family tradition. Lu says architecture built with their traditional carpentry makes perfect sense when being analyzed by modern physics.

They are solid and beautiful in a way that some joints and supporting structures look like decorations, and some are cleverly hidden.

And his ancestors were themselves intellectuals, capable of designing an architectural complex of diverse construction, featuring watercourses and greenery, as well as a combination of complicated wooden structures. They were also able to partake in manual work as well as manage the whole project.

Yet Lu, modestly, says he always thinks his skill is no match for that of his father, who, in his lifetime, had taken part in the restoration of the renowned Fengjiao ancient town and the Hanshan Temple in Suzhou.

Contemporary conversion  
Lu admits that the industry is experiencing a difficult time, with a relatively low income and lack of social recognition that steers people away from a career that demands knowledge, wisdom and analytical strength.

According to Meng, the scholar, despite the systematic accounts in *Yingsao Fayuan*, a bible for Suzhou-style architecture written by Yao Chengzu (1866-1938), carpenters today inhabit a different environment from their predecessors.

The younger generation would rather imitate than invent, she says.

The 74-year-old Lu has been teaching apprentices since the 1970s. In recent years, Xu, who has been learning carpentry from Lu for the past 43 years, teaches part time at local vocational colleges.

Both believe three to five years is adequate time to cultivate a carpentry skill set, but when, or whether, there will be a next-generation master of Xiangshan carpentry, who can draft, carry out the labor and direct, remains a question.

Architect Hua Li, a practitioner of modern architectural theory and practice, has completed several wooden structure projects over the years and has been reflecting on the potential of the traditional materials and the intellectual legacy widely applied in residential dwellings throughout the country.

Although wooden architecture has certain limits in terms of scale and fire protection and is therefore not in mainstream use, he recognizes wood as being nonpolluting and bringing a feeling of nature, intimacy and warmth.

In 2008, Hua's Trace Architecture Office designed a handicraft paper museum in rural Tengchong, Yunnan province, deep in Gaoligong Mountain.

*sumiao* structures, by a group of experienced local carpenters.

"It has extended the usage of traditional woodcraft, as it was seldom applied to an irregular shape," Hua says, adding that this attempt indicates traditional timber-framed structures can be more diversely used and promoted in a wider range of applications.

In 2017, in Taxia village of Nanjing county, Fujian province, Hua led a project that involved renovating five old buildings into a commercial resort, the Tsingpu Tulou Retreat. Three of them were rectangular *tulou* (earthen buildings) constructed in the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

According to Hua, the challenge was keeping the original wooden structures and earthen walls while upgrading the thermal and sound insulation, lighting, waterproofing and fire protection facilities to meet the need of a high-end hotel room.

These changes should be made as imperceptible or disguised as much as possible, so as not to interrupt the overall atmosphere of a bygone era.

Hua says a contemporary architect can draw inspiration from the ideas and aesthetics of traditional Chinese architecture.

Another project in Fujian, a branch of the bookstore chain Librairie Avant-Garde in Xiadi village of Pingnan county, saw the architect by a concrete-and-steel structure in the shell of a traditional house with three surviving rammed-earth walls.

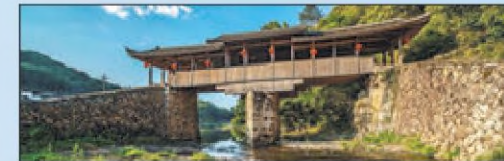
A steel column at the center of the building supports a double-sloped roof, the position and shape of which reminds people of its previous appearance that was reminiscent of the region, and the overall design enables a relatively large-span space to hold theatrical and cultural activities.

"I'm suggesting a method that seeks to link the tradition by using current construction methods and materials," Hua says.

He calls for updates in national technical specifications both for traditional timber-framed structures and an industrial system that applies laminated wood, prefabricated units and on-site assembly.

He says he wants to integrate such craftsmanship in suitable designs to facilitate its inheritance, because "a carpenter cannot enhance skill without frequent practice, and the handicraft will diminish without a carrier."

Contact the writer at [fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn)



Wenzhong Bridge in Taishun county, Zhejiang province. ZHUANG TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

“Covered bridges played a vital role in the rural transportation network and became a little like relay stations for the villagers.”

Lin Lina, deputy director of Taishun's bureau of culture, radio, TV, tourism and sports

By XU FAN | [xufan@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:xufan@chinadaily.com.cn)

It is the upwardly curved eaves, gray-tiled roofs and wooden sidings that give the ancient covered bridges in Taishun, a mountainous county nestled in Zhejiang province, their distinctive appearance.

If on a clear day, a traveler stands gazing at one from distance, beneath the blue sky and white clouds, it's easy to imagine that a rainbow spans the stream. It's a breathtakingly beautiful sight.

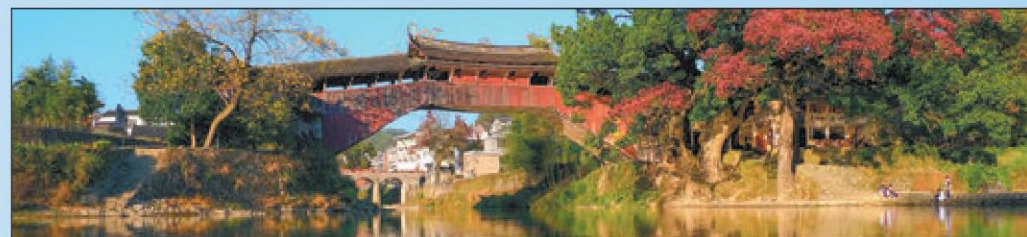
Hailed as "the hometown of China's covered bridges", the small county is home to 32 ancient bridges constructed during the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties (960-1911). Among them, 15 have been listed as major historical and cultural sites protected at the national level, the most of their kind in the country.

According to the National Cultural Heritage Administration, China has so far found 1,355 covered bridges built in ancient times, and 138 of them, located in 13 provinces and regions, have been listed as national-level protected relics.

In 2009, UNESCO inscribed the traditional design and practices of building Chinese wooden arch bridges on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

Mostly found in Zhejiang and Fujian provinces, which jointly applied for inclusion on the UNESCO list, covered bridges not only provide shelter from the sun and rain, but also serve as a nostalgic reminder of a heartwarming and bustling past.

"Because of its topography, Taishun has high mountains and meandering rivers. Before the advent of roads, traveling from one village to another often meant hours spent crossing rivers and scaling mountains. So, covered bridges played a vital role in the rural transportation network and became a little like relay stations for the villagers," says Lin Lina, deputy director of the



Beijian Bridge is one of the 32 ancient bridges in Taishun, Zhejiang province. Thanks to the joint efforts of the government and local artisans, the historical sites remain well-preserved. LIN ZONGYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Reinventing China's olden arches

county's bureau of culture, radio, TV, tourism and sports. Having grown up in the county, Lan remembers that her father once allowed her to sit on his shoulders, as he carried a bag of gifts across a covered bridge on their way to visit her grandmother.

Her cherished memories are far more than that. Almost all the covered bridges also include shrines for passersby to conveniently worship and pray for safety or good luck. On special days like festivals, the bridges become markets, drawing vendors selling agricultural products and daily items, and sometimes, puppet shows are held on the bridges to entertain the young.

Better protection  
Due to safety concerns, the practice of burning incense at the shrines has been prohibited. The bridges have been better preserved thanks to modern technology, and have had a more significant impact in promoting traditional culture and craftsmanship.

In late October, it was announced that the Three-Year Action Plan for the Protection of Covered Bridges (2023-25), which was issued in May, would be launched in Taishun. The aim of the plan is to create a comprehensive preservation system for covered bridges, and outline 10 major tasks, including surveying them, gathering information about them, and setting up risk assessment mechanisms.

A digitally empowered platform has been implemented in Taishun to monitor risk factors, such as rainfall, river levels, abnormal bridge temperatures and smoke. It not only enables a prompt response to emergencies, but also aids in preventing and minimizing potential damage.



Zeng Jiakuai leads the construction of covered bridges. He is a provincial-level inheritor of "beam-weaving" techniques. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Online  
Watch the video by scanning the code.

"We have also compiled a flood prevention manual that includes different emergency measures and guidelines for different types of covered bridges. For example, for bridges with strong load-bearing capacity, sandbags can be piled up to enhance its resistance and prevent collapse when the water level rises," says Lan.

Additionally, weather forecasts now focus on smaller areas within a 1-kilometer radius of the rainfall collection station near historical bridges, allowing for a more accurate and efficient response and better prevention, she adds.

Ancient becomes new  
With the centuries-old relics now well-preserved, the traditional skills and expertise needed to build and design covered bridges is attracting the interest of a new generation of carpenters. Over the past two decades, six teams comprised of around 100 craftsmen have been set up around the country and have built 46 new covered bridges.

Zeng Jiakuai, a provincial-level inheritor of "beam-weaving" techniques, leads one of the teams. It's a traditional method that involves interweaving and fastening multiple layers of wooden beams to create a single, strong and stable structure.

Born into a family of carpenters in Taishun, Zeng started learning to build wooden structures when he was 18 and began exploring wooden arch bridge construction techniques when he was 29.

Determined and diligent, Zeng ventured into the mountains to study historical bridges, recording data on their heights, spans, and the sizes of their different parts.

Through meticulous research and preparation, which included

making models and conducting pressure tests, Zeng became a self-taught bridge builder. He furthered his knowledge and skills by working under Dong Zhijie, a master carpenter who oversaw the construction of Tongde Bridge between 2004 and 2006, the first covered bridge built since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

From 2017 to 2019, Zeng traveled to Nantou county in Taiwan on a number of occasions, staying for a total of five months to help build a 43.5-meter covered bridge, the first of its kind to be built in Taiwan.

Having built 20 covered bridges, Zeng says that the structures have become a part of rural custom and culture. He says people in rural Zhejiang and Fujian provinces who have left their hometowns to work elsewhere find solace in the covered bridges, which help relieve homesickness.

When traditional craftsmanship is revitalized by being passed down, the younger generation approaches heritage in a creative, modern way.

Bao Houji, director of Taishun's Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, says that a series of cultural and creative products have been developed, including toy reproductions of its 32 ancient bridges.

Many newlywed couples, including those who travel specially to Taishun, like to use the covered bridges, which are mostly located in bucolic, picturesque surroundings, as the backdrop for wedding photos, making these old bridges even more popular and turning them into new internet sensations, adds Bao.

"Covered bridges are a unique but relatively niche form of cultural heritage conservation in China. They used to be an important element in public transportation and served as public gathering spaces for rural life. Nowadays, their preservation is an important pivot in passing on historical context and supporting rural vitalization," he says.



