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Rough road ahead

Rising prices trigger protests amid ripples from Fed's interest rate hikes

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Widespread cold snap an upside for down jackets

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Spurring consumption

Incentives to further boost tourism following signs of robust recovery

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2023

Finding solace in art



Palestinian artist Bassel al-Maqoussi, 45, who was displaced from his Gaza City home, paints on Tuesday alongside his son at a temporary shelter in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. Israel launched heavy strikes across central and southern Gaza overnight and into Wednesday after broadening its offensive against Hamas. MOHAMMED ABED / AFP

Diplomatic events reap broad benefits

China's boom in exchanges helps to promote global recovery, peace

By XU WEI
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For Pakistani journalist Saud Faisal Malik, China's remarkable surge in international exchanges, including a rich variety of diplomatic events, has offered him key opportunities to observe from close up Beijing's foreign policy priorities and domestic agenda.

During his five-month stay in China this year, Malik traveled to 12 cities for news-gathering trips and covered several of the nation's landmark diplomatic events, including the first China-Central Asia Summit in May and the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in October.

Malik, who is deputy editor-in-chief of Pakistan Observer magazine, said it was highly rewarding for him to be part of a process that saw China welcome a historic increase in visits by global leaders, business executives, scholars and reporters in the first year of its post-pandemic era.

"The nation's booming exchanges served the need of both the country and the rest of the world for economic revitalization and promoting peace and harmony," he said.

Over the past year, China has ratcheted up efforts to forge partnerships for win-win cooperation, seek multilateral solutions to global challenges and build an open world economy, as part of a commitment to building a global community with a shared future, said analysts and observers.

The most important multilateral event hosted by China this year was the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, an event in Beijing that brought together two dozen global leaders and representatives from over 100 countries and 30 international organizations.

In a landmark address delivered at the forum, President Xi Jinping announced Beijing's eight major steps to boost the high-quality development of the Belt and Road going forward, outlining a new vision for the future of the flagship initiative.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said after the event that the global forum delivered a strong appeal for solidarity, cooperation, opening-up and win-win outcomes, instead of division, confrontation, closed doors and zero-sum games.

"Amid the complex changes of the century, the BRI always brings stability and positive energy to the world," he added.

Key outcomes of the forum include Beijing's pledge to set up new renminbi financing windows, carry out 1,000 aid programs for public well-being, and provide training sessions on green development for partner countries by 2030.

A forum secretariat has also been established to promote institutional development and project implementation. The secretariat said in a statement this month that more than half of the outcomes of the BRI forum have already been implemented.

2023 year in Review

The China-Central Asia Summit, held in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, marked another highlight of China's diplomatic events in 2023.

The five Central Asian countries underscored their support for building a China-Central Asia community with a shared future, and the summit adopted more than 100 agreements in various sectors that paved the way for future cooperation.

During the summit, Beijing emphasized its commitment to expanding trade and economic cooperation, establishing energy partnerships and increasing the number of direct flights between China and the region.

Malik, the Pakistani journalist, said the China-Central Asia Summit has its own importance in the region, since China has emerged as a main player in the region for connectivity under the BRI.

President Xi also hosted global leaders at the FISU World University Games in Chengdu, Sichuan province, and the Hangzhou Asian Games, two sporting events that were staged in a streamlined, safe and splendid manner.

The global gatherings over the past year have offered a key window for Xi's vision for building a global community with a shared future, analysts said.

See **Diplomacy,** *page 3*

WORLD WATCH
By Tahir Farooq

Human rights discourse must be fair, objective

In the intricate ballet of international relations, Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region has emerged as a stage where global powers perform a complex dance of accusation and counteraccusation.

This region, with its rich tapestry of ethnicities including the Uygur, Han, Kazak and Hui, has become the epicenter of a heated global debate on human rights, sovereignty and the realpolitik of our times.

The narrative surrounding Xinjiang is deeply polarized. Western powers, spearheaded by the United States, accuse Beijing of human rights violations against the Uygur Muslim population. Allegations of "mass detentions", "forced labor" and "cultural erasure" have dominated Western discourse, leading to diplomatic confrontations and sanctions.

China's response has been one of firm denial and counternarrative. Beijing posits its measures as crucial to combating extremism and fostering economic development. The so-called "reeducation camps" are vocational training centers, integral to ensuring stability and prosperity in a region once plagued by separatist tendencies and radical ideologies.

The Western stance on Xinjiang is absurd and malicious. The West's focus on alleged human rights issues in Xinjiang is a strategic tool used to counter China's growing global influence. This perspective is underpinned by the belief that the West, particularly the US, employs human rights rhetoric selectively, influenced more by political interests than by a commitment to universal principles.

Contrary to the prevalent Western narrative, if we look at the policies of the Chinese authorities, they are supportive of the Muslim community, aiming to foster integration, economic development and social harmony.

See **Rights,** *page 3*

'Einstein's brain' among best-sellers

By LIU YUKUN
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Call it what you will — the sellers' creative genius or the buyers' love of the bizarre — but a cut-rate, "intelligence boosting" virtual product, marketed as "Einstein's brain", has become a coveted trophy among online shoppers on Taobao, allowing it to win a spot on the list of top 10 popular items for 2023 released by the e-commerce platform on Monday.

Sellers of the "brain", which is priced at a few US cents on Taobao, Alibaba Group's online marketplace, promise potential customers an IQ as high as the famous German-born theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein.

The product page flaunts the scientist's iconic photographs, complete with his chevron mustache and frizzy gray hair. One particular advertisement for the product goes a step further to promise a spurt in brain cells overnight, even though it seeks to clarify that no physical goods or services will be delivered.

A top-selling store on Taobao recorded as many as 120,000 orders for "Einstein's brain" during the high-stakes national college entrance exams, or *gaokao*, in June.

In addition to the "intelligence boosting" virtual product, a range of other unique products have been embraced by online shoppers. Most of these either offer a certain degree of emotional comfort or have high entertainment value.

For example, the "wake-up-from-love insults", which is a chat support service for people who suffer from a special condition that fixates them on romance. The service bombards the intended person with messages to coax them out of a bad relationship.

The Taobao popularity list also includes *The Art of War*, a book written by ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu and unexpectedly endorsed by a trendy TV show, *baiju*-flavored latte, pills for a healthy heart and the *mamian-qun*, or traditional Chinese four-panel skirts.

The novelty quotient of most of these products is behind their immense appeal, which reflects the emotional needs of the younger generation, experts said, adding that young people actively seek self-adjustment and prioritize emotional well-being amid life's many challenges.

This trend is driving the booming online emotional service business, which is mostly led by young entrepreneurs, many of them fresh graduates or students. They have found creative ways to provide emotional comfort, and at the same time are capitalizing on the growing market, which Taobao estimates to be worth hundreds of billions of yuan.

Wei Xiang, a researcher at the National Academy of Economic Strategy, affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the surging popularity of products that cater to consumers' emotional needs reflects an improving outlook on economic development, highlighted by a steady drop in the unemployment rate and a reduction in inflation levels.

Hong Yong, deputy researcher in the e-commerce branch of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that such novel products often draw inspiration from popular memes or social topics.

Zhang Jianqian, born in 2002 and raised in Xingtai, Hebei province, was among the first group of young people who found success from selling "fun products" on Taobao that comfort or entertain consumers.

"I often exchanged banter with my friends, and said they were not smart enough. One day I thought, what if I sell 'Einstein's brain'? In today's fast-paced life, people don't mind spending a few cents to find joy," he said.

Despite skepticism about the product's practical value, Zhang said he believes it represents an opportunity to boost confidence before important occasions in life.

Some customer reviews echoed Zhang's belief. "I am buying self-confidence. I need something to reassure myself that I can do well before a big event," said Sun Nan, a customer in Beijing.

HONG KONG BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO OLD HERITAGE

City places high value on time-honored traditions

By OASIS HU in Hong Kong
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in-depth

To raise awareness of a traditional Chinese orthopedic technique known as *dit da*, which is designated as an Intangible Cultural Heritage item in Hong Kong, Leung Tin-chu designed his clinic as a bone-themed amusement park.

Located in the Cheung Sha Wan neighborhood of Sham Shui Po, the clinic entrance resembles an arcade, with four dolls and two Japanese vending machines greeting visitors.

The entire space is lit in a pink hue. Rows of pink bones hang from the ceiling, while the walls are adorned with thousands of colorful dolls.

Toys piled high on the floor are printed with bone patterns, while an air hockey game and a game played with a crane claw machine also attract visitors, along with a pinball machine.

Patients head for the bright pink front desk. Several sit on bone-shaped stools, with herbal medicine bags wrapped around their knees. After discovering cartoon graphics such as SpongeBob SquarePants or Hello Kitty printed on the covers of medicine bags, they sometimes use their phones to take photos of the bags.

See **Dit da,** *page 2*

For the love of books



People visit the Beijing Library on Wednesday in Beijing's Tongzhou district. The library boasts a collection of 8 million books. Besides the four-story building, a museum and an art center also opened to the public on Wednesday in Tongzhou. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

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PAGE TWO



Bone-themed dolls adorn the clinic of Leung Tin-chu, which has been designed as a bone-themed amusement park. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Dit da: *Need to abandon rigid thinking stressed*

From page 1

Others waiting to see Leung explore the premises. Some walk around taking photos of the dolls on the walls, while others play with the claw crane machine.

The clinic is devoid of the sharp smells of disinfectants and medicines. No alarms sound, and there is an absence of stark white walls, which could increase patients' fears. Instead, Leung's clinic is warm and vibrant. As a result, visitors want to stay longer and explore further.

"The whole makeover took me about four years and cost around HK$1 million ($128,000), but it's been worth it," said Leung, a single father in his 40s whose daughter adores the color pink.

Leung said the designs he has used at the clinic help attract patients and spread knowledge about *dit da*.

Also known as *die da*, the technique originated in southern China. It adopts methods such as bone-setting, massage, acupressure, and herbal applications to treat musculoskeletal injuries and conditions that include fractures, sprains, bruises, allergies, and swellings.

Dit da was widely used in Chinese martial arts to treat injuries. In the 1960s and 1970s, as martial arts flourished in Hong Kong, the number of *dit da* practitioners grew. However, with advances in medical technology and the emergence of new treatment methods, awareness of the technique gradually declined.

Its use in the city is now regulated by the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong, which requires practitioners to hold a professional certificate. In recognition of its cultural significance, *dit da* was inscribed on the city's first Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2014.