Santiao Bridge in Taishun county, Zhejiang province. FANG JUNCONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

1,355 covered bridges

the number of bridges built in ancient times that have been found in China, according to the National Cultural Heritage Administration



Wenxing Bridge, nestled among patches of paddy fields, displays upwardly curved eaves and gray-tiled roofs, typical features of ancient bridges in Taishun county, Zhejiang province. FANG JUNCONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## China, Japan and ROK have every reason to build on thawing ties for common interests

That the foreign ministers of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea met on Sunday for their first trilateral meeting after a hiatus of four years should be considered a positive development for the relations among the three major countries in East Asia.

Given the fact that the GDP of the three economies put together makes up about 25 percent of the world's total and the trade volume among the three constitutes about 20 percent of the world's total, how their cooperation fares has a bearing on the economic development of the world.

No wonder Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Japanese and ROK counterparts that the three countries should play a more proactive role in promoting regional and global development in the face of the headwinds buffeting the global economy.

To this end, Wang called on the three countries to restart negotiations on their trilateral free trade agreement as soon as possible, maintain the momentum of regional economic integration, improve the multichannel and multilevel regional free trade arrangements, and contribute to the common goal of pushing for a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.

Wang urged his Japanese and ROK counterparts to resist turning regional cooperation into camp politics. He also said in bilateral meetings with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and ROK Foreign Minister Park Jin that economic and technology issues should not be politicized, which is undoubtedly a prerequisite for Japan and the ROK

to have good relations with China.

For any sustained improvement in the relations among the three neighbors, it is vital that the three countries show respect for each other and pay due care and attention to each other's core concerns.

It is natural for the three countries to have differences on a range of issues. But as close neighbors and important economic and trade partners to each other, continued communication is essential and they should establish a long-term mechanism to iron out or shelve their differences.

It is also important for the three countries to promote cooperation and exchanges in a wide range of areas, which will hopefully increase political trust among them and thereby facilitate the improvement of bilateral and trilateral relations.

That the three sides agreed to create the necessary conditions and make the relevant preparatory work for the leaders of the three countries to meet is a positive move in this respect. Seoul and Tokyo should be clear about why the annual meeting among the leaders of the three countries agreed upon in 2008 has been suspended since 2020.

They both need to not let Washington guide their actions and they should refrain from following its lead in politicizing economic and technology cooperation and trying to put the brake on China's development. There is no reason for the three countries to let their differences, which can be peacefully resolved, prevail at the expense of the development of their ties.

## Argentina would benefit from joining BRICS

Argentinian president-elect Javier Milei's team in charge of international relations is reportedly weighing up whether Argentina should proceed with joining BRICS or not. This, according to experts the team has consulted, represents "an opportunity rather than a risk" for the country.

While a final official decision has yet to be made, whichever side the coin lands on will have a significant impact on Argentina's economic future. That the right-wing libertarian president-elect is mulling the merits of joining may be indicative of a softening of his hard-line campaign stance. That stance included a number of provocative claims in addition to the suggestion that the South American country would not be one of the new members joining the BRICS grouping of the world's five largest emerging markets.

Having secured victory in the election, that he is apparently willing to adopt a more pragmatic change in attitude comes as no surprise. Given that Milei is no longer in the opposition, he is now tasked with the seemingly impossible mission of navigating Argentina out of unprecedented economic woes marked by a triple-digit inflation, depleted foreign reserves and a poverty rate of more than 40 percent. Against this backdrop, good relations with the major emerging markets of BRICS are just too important for Argentina. It would be akin to cutting

off one's nose to spite one's face to distance Argentina from other emerging economy markets.

As outgoing president Alberto Fernandez said, joining BRICS would help Argentina "open up possibilities of joining new markets, of consolidating existing markets, of raising investment coming in, of creating jobs and raising imports", all of which Argentina desperately needs.

Membership of the enlarged BRICS would definitely align the country with the economic dynamics of the BRICS member states, which combined already account for 42 percent of the world's population and more than one-fourth of the global GDP. The new BRICS with the addition of six countries would represent 46 percent of the world population and around 37 percent of global GDP when measured at purchasing power parity.

The BRICS grouping has become an important platform for emerging markets and developing countries to strengthen solidarity and cooperation. The New Development Bank the group established in 2014, as well as the BRICS nations' trillions of dollars in reserves, would be able to provide enough liquidity to help Argentina refinance its mounting debts.

Indeed, Argentina would have nothing to lose, but everything to gain, from its joining of BRICS. Not to do so would prove to be extremely costly for the country.

## AUKUS defies nuclear nonproliferation regime

That the United States and the United Kingdom are powerful developed countries does not give them the right to subvert the international rules aimed at nuclear nonproliferation.

Both countries have in the past been vocal supporters of the International Atomic Energy Agency's work to prevent countries acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities. That is in sharp contrast to their insistence that the IAEA green-light their de facto handover of nuclear weapons to Australia by means of the nuclear submarine deal the three countries announced in September 2021 under the AUKUS framework.

As Li Song, China's permanent representative to the IAEA, told a meeting of the IAEA board of governors on Friday, the AUKUS collusion poses grave challenges to the international nonproliferation regime that has been a bedrock of postwar peace and stability. His call for intergovernmental discussions at the IAEA to address the proliferation risks posed by the AUKUS deal should not fall on deaf ears given the bad demonstration effect and the nature of the clique's opaque collaboration.

The deal aims to sharpen the blade of the US-led clique in its geopolitical game in the Asia-Pacific. But that comes at the cost of regional stability and nuclear security. If the IAEA gives a green light to the deal, it will be openly flouting its purpose.

The AUKUS countries are even trying to bend the "atoms for peace and development" organization to their will by going so far as to force other IAEA member states to take sides, bad-mouthing those states

that oppose their move as being the threats that justify it. That fallacious argument is intended to subvert the IAEA's safeguards system that has historically been achieved through consensus. As Li said, such a tradition has ensured that the IAEA safeguards system has kept pace with the times, on the basis of the general acceptance and support of member states.

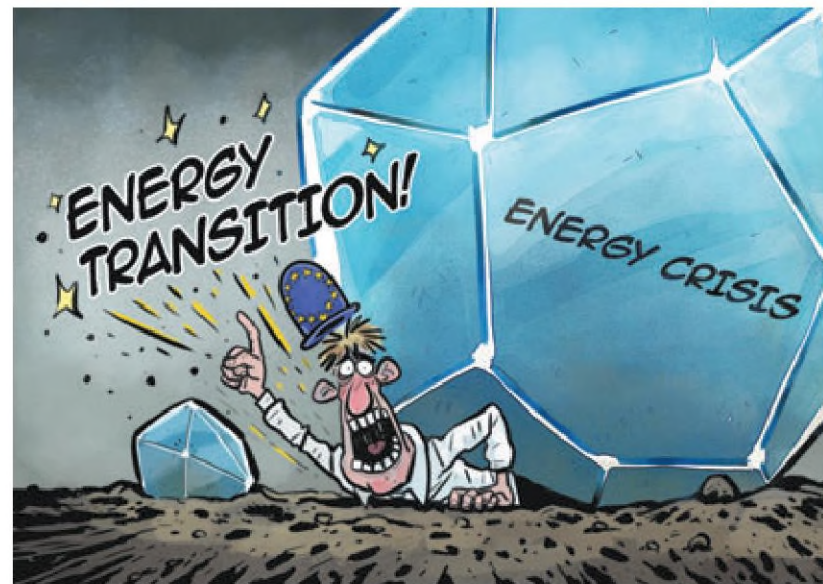
Approval of the AUKUS deal, which involves political, security, legal and technical issues, would set a dangerous precedent, fatally undermining the IAEA safeguards system and relevant safeguards practice. The IAEA would lose any claim to authority, impartiality and neutrality. More and more IAEA member states, having recognized the complexity and gravity of the situation, have voiced their concerns.

That Friday's IAEA board meeting marked the 11th time that the AUKUS deal was on the formal agenda of one of its quarterly meetings, without producing any concrete results, indicates the IAEA Secretariat's ineffectual response to the international community's collective concerns over the matter, raising suspicions of partiality toward the US camp.

That means before the IAEA member states reach a consensus through intergovernmental discussions on the AUKUS issue, relevant safeguard arrangements should not be interpreted and decided behind closed doors by only the AUKUS countries and the IAEA Secretariat.

China will continue to push for the intergovernmental discussion process so as to uphold the authority and efficacy of the international nonproliferation regime and the IAEA safeguards system.

Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Time to reflect on rationality of EU's sanctions against Russia

The European Union is considering a new round of sanctions against Russia over and above the 11 rounds that have already been imposed after the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out in February last year.

A recent Bloomberg report says the new sanctions are aimed at cracking down on Russia's ability to circumvent existing sanctions through third countries. The EU's executive arm proposed a ban on importers reselling certain items, such as semiconductors used in weapons or needed to make them, to Russia and required them to put a sum of money into an escrow account to ensure compliance.

At least half of this money would be transferred to a trust fund in Ukraine and the contract would be terminated if those rules were vio-

lated. Exporters are also obliged to notify their national authorities of any violations by companies in third countries.

However, diplomats from some major EU member states raised concerns over the proposal. Some EU members also want to reduce the number of goods that can be covered, fearing the new proposal will put European companies at a disadvantage.

Bloomberg previously reported that the new sanctions may involve 5 billion euros (\$5.47 billion) of trade. It said the EU is considering banning exports of welding machines, chemicals and technologies that can be used for military purposes, and restricting imports of processed metals and aluminum products, as well as diamonds. The bloc is also considering adding more goods to the ban list and

bringing relevant companies in third countries under the sanctions.

The Wall Street Journal quoted EU officials as saying the EU executive body issued a new round of sanctions against Russia on Nov 14, but diplomats said it could take weeks for all 27 member states to adopt the measures.

The 11 rounds of sanctions the EU has imposed on Russia cover energy, economy, trade and other areas. However, according to Russia's official statistics service Rosstat, the country's gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of 5.5 percent in the third quarter of 2023, which is better than its previous official assessment. Amundi, Europe's largest asset manager, recently forecast Russia's economy would grow three times faster than the eurozone in 2024.

- GUANCHANG

## What blue-collar workers deserve is more than wage

The income of interior decorators has reportedly overtaken that of many white-collar workers and many house owners are complaining how expensive it has become to decorate their homes.

This is a common phenomenon in developed countries where there is insufficient supply of human resources. Earlier surveys show that the average age of bricklayers is over 45.