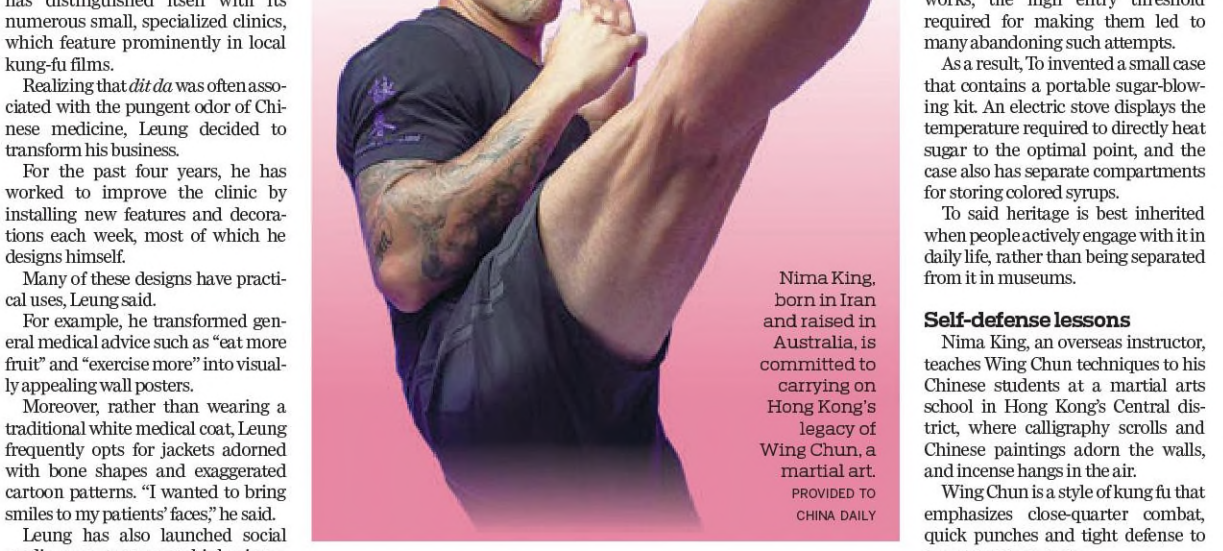
Leung's decision to enter this field of medicine was influenced by his parents, who ran a *dit da* clinic, where he helped them care for patients. Seeing the relief his parents brought to patients, Leung decided to become a *dit da* physician.

After graduating from secondary school, Leung studied on the Chinese mainland. He then returned to Hong Kong to obtain his certificate of practice and work at a Chinese medicine clinic operated by the University of Hong Kong for a decade. When his parents retired, he took over as the second-generation owner of their clinic. With more than 20 years' service, Leung has been awarded over 200 certificates in his field of medicine.

After learning that *dit da* had become an Intangible Cultural Heritage item, Leung was delighted that the technique had received more recognition, but he was worried about the industry's future.

In the 20th century, Hong Kong boasted thousands of *dit da* practices, but now fewer than 500 remain, Leung said.

Leung feels that such clinics are unique to Hong Kong. Whereas the mainland is also home to many *dit da* practitioners, they usually work in larger hospitals, while Hong Kong has distinguished itself with its numerous small, specialized clinics, which feature prominently in local kung-fu films.



Leung expects his clinic to raise awareness of *dit da*, a traditional orthopedic technique.

Nima King, born in Iran and raised in Australia, is committed to carrying on Hong Kong's legacy of Wing Chun, a martial art. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Realizing that *dit da* was often associated with the pungent odor of Chinese medicine, Leung decided to transform his business.

For the past four years, he has worked to improve the clinic by installing new features and decorations each week, most of which he designs himself.

Many of these designs have practical uses, Leung said.

For example, he transformed general medical advice such as "eat more fruit" and "exercise more" into visually appealing wall posters.

Moreover, rather than wearing a traditional white medical coat, Leung frequently opts for jackets adorned with bone shapes and exaggerated cartoon patterns. "I wanted to bring smiles to my patients' faces," he said.

Leung has also launched social media pages to promote his business, gaining more than 300,000 followers. He shares his expertise in livestream broadcasts and on television programs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he arranged for a fleet of vehicles in Hong Kong to distribute care packages. During Halloween, he organized an educational bone workshop for 25 children, teaching them about anatomy, bone structure, and the basics of *dit da* by using bone toys.

The clinic has attracted wider attention and a group of regular customers, one of them being pole dancer Chan Yu-ki, whose work over the years has resulted in persistent injuries and sudden bruising.

As Western medicine provided little relief, Chan searched online to find new treatments. She discovered Leung's clinic, but having watched gangster films depicting bone-setting shops, she was skeptical about the treatment. However, Leung persuaded her to try it.

Chan soon noticed an improvement. "Western medicine tends to rely on oral administration of drugs, the effects of which take longer to become apparent. However, with *dit da*, herbal remedies come into direct contact with the injured area, quickly reducing swelling and pain," she said.

Chan returned to Leung whenever she experienced new bruising, and learned that *dit da* was an Intangible Cultural Heritage item.

"I think Leung's creativity is helpful. Someone like me, who has never paid attention to such heritage, is now more aware of this issue," she said.

Break with tradition

Leung Ka-kit, founder and president of the Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Association, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving such heritage, said the city boasts hundreds of related items, but preserving them can be challenging when innovation is involved.

Some Intangible Cultural Heritage masters are not willing to adopt new methods, Leung Ka-kit said. For instance, when his organization proposed training craft workers as video bloggers to document the process of creating artwork, some declined, fearing that the secrets of their work would be revealed.

Conservative forces in society also often oppose the introduction of new ideas.

Leung Ka-kit said a Cantonese opera troupe in Hong Kong once integrated the art form into a murder mystery game, with the aim of creating an immersive and interactive experience for audiences. Although there was a positive response, many practitioners of the art form criticized the attempt, claiming it lacked respect for tradition and posed a risk of Cantonese opera being misunderstood.

"Only by first abandoning rigid thinking can new possibilities be unlocked," Leung Ka-kit said.

Louis To Wun, master of a sugar-blowing technique in Hong Kong, said preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage items requires the courage to break with tradition.

The sugar-blowing technique is more than 600 years old. Craft workers use stoves to heat sucrose and maltose into syrup. Before it cools, they knead, twist, press, pull and blow the hot syrup into various figures, such as animals of the zodiac, flowers, birds, insects, and fish. In 2014, the technique was recognized as a Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage item.

Learning the craft by himself, To tested more than 10 kinds of sugar to find the right materials. He injured himself and even caused small explosions when learning to heat the sugar.

But he persisted for more than 10 years until he had fully mastered the technique. Now, To is one of the few sugar-blowing masters in the city who are invited to give workshops and speeches on various occasions.

When passing on this technique to a wider audience, To encountered a common challenge related to hand-made Intangible Cultural Heritage items. While numerous people expressed an interest in these craftworks, the high entry threshold required for making them led to many abandoning such attempts.

As a result, To invented a small case that contains a portable sugar-blowing kit. An electric stove displays the temperature required to directly heat sugar to the optimal point, and the case also has separate compartments for storing colored syrups.

To said heritage is best inherited when people actively engage with it in daily life, rather than being separated from it in museums.

Self-defense lessons

Nima King, an overseas instructor, teaches Wing Chun techniques to his Chinese students at a martial arts school in Hong Kong's Central district, where calligraphy scrolls and Chinese paintings adorn the walls, and incense hangs in the air.

Wing Chun is a style of kung fu that emphasizes close-quarter combat, quick punches and tight defense to overcome opponents.

In the 1950s, several renowned Wing Chun masters moved to Hong Kong, including the legendary Ip Man. They established schools to develop Wing Chun as one of the city's most iconic traditions. Interest in martial arts has waned in recent decades, but in 2014, Wing Chun was designated an Intangible Cultural Heritage item.

King, born in Iran and raised in Australia, is committed to carrying on the city's Wing Chun legacy.

In 2003, when he was 21, he attended a lecture given by Chu Shong-tin, an apprentice of Ip Man, who traveled to Australia from Hong Kong to promote Wing Chun. King was selected to engage in friendly competition with Chu, who was in his 70s. The confident King never expected to be swiftly struck to the floor by the elderly master, an action that left him stunned.

Despite not being able to speak Chinese, King soon decided to learn Wing Chun from Chu. He saved for two years, and in 2005, moved to Hong Kong, where he joined Chu in intensive training courses. He devoted up to six hours a day to Wing Chun and continued the courses for nine years until Chu's death.

In 2008, to pass on Chu's dedication and popularize Wing Chun, King established the Mindful Wing Chun martial arts school in Hong Kong.

Departing from the traditional master-apprentice model, where the master admits only the most talented students, teaching them at home, King set out to introduce a modern and commercialized approach to Wing Chun education.

First, he developed a comprehensive curriculum system that split Wing Chun routines into different levels, each with increasing difficulty, to ensure a progressive learning experience.

King then introduced a skill assessment system, where students demonstrated specific moves at each level. Only after their performance meets certain standards can they progress to the next level.

He also introduced a reward system. Adult students receive certificates when they complete each level, while children are awarded different colored belts.

King's school stood out with its emphasis on the importance of focused attention in every class. During classes, if he notices a student becoming distracted, King quickly redirects the student's focus.

As concentrating hard has a meditative effect, those facing high levels of stress, such as senior executives, directors and white-collar workers, refer to King's school as "a temple within a bustling and noisy city".

"Unity of mind and body is a fundamental principle rooted in Wing Chun and Chinese philosophy. I just highlight this aspect in my curriculum to meet contemporary needs. This is also why my school is named Mindful Wing Chun," King said.

The school has flourished, attracting thousands of students to become one of the largest kung fu institutions in Hong Kong. Many of King's students come from countries such as the United States, Germany, Canada and Australia, and when they return home, some of them open their own schools to spread knowledge of Wing Chun.

In 2012, King started to create Wing Chun videos online. He gave detailed explanations of his practice, edited the footage, and uploaded the videos to the internet.

The videos can be bought online, and the initiative has attracted more than 400 students from around the globe. "Now, even if I die tomorrow, the next generation can watch my channel to learn about Wing Chun," King said.

For him, the essence of inheritance lies in keeping up with the times. "If there is a need, I am open to incorporating advances such as the metaverse and virtual reality technology into my teaching," King said.

Leung, from the Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Association, feels that while protecting cultural heritage is crucial, fostering its growth and evolution is even more important. There are numerous possibilities for innovation and advancement, and breaking away from traditional and rigid thinking is vital for embracing these possibilities, he said.





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TOP NEWS

Lai slammed for comments on war risk

Pursuit of 'Taiwan independence' only serves to ramp up cross-Strait tensions

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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A Chinese mainland spokesman slammed Lai Ching-te, deputy leader of China's Taiwan region, on Wednesday for his comments on the risk of a cross-Strait war, and warned that the pursuit of "Taiwan independence" means war.

Lai recently claimed that if he is elected as Taiwan's leader as the candidate of the "pro-independence" Democratic Progressive Party, the risk of a cross-Strait war would be the lowest, because his policy is the most "correct" and also "aligns with international practices".

Chen Binhua, spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, told a news conference on Wednesday that the ruling DPP authorities obstinately stick to their "Taiwan independence" stance, escalating the tense and volatile situation across the Strait and pushing Taiwan toward the brink of war.

Upholding the one-China principle is a common consensus of the international community, the spokesman said, emphasizing that opposing "Taiwan independence" and safeguarding peace is the right way forward.

People from Taiwan and even Lai himself would find it hard to believe his own words, as Lai, a prominent figure in the ruling DPP authorities, has openly declared himself to be a pragmatic advocate of "Taiwan independence", Chen added.

He said that as long as the 1992 Consensus is upheld and opposition to "Taiwan independence" is maintained, cross-Strait negotiations can be restored, all matters can be discussed and negotiated, and cross-Strait relations can return to the track of peaceful development.

Chen said that when the Taiwan Strait is peaceful and stable, the interests and well-being of Taiwan compatriots can be enhanced, but these will be compromised when cross-Strait situation is tense and turbulent.

From 2008 to 2016, both sides of the Taiwan Strait, based on adhering to the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence", created the conditions for the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, he said, noting that this brought tangible benefits to compatriots on both sides, especially those in Taiwan, and gave positive energy to the prosperity and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

However, Chen said that since the DPP came to power in 2016, it has persistently clung to a "Taiwan independence" separatist stance, refused to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus, colluded with external forces to seek "Taiwan independence", and gradually pushed Taiwan into a dangerous situation.

"We sincerely hope that compatriots on both sides of the Strait can join hands to safeguard peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, and create a new era of prosperity and development," Chen said.

He noted that the actions of the DPP authorities have undermined the political foundation of cross-Strait negotiations, fundamentally causing difficulties in solving problems related to the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement.

Starting from Jan 1, the mainland will suspend tariff reductions on a total of 12 items of chemical products from Taiwan in response to the island's unilateral and discriminatory trade restrictions which violate the economic pact between the two sides.

Chen criticized the DPP authorities for proclaiming that war is not an option for Taiwan while intensifying efforts to seek "independence" by relying on the US and through force.

He warned that: "No matter how many weapons the DPP authorities acquire from the US, it cannot shake our steadfast determination to resolve the Taiwan question and achieve national reunification, and cannot withstand our powerful capability to thwart the 'Taiwan independence' plot and safeguard national sovereignty."

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Ready for New Year

Two children paint dragons on glass on Wednesday to welcome the upcoming Year of the Dragon at a kindergarten in Gwangju, South Korea. 2024 is the Year of the Dragon according to the Chinese zodiac. In Korean culture, the dragon symbolizes courage, extraordinariness and hope. YONHAP

Great Wall game board unveils old military pastime

By WANG SONGSONG
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A chessboard carved on a block of stone on the Jiankou section of the Great Wall in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Hundreds of years ago, as the setting sun cast a golden glow upon the Great Wall, a group of soldiers found a welcome diversion from the pressures of military duty in a chess-like board game. Lacking a playing board, they carved one on stone.

The soldiers navigated the board with the same precision they employed on the battlefield, calculating their options and contemplating the consequences of each decision. The clang of swords and the cries of fallen comrades were replaced by the gentle click of pieces on the game board in the evening light.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows across the wall, they finished their game and retreated to their posts, their minds strategically sharpened and ready to face the trials that awaited them.

A scene like this might have played out during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), as centuries later, Chinese archaeologists have discovered what appears to be a sort of chessboard carved on a block of stone on the Jiankou section of the Great Wall in Beijing's Huairou district. The finding sheds light on what soldiers might have done during their leisure time.

The game board, carved on a paving stone at watchtower No 141, was discovered last year and recently made public.

"We are not sure which variant of chess it is. There were two popular board games in the Ming Dynasty — Go and Chinese chess," said Shang Heng, associate researcher at the Beijing Archaeological Research Institute.

Previously, Shang had found another game board at watchtower No 145 on the Jiankou section. But that board, with a square in the middle, is different from the one found last year.

The recent discovery adds another layer to the cultural significance of the Great Wall. It not only enriches the understanding of ancient Chinese culture, but also gives the formidable structure a human angle.

"Historical documents tend to record institutional content. The archaeological excavation essentially serves as a supplement that fills in the gaps in our understanding of the Great Wall," Shang said.

According to Shang, the border region was essentially a small-scale society. Apart from patrolling and fighting, soldiers lived as ordinary people.

The 520-kilometer-long Beijing section of the Great Wall winds from east to west, spanning Pinggu, Miyun, Huairou, Yanqing, Changping and Mentougou districts.

Starting in 2021, Beijing has taken the lead nationwide in incorporating archaeological excavations into the restoration work of the Great Wall, with the Jiankou and Dazhuangke sections serving as pilot projects.

This marks a shift from general emergency reinforcement toward research-oriented restoration, allowing historians and archaeologists to delve into the wall's rich history.

Shang said that some parts of the Great Wall above ground are in ruins, while some other parts are buried. Excavations will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the structure, and will help restore the wall as close as possible to its original appearance.

Moreover, as the underground parts are brought to light, unexpected discoveries can offer glimpses into the wall's cultural dimensions, he said.

"Next year, we will carry out archaeological excavations from watchtower No 117 to watchtower No 122. That's the highest part of the Jiankou section, and visitors will be able to enjoy a panoramic view of Jiankou," he added.

The Great Wall discovery follows another find in 2013 related to a board game in the United Kingdom. A 7th-century board game piece was unearthed by University of Reading archaeologists in the remains of an Anglo-Saxon royal hall, where board games were popular.

Researchers believe the hollow bone cylinder they found, at the Lyminge dig in Kent, belonged to an early backgammon or draughts game set.

Du Juan contributed to this story.

Diplomacy: China's spirit of openness lauded

From page 1

Wang Yiwei, director of the Institute of International Affairs at Renmin University of China, said the head-of-state diplomacy from Xi charted the course for Beijing's foreign policy initiatives through the multilateral events.

"China has played a pioneering role in global cooperation in terms of its visions, strategic planning, institutional innovation and pragmatic actions," he said.

Kostas Gouliamos, former rector of European University Cyprus and an ordinary member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, said the tangible outcomes of China's events and summits uphold the Chinese wisdom for multilateralism and, accordingly, maintain the spirit of inclusive growth, openness and high-quality cooperation.

Such outcomes carry global significance as they become effective instruments for universal security, stability, everlasting friendship and peace, he said.

The stronger synergy between China and its global partners "is a splendid chapter in charting both a connected, peaceful world and a path for a global community of shared future", he said.

With the increased internationalization of Beijing's efforts, the government's foreign policy has thus emerged as being characterized by more significant developmental practices and vital to multilateralism as well as high-tech and economic policies, he added.

Marsela Musabelliu, executive director of the Albanian Institute for Globalization Studies, said Beijing has actively sought multilateral solutions to global challenges, recognizing that complex issues often require collaborative efforts from the international community.

"In the face of a turbulent global landscape, China's political leadership has considered domestic and international imperatives, working with a strategic vision and introducing a series of policies favorable to regional, continental and global geopolitical stability," she said.

Wang Huiyao, president of the Beijing-based Center for China and Globalization, said China has put greater emphasis in 2023 on building global platforms for economic cooperation. "While Western countries ramped up efforts to form geopolitical circles, China has intensified its drive to develop platforms committed to promoting economic growth and win-win cooperation," he said.

Besides existing mechanisms such as the China International Import Expo, China also held its first International Supply Chain Expo in November. The expo in Beijing drew 15,000 participants, with businesses signing more than 200 cooperation agreements and memorandums of understanding that involved total funding of over 150 billion yuan ($21 billion).

The supply chain expo marked an innovative drive to strengthen the security of global industrial and supply chains, said Wang Yiwei, from Renmin University.

China, instead of seeking decoupling or the severing of supply chains, has sought to strengthen them for the benefit of the global community and to lead globalization to a deeper level, he said.

Rights: Aim is to further integrate region into economic fabric

From page 1

The initiatives such as poverty alleviation programs, infrastructure development and educational opportunities are aimed at improving the standard of living for all ethnic groups in the region.

We are witness to the efforts in protecting the practice of Islam, showcasing State-sponsored construction and renovation of mosques, and organizing events to celebrate Islamic festivals. These actions, according to Chinese officials, demonstrate a commitment to the cultural and religious rights of the Muslim population in Xinjiang, countering the allegations of "religious and cultural suppression".

A stark reflection of this perceived double standard is seen in the West's approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The enduring and painful struggle in this region, marked by accusations of human rights violations and breaches of international law, contrasts sharply with the unconditional support often extended to Israel by the same Western powers critical of China.

The US, for example, has been a steadfast ally of Israel, providing substantial military aid and diplomatic backing, even amid widespread international criticism of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. This comparison raises crucial questions about the consistency and motivations behind Western foreign policy, suggesting a selective application of human rights norms, swayed by strategic alliances and interests.

The unwavering US support for Israel, even in the face of numerous allegations of human rights violations, presents a stark contrast to its stance on other international issues. This special relationship, cemented by substantial military aid, diplomatic backing and political support, has often been criticized as enabling policies in Israel that are at odds with the professed US commitment to human rights. Critics argue that this alliance has had significant repercussions for the Palestinian population, including the perpetuation of a cycle of violence, displacement and economic hardship.

The US veto power on the United Nations Security Council has frequently been used to shield Israel from international condemnation, further exacerbating the asymmetry in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This approach raises profound questions about the consistency of US foreign policy, particularly its selective engagement with human rights issues based on strategic interests rather than a principled stance.

A delegation from Pakistan recently visited China on a 15-day trip, during which delegation members visited significant places including Xinjiang. Moiz Farooq, executive editor of Pakistan Economic Net, was part of the delegation. He concluded that it makes sense that the US is targeting the region, since Xinjiang has the potential to become a bridge between China and the Islamic world.

From a diplomatic vantage point, the Xinjiang issue and the Western response to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict underscore the intricate and often contradictory nature of international relations. These scenarios exemplify the challenges in applying a uniform standard of human rights across diverse geopolitical landscapes. On the one hand, there is no evidence of human rights violation in Xinjiang, but the West has still constantly targeted China. On the other hand, the blatant human rights violations by Israel are unfortunately not only endorsed by the West, but funded, too.

The Xinjiang narrative, as it stands in the international arena, is a testament to the complexities of global politics, where geopolitical interests often overshadow the purported universal principles of human rights.

The Western depiction of the situation in Xinjiang fails to acknowledge the strides made by the Chinese government in promoting economic development and social harmony among diverse ethnic groups. The investments in infrastructure, poverty alleviation and educational opportunities highlight a commitment to the well-being of all citizens, including the Uygur community.

By fostering such initiatives, China aims not only to counteract extremism through development, but also to integrate the region more fully into the national and global economic fabric. This strategy, which is often misconstrued or ignored in Western discourse, is crucial for the stability and prosperity of Xinjiang.

As the world moves toward a multipolar order, it is imperative that international discourse on human rights and sovereignty is grounded in objectivity and fairness. Only through an unbiased and informed approach can the global community hope to foster a more equitable and just world order, in which every nation's efforts toward peace, development and stability are recognized and not unjustly vilified.

The writer is editor-in-chief of Daily Ittehad Media Group and Pakistan Economic Net. He is also vice-president and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Global economy faces rough weather ahead

Rising prices trigger protests as Fed's interest rate hikes cause spillover effects worldwide

By **SHAO XINYING**
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US actors Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul met again in August. This time not for the reunion of the *Breaking Bad* series, but on the picket line in solidarity protests with other Hollywood actors.