The rising wages in blue-collar jobs reflect the increasingly tense labor supply and demand relationship, which is expected to boost vocational education. High incomes help blue-collar workers gain their overdue respect, so that more young people can be attracted to relevant posts.

Notably, blue-collar workers are the major forces in the labor market in most countries. They not only

make indelible contributions to the development and progress of society, but also the living standards and income of those doing such jobs are important factors affecting social equity and stability.

According to the seventh national census, in 2020 the population aged 15-64 years in China was 968 million, among which about 400 million were blue-collar workers.

The income growth of blue-collar workers provides a solid foundation for the overall improvement of social income. As long as the income of these blue-collar industries can be guaranteed, they can attract more laborers and can help boost the employment rate as a whole. That will also inject more vitality into social consumption.

However, it must be seen that those blue-collar workers still suffer

from a comparatively poor protection of their legal rights and interests. For example, wage arrears, poor working conditions, long working hours and frequent but unattended work-related injuries remain the concerns of many of them. To resolve these problems entails systemic efforts of the whole society, particularly the lawmakers and governments.

Migrant workers constitute a major body of the blue-collar workforce. It is pity that they still cannot enjoy equal welfare as local residents of the cities where they work and live. Payment for their labor is only one part of what they deserve, which should also include equal access to basic public services and public goods of a city where they pay tax and sell their labor.

- BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## Childcare calls for greater inputs into pediatrics

Surveillance reports released by the Chinese National Influenza Center indicate that over the past few weeks, the positive rates of influenza virus tests in the country have been increasing continuously.

Last week, the National Health Commission urged relevant localities to strengthen overall planning and implement a hierarchical diagnosis and treatment system.

It is recommended that children with mild symptoms of a respiratory system infection or pneumonia first go to grassroots clinics at the community level for treatment to reduce the burden on major hospitals. Parents should be wary of the high risk of cross infections at hospitals that are currently extremely busy.

That it takes more than 24 hours to see a pediatrician after registra-

tion in a hospital in some cities should prompt the central authorities to increase their input to pediatric departments. Against the background of the slowdown in birthrate in recent years, the shortage of pediatric medical resources across the country is easily overlooked.

Because of the heavy workload and comparatively lower status of pediatricians in the hierarchical system of medical workers in the country, in which oncologists, orthopedists, cardiologists, ophthalmologists and stomatologists are generally held in higher regard, few medical students would like to major in pediatrics at university.

The shortage of pediatricians coexists with the reluctance of hospitals to invest in pediatric departments as they don't think the

pediatric departments can help increase their overall revenue.

Compared with adults, children have weaker resistance to disease and are more likely to need intensive medical treatment during infectious disease seasons. Pediatric medical resources should have redundancy and be dynamically adjusted in real time.

The government therefore needs to increase its subsidies to hospitals so they can expand their pediatric departments. Basic pediatric medical services should be regarded as a necessary public good.

Increasing the supply of medical resources for children should undoubtedly be an integral part of the government's efforts to encourage childbirth and ease childcare burdens.

- THEPAPER.CN

## CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

## Contact us at:

**China Daily**  
15 HuiXin Dongjie Chaoyang District,  
Beijing 100029  
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8636  
editor@chinadaily.com.cn  
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631  
ads@chinadaily.com.cn  
Subscription: +86 400-699-0203  
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn  
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobi/daily.html

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

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

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

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

## COMMENT

Andy Heng

## BRI a story of commerce, connectivity and culture

The Belt and Road Initiative was first proposed by President Xi Jinping at the Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan in September 2013. In November 2014, when our bank's vice-chairman was in town, a journalist from Hong Kong asked him his view on the BRI. With great humility, he turned and asked, "what is BRI?"

So much has changed since. In November 2017, Francis Yeoh, chairman of Malaysia-based YTL conglomerate gave a speech on the initiative at the Fortune 500 Forum. Yeoh compared the initiative with the Marshall Plan, where massive funds were set aside to rebuild Europe after World War II, with the focus on infrastructure. Granted, the analogy is far from perfect as the Marshall Plan was conceived immediately after WWII while the BRI has come up during peacetime. Yet, Yeoh's speech galvanized us all, builders, bankers, policymakers.

In 2019, Bruno Macaes, a geopolitical expert, published a book on the initiative, titled *Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order*. In it, a former Portugal writes that "the best image of the Belt and Road is not the trains crossing the Eurasia supercontinent, or the ports and industrial parks opening up along the way. It's the cities being built up from scratch. These are what will change the physical and human landscape of the planet, creating new ways of life, new ideas, new adventures". Stephen Green, former chairman of HSBC, recommends Macaes' book as "essential reading for us all".

Beijing celebrated the 10th anniversary of the initiative at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on Oct 17 and 18. China Daily reported on the glowing benefits of the BRI, while SCMP and Lianhe Zaobao were more nuanced. The Western media were less generous. One (Financial Times) questioned the wisdom of the BRI's investments. Euronews alleged that the initiative's loans drive debt-ridden countries to bankruptcy. Whatever happened to balanced media coverage? The diametrically opposing reports reminded me of the old saying, "everyone did as he saw fit". But what is the truth?

**BRI deserves better storytelling**

The initiative deserves better storytelling. As a banker and a student of history, I would begin with the 3Cs — Commerce, Connectivity and Culture, no puns intended with gold, gospel and glory used in the 15th century Portugal. Commerce is a good place to start. Between 2013 and 2022, two-way investments between China and the Belt and Road countries topped \$380 billion, of which, China's outbound direct investments exceeded \$240 billion, benefitting 67,000 enterprises in the world. Chinese firms in the United States hire 89 percent of local employees, creating thousands of jobs, feeding millions of families. Using Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo's phrase, these are "good economics for hard times".

The second "C" — Connectivity. The Piraeus Port in Athens, the China-Laos Railway, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway are some Belt and Road projects that connect cities and peoples. One cannot over-emphasize the importance of connectivity in facilitating commerce and cooperation. Aaron Friedberg, a Princeton University professor who believes that China and the US are contesting for supremacy over Asia, highlights the power of the initiative's connectivity in this manner, "depending on which ones (countries) are included, these countries may already comprise close to two-thirds of the world's people and nearly one-third of its total GDP".

Kishore Mahbubani, founding dean of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, urges



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

And in the past years, Chinese leaders and Indian leaders visited each other's hometowns and enhanced understanding about exchanges between civilizations.

Europe to partner China in developing African infrastructure. In his book, *Has China Won?* (2020), Mahbubani argues, "the most sensible thing for European leaders to do is to join, en masse, the next high-level meeting of Chinese and African leaders in Beijing. A massive turnout of European leaders at such summit would send a powerful market signal. It could catalyze a powerful wave of new investments in Africa. Over time, with a strong African economy, there will be less incentive for widespread African migration to Europe".

**Cultural aspects equally important**

Finally, the third "C", the cultural aspects. Compared with commerce and connectivity, culture leaves lasting impacts. Quoting from George Yeo, former Singaporean foreign minister (2004-11), in his speech entitled "China in Europe's Future and Europe in China's Future" delivered in May this year, "culture touches people deeply. They will forget everything else, but they will not forget how you treat them in their identity".

The accounts of Zhang Qian, a political envoy who went as far as Central Asia during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), are well known, but stories of legendary characters such as Fa Xian, Xuan Zang, Alopen Abraham and Zheng He are more delightful.

Since the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), silk was widely used throughout the Roman Empire, both as a luxury product and as currency to pay troops. In his book *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*, Oxford historian Peter Frankopan writes that Seneca, the Roman statesman, was horrified by the popularity of Chinese silk, arguing "silk garments could barely be called clothing given they hid neither the curves nor the decency of the ladies of Rome. The very foundation of marital relations was being undermined". Despite Seneca's warnings, silk merchants won the day.

Fa Xian, a Chinese Buddhist monk, whose pilgrimage to India in the early fifth century initiated Sino-Indian relations, translated many sutras into Chinese, spreading Buddhism. Xuan Zang, a famous Buddhist monk in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), traveled to India despite travel ban. Upon his return to Chang'an, Xuan Zang documented his sojourn in a historic travelogue, *Da-Tang Xiyu Ji* (Great Tang Records on the Western Region), detailing the geography, economic activities and climate.

And in the past years, Chinese leaders and Indian leaders visited each other's hometowns and enhanced understanding about exchanges between civilizations.

To conclude, how does one see the Belt and Road Initiative? This is the answer of Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema in his interview with CGTN in September, "who would not want to be part of the global civilization? Who would not want to uplift his own people from poverty? Who would not want to help their women who walk 5 kilometers for water every day? Who would not want to be part of this great story?"

The author is the general manager of a foreign bank based in Guangzhou. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Qiu Ju

## China-US Sunnylands statement rekindles hope of tackling climate crisis

The recent meeting between the leaders of China and the United States has attracted considerable attention. But that should not detract from the importance of the Sunnylands statement, which showcases both nations' commitment to engage in dialogue and collaboration on climate issues.

Because of the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic and escalating geopolitical tensions, global efforts to combat climate change have faced hurdles and even regressed. In this context, the Sunnylands declaration undeniably brings the much-awaited warmth of hope amid the prevailing challenges. Particularly on the eve of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) taking place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from Nov 30 to Dec 12, the agreement to expedite actions against the climate crisis despite previous disagreements sets a positive tone for negotiations and is poised to significantly contribute to its success.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the climate crisis is now an undeniable reality, transcending mere scientific models. That is why, despite the tumultuous international environment, major powers have contin-

ued dialogue on climate-related issues. Addressing the climate crisis has become an indispensable priority for world leaders. At the heart of international relations lie national interests. The willingness of nations to set aside past grievances, bridge religious and cultural differences and development needs, to cooperate on climate issues underscores the pressing reality of the crisis.

According to a report the World Economic Forum published in 2021, if the climate crisis continues unchecked, the global average temperature could rise by 3.2 C by 2050, resulting in an approximate 18 percent loss of the global GDP, equivalent to roughly \$23 trillion.

In contrast, effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, limiting global temperature rise to below 2 C, would result in less than 4.2 percent in economic losses to the global GDP. Asia is anticipated to bear the brunt of the impact, with the region's GDP falling by 5.5 percent, even within the 2 C scenario.

However, these numbers only scratch the surface, encompassing extreme weather events, climate disasters, food scarcity, flooding from rising sea levels, and population displacement. More profound loss-

**This reinforces our belief in the power of "rationality" and our faith in the international community to make informed choices in tackling the climate crisis.**

es, such as the extinction of numerous species, impacts on human health, exacerbated poverty and inequality leading to social upheavals, are incalculable. WHO estimates suggest that between 2030 and 2050, climate change could cause an additional 250,000 deaths annually due to malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress.