Speaking to the crowd, Cranston said, "We just want them to see reality and fairness and come back to the table and talk to us."

Striking actors started the rally in mid-July, more than two months after screenwriters began protests in their bid to get better pay and working conditions under the influence of streaming services and artificial intelligence.

The celebrity-packed picket lines brought more attention to the so-called Hollywood double strike — writers and actors — unseen in 60 years.

From coast to coast, a wave of strikes has gripped the US throughout 2023, rippling across industries such as logistics and automobiles.

The country's United Auto Workers union began a strike in mid-September against all the Big Three automakers, namely Ford Motor, General Motors and Stellantis. The first-ever strike of all three at once in the union's 88-year history came after failed talks on new contracts.

In the past 50 years across the United States, there has been a massive redistribution of wealth, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders said at a rally, highlighting the rising salaries of the CEOs of the Big Three automakers.

Against this backdrop, the union had reportedly been negotiating for significantly higher pay and new benefits.

"After the pandemic, the US economy grappled with sluggish growth and encountered intense competition from other countries, presenting challenges for businesses," Wang Zhen, a research professor of international politics at the Institute of International Relations, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, told China Daily.

During the pandemic, the US implemented stimulus packages to bolster the economy.

"The fiscal expansion policies led to high inflation and elevated the cost of living for the working class," Wang said. "In addition, technological advancements, particularly artificial intelligence, have encroached upon the traditional interests of corporate workers, prompting them to take to the streets to defend their rights."

The US inflation rate started to grow at a more than 2 percent rate from March 2021 and peaked at 9.1 percent in June 2022 to a 40-year high, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

To tame inflation, the US Federal Reserve raised its benchmark policy interest rate 11 times since March 2022 from the near-zero level to the current 5.25-5.50 percent range, marking the fastest pace in 40 years.

"The Fed is as aggressive as it has been since the early 1980s," Chris Turner, global head of markets at the Dutch banking group ING, was quoted by CNN as saying.

"They're willing to tolerate higher unemployment and a recession", he said. "That's not good for international growth."

Even though inflation has eased from a peak of 9.1 percent last year, it remains too high for the Fed.

The US central bank said it remains "highly attentive to inflation risks" and that it is strongly committed to returning inflation to its 2 percent goal as it left interest rates unchanged on a Dec 13 meeting, a third pause from September.

The rate-setting group pointed to recent indicators showing that economic activity has slowed in the third quarter.

The high rates have put the banking system under pressure, which has seen the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank in March, and the failure of First Republic Bank in May. Elsewhere, UBS agreed in March to buy Credit Suisse in a rescue move to avert a banking sector meltdown.

"Ripple effects of US financial system strains could lead to tighter credit, sharper slowdown worldwide," said a report by The Wall Street Journal earlier this year. "Turmoil in the US banking sector isn't just a problem for the US. It also increases the risks of a global recession."

Xu Gao, chief economist at Bank of China International, told China Daily, "After the collapse of the Silicon Valley Bank, the growth rate of credit extended to entities by the US banking system showed a slower pace.

"Once the accumulated liquidity is drained, the impact of subsequent liquidity crunch is expected to manifest in the real economy."

Citing the manufacturing purchasing managers index in the US which has run under 50 since November last year, Xu said, "Although the US economy seems to be doing well this year, its role as a driving force for global economic growth has declined."

The World Economic Outlook published by the International Monetary Fund in October said: "Borrowing costs for emerging (markets) and developing economies remain high, constraining priority spending and raising the risk of debt distress. ... The danger is of a sharp repricing of risk, especially for emerging markets, that would appreciate further the US dollar, trigger capital outflows, and increase borrowing costs and debt distress."

In November, European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde told the European Parliament that although she expected the weakening of inflationary pressures to continue, "the medium-term outlook for inflation remains surrounded by considerable uncertainty". She said wages would continue to play a pivotal role in driving domestic inflation.

Daily squeeze on budgets

Tomas Hnyk, a Prague resident, told China Daily that ordinary people face a daily squeeze on their budgets.

"The costs of energy and food and their basic services increased by a lot more than their income," he said.

Energy prices have surged, especially after the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which cast a long shadow on the continent as no quick ending is seen, he said.

"Prices went up for almost everything," he said. "Despite inflation being smaller than it was, it is still a big issue. For people with less money, it is a huge deal."

This frustration is not only felt in the Czech Republic, but also across other European countries, as they have experienced a wave of protests, with citizens demanding concrete steps from the government to ease their economic burden.

In France, people protested against an increase in the retirement age. In Germany, striking transportation workers caused major disruptions at airports and bus and train stations.

The United Kingdom also witnessed pay disputes across sectors, with workers demanding higher wages. Strikes in schools, railways and hospitals have become more frequent, notably in the National Health Service, where health workers staged the largest strike in its 75-year history. The financial strain intensified as Birmingham and Nottingham declared bankruptcy in September and November, respectively.

Meanwhile, Africa suffers from high inflation, as highlighted in the IMF Regional Economic Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa published in October, which said: "Inflation is still too high. Inflation at end 2023 is projected to stay in double digits in 14 countries."

In its Economic Outlook published in late November, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said it expected the global economy to slow down slightly in 2024 as a result of the tightening of monetary policy, weaker trade and dipping consumer confidence.

It projected a global GDP growth of 2.9 percent in 2023, followed by a mild slowdown to 2.7 percent in 2024 and a slight improvement to 3 percent in 2025. Asia is expected to continue to account for the bulk of global growth in 2024-25, as it has done this year.

Observers noted a recent trend of de-globalization, spearheaded by the US, resulting in disruptions to global supply chains.

The US and its Western allies "have been the biggest beneficiaries" of world economic integration and globalization since the end of the Cold War, Wang from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences said.

However, since former US president Donald Trump assumed office in 2017, a shift toward anti-globalization policies has been evident, initiating trade and technology wars aimed at curbing the ascent of developing countries, Wang said.

"These policies, among others, failed to achieve the 'manufacturing reshoring' advocated by US policymakers, and have increased the operation costs for enterprises. This, in turn, burdens people across the globe, and poses a challenge to the world economic recovery after the pandemic."

Leading to disruptions

The so-called decoupling or de-risking undeniably leads to disruptions to the global supply chains, said Xu from the Bank of China International. "The potential hurdles and risks associated with this trend raise valid concerns about the overall stability and interconnectedness of the global economic landscape."

Commenting on economic security, Pascal Lamy, former director-general of the World Trade Organization, said: "You cannot do anything just by waving your flag of national security. This would destroy the multilateral trading system. So we have an issue which I think necessitates better attention."

As the US monetary tightening cycle nears an end, there is a real risk of recession for the US whose economy stands at a "precarious crossroads", Xu said, pointing to challenges to global economic recovery.

"Although overall if I look at these three engines — technology, ideology, and peace or geopolitical tensions or conflicts — I still believe that these engines will keep pushing for globalization," Lamy told a recent event hosted by the Center for China and Globalization.

2024 will be a pivotal year for elections worldwide, coupled with the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Gaza crisis, which will add to uncertainties across the globe, Wang said.

Although headwinds abound, Wang remains cautiously optimistic about the potential growth.

"It is still possible for the international community to maintain overall peace. After the pandemic, the willingness of countries around the world to strive for economic development has not waned, and the momentum of technological change has not stalled," he said.

"Additionally, the negative repercussions of the Fed's rate hikes will be absorbed gradually, and it is widely anticipated that the Fed will pivot to monetary easing next year. These factors combined will bring new impetus and hope to the recovery of the world economy."









Top left: Bryan Cranston (front left) and Aaron Paul (front right), cast members from *Breaking Bad*, strike on a picket line outside Sony Pictures studios in Culver City, California, on Aug 29. CHRIS PIZZELLO / AP **Top right:** Members of the United Auto Workers attend a rally in Detroit on Sept 15. PAUL SANCYA / AP **Bottom left:** Customers check out at a supermarket in Barcelona, Spain, on Sept 14. ANGEL GARCIA VIA GETTY IMAGES **Bottom right:** A woman holds up a Spanish sign reading "Our soup kitchens need food" outside Argentina's Social Development Ministry during a protest demanding more government food aid for soup kitchens in Buenos Aires on Dec 22. RODRIGO ABD / AP

RCEP steers wheel toward recovery, stability

By **SHAO XINYING**

As the world emerges from the pandemic, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is poised to further facilitate trade flows and inject much-needed vitality into the global economy, which has been disrupted by uncertainties during past years, experts say.

The RCEP is an important institutional arrangement for regional economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region, offering a new paradigm for broader cooperation, they say.

The partnership was signed in November 2020 by 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

Since the agreement came into effect for 10 of these countries on Jan 1, 2022, it has catalyzed intra-regional trade and spurred economic development, observers say.

"The RCEP forges tighter economic bonds between the economies and integrates ASEAN 10+5 free trade agreement arrangements," said Li Siqi, an associate professor at the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

The RCEP covers 2.3 billion people, $25.8 trillion of global GDP, $12.7 trillion of global trade in goods and services and 31 percent of global foreign direct investment inflows, according to the World Bank.

"Amid economic uncertainties and persistent downward pressure, the RCEP stands as a beacon of stability, offering member countries relatively predictable and secure trade expectations," said Zhang Miao, an associate professor of the School of International Relations / Research School for Southeast Asian Studies at Xiamen University.

As certain countries, amid global geopolitical risks, are initiating trade wars and pursuing decoupling, "the RCEP fosters mutual trust and serves as a stabilizer in navigating international uncertainties", Li said.

Buoyed by its commitment to further opening-up, China has emerged as a driving force in the global economic recovery by spearheading trade liberalization, experts say.

In 2022, China's imports and exports to the other 14 RCEP members reached 12.95 trillion yuan ($1.76 trillion), up 7.5 percent year-on-year, accounting for 30.8 percent of its total imports and exports, China's General Administration of Customs said. The figure reached 6.1 trillion yuan in the first half of this year, up 1.5 percent year-on-year.

"China's substantial economic scale serves as a vital source of reassurance," Zhang said. "It will have a positive effect on the global value chains and supply chains.

"Given the deeply intertwined interests among the countries, it can be said that the members' destinies are closely linked and stand to gain and lose together. This is what we can call 'economies of a shared future'."

'Inclusive' pact

Li hails the RCEP as "inclusive" because of members' different levels of socioeconomic development and because the pact involves not only developed economies such as Singapore and Australia, but also less-developed countries such as Laos and Cambodia.

Zhang said the agreement is like "a double-edged sword" for the less-developed countries because it presents both opportunities and challenges.

On one hand, these countries, by taking part in the pact, take on the "fast trajectory" of free trade; on the other hand, it elevates governance standards within them, she said.

The RCEP incorporates innovative policies applicable across diverse economies, she said. "The principle of cumulative rules of origin stands out as the most important institutional innovation of the RCEP as it is the embodiment of the multilateralism that China has long championed."

By setting a time frame for reducing tariffs, the RCEP focuses on reducing tariff barriers among member countries and on promoting the circulation of goods and services within the region, Li said. "The enhanced regional market cooperation not only alleviates disruptions in the global supply chains, but also mitigates risks from so-called decoupling."

Zhang said such an arrangement provides "a cushion period" for some of the participating countries.

"It enables the less-developed countries to safeguard their industries, and at the same time to reap benefits from the pact," Zhang said.

Penn Sovicheat, secretary of state of Cambodia's Commerce Ministry, said the RCEP has been a key driving force for Cambodia's export growth and has become a magnet for attracting more foreign direct investment inflows into the country.

Cambodia exported $7.21 billion worth of products to RCEP member countries in the first 11 months of 2023, up 27 percent from the corresponding period last year, said a ministry report published this month.

The Philippines was the last country to ratify the deal in February, which became fully effective for all 15 signatory countries on June 2.

Allan Gepty, the nation's lead negotiator in RCEP talks, hailed the entry as "a milestone for the Philippines".

According to the Asian Development Bank, the RCEP could increase the Philippines' exports by 3.7 percent by 2030, an addition of $7 billion.

"The RCEP introduces new ideas and solutions for global economic governance, that is, to jointly build a universally beneficial and inclusive economic governance system and promote economic cooperation," Li said. "It is believed that the RCEP will inject fresh momentum to the Asia-Pacific economic development."

Zhang said: "The RCEP reflects the commitment of a responsible major country toward further opening-up and providing a necessary international public good. The RCEP will deliver benefits for member countries and contribute to post-pandemic global economic recovery."



A staff member loads packed durians into a truck at a processing facility in Chumphon, Thailand, on Sept 19. China accounted for more than 96 percent of Thai durian exports in 2022, Thailand's Ministry of Commerce said. WANG TENG / XINHUA

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BUSINESS

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Qingdao automated container terminal starts operations

By WANG KEJU
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China's first indigenously developed automated container terminal in Qingdao, Shandong province, began operations on Wednesday, marking a significant step forward by the nation in achieving core competitiveness in the ports sector, the port operator said.

The third phase of the automated terminal of the Qingdao port achieved complete localization of systems and equipment, with its infrastructure powered by 28,000 homegrown components, said Shandong Port Group Co.

Specifically, the first fully self-developed container intelligent control system — the core of the automated terminal — boasts millisecond-level data refresh rates and high processing efficiency, positioning it at the forefront of global innovation, said Chen Qiang, deputy manager of the information technology department of the automated terminal.

The previous system required weekly maintenance and upgrades, resulting in the simultaneous shutdown of hundreds of devices for nearly an hour and substantial economic losses, Chen said.

However, with the implementation of the intelligent control system, upgrades can be performed at any time without disrupting on-site operations.

The fully automated terminal has transformed operations, nearly eliminating the need for manual intervention in the operation of nearly 200 pieces of machinery. Former equipment operators now work in remote control rooms, transitioning from hands-on joystick operations to mouse-click control.

With the entire process managed by automated scheduling and machinery operations, the terminal can reduce on-site staff by 80 percent compared to traditional terminals, while achieving a 30 percent increase in overall operational efficiency, according to the company.

The newly operational terminal has not only achieved significant breakthroughs in various domestically developed technologies, but has also prioritized replication and scalability during its construction, said Liu Fangchao, a professor at Qingdao Harbour Vocational and Technical College.

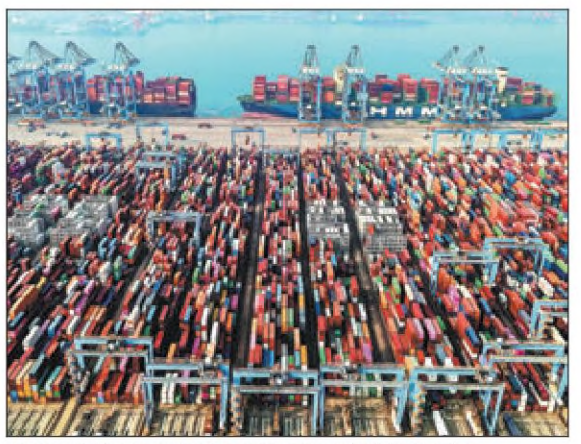
By emphasizing compatibility, the terminal's achievements can be effectively integrated into diverse port environments, fostering an interconnected national port infrastructure, Liu said.

It will also offer a more intelligent, greener, safer and economically viable approach to the construction of automated ports worldwide, Liu added.

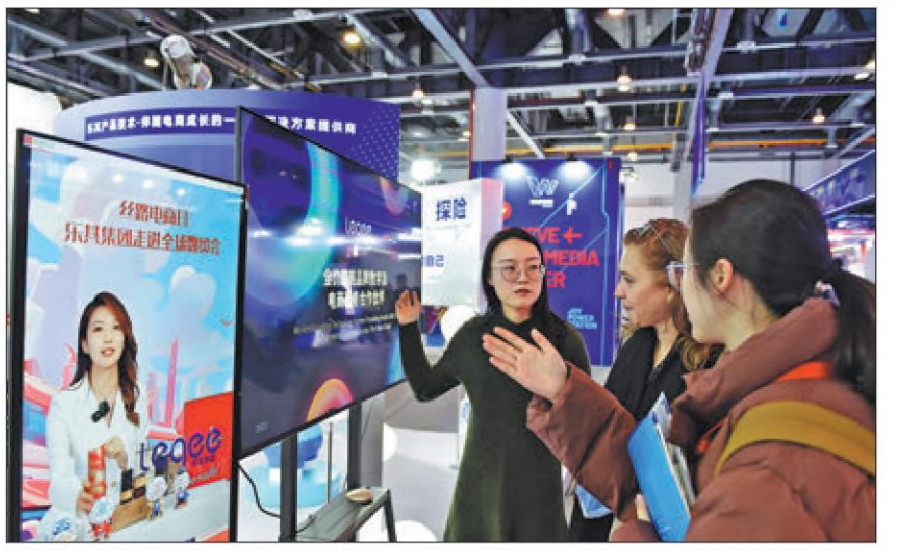
China remained the world's largest trading nation for goods for a sixth consecutive year in 2022, according to data from the General Administration of Customs. Over 90 percent of the country's import and export cargo volumes are transported by sea, according to the Ministry of Transport.

China's ports, a vital link in global maritime trade, have also clinched the top spot in global rankings for both cargo and container throughput for multiple consecutive years.

Chinese ports have not only grown in scale but have also become increasingly advanced over the years, which has enhanced operational efficiency and reinforced the country's position as a key player in international trade, Liu said.



A view of the automated container terminal in Qingdao, Shandong province. ZHANG JINGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Exhibitors introduce livestream promotions to visitors during an e-commerce expo in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. LIU LINGYI / XINHUA

Small manufacturers harness e-commerce

Report: New product categories shine as consumer choices evolve abroad

By FAN FEIFEI
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Niche sports products, intelligent hardware, smart home devices and customized small machinery equipment made by Chinese manufacturers are becoming popular among overseas consumers, whose demand for personalized commodities is rising, said a new report released by Alibaba.com, Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group's business-to-business platform that helps facilitate foreign trade, on Wednesday.

The turnover of pickleball paddles surged 209 percent year-on-year in November, while baseball- and badminton-related products, and camping, hiking and other outdoor sports commodities have seen booming sales on the online marketplace, according to Alibaba.com.

Pickleball is a trendy, fast-growing sport that has enjoyed soaring popularity in the United States in recent years.

Alibaba.com said artificial intelligence technology has accelerated the popularization of intelligent hardware, with overseas consumers increasingly favoring consumer electronics products and small household appliances with innovative intelligent technologies.

Sales of wearable devices, virtual reality glasses and smart speakers rose more than 30 percent year-on-year in November, it said.

Overseas pet owners are willing to pay more for premium products, as the transaction volume of cat litter boxes and pet feeders jumped 102 percent and 128 percent year-on-year, respectively.

Small machinery equipment like laser engraving machines, laser printers and multifunction packaging machines that can meet the personalized demand of overseas Generation Z consumers (those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s) have seen robust growth, the report noted.

Environmentally friendly products are increasingly favored by overseas shoppers. For instance, sales of straw tote bags and knitted fabrics made of organic cotton with antibacterial function increased 78 percent and 49 percent year-on-year, respectively.

Qin Fen, who is in charge of industries and merchant business at Alibaba.com, said the new wave of AI should encourage small and medium-sized Chinese manufacturers to improve their AI and digital capabilities to offer tailor-made products and satisfy wide-ranging demands overseas.

Cui Lili, director of the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics' Institute of E-commerce, said the popularity of made-in-China products in overseas markets shows these cost-effective commodities have gained wide recognition and burnished the image of Chinese brands abroad in recent years.

Fresh growth opportunities are emerging, Cui said, adding Chinese enterprises should make full use of cross-border e-commerce platforms to quickly meet demand from overseas markets, learn more about relevant laws, regulations and quality standards of other countries, and adjust supply chains to make products that meet local requirements.

China's cross-border e-commerce sector has seen robust growth in recent years. The import and export scale of the country's cross-border e-commerce reached 1.7 trillion yuan ($237.8 billion) in the first three quarters, up 14.4 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

As a new form of foreign trade, cross-border e-commerce has become an important driving force for bolstering the growth of China's foreign trade, said Zhang Zhouping, a senior analyst of B2B and cross-border activities at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy.

An increasing number of Chinese merchants now sell their products to overseas markets via cross-border e-commerce platforms, which provide a new way for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to expand their global footprint and build up new brands, Zhang said.

Overseas consumers have gradually boosted their awareness of, and trust in, Chinese companies and products, and maintain a favorable attitude toward Chinese brands, according to a white paper released by online media outlets Sina News and Huanqiu.com.

Enterprises bullish on supply chain expo

By ZHU WENQIAN
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Both domestic and foreign companies are highly enthusiastic about participating in the second China International Supply Chain Expo to be held from Nov 26 to 30 next year in Beijing, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade said.

Preparatory work for the event is on in full swing, showing the country's commitment to further opening-up, it said.

The expo will showcase the supply chain achievements of five sectors — smart vehicles, green agriculture, clean energy, digital technologies and healthcare — just like in the first expo, the CCPIT said during a news conference on Wednesday.

The event organizer said it will research the feasibility of showing fruitful results of other industrial and supply chains at the second expo.

The council has already sent out invitations to global companies, and enterprises such as Chinese drugmaker Sinopharm Group, Chinese artificial intelligence company iFlytek and US medical technology company GE HealthCare have signed letters of intent to participate in the second exhibition.

Meanwhile, Chinese enterprises actively held or participated in overseas exhibitions in 2023, and the segment showed a comprehensive recovery trend following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This year, Asia, Western Europe, and North America stood as important destinations, maintaining high attractiveness for Chinese enterprises interested in participating in overseas expos," said Zhang Xin, a spokesperson for the CCPIT.