Both the US and China are not immune to these consequences. In 2022, the US incurred losses exceeding \$176 billion due to weather and climate disasters. Research from Tsinghua University's Institute of Energy, Environment and Economy reveals China's faster temperature increase compared to the global average over the past 70 years. The country experiences an average annual economic loss of approximately \$50

billion due to climate-related disasters, roughly equivalent to 0.4 percent of the nation's GDP. Although 0.4 percent may seem trivial compared to China's past double-digit GDP growth rates, the impact of climate change is not linear. Temperatures surpassing critical points could lead to a scenario of an 18 percent global GDP loss by 2050, or even worse.

Contemporary Chinese citizens have not seen significant nationwide economic downturns. In recent years of economic slowdown, many businesses and individuals have felt the chill though. If the climate crisis remains inadequately addressed, far more adverse outcomes could follow, impacting generations born in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s during their later years or even in their prime.

The climate crisis fundamentally represents a tragedy of the commons. To draw an analogy, we are all "shepherds" tending to the Earth's land. In times of abundant grass and water, if experts predict that overgrazing might deplete resources in 100 years, a shepherd focused solely on self-interest might ignore the warning. Shepherds who are concerned about their descendants would persuade others to limit herd expansions while clandestinely growing their

own. However, when the prophecy becomes a reality — as pastures begin deteriorating and some herds suffer from malnutrition — even the self-centered shepherds will start reducing livestock size on the basis of cost-and-benefit calculation. Moreover, influential shepherds will aim to persuade others to collectively mitigate risks. Younger shepherds, facing potential starvation without inheriting elders' pastures, would vehemently voice concerns. As such, participating in collective action to address the climate crisis is no longer purely altruistic but a rational choice.

As the world's largest economies and top emitters of greenhouse gases, the China-US leaders' meeting and the Sunnylands statement inject confidence and vitality into global climate cooperation at a crucial historical juncture. This reinforces our belief in the power of "rationality" and our faith in the international community to make informed choices in tackling the climate crisis.

The author is a researcher at the China Europe International Business School Lujiatai International Institute of Finance. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## GLOBAL VIEWS

ERIK SOLHEIM

## New era of collaboration

The vision of building a global community with a shared future underscores the interconnectedness that should guide efforts to address common challenges

China's transformative ascent since 1978 stands as the most significant game-changer in my lifetime; I can personally bear witness to the nation's remarkable trajectory from being the 180th per capita economy to the second biggest in the world. When I first visited China in 1984, it was among the poorest countries in the world, with no skyscrapers or personal cars, with no high-speed railway or any sort of high tech. Most Chinese at the time ate rice or noodles and wore very simple clothes. Today China is a showcase of modernity. It aims for an ecological civilization and is pursuing a Chinese path to modernization.

China's rise heralds a new, multipolar world, disrupting outdated paradigms but offering unprecedented opportunities for global collaboration. The world, including the West, should celebrate its ascent.

Contrary to viewing this shift as a zero-sum game, it is crucial to recognize that China's rise benefits not only itself but humanity at large. The global economy has expanded, lifting millions of people out of poverty worldwide. East Asia, once a region marred by conflict, is now a beacon of peace and prosperity, the one big region free from wars. China's affordable products have reduced global prices, enabling broader access to goods, benefiting the United States and everyone else.

However, embracing a new global order is not without its challenges. For the US, accustomed to a century of unparalleled dominance, accepting a new and equal power requires adaptation. Similarly, China must adjust to its role as one of the world's leaders and the concomitant responsibilities that brings.

Collaboration between China and

the US, bringing in key players such as India, the European Union, Turkey, Indonesia, Russia, Brazil, among others, is pivotal for addressing global challenges. The foundation for a lasting partnership lies in two fundamental principles: respect and dialogue.

It is unrealistic to expect China to adopt the West's governing system or for that matter that the US should adopt China's. China's system is rooted in thousands of years of Chinese experience valuing harmony in society. The US is heavily influenced by the focus on individual freedom in a migrant society. Fortunately these differences need not hinder collaboration. A partnership in climate action, environmental protection, prosperity and peace is achievable without compromising sovereignty or the values of either the East or the West.

To foster this collaboration, the US should show more respect and curiosity toward China. China is a state with a population four times bigger and with a history more than 10 times longer than that of the US. The depth of Chinese civilization and its modern cities with superior infrastructure deserve acknowledgment. Learning about China's historical periods of advancement, such as the Tang Dynasty (618-907) or the Song Dynasty (960-1279), can dispel arrogance and nurture curiosity. For nearly all of human civilization, China was one of the most advanced places on earth.

Conversely, Chinese friends should appreciate the US' historical contributions. The US pioneered the modern republic, influenced



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Western political thought, and propelled the industrial and scientific revolutions.

A respectful acknowledgment of each other's redlines, such as the one-China principle, is also required.

Mutual understanding is the key to overcoming differences. It is time to step up mutual visits and dialogue in different settings and

at different levels, from those of the presidents, foreign ministers, and finance officials to representatives of businesses and universities. The increasing visits this year bring hope. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited the US this October after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken traveled to China in June.

Especially significant, Chinese

President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden had face-to-face talks in San Francisco. This was perhaps the best news of the year. Issues discussed in about four hours ranged from the crisis in the Middle East, to restoring direct military contacts, the fentanyl crisis in the US and the risks posed by artificial intelligence.

At a business event in San Francisco, President Xi delivered a wonderful speech showing warm respect for the US people. I wish all leaders would follow this path of mutual respect, both in words and deeds.

In today's geopolitical world, nothing is more important than China-US relations. With collaboration between China and the US, it will be much easier to tackle the grave global problems. Together we can fight climate change, restore the global economy after the pandemic, bring all humans out of poverty, control and develop artificial intelligence and maintain world peace. Also it will be easier to find solutions in Ukraine and Palestine.

Recognizing that humanity shares one planet and one destiny, China and the US will take their global leadership jointly in environmental initiatives. China and the US announced a joint statement on climate cooperation hours in advance of the Xi-Biden summit. The statement reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate on fighting the climate crisis. The two sides have recommitted to the 2015 Paris climate goals and have pledged to work together to make the forthcoming climate talks in Dubai a success. Notably, both countries

have committed to "economy-wide" nationally determined contributions not limited to carbon dioxide but across all greenhouse gases.

In the realm of green technology, China is far ahead of the rest of the world, with a 60-80 percent share of all renewable markets, solar, wind, hydropower and batteries. More tensions may arise due to business competition, but this competition can also drive faster global adoption of green practices. When US and European automakers see the technologies of global leaders such as BYD or CATL, they understand they need to speed up to compete. A balanced approach is needed, emphasizing cooperation, dialogue, and utilizing institutions such as the World Trade Organization when disputes arise.

China's achievements in high-speed rail and solar panels offer valuable experiences for global development. The Belt and Road provides a great opportunity for China to share its technologies and green is now the background color of the Belt and Road. Instead of competition, the US should explore complementarity with the Belt and Road Initiative, helping developing countries by leveraging its strengths in areas such as high-tech, artificial intelligence, vaccines and top-tier universities.

The destiny of nations is intertwined, emphasizing the need for collective prosperity. Together, we thrive; separately, we falter.

*The author is vice-president of the Green Belt and Road Coalition and former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

WANGLEI

## Successful balancing act

Australia offers a gold example to other countries of how to avoid the predicament of having to choose sides in the game of major powers

The recent resumption of high-level contacts between China and the United States, especially the China-US summit meeting in San Francisco, has raised positive expectations among the international community for an improvement in bilateral relations.

The convening of the 30th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco has also injected new impetus into promoting openness and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is hoped that the positive trend will continue, but the agitated state of the strategic game between China and the US has not yet fundamentally changed, and there is still a long way to go for the bilateral ties to return to a healthy and stable track that will benefit not only themselves but the region at large.

As the China-US competition is becoming increasingly normalized, Asia-Pacific countries continue to face the dilemma of "taking sides". On the one hand, they are aware that to varying degrees they still depend on the US for security. On the other hand, they fully realize that China is their most important trading partner, and their economic growth is inseparable from their cooperation with China. If they ignore that fact and coordinate with the US to contain China, their partnership with China will be inevitably compromised.

However, the US' strategic adjustment with China has not decreased, instead it has increased from \$275.8 billion in 2017 to nearly \$400 billion in 2022, making its consumers more dependent on "made-in-China" products. The US' "small yard with high fences" policy has not prevented China's technological breakthroughs in the fields such as semiconductors, new energy and

information communication, but has instead caused heavy losses to its own high-tech enterprises' exports to China. The challenging "industrial relocation", high labor costs, and frequent union strikes cause continuous blows to the US' manufacturing plan.

According to macroeconomic data provider CEIC, since 2018, the export volume of inland provinces and cities in China has increased by 94 percent, far higher than India's 41 percent, Mexico's 43 percent, and Vietnam's 56 percent during the same period. Undoubtedly, these countries are still unable to challenge China's status as the "world factory".

The Morrison administration's second mistake was betting on the US' victory and China's failure to indulge a strategic speculative mentality. On the one hand, it fantasized about taking advantage of China's dependence on Australia's mineral resources to force Beijing to make concessions and compromises; and on the other hand, it sought to shape Australia into a "pioneer" of the US' "Indo-Pacific strategy" in exchange for economic rewards and security assistance from the US and Western allies. However, to its disappointment, China soon turned to countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Brazil for imports of industrial raw materials, accelerating the pace of replacing Australia.

What is more ironic is that Australia's partners rushed to claim the market share lost by Australia in China. According to researchers from the University of Technology Sydney, Australia's exports of the 12 goods affected by the US sanctions decreased by \$12.6 billion, while the US' exports to China increased by \$4.6 billion, and Canada's and New Zealand's exports increased by \$1.11 billion and \$786

million respectively. Obviously, Australia's US-led security allies have been the biggest beneficiaries of China-Australia trade frictions.

The Morrison government's third mistake was to refuse to recognize these two mistakes, allow risks to spiral out of control, and continuously upgrade its anti-China policies. From banning Huawei from building its 5G network to obstructing China-Australia economic and trade cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative framework, and cooperating with the US to intervene in the Taiwan question and other issues, it forced China to take reciprocal countermeasures. China-Australia ties hit rock bottom because of its reckless moves.

But from the inauguration of the new Australian government in May 2022 to Albanese's visit to China this November, the rapid thawing of bilateral relations and the positive momentum of a turnaround in just 18 months indicate that the Albanese administration has done something right in developing relations with China.

On the one hand, the Albanese government maintains a calm mind and demonstrates diplomatic independence. Its approach to dealing with Beijing has begun to return to caution and thoughtful consideration, emphasizing that Australia should contact and cooperate with China from the perspective of national interests.

On the other hand, the Albanese administration keeps showing sincerity and emphasizes consistency between its words and deeds. In



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

addition to continuously releasing friendly signals in diplomacy, the Albanese government revoked its World Trade Organization lawsuit against China and gave a nod to a cooperation project of Chinese companies in the Port of Darwin. As a result, the economic and trade negotiations between the two countries have been restarted, and a series of economic and trade disputes have been resolved since the first half of this year.

Australia's experience and lessons are enlightening for Asia-Pacific countries that face the pressure of "taking sides" because of the China-US competition. It should be noted that China-US relations are far more complex than imagined, with multiple components of confrontation, cooperation, and competition coexisting. In this situation, Asia-Pacific countries should not act as "pawns" in the game of major powers, but rather as "players" in promoting regional peace and development. They

should utilize independent diplomacy and a strategic balance to increase their own room for maneuver on policies.

All parties in the Asia-Pacific should cherish the region's hard-earned peace and stability. China adheres to peaceful development and opposes a new Cold War in the region. Confronting competition with the US, China does not want or request Asia-Pacific countries to take sides or stand in line. And China is willing to share its development opportunities with all members of the Asia-Pacific community, working together to achieve win-win cooperation.

*The author is an assistant research fellow at the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## BUSINESS

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HIGHER GROUND

## Lenders may bolster private sector

New circular seen persuading banks to extend equal treatment to firms

By LIU ZHIHUA  
liuzhihua@chinadaily.com.cn

China is expected to further strengthen policy support for the private sector with focus on improving financial services, to sustain economic recovery momentum and stabilize employment, macroeconomic experts said on Monday.

They said they expect better coordination between government departments and financial institutions, which can overcome financing bottlenecks and bolster private enterprises, most of which are mid-sized or smaller.

Their comments came on the heels of a circular jointly released by eight central government departments on Monday, stressing improvement in financial services and noting that financial institutions should accord equal treatment to enterprises.

The departments include the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, the National Financial Regulatory Administration, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance.

The circular called on financial institutions to effectively smooth and expand financing channels, including loans, bonds and stocks for private enterprises. Apart from urging banks to increase first-time loan and credit support for private enterprises, it asked them to take the initiative to help private enterprises improve their capital flows. That can be done through efforts like not blindly restricting, withdrawing or cutting off loans while striving for balance between promoting development and preventing risks.

Other priorities mentioned by the circular included optimizing the registration mechanism for private enterprises to issue debt, fully leveraging the role of private enterprise bond financing support tools and expanding the scale of private enter-



Employees work on the production line of a private textile company in Fuzhou, Jiangxi province.  
ZHU HAIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

prise bond financing.

"China's economic recovery momentum has been picking up since the third quarter, but small and micro-sized enterprises remain a relatively weak link in the economy," said Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International.

"It is highly necessary to strengthen policy support for those enterprises and expand the allocation of financial resources for the private sector," Wang said, predicting loan accessibility for small and micro-sized enterprises will continue to improve while their cost of loans will likely decline.

With the circular issued, outstanding inclusive loans for small and micro-sized enterprises will likely keep growing at above 20 percent year-on-year for a certain period in the future, outperforming that of the overall loan growth significantly, he said.

Li Chang'an, a professor at the Academy of China Open Economy Studies, which is part of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said that liquidity

stress has become a severe challenge for many private enterprises, as difficulties and costs in obtaining loans and issuing bonds have aggravated over the past three years.

"The circular has outlined comprehensive principles to address such a problem, and more detailed policy measures by different government departments involved are expected to be rolled out later toward joint efforts," he said.

Given private enterprises' relative inability to contain risk and their lack of quality collateral for financing, more innovative methods should be explored, to motivate potential lenders and creditors while also effectively managing private enterprises' loan or debt default risk, he said.

For instance, the banking system should develop ability to precisely identify financial needs and risks of private enterprises to improve services, while the existing special funds established for small and medium-sized enterprises should play a more capable role, he said.

Xu Wencao, director of Asia-Pacific financial institutions at Fitch

Ratings, observed that the circular mentions cross-department cooperation, aiming to improve disclosure and transparency as well as providing more credit enhancement.

More accompanying measures will come through to increase banks' incentives such as required reserve ratio reduction or tax benefits for associated lending, she said.

Chang Haizhong, executive director of corporates at ratings agency Fitch Bohua, said it is expected that problems, like commercial banks being reluctant to lend to private enterprises and financial asset management institutions being reluctant to invest in private enterprise bonds, will be solved to a certain extent going forward.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the purchasing managers index for medium-sized and small enterprises in the manufacturing sector came in at 48.7 and 47.9 in October, respectively, below the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction. The readings were also 0.9 and 0.1 lower, respectively, from that in September.

## Panda bonds to help RMB expand footprint

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

Increased interest in panda bonds, spurred by China's low interest rates and supportive policies, will help promote the internationalization of the renminbi, experts said on Monday.

Panda bonds are yuan-denominated bonds issued by overseas institutions in the Chinese onshore market.

Calculations by the People's Bank of China show that 58 panda bonds were issued in the country during the first eight months, with the total fundraising reaching 106 billion yuan (\$14.8 billion).

Up to 52 panda bonds were issued last year, with the total funds raised coming in at 85 billion yuan, according to the country's central bank.

Freddy Wong, head of the fixed income department at Invesco Asia-Pacific, said issuances of panda bonds so far this year have overtaken that of 2016 in value terms — the previous peak — to touch a record.

Supportive institutional arrangements such as the Bond Connect and Swap Connect programs have better linked the onshore and offshore investments, encouraging the issuance of panda bonds, he said.

The low interest rate in China is an incentive for international institutions to issue panda bonds, said Ethan Wang, head of investment strategy for wealth management at Standard Chartered China.

At present, the yield on China's 10-year government bond is around 2.6 percent, while the corresponding bond yield in the United States is as high as 4.5 percent.

Experts from the foreign exchange and commodities department at CIB Research wrote in a report that RMB assets are a safer financing option for international institutions given their lower correlation with the US and European markets.

This is especially important at a time of rising market volatility, they said.

International investors cannot overlook China as it is already the second-largest bond market in the world after the US, they added.

In September, the RMB became — for the first time — the second most used global currency in the trade finance market, overtaking the euro, according to global financial messaging services provider, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication.

At the end of last year, the PBOC and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange announced new measures for the capital management of overseas institutions' bond issuances in the Chinese onshore market. They said that proceeds from panda bond issuances can be remitted overseas as long as the actual usage of the funds is consistent with the purposes stated in the offer circular, said Feng Lin, a senior analyst at Golden Credit Ratings.

Prior to this, such financing could only remain in the Chinese onshore market. Therefore, the new measure will encourage the issuance of panda bonds, she said.

More importantly, facilitated issuances of panda bonds will encourage overseas institutions' cross-border receipts, payments and use in the form of the RMB, said Feng.

When panda bonds mature, the issuers will have refinancing needs. This will help stabilize the issuance of the yuan-denominated bonds, said Wong from Invesco.

This is conducive to the internationalization of the RMB, making the Chinese currency a financing tool for multinational companies, he said.

According to a report on RMB internationalization released by the PBOC in October, continued efforts will be made to support more overseas central banks, international development institutions and multinational companies in issuing panda bonds.

## Huawei-Changan auto JV rocks industry

By LI FUSHENG  
lifusheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Huawei's decision to move its smart vehicle technologies and solutions into a joint venture with Chinese carmaker Changan is expected to grow its business but it is also spreading disquiet among other partners as well, said analysts.

The new company, in which Changan is to hold up to 40 percent stake, will engage in research and development, production, sales and service of intelligent automotive systems and component solutions, said Huawei on Sunday.

Yu Chengdong, head of Huawei's smart vehicle business unit, said China needs a smart electric vehicle platform that is headed by "a locomotive" and co-built by automotive firms.

He said the equity stakes in the joint venture will be open to its existing partners and others of potential strategic value. Huawei has been co-developing models with brands

including Seres, BAIC, JAC and Chery. In a research note, Ping An Securities analysts said the new JV has great potential, whose annual operating revenue could reach over 100 billion yuan (\$13.97 billion) in the long run.

In contrast, Huawei's operating revenue from its vehicle business unit was 1 billion yuan in the first half of this year.

Ping An analysts said Huawei's influence is growing in the automotive industry because of its competitive edge in smart driving and smart cabin technologies.

They further said annual sales of vehicles that sport Huawei's technology package will reach 1 million units in the short term.

Changan, which has partnered with Huawei on its Avatr models, is expected to benefit most from the deal. Its shares jumped to the daily limit on Monday.

Yet, Seres, a long-time partner with the technology giant to roll out the AITO models, saw its

shares slump 7.45 percent during the intraday trading. But, they closed marginally up nevertheless, with Seres' good sales performance and late-night statement on Sunday appearing to have finally reassured investors.

Other partners among carmakers, including Chery and BAIC, have remained silent. Shares of BAIC's listed arm BAIC BluePark fell 0.79 percent on Monday.

Roy Lu, a Shanghai-based automotive analyst, said Huawei has proven appealing to small and medium-sized Chinese carmakers that do not yet have their own solutions.

"It is one of the best solutions for them," said Lu. "Working with Huawei is probably better than working with traditional suppliers."

From the very start, Huawei's logo helped such smaller carmakers to sell more vehicles and now Huawei's technology will boost their sales, said Lu.

But larger companies, including



A view of the assembly line of carmaker Changan in Chongqing.  
WANG QUANCAO / XINHUA

SAIC, Geely and GAC, have chosen to solve the problem themselves.

Chen Hong, SAIC's chairman, said one-stop package solutions from suppliers will reduce carmakers to hardware companies.

"It is like we become the flesh and they are the soul, and that is not acceptable to us. We want to retain our soul," said Chen.

Yale Zhang, managing director of consulting firm Automotive Foresight, said Huawei has shown it will pursue excellence in smart vehicles, but the big carmakers may see it a potential threat.

"What if it produces vehicles itself when conditions are ripe? After all, carmakers make much, much more money than suppliers," said Zhang.

## 3rd phase of nuke heating service starts operations in Shandong

By ZHENG XIN  
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

The third phase of China's first heating project fueled by nuclear energy, covering multiple prefecture-level cities, was put into operation in Haiyang, East China's Shandong province, over the weekend, as part of the government's efforts to increase green energy supplies for heating during this winter and next spring.