"Germany and the United States were the main destination countries for Chinese companies participating in overseas exhibitions, followed closely by Russia, Japan, and Brazil. These five countries together accounted for nearly 50 percent share of Chinese companies' participation in overseas expos this year," Zhang said.

Compared with the pre-pandemic period in 2019, the textile and machinery sectors in China remained the main participants at overseas exhibitions, while the representation of industries such as healthcare, transportation and logistics, and information and communication has increased, he added.

In addition, there have been greater dividends from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, which took effect on Jan 1, 2022.

The trade pact of 15 Asia-Pacific countries is expected to reduce tariffs by up to 90 percent on goods traded among members over the next two decades.

In November, CCPIT branches nationwide issued 19,834 RCEP Certificates of Origin, up 20.83 percent year-on-year. The certificates will grant companies tariff reductions. It is expected to reduce tariffs by $9 million on Chinese product exports to RCEP member countries.

A report recently released by CCPIT that surveyed various types of enterprises has found that ASEAN's overall business environment has improved this year.

Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia ranked high in terms of favorable business environments, the China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Business Environment Report 2023 showed.

The overall business performance of Chinese enterprises operating in the ASEAN region has been good in 2023, and their market share, operating income and net profit in the region are expected to increase this year, the report found.

China and ASEAN have been each other's largest trading partners for three years. As of July, the cumulative two-way investment between China and ASEAN member states exceeded $380 billion, according to the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator.

Briefly

Central SOEs' profits reach $338b

For the January-November period, the profits of China's centrally administered State-owned enterprises reached a stable 2.4 trillion yuan ($338.2 billion), the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council said. The fixed-asset investment of central SOEs, including real estate, expanded 9 percent year-on-year to 4.1 trillion yuan, SASAC data showed.

Reverse repos add $59b to liquidity

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, conducted 421 billion yuan ($59.29 billion) of seven-day, 1.8 percent reverse repos on Wednesday, to keep liquidity reasonable and ample at the end of the year. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Executive: BRI driving accounting boom in China

By ZHOU LANXU
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China may become the biggest market for the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in terms of membership, thanks to the country's vast talent pool and the China-proposed decade-old Belt and Road Initiative.

Joseph Owolabi, president of ACCA (2022-23 session), said the London-based global professional accounting body is excited about the prospect of the Chinese market growing and potentially representing the largest proportion in its global membership.

ACCA now has over 29,000 members in China amid the 247,000 members worldwide.

While it will still take time for the Chinese market to catch up with ACCA's largest markets, Owolabi told China Daily he sees the potential for members in the Chinese mainland to top 200,000, driven by the abundant demand for skilled accountants out of the country's vast 1.4 billion population.

When it comes to the future members, he said China is already the top market for ACCA as it is home to 148,000 future members. All over the world, ACCA has 526,000 future members in 181 countries.

> "Nothing helps tell the Chinese story better than the BRI. It allows people, without necessarily coming to China, to see how great a country it is."
>
> **Joseph Owolabi,** president of ACCA (2022-23 session)

ACCA future members are accounting students who have not passed all ACCA exams, and affiliates who have passed all exams but do not yet have three years of practical experience or have not completed the ACCA ethics module.

As China pushes ahead with the BRI, the country will also need a growing number of professional accountants — as leaders, managers and sustainability experts — to help facilitate international projects, Owolabi said.

He said that ACCA has been supporting the BRI not only by nurturing professional accountants, but also by facilitating trade via its extensive global relationships.

Since it was launched 10 years ago, the BRI has been welcomed by the international community both as a public good and a cooperation platform. The Central Economic Work Conference in December called for efforts to ensure that both major signature projects and "small yet smart" livelihood programs are promoted under the initiative.

Owolabi said he thinks good work has been done to ensure that BRI projects are commercially viable and profitable, with some leveraging collateralized assets to ensure debt sustainability.

He said many of the projects have generated a positive social impact and enhanced bilateral relations. For instance, some BRI projects have helped develop ports and increase trade in Nigeria, his native country.

"Nothing helps tell the Chinese story better than the BRI. It allows people, without necessarily coming to China, to see how great a country it is."

Seeing immense opportunities in China, Owolabi said there is "no better time" than now to do business in or with China, and ACCA is particularly active in assisting China's net-zero transition, equipping accountants with the necessary skill sets, including sustainability and ESG auditing-related abilities.

Sustainability auditing is a process that evaluates the performance of an organization in relation to its sustainable development goals, while ESG auditing is an assessment of the risks related to environmental, social and governance issues and can verify the accuracy of ESG-related data disclosed by companies.

The accounting body also looks to help China's accounting community build insights into artificial intelligence as well as data security and governance, which will bring new career opportunities for accounting professionals, Owolabi said.

In 2024 and beyond, he said ACCA will work to enhance membership value in China by developing closer collaboration with universities to help deliver jobs and career opportunities to ACCA's future members, who are mainly college students.

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BUSINESS

Emissions accounting new green drive push

Key for firms looking to join in carbon trade, with policy backing

By LIU YUKUN
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China's carbon accounting sector is surging as companies seek cutting-edge accounting methodologies for clearer assessments of greenhouse gas emissions, and work to strategically reduce carbon output across diverse operational facets, which experts said will spur a billion-dollar market.

They said companies in China have actively embraced carbon reduction measures to facilitate their green transformation process in response to the nation's call. However, in quantifying and disclosing their achievements, the lack of standardized carbon accounting methods — stemming from the variety of industries, categories, processes and modalities involved — has posed an ongoing challenge to establishing a unified carbon emissions measurement system.

This complexity is particularly pronounced for businesses looking to participate in the carbon market or engage in global trade, especially following the European Union's release of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism — a tariff on carbon-intensive products — which is undergoing trial runs and will come into effect in 2026, they said.

"With the establishment of nine regional carbon trading platforms and hundreds of thousands of enterprises engaged in the market, a nationwide unified carbon emissions trading mechanism is set to be fully established, providing a potentially continuous stream of orders for the carbon accounting industry," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

Lai Xiaoming, chairman of the Shanghai Environment and Energy Exchange, said China now boasts the world's largest carbon allowance trading market. As of Nov 30, the cumulative transactions of carbon emission allowances have reached 423 million metric tons, totaling 23.57 billion yuan ($3.3 billion).

Venture capital firm Matrix Partners China said it expects the size of the carbon accounting market to stand at tens of billions of yuan, based on a carbon allowance trading volume of 8.5 billion yuan. Now the trading volume figure has increased by twofold.

Globally, the carbon accounting market is currently estimated to be $15.31 billion and is expected to reach $64.39 billion in 2030, said Fortune Business Insights, a market research company in India.

"The threat of climate change to global economic and social development is on the rise, making carbon management increasingly important. In this context, there is an urgent need to effectively prevent and actively respond to various risks related to energy and climate. This involves leveraging new data to construct innovative methodologies, proposing new theories, and efficiently coordinating the development relationship between energy, climate and the economy," said Lu Guibin, deputy head of the Nanjing University of Science and Technology, during the recent China Energy and Climate Finance Thirty-Person Forum in Nanjing.

Chinese companies are also leveraging advanced technology to create carbon accounting and management systems.

Take Xianyu as an example. The online secondhand goods transaction platform has joined ranks with the China Beijing Green Exchange to develop a model to quantify CO2 emissions that one can save when buying secondhand products, based on the calculation of emissions generated in the raw material and production process. Additional research is conducted on the life span of items and consumer perceptions, introducing more accurate calculation factors.

"Effectively inspiring users to participate in carbon reduction is crucial, with the prerequisite being to make carbon reductions quantifiable, perceptible and valuable for users. We look forward to serving over 1 billion users by 2030, driving a carbon reduction volume exceeding 55 million tons," said Ding Jian, president of Xianyu.

The booming market has received policy support. In 2022, an action plan to accelerate the establishment of a unified carbon emissions accounting system was co-released by the National Development and Reform Commission, the National Bureau of Statistics, and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

The plan suggests establishing a national and local carbon emissions accounting system. It said the NBS will uniformly formulate national and provincial-level carbon emissions accounting methods, delineate the statistical responsibilities of relevant departments for basic data related to energy, industrial production processes, emission factors and electricity input-output, as well as organize nationwide and provincial-level annual carbon emissions accounting activities.

Ren Xianguang, director of the National Energy Conservation Center, emphasized the challenges involved in establishing carbon emissions accounting systems. These challenges include maneuvering amid different accounting objects, goals, data sources and regulatory departments.

"The biggest challenge was a lack of unified carbon accounting standards, which resulted in barriers to mutual recognition in trade. Despite huge potential, the industry is just at the early stage of development in China," said Lin.

Power-backed performance



A State Grid technician works on a transmission tower at a substation in Anyang, Henan province. To facilitate services for local businesses, State Grid's unit in Anyang recently sent out employees to collect feedback from local companies on power demand, based on which the power supplier will optimize its systems in advance. The Anyang company said it will continue such efforts in the long run, with focus on rural areas.
BI XINGSHI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Shoppers check out goose down jackets at a Luxemporium department store in Beijing on Dec 2.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Big chill an upside for down jackets

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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Amid the recent cold wave gripping many parts of China, down jacket consumption has surged, propelling the sector to grow and prosper, industry insiders said.

The domestic down clothing market has seen prices skyrocket in recent years. This winter, a goose down jacket from domestic brand Skypeople sells for a whopping 7,000 yuan ($979), sparking heated online discussions.

Bosideng, a major Chinese manufacturer of down jackets, has led the premiumization trend for years, with an average price of more than 6,000 yuan for its hiking series outerwear this year.

Linda Yuan, a Beijing resident, bought a Bosideng down jacket for her husband for 2,800 yuan this month.

"The down jacket uses goose down as filler. These days the lightness and fast warming features are essential in selecting winter wear," Yuan said.

The sector's high-end category — goose down jackets — continues to expand in the overall down jacket market.

The growth is boosted by continual rises in disposable incomes, evolving consumer preferences and heightened quality expectations among Chinese consumers, said a report jointly released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, fashion magazine Vogue Business, and domestic high-end goose down clothing brand Guvet, in December.

The proportion of goose down clothing in total sales of related apparel in 2022 and 2023 has grown from 8 percent to 18 percent, a robust engine for the sector, according to a report by Douyin, a short-video sharing platform.

> "The focus on product, values and experience is crucial to success amid competition in the down jacket market in China."
>
> **Wu Kunming,** founder of Guvet, a domestic goose down clothing brand

The growth of the down jacket market is faster than the overall clothing industry. According to the China National Garment Association, the down jacket market size reached about 169.2 billion yuan in 2022.

Douyin said the down jacket market grew 34 percent year-on-year this year, with the growth rate of products priced over 800 yuan significantly higher than the overall down jacket market, reaching 70 percent.

Capitalizing on the upscaling trend, Guvet has become the top seller on Douyin and is actively expanding offline.