The project, with a planned installed capacity of 900 megawatts, is part of No 1 Warm-U-Clear, the first commercial nuclear energy

heating project in China, its operator State Power Investment Corp said.

The green energy will be provided by the Haiyang nuclear power plant, which has a heating system connected to two traditional nuclear units.

It provides green heating to Shandong province's Haiyang and Rushan through a transport pipe, it said.

The total heating area of the project will reach 12.5 million square meters this winter, which will keep about 400,000 people warm, it said.

Provinces across the nation are stepping up energy supplies to meet rising energy demand for heating during the winter.

The project will provide much-needed experience to further apply clean energy heating nationwide, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

The role of nuclear power as a clean energy source for heating is expanding in the country. In the long run, this will not only reduce heating costs but also significantly improve the operational effi-

ciency of nuclear power plants, Lin said.

The efforts in nuclear heating illustrate China's ambitions at de-carbonizing its energy-intensive heating sector, he said.

State Power Investment Corp has been stepping up efforts to expand its nuclear power-based heating projects to more areas across the country in recent years.

The company started its first phase of nuclear heating in 2019 in Shandong province, which has provided 700,000 sq m of carbon-free heating, followed by the second phase that covered 5 million

sq m in 2021, it said.

Since the operation of the first phase of No 1 Warm-U-Clear in 2019, it has replaced the consumption of 390,000 metric tons of standard coal while reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 720,000 tons, SPIC said.

The first pilot nuclear heating project in southern China, which is built upon residual thermal power of China National Nuclear Corp's Qinshan nuclear power station in Zhejiang province, is also currently under operation in Haiyan county, in East China's Zhejiang province.

## Briefly

## Telecom sector Jan-Oct revenue up

China's telecommunication industry January-October revenue grew nearly 7 percent year-on-year to 1.42 trillion yuan (\$199 billion), buoyed by emerging businesses, according to data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Emerging sectors such as cloud computing, big data, the internet of things and internet data centers saw their revenues rise 20.5 percent year-on-year to 301.2 billion yuan. Broadband internet services generated 219 billion yuan worth of revenue for China's three telecom giants — China Mobile, China Telecom, and China Unicom — in the first 10 months, up 9.3 percent over the previous year.

## Software profit rises in first 10 months

The January-October profit of China's software and information technology services grew nearly 14 percent year-on-year to 1.14 trillion yuan (\$160 billion) on a revenue of 9.82 trillion yuan, up nearly 14 percent as well, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology showed. Revenue from software products increased by more than 11 percent year-on-year to 2.32 trillion yuan while that from industrial software products expanded to 223.1 billion yuan, up more than 12 percent. Cloud computing and big data services revenue jumped 14.8 percent year-on-year, and e-commerce platform technical services revenue rose 9 percent, the data showed.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

# BUSINESS

## Pre-owned luxury goods biz gains momentum

By ZHU WENQIAN  
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

China's pre-owned luxury goods market has grown remarkably in recent times as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on it has subsided and the purchasing power of China's middle-income consumers has also gradually recovered, experts said at a trade forum.

China's secondhand luxury goods market has grown to such a size that the potential value of all the products that could be traded could exceed 3 trillion yuan (\$420 billion), said the Yaok Institute, a market research firm.

However, the actual 2022 sales and estimated 2023 sales were not immediately available. Handbags, clothing, footwear, watches, jewelry and wines are some of the product categories popular among Chinese consumers of secondhand luxury goods, market sources said.

The rapid growth of e-commerce has spurred the market, so trading in it needs to improve to global standards, said the China Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Association.

"Given continuous consumption upgrade, we should cultivate more professional talent for the further development of the market and strengthen cooperation with colleges and research institutions," said Wang Xin, president of the association.



A shopper checks out handbags at a secondhand goods store in Shanghai in October.  
WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Young female consumers have become the mainstay of the secondhand luxury goods market in China. High-end handbags are the most active category, with clothing and footwear expected to see rapid growth in sales. But the spending power of male consumers and those aged above 40 cannot be underestimated either, said a report based on new research carried out by the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

Zhang Mengxia, director of Luxury China of the UIBE, the first academic research and talent training institution for luxury products management in the country, said: "The trading volumes of the top eight luxury brands accounted for about 80 percent of the total transactions for secondhand luxury products, and some niche brands have gained in popularity.

"As Chinese consumers have diverse and specific fashion demand, unique designs of luxury products will drive secondhand luxury consumption."

China's secondhand luxury products market boasts a large scale, but the circulation rate is still lower than that of developed markets such as Europe, the United States and Japan, Zhang said.

According to Bain & Co, the global luxury market this year is projected to reach 1.5 trillion euros (\$1.64 trillion), growing 8-10 percent over 2022, which will likely be a new industry record, fueled by resurgence in social interactions and travel.

By 2025, China is expected to become the world's largest luxury consumption market. The Chinese mainland posted a strong performance in the first quarter, the consultancy said.

Bain & Co further said Hainan island is poised to grow as a bright luxury hub as it is set to become a duty-free island by 2025.

Experts expect strong growth of firsthand luxury goods to have a knock-on effect on the secondhand goods market. Internationally, luxury brands have been showing an increasing interest in the secondhand market, with some companies launching their own secondhand trading platforms.

Authenticity and consumer trust will be critical to the healthy development of the sector, Zhang of Luxury China said.

The increasingly active secondhand market is expected to help promote China's circular economy and green development, facilitating the country to achieve its dual-carbon goals, said Zhang Zhigang, former vice-minister of commerce.

## Coca-Cola gears up to secure market lead

US beverages firm banks on innovative strategies to enhance core categories

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Large bottles of Coke, Sprite and Minute Maid are adorned with a floating paper dragon in vibrant red and gold hues at the Coca-Cola China headquarters in Shanghai.

Soon, such displays will be seen not only in urban supermarkets, but also at grocery stores in rural areas.

As the Year of the Dragon approaches, beverage players like Coca-Cola are going the whole distance to gain the upper hand during the pivotal yearly shopping battleground.

The company is adding a local twist to create better experiences for, and more engagement with, consumers, including products inside larger packaging suitable for sharing with friends and family, and digital red envelopes, said Gilles Leclerc, president of Coca-Cola Greater China and Mongolia.

Elevating the consumer experience aligned to catering and celebratory occasions matters to the 137-year-old US beverages company, Leclerc said.

"We still need to get deep into the science part of our products, which means understanding the consumers very well. Then we can incorporate a little bit more art."

Having been in charge of Coca-Cola's operations in China for nearly a year, Leclerc said he feels amazed at the marketplace's growth — most visible in catering, on-premise coffee chains and digitization.

"We need to remain open ... this marketplace is constantly evolving and is shaping. It's not 'one size fits all,'" Leclerc said in an interview with China Daily last week.

He said it is crucial to make long-term investments, keeping in mind the categories to get into.

"If you look at it, we could play into 20 different categories. It's vast. We need to stay humble into what is our right to win. Businesses need to focus more on core categories."

Boosted by consumers' health and well-being needs, sparkling beverages, juice, RTD (ready-to-drink) coffee and tea are the four pillars that will drive future growth for Coca-Cola China, said the executive.

The company will also continue to invest in its star sparkling products — Coke, Sprite and Fanta.

"When you look at competition

coming in the sparkling category, it means that category has a lot of legs that can stretch through generations. There is still a very low per capita consumption, which means more room to grow," Leclerc said.

To resonate better with local consumers, the company has made efforts to add more "fun and innovations" into its sparkling products through various flavors and packaging.

"The occasion and the brand connection are areas where we can innovate, and then the channel, the pack and the price architecture is something that also animates us a lot," Leclerc said.

Such efforts helped to encourage local communities to discover new ways to blend Coca-Cola drinks with local cuisine, such as the combination of Sprite with hotpot in Sichuan province.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in the first half, the retail sector in China grew 6.8 percent year-on-year to 20.3 trillion yuan (\$2.84 trillion), with the catering sector up 21.4 percent to 2.4 trillion yuan.

Jason Yu, general manager of Kantar Worldpanel China, said, "It is critical for Coca-Cola to maintain its leadership within the carbonated soft drinks market while strengthening its position in those adjacent sectors."

Coca-Cola's juice brand — Minute Maid Pulpy — has further reached villages and counties in China, Leclerc said.

The company's third-quarter earnings results showed that juice, value-added dairy and plant-based beverages grew 2 percent globally, primarily driven by the growth of Minute Maid Pulpy in China and other brands.

The tea and coffee categories are also high on Coca-Cola's agenda. "We enhanced our unsweetened tea, Authentic Tea House, using a special cold-brewing technology to elevate its flavor," Leclerc said.

To better execute marketing innovations, Coca-Cola China is enhancing ties with local bottling partners, COFCO Coca-Cola and Swire Coca-Cola.

Leclerc said: "We act as one team. We actually come up with a strategy jointly. It has to be the three of us looking at the holistic opportunities of the market."



Gilles Leclerc

## Electrification to drive nation's net-zero goals

By ZHENG XIN  
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

Electrification will play a key role in China's decarbonization, especially in sectors such as steel, building and transportation, experts said.

China's electrification drive has progressed steadily over the past few years, alongside the rapid decarbonization of its power supply.

It is an important strategy for the country to reach its carbon neutrality goals by significantly curbing and reducing final energy consumption through higher efficiencies in many areas, said Gong Jicheng, a researcher at the College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering at Peking University.

Gong made the remarks during the release of the Synergetic Roadmap of Carbon Neutrality and Clean Air for China 2023, jointly held in Beijing by Tsinghua University, the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning, Peking University, the

Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, the Energy Foundation, and the China Clean Air Policy Partnership.

Electrification means replacing technologies or processes that use fossil fuels, like internal combustion engines and gas boilers, with electrically powered equivalents, such as electric vehicle engines or heat pumps.

These replacements are typically more efficient, reducing energy demand, and have a growing impact on emissions as electricity generation is decarbonized, the International Energy Agency said.

In the transportation sector for example, China has pioneered the development and promotion of electric vehicles, whose growing adoption and expansion have contributed substantially to a cleaner and more sustainable transportation system, Gong said.

Electrification in the steel sector, like the deployment of the electric arc furnace, which heats material by means of an electric arc, can also

significantly enhance the energy efficiency of the steel industry, and reduce emissions of major air pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, by more than 80 percent by 2060.

According to the China Electricity Council, the proportion of electricity in China's final energy consumption is expected to exceed 30 percent by 2025 from the current 27 percent, which is already higher than the world average.

The electrification rate in the industrial and building sectors is currently 26.2 and 44.9 percent, respectively, in China. While the figure is only 3.9 percent in the transportation sector, the country is moving ahead with transportation electrification, with about 5.2 million charging infrastructure units established during the past few years, creating the world's largest charging network, the CEC said.

Yang Kun, executive vice-chairman of the CEC, said China will vigorously promote the replacement of coal and oil with electricity in various sectors, including industry,

transportation, construction and agriculture.

The journey of electrification has not been without its challenges.

Transitioning away from fossil fuels requires technological breakthroughs, investment as well as government planning, said Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute.

"With significant potential to mitigate emissions and decarbonize energy supply chains, electrification is, and will be, an important strategy to help reach net-zero goals in China.

"As electrification is applied in more energy end uses, the share of electricity in total final energy consumption will witness a substantial increase by 2030."

Electricity generation needs to shift to renewable resources, while the power grids also need to expand their capacity and flexibility to accommodate the growing demand for electricity, Luo added.



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# BUSINESSFOCUS

## Beverage firms see China as their cup of tea

New-style brewed brands finding sweet spot with curious consumers

By ZHENG YIRAN  
zhengyiran@chinadaily.com.cn

With increasingly fierce market competition, new-style tea beverage brands in China are taking their best shot to look for new growth points in order to better satisfy consumers' particular, dynamic and sometimes fickle gustatory desires.

From business mode to marketing strategies, they are trying their best to win the hearts — and taste buds — of tea drinkers.

In September, Heytea, a popular beverage chain brand based in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, launched a milk-based product exclusively used for new-style tea beverages. Through adjusting the dairy content and using advanced processing technologies, it creates a richer taste, which is more suitable for the palates of new tea product fans.

The company said the protein content of the milk is as high as 3.8 grams per 100 milliliters, some 27 percent more than regular additives.

"The launch of the customized milk additive filled in a market vacuum in the new-style tea beverage market. Previously, such milk was more often used in the coffee sector," said Zhu Danpeng, an independent food and beverage analyst based in Guangzhou, Guangdong.

According to the report jointly released by the tea and new beverage committee of the China Chain Store and Franchise Association, as well as the Meituan Research Institute, China's new-style tea beverage market is expected to reach 149.8 billion yuan (\$21 billion) by the end of this year, and surpass 200 billion yuan by 2025.

As of Aug 31, there were roughly 515,000 new-style tea beverage outlets in the country, a 36 percent increase from the end-2020 level. Broken down by region, the number of outlets in Guangdong's Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Dongguan; Sichuan province's Chengdu; as well as Shanghai and Chongqing, all surpassed 6,000. Specifically, Guangzhou shops alone surpassed 12,000, the report said.

Beginning this year, market competition has become particularly fierce. In August, ChaPanda, a Chengdu-based new-style tea beverage chain brand, officially submitted a listing application to the Hong Kong stock exchange, with China International Capital Corp Ltd as the exclusive sponsor.

Prior to that, at least five other local chain brands, including Mixue Bingcheng, Chagee, Auntea Jenny and Guming, were also planning initial public offerings, Bloomberg reported. "Competition is particularly fierce

among mid-end new-style tea beverage brands. To some extent, IPOs may be their last chance," said Shi Li, an F&B analyst at online retail media Lingshouke.

Leading enterprises are also shifting their strategies. Last year, Heytea and Naixue lowered some of their product prices from over 30 yuan to between nine yuan and 19 yuan.

"The price adjustment of high-end brands, which enables them to almost cover the whole price range, was a severe blow to mid-end competitors, whose product prices are set within the 15 to 25 yuan range. Amid such a price range, consumers tend to choose those of higher quality and thus higher production costs," Shi said.

Meanwhile, top-tier brands are introducing smart devices to raise production efficiency and cut costs.

The production process of new-style tea beverages is complicated, which previously basically relied on manual labor wherein a store needed to be staffed with dozens of employees, said Peng Xin, founder of Naixue.

Manual labor costs have been high. According to the prospectus submitted by Naixue at the beginning of 2021, its manual labor costs surged from 340 million yuan in 2018 to 920 million in 2020.

Starting from 2021, Heytea and Naixue have established professional teams, recruiting mechanical and electrical engineers to design and develop in-house smart devices. In 2022, the first batch of smart devices was put into operation in Heytea and Naixue shops, said a report from Guangzhou-based media group Bright Media.

Bright Media said Heytea's self-developed smart devices are more comprehensive, which refine the steps of tea making, with each step expected to have its own intelligent devices. Meanwhile, Naixue emphasizes "small and exquisite", and uses smart devices in conjunction with automatic scheduling systems.

On July 4, Heytea officially launched a whole set of milk tea technology solutions, including intelligent scales, smart tea dispensers, automatic peeling machines, corers, lemon squeezers, dicers and intelligent steaming and boiling machines, covering multiple facets such as raw material preparation and management as well as tea blending.

The production efficiency has jumped correspondingly. Taking the automatic peeling machine as an example, in the past, manual peeling of a basket of grapes took about 15 minutes. Now, machine peeling only takes a minute — and pulp retention is more complete. The intelligent tea machine completes the production of a cup of tea in as



Above: Consumers line up to buy Heytea beverages at an outlet in Yantai, Shandong province, in August.

TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: Consumers gather at a Mixue Bingcheng store in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in September.

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According to the IPO plan of Mixue Bingcheng, the beverage player is expected to raise a total of nearly 6.5 billion yuan, and a major part of the funds raised will be invested in further optimizing its industrial chain, combining research and development, manufacturing, warehouse and logistics, sales and chain store operation.

With mounting competition, Bo Wenxi, chief economist at marketing firm Interpublic Group China, offered his suggestions.

"Leading brands may take advantage of marketing strategies, such as new product launches and cross-branding, in order to constantly attract new customers and raise sales revenue. They may also consider expanding business overseas to satisfy demand from global consumers and increase market share."

Yi Wan, a 30-year-old consumer in Beijing, said: "I have tasted so many different milk teas. Now, apart from the ones that I usually buy, I hardly try any new products unless they're an IP cross-branding that I'm interested in."

For mid-end enterprises, differentiated competition is likely the best way forward. For example, they can offer customized products for a specific consumer group, or offer more personalized services. Furthermore, through supply chain management optimization, they are able to increase production efficiency and lower costs to further enhance market competitiveness, Bo said.

"Small enterprises may focus on a niche market and offer professional products and services. They may also consider localized marketing strategies and working with major enterprises, so as to seek out new growth points," Bo said.



The launch of the customized milk additive filled in a market vacuum in the new-style tea beverage market. Previously, such milk was more often used in the coffee sector."

Zhu Danpeng, independent food and beverage analyst

fast as four seconds, Heytea said.

"Apart from all these, another blow for mid-end brands is that leading enterprises are quickly expanding their outlets," Shi from Lingshouke said.

Last November, Heytea officially launched its franchise model. On July 20, Naixue took the same action, with Lelecha also following their leads.

Currently, there are over 2,500 Heytea outlets nationwide, covering over 240 cities, among which more than 1,000 were set up based on a franchise model.

In overseas markets, a Heytea outlet in the Soho area of London has been well-received by consumers. Since opening in August, the outlet sells an average of 1,300 bottles per day, and has set a single-day record of 2,000 bottles — generating sales revenue of 12,000 pounds (\$15,145).

On Oct 13, Heytea officially opened an outlet in Swanston Street, Melbourne, Australia. Its first outlet in Canada, located in Crystal Mall near Vancouver, was

opened at the end of October.

Likewise, Naixue plans to open its first direct store in Bangkok, Thailand, at the beginning of December. It has launched rebranded tea beverage products in its China outlets in advance, offering domestic consumers an undifferentiated experience like that in Thailand — a new attempt in the new tea beverage sector.

Mid-end new-style tea beverage brands have no choice but to meet the challenge head-on. This year, Guming and Auntea Jenny both have goals of establishing 3,000 new outlets, heading to the goal of running 10,000 outlets nationwide.

The expanding number of outlets has higher logistics and supply chain needs, which means huge amounts of capital inflow, Shi said.

A prospectus from Mixue Bingcheng showed that between 2019 and the first quarter of 2022, warehousing and financing costs of the company increased year-by-year. In 2021 alone, the company set up 12 rental warehouses and logistics bases.

## Chocolatiers eye nation's robust confectioneries market

By ZHENG YIRAN

China's consumption of chocolate and other sweets is witnessing robust growth this year, as more people pass by shops selling such products after a three-year pandemic kept many indoors for long stretches.

In September, Dongguan, Guangdong province-based snack maker Hsu Fu Chi witnessed a 30-percent year-on-year increase in its candy product sales. Specifically, sales of its soft candies surged 79 percent.

To meet surging demand, the company invested 120 million yuan (\$16.8 million) in the construction of a new gummy workshop in Dongguan. The production facility, covering nearly 6,000 square meters, was put into operation on Sept 28 and is capable of churning out over 10,000 metric tons of juice soft candies annually.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, increased outdoor activities and strolls through traffic-heavy retail spaces have boosted consumers' purchasing appetite for

candies and chocolates.

"Among all snacks, candy is one of the fastest-recovering subcategories. A major reason behind the sales recovery of candy is that consumers are getting back to outdoor consumption scenarios this year," said a recent report from market research firm Kantar Worldpanel.

Sales of chocolate have seen a robust recovery. At 1 pm on a typical weekday afternoon, a Laderach outlet in Taikoo Li shopping center, Shanghai, receives constant customer flows. Priced at 99 yuan for 100 grams, or 399 yuan for 24 pieces, the Swiss-branded fresh chocolates — which are flown straight from Switzerland — enjoy great popularity among Chinese consumers.

"Please help me pack and serve the fresh chocolate of my favorite flavor as usual. Thank you," a regular told the shop assistant. The 40-year-old public relations manager spends around 200 yuan on chocolate and chocolate-centric products every month. Her favorite flavor in the store is pistachio dark.

Such rapidly growing demand is attracting foreign chocolatiers to place more emphasis on the Chinese market. In August, Italian chocolate and confectionery maker Ferrero Group appointed Zhang Suyi as the group's general manager of China. Zhang is the first local head since Ferrero entered the Chinese market. The Italian firm said this appointment not only highlights its further attention to, and confidence in, the Chinese market, but also marks a new phase in Ferrero's development in the world's second-largest economy.

Zhang said that in order to better meet the needs of Chinese consumers, Ferrero will focus on developing new consumption scenarios — such as special occasions like Valentine's Day and International Women's Day — for consumers to enjoy chocolate. Meanwhile, it will further expand new emerging channels, including online-to-offline, wedding banquets, corporate welfare and group purchasing to boost sales.