On Douyin, Guvet said it led market share reaching nearly 28 percent within the 1,500-2,999 yuan price range for medium and high-end goose down clothing. Its Black Pearl series, priced above 2,000 yuan, was atop the platform's sales. Guvet also dominates the 3,000 yuan market range, covering 18 percent of the market share on Douyin.

Wu Kunming, founder of Guvet, said its brand is aimed at higher-income women aged 30 to 40 who prioritize quality and services.

On Douyin, its product price per purchase has been raised from 1,700 to 3,000 yuan this year, with more than 30 percent being repeat-purchase customers, Wu said.

This month, the company opened its first offline pop-up store at Luxemporium, a fashion unit of retailing giant Wangfujing Group, in Beijing.

It plans to have more stores in Jinan, Shandong province; Chengdu, Sichuan province; and Shanghai in collaboration with Luxemporium.

In recent years, the surge in outdoor sports as a popular leisure activity among young people has also contributed to the rapid growth of the down jacket market.

In the first three quarters, sales of down jackets reported a year-on-year increase of around 697 percent.

The winter apparel market is highly competitive, featuring international luxury down jacket brands like Moncler and Canada Goose, domestic players including Bosideng and Yaya, sportswear brands such as Descente, The North Face and Nike, and fast fashion brands such as Zara and Uniqlo.

Younger consumers in China nowadays have wider access to information, a better understanding of quality and increased cultural awareness, and are no longer solely seeking lower-priced products.

Instead, "they want good products," said Wu.

"The focus on product, values and experience is crucial to success amid competition in the down jacket market in China," he added.

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BUSINESSFOCUS

China charging ahead in global EV battery sector

Globalization still priority next year as home market becomes saturated amid challenges

By CHENG YU
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China has helped power millions of electric vehicles around the world in 2023, responsible for over three-fifths of global installations of power batteries — the muscle at the heart of EVs.

South Korean market consultancy SNE Research said in a recent report that China continued to dominate the global power battery market in the first 10 months. Six of the world's top 10 battery makers are from China, with their market share taking up 63.3 percent of the total.

For these Chinese battery manufacturers, "globalization" has been the keyword this year after charging up the massive domestic market. Looking ahead into 2024, it will still be a priority for them to get an even bigger slice of the international market, but they face rising geopolitical challenges and uncertainties abroad, industry experts said.

Ouyang Minggao, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a Tsinghua University professor, said, "As competition among power battery makers continues to intensify in the domestic market, Chinese battery manufacturers will no doubt accelerate their steps to go global."

Ouyang predicts the market scale of power batteries and energy storage batteries is expected to exceed the original goal of 7 billion kilowatt-hours — which is already high — this year and grow seven to 10-fold over the next seven years.

"Huge opportunities await for these battery makers as the global battery market still has huge development potential in the coming years," he added.

Currently in China, in addition to well-known battery giants like Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd and BYD, peers such as CALB, Gotion High-tech Co, Sunwoda and Eve Energy are also among the world's top 10 EV battery makers. All of these battery giants have announced plans to expand foreign business.

"Globalization is an irresistible trend," said Li Zhen, founder and chairman of Gotion High-Tech Co, at a Bloomberg forum in Singapore in November. "You have to share the technology and products with other countries. That is the fundamental economic side of it."

The company, backed by leading Germany-based automaker Volkswagen, invested recently in battery manufacturing plants in two US states, Illinois and Michigan, which marked a milestone among Chinese battery makers in globalization due to the significant role the US market plays in EV and renewable energy technologies.



A worker operates equipment at a production line of Gotion High-tech Co, a Chinese company focusing on power battery development and production, in Hefei, Anhui province, in December 2022. RUAN XUEFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

2023 year in Review

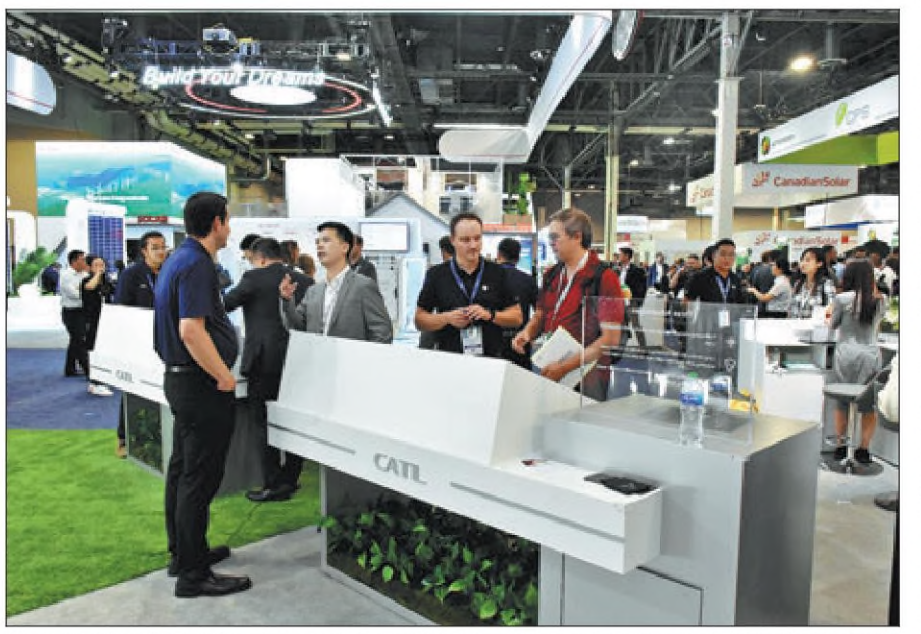
The planned $2 billion lithium battery plant in Illinois is expected to produce 10 gigawatt-hours of lithium battery packs and 40 GWh of lithium-ion battery cells annually, while the Michigan plant will take an investment of $2.36 billion to produce anode and cathode materials for batteries.

"The United States is a market that we must enter," Zeng Yuqun, founder and CEO of CATL, the world's largest EV battery maker, said in an internal meeting involving over 50 renowned investors — including Hillhouse Capital, Sequoia Capital, Tencent Holdings and Temasek Holdings — late last year.

In February, US automaker Ford Motor said it will collaborate with CATL on a new $3.5 billion battery plant for electric vehicles in Michigan.

If it goes smoothly and opens in 2026, the facility is expected to produce batteries to power a total of 400,000 EVs a year in the US.

"Besides the US market, Chinese power battery companies must pay attention to Europe — with the region being a traditional vehicle powerhouse — and Southeast Asia as an emerging market. At the same time, some are expected to explore the Middle East market," said Wang Zhikun, executive vice-president of Svolt, a power battery maker.



Visitors gather at the booth of Chinese battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd during a renewable energy expo in Las Vegas, the United States, in September. ZENG HUI / XINHUA

Sunwoda, another major power battery maker, announced in August it would open a new EV battery factory in Hungary with a total investment of 1.9 billion yuan ($266 million). Eve Energy, on the other hand, said in October that it would build its first European factory in Debrecen, Hungary, to supply BMW with power batteries for its new electric cars.

Deng Yongkang, an analyst from Minsheng Securities, said in a note, "Building factories overseas not only helps these battery makers digest existing saturated production capacity, but also offers stable overseas orders with higher profitability, which is expected to be a boost to companies' business performance."

In addition, the country has now formed the world's largest battery manufacturing value chain, extending from material research and development, battery production and recycling to equipment support, making such companies a natural fit in overseas markets, Deng said.

Moody's analysts also said that China's competitive advantage in lithium-ion battery cell production gives its carmakers an edge in terms of EV production costs. "China is expected to account for more than half of the global supply of lithium, with that advantage (in addition to) lower labor costs," they said.

Qi Lu, director of the new energy materials and technology laboratory at Peking University, said that Chinese battery makers are expected to have a greater presence in overseas markets backed by competitive technological innovations.

"China has a certain technological advantage, as can be seen from the improvement of lithium battery R&D and lithium iron phosphate battery application technology, and then to the advent of new categories of batteries such as sodium batteries, high-nickel batteries and semi-solid batteries," Song said. "With these advantages, they are expected to grab a bigger slice of the pie in the coming years."

Looking ahead to 2024, however, many experts worry about rising geopolitical uncertainties abroad while Chinese battery manufacturers go global. CATL's factories in the US and Hungary, for instance, were reported to have been halted under investigation by local authorities. However, CATL denied it later and said they are proceeding ahead as planned.

Wu Dan, a researcher at the Institute of International Affairs of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), said that some Western countries are enacting new trade and investment rules based on environmental, social and governance standards and tightening reviews over foreign investments, aiming for long-arm jurisdiction over Chinese counterparts.

"The main aim is to limit and weaken China's dominant position in batteries and reduce their dependence on China in the new energy automobile industry and related supply chains," Wu said.

The US passed the Inflation Reduction Act last year. Under the act, to be eligible for half the amount of the government subsidies per car, that is $3,750, at least 50 percent of the value of components of the EV batteries must be manufactured or assembled in the US. In addition, EVs with battery components or materials sourced from "foreign entities of concern" are excluded.

The EU, on the other hand, passed a strict new battery regulation requiring EV batteries entering the market to have a "passport" that will display the products' information, including carbon footprints and recycled content.

Zhang Xiang, an auto sector researcher at the North China University of Technology, said: "Such regulations will undoubtedly increase the costs and prolong the R&D process to meet the requirements for Chinese battery manufacturers over the short term."

Lyu Xiang, a US studies expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that Chinese battery makers are also finding ways out, as can be seen in the Ford-CATL cooperation, where CATL will license its technology to Ford instead of directly producing batteries.

"This cooperation model kills two birds with one stone. It not only enables Ford to obtain various subsidies promised in the act, but also helps CATL to avoid foreign investment security reviews to reduce some risks," Lyu said.

Windrose making waves with e-trucks

By CHENG YU



Han Wen, founder and CEO of Windrose

Chinese electric truck manufacturer Windrose Technology Inc is set to disrupt the global heavy truck sector, as the company plans to conduct road tests of its first electric heavy-duty trucks in the United States and Europe by the third quarter of next year.

Han Wen, founder and CEO of Windrose, told China Daily that the company is planning to conduct tests in prominent locations such as Los Angeles, Dunkirk, Antwerp and Rotterdam.

"We also plan to set up production capacity and receive local financial incentives in some of the above-mentioned places," Han said, without disclosing details.

The overseas momentum will help Windrose in its goal of delivering heavy-duty electric vehicles, with impressive ranges of 600 kilometers, by the fourth quarter of 2024, Han said.

Despite being a young startup founded in 2022, Windrose has already raised substantial funding through three rounds of fundraising, accumulating nearly $100 million. Notable investors include FountainVest Partners Co, Yunqi Partners and GSR Ventures Management Co.

Han, a Stanford MBA graduate with a background in heavy-duty truck-related ventures, has positioned the company to be "globally competitive" since its founding. He also formerly served as chief strategy and financial officer of leading autonomous trucking company Plus.

Such a global vision and rich industry know-how can also be seen from the company's cooperation with global sports goods retailer Decathlon and Hong Kong-based Kerry Logistics in carrying out road tests, including high-temperature and high-altitude testing, in China.

"Collaborating with multinational enterprises like Decathlon allows us to address the diverse application needs of heavy-duty truck customers across different regions. This positions us to use a singular truck model to meet the demand for intelligent and electric trucks globally," Han said.

"This is the first time that a Chinese truck brand, diesel or electric, will be entering the high-end segment of key global markets," he added.

Han said that Windrose has also joined hands with Germany-based global technology inspection company TUV SUD to ensure regulatory compliance for its electric trucks in overseas markets like the US, which he said will further step up the company's global layout.

Over the past few years, China has quickly emerged as a global leader in new energy vehicles and related industry chains. The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said that in the first 11 months of this year, deliveries of NEVs totaled 8.3 million units in China, up 36.7 percent year-on-year.

In terms of batteries, an important component of EVs, China has a manufacturing capacity of nearly 900 gigawatt-hours a year, accounting for 77 percent of the world's total production capacity last year. Six of the world's top 10 battery manufacturers are from China.



A view of an electric heavy-duty truck of Chinese manufacturer Windrose Technology Inc. The company aims to conduct road tests of the first batch of such trucks in the United States and Europe by the third quarter of next year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"There is no better place than China if we want to build EVs, with the largest shipments of smart devices in the world, its high-quality R&D talent pool, and most importantly, an EV supply chain that contributes to more than half of the world's total," Han said.

Highlighting the nation's hypercompetitive EV sector and well-rounded supply chain, Han believes that they will give the company an edge to compete in global markets, especially the US and Europe.

Andrew Huang, managing director of FountainVest Partners, said that Windrose has developed competitive new energy heavy-duty trucks in combination with software and hardware.

"The company has also obtained order intentions from overseas markets and gained some momentum in the international market," Huang said.

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CHINA MARVELS



WAKEWATER BAR
10th deck
Capacity: 20 people

With clamshell chairs and shaded seating areas, passengers can have drinks after a swim in the pool.



SPORT AND FUN ACTIVITIES
12th to 14th decks

Tourists can enjoy mini-golf, an open seating area and a rope challenge path.



BEACH CLUB
10th and 11th decks

With a folding and retractable roof, this space consists of swimming pools, bar and grill restaurant.



WATER PARK
12th, 14th, 15th and 16th decks

The water park has three waterslides spanning four decks.



WELLNESS COMPLEX
12th deck

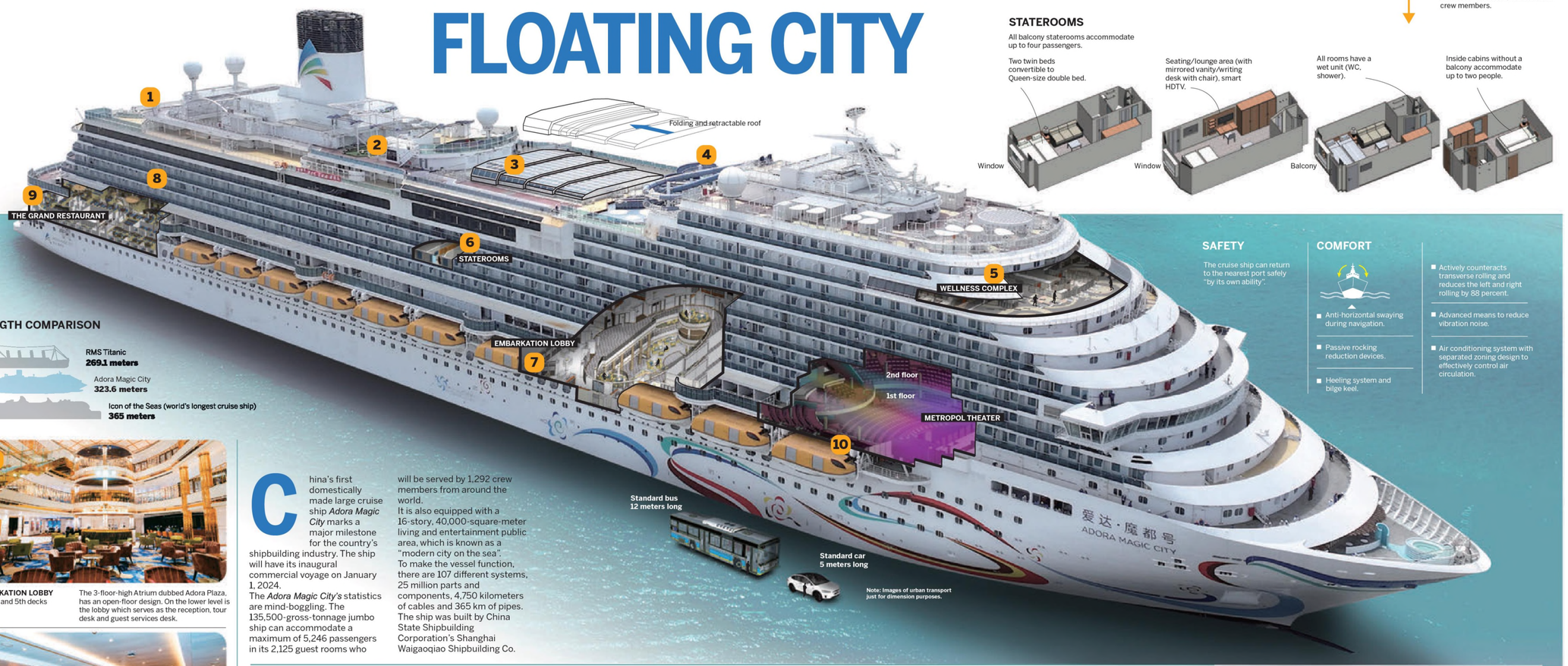
A fitness center with a modern gym, spa and beauty salon.



STATEROOMS
Several decks
2,125 total

The ship has 16 decks, of which 14 can be accessed by passengers. Twelve of the decks have cabins. The ship has 701 crew cabins and can accommodate 1,292 staff and crew members.

FLOATING CITY



STATEROOMS

All balcony staterooms accommodate up to four passengers.

SAFETY

The cruise ship can return to the nearest port safely "by its own ability".

COMFORT

- Anti-horizontal swaying during navigation.
- Passive rocking reduction devices.
- Heeling system and bilge keel.
- Actively counteracts transverse rolling and reduces the left and right rolling by 88 percent.
- Advanced means to reduce vibration noise.
- Air conditioning system with separated zoning design to effectively control air circulation.

LENGTH COMPARISON

EMBARKATION LOBBY
3rd, 4th and 5th decks

The 3-floor-high Atrium dubbed Adora Plaza, has an open-floor design. On the lower level is the lobby which serves as the reception, tour desk and guest services desk.



BAVARIAN LOUNGE
5th deck

On this deck there are signature dining venues and a brewery that makes its own craft beer.



THE GRAND RESTAURANT
3rd and 4th decks
Capacity: 1,470 people

View from the lower floor of the restaurant toward the stairs to the upper floor.

China's first domestically made large cruise ship *Adora Magic City* marks a major milestone for the country's shipbuilding industry. The ship will have its inaugural commercial voyage on January 1, 2024.

The *Adora Magic City's* statistics are mind-boggling. The 135,500-gross-tonnage jumbo ship can accommodate a maximum of 5,246 passengers in its 2,125 guest rooms who will be served by 1,292 crew members from around the world.

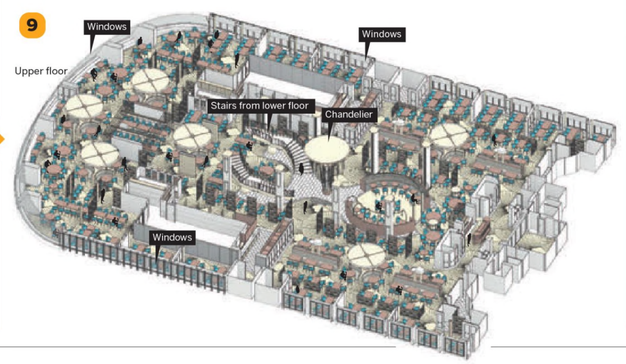
It is also equipped with a 16-story, 40,000-square-meter living and entertainment public area, which is known as a "modern city on the sea".

To make the vessel function, there are 107 different systems, 25 million parts and components, 4,750 kilometers of cables and 365 km of pipes.

The ship was built by China State Shipbuilding Corporation's Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co.

THE GRAND RESTAURANT

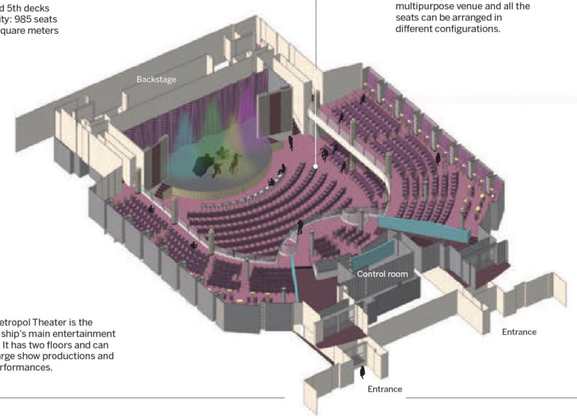
The *Adora Magic City* has a main dining room on two levels, which is open for breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner.



METROPOL THEATER

4th and 5th decks
Capacity: 985 seats
1,674 square meters

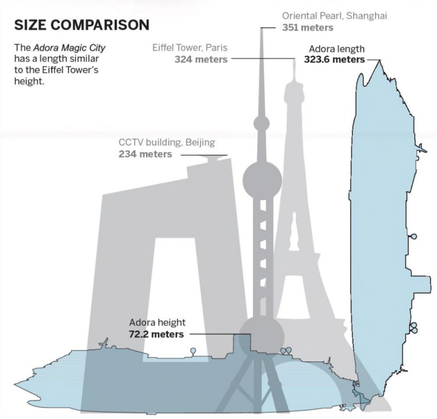
The Metropol Theater is a multipurpose venue and all the seats can be arranged in different configurations.



The Metropol Theater is the cruise ship's main entertainment venue. It has two floors and can host large show productions and live performances.

SIZE COMPARISON

The *Adora Magic City* has a length similar to the Eiffel Tower's height.



Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding, cruisemapper.com / Render images provided by Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding

GRAPHIC BY JORGE CORTES AND TIAN CHI / TEXT BY WANG YING, YU YILEI AND XU XIAOMIN / CHINA DAILY

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From left: Glico has brought a wide range of products to the Chinese market. Ikea demonstrates the FOSSTA collection for the 2024 Chinese New Year at the 2023 China International Import Expo in Shanghai, Kenvue offers a wide range of products to the Chinese market. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shanghai takes initiative to restore consumer confidence

International companies among those impressed by city's credentials and efforts to reinvigorate consumption

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**



A shopping center in the downtown Xintiandi commercial area of Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In early 2023, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce declared 2023 as the Year of Consumption Revitalization and pledged to implement a wide range of measures to strengthen