In terms of product innovation,

in September, Ferrero launched its new brand, Black Forest, in the Chinese market, which is from the Ferrera brand, acquired by Ferrero in the US. The launch of Gummy Bears and Juicy Burst was also the first time Ferrero entered the gummy candy market segment in China.

In the future, in addition to chocolate, Ferrero will introduce new products to help the company grow faster in the sweet packaged food market, said Zhang.

"Against the backdrop of overall consumption recovery in China, its candy and chocolate market is witnessing a revival. Specifically, the country's candy consumption market is far from being saturated. It is embracing an upgrade instead," said Yang Yu, a senior retail expert and founder of online business information provider Yilan Commerce.

"In recent years, we invested 180 million yuan in the intelligent transformation of our production lines to raise output value. However, this was not enough to meet the



A Hsu Fu Chi employee monitors production data at the company's biscuit factory in Dongguan, Guangdong province, in October.

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strongly recovering market demand. This is why we invested in the new gummy workshop this time," said Liu Xinggang, president of Hsu Fu Chi.

"Compared to a decade ago, consumers' shopping scenarios today are more complicated and refined. We have to grasp business opportunities under various scenarios so as to offer high-quality products to consumers at every place

and for all occasions," Liu said.

Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that low-sugar and sugar-free candies and chocolates are increasingly favored by the market, as consumers seek to strike a balance between enjoying delicious snacks and maintaining health.

"This subcategory, which is more consumer-friendly, is where enterprises may want to explore," Yang said.

## LIFE



The Xibeijie community in Huichang, Ganzhou, Jiangxi province, has been transformed into a theatrical village, with venues offering different atmospheres. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Date in memory sets creative stage

Playwright honors his father as rural venue seeks to establish a reputation in the theatrical world, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

Jan 10 is a profoundly significant date for playwright and theater director Stan Lai. During a recent news conference for the Huichang Theater Village, he spoke of its particular and poignant resonance.

On Jan 10, 1969, Lai, then 15, faced the loss of his father; on Jan 10, 1984, Lai's first-ever theater production, *We All Grew Up This Way*, made its premiere; and on Jan 10, 2024, he will celebrate the 40th anniversary of his theater career.

He selected this date in 2024 to stage his upcoming work, *Flower in the Mirror, Moon in the Water*, in Huichang county, Ganzhou, Jiangxi province, his father's hometown.

As a site-specific play dedicated to Huichang, the new production will be performed in a theater created out of the Wu family ancestral hall, a historical mansion in Huichang's ancient city area, where the audience, in both the venue's indoor and outdoor areas, will follow the story of a girl seeking revenge for her mother.

It will be one of the productions in a 10-day theater season starting from Jan 5 to mark the opening of the Huichang Theater Village, a project that aims to turn the county into a hub for theater practitioners and enthusiasts.

Lai's father left Huichang, where he was born and raised, for Taiwan in 1947 and then worked in the United States, without ever returning to his hometown. It wasn't until the 1980s, when Lai began corresponding with his uncle in Huichang that he rekindled the connection.

"Because my father passed away quite early on, I never felt a sense of hometown. But as I received the first letter from my uncle, the sentiments hit me, the deep feelings emanating from his words, the envelope, the postage stamp," Lai says.

In 1997, he visited Huichang for the first time. At the time, he didn't have much of an idea how to con-

tribute to this county, which lies deep in the mountains and is difficult to reach. Starting in 2015, he decided to stage a theater production in Huichang each year.

"It was just a simple thought, to bring a play here each year and see if any changes would take place. What influence could culture have on this relatively remote place?" he says.

With the support of the Huichang local government, Lai began to envision boosting the county's economic development through culture, art and theater, transforming it into a destination desirable to the younger generations, hence the theater village project was conceived.

The Xibeijie community, located in Huichang's ancient city, has been transformed into a theater village, where the ancestral hall, a former factory and street houses have been turned into four theater venues with different characteristics.

The ancient city's squares, riverbanks and pavilions, built in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), will also take on modern functions, allowing for diverse types of theater and outdoor performances.

In the opening theater season, several productions from home and abroad will be staged. Apart from *Flower in the Mirror, Moon in the Water*, Lai and his Theatre Above will bring *The Village*, a 15-year-old production telling the stories of migrants from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan during the last century.

Another of Lai's classics, *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*, is also being adapted and performed by a local Huichang theater troupe, which incorporates elements of Jiangxi's folk tea-picking opera. This September, Lai and his wife, theater producer and CEO of Theatre Above, Ding Nai-chu, went to Huichang to oversee rehearsals.

Taiwan-based performing arts group U-Theatre is set to inaugurate the theater village with their well-known drum performance,



*Sword of Wisdom*, at an open-air venue.

Unlike conventional theater festivals, Huichang Theater Village hopes to become a year-round project, including two theater seasons in spring and autumn, and productions to be staged throughout the year.

Wang Mingfu, a Huichang-born entrepreneur who established the

county's vocational Hejun College, is also involved in the project. Apart from giving back to his hometown, he also wants to support those with a genuine passion for theater.

"I have been living and working in big cities for a long time, and I feel that contemporary urban dwellers, especially those with knowledge and cultural pursuits, often face two challenges — anxiety

and a sense of drifting," Wang says. "For such people, a good play is able to provide them with consolation and warmth. But I think what they truly need is a spiritual hometown where they can come to settle down."

Projects to invite theater practitioners, both veteran and emerging, to live and work in the theater village have been established, as

well as for low-budget original productions to be created and rehearsed here, so that a network of artists across regions and countries can be created.

Wang says that he would like to establish a fund for Huichang Theater Village, to offer financial backing to a selection of outstanding productions and emerging talent.

Under the collaboration between Lai and Wang, a theater technology college has been set up in Huichang to provide professional courses for future theatrical technicians, with stage and costume design centers that meet international standards.

"As a businessperson and investor, I also think of theater as an industry. From my discussions with Lai, I found that there's a relatively weak link in the theater industry chain, which is the shortage of technical professionals," Wang says.

Lai's own theater workshop, which is part of Theatre Above, will also be based in the town, providing theater education to amateurs of all age groups.

Octavian Saiu, Romanian theater scholar and critic, said at the news conference on Nov 16 that for the past 20 years, he has worked and studied with all the great theater festivals around the world and draws one commonality.

"All great festivals happen in small cities or in small places, all of them, without exception. They happen in Edinburgh, in Avignon, in Sibiu, in Wuzhen, where an entire community can be integrated into the fabric of that vision," Saiu says.

"Stan Lai, who is the most cosmopolitan theater artist I know, now reconnects with his roots, in this place which he calls a village. I think that is a beautiful symbol in itself. This is a great gift presented by Stan Lai to the place that we are now celebrating — Huichang."

Contact the writer at [chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn)

## Documentary frames international artists in China

By YANG FEIYUE  
[yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn)

A documentary featuring international artists in China recently aired on Bilibili and several other online platforms.

*Journey to China: Resonance of Art* was a joint effort between the international department of People's Daily and film production company Figure.

It focused on the study, work, and lives of young international artists in China with the aim of presenting the significant role of cultural exchange and mutual learning in fostering artistic development from a unique perspective.

"For many people, the perception might still be focused on Chinese artists going abroad to study and create," says Cao Yanhong, the documentary's producer. "After thorough research and understanding, we found numerous examples around us of foreign artists who have begun living and creating artworks in China, which is worth documenting," Cao adds.

Allan Denis Naymark is one of the three artists featured in the film. He is among many Western artists who have stayed in the capital of porcelain, Jingdezhen, East

China's Jiangxi province, to pursue the art.

Influenced by his archaeologist father, Naymark developed a strong interest in ancient Chinese ceramics as a youth and started learning pottery at the age of 8.

He came to Jingdezhen to pursue ceramics art and has been there since 2015.

"It's nice that people from all over the world in the field of ceramic art gather here," Naymark says.

He is drawn to the rich history of ceramics, vibrant artistic atmosphere and well-established industry in Jingdezhen.

He says Jingdezhen has become a source of artistic inspiration for him.

"In the future, I want to establish a large studio to attract artists from all over the world here," he says.

Armenian violinist Astghik Poghosyan also featured in the documentary. Her childhood dream was realized when she got to study violin at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 2009.

She longed to visit China as a child, influenced by Hua Mulan, a legendary heroine from the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-581).

"China is Mulan's hometown,

and I felt I must go and see it," she says.

After graduation, she successfully applied for a work permit in Shanghai and joined the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra as an assistant to the conductor.

For the past 14 years, Poghosyan has been exposed to Chinese culture, learning crafts, playing music, enjoying cuisine, and experiencing the friendliness of the people.

She often gets together with her professors and students from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, either for holidays or someone's birthday.

"Shanghai indeed is a place where my dream started," she says. Giacomo Bruni from Italy showed his affection for traditional Chinese painting in the documentary.

As an exchange student to China in 2012, Bruni got to know the school of painting typical of southern China. It sparked his interest in traditional Chinese painting and led him to decide to pursue Chinese landscape painting studies at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province.

"The way of looking at things is different, and the meaning of things becomes different," Bruni says.

He believes that Chinese landscape painting is complex and carries a deep meaning.

"Chinese painting is not a visual representation of things but a spiritual one," he says.

The deeper Bruni delves into landscape painting and Chinese culture, the stronger his insights and passion become.

He has come to understand the work of the ancient philosopher Zhuangzi, a pivotal figure of classical Taoism in the third and fourth centuries BC. He can casually quote verses from the renowned poet Su Dongpo during the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

Years of practice have enabled Bruni to excel in landscape painting, seal engraving, woodblock printing and rubbings.

He says he has enjoyed immersing himself between landscape paintings and reality, Eastern and Western cultures.

Bruni has become an active promoter of traditional Chinese art. In Italy, he has launched a series of projects, including exhibitions, seminars and workshops, to promote Chinese painting.

He says his goal is to help the Western world to be better acquainted with Chinese culture,



Above: Giacomo Bruni from Italy practices traditional painting at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province. Left: A close-up of Bruni's work.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

in order to benefit more from it.

"My dream is to establish an art school one day in Europe for students to study Chinese art," he says.

"One day, Chinese culture can also become a part of Western life," Xin Wen, chief director of the documentary, says she didn't expect so many foreigners to be so

deeply involved in China's intricate social fabric.

"They truly see themselves as a part of Chinese social life," Xin says.

"This also reflects the inclusiveness and influence of Chinese culture. They can seamlessly and naturally adopt a variety of lifestyles without barriers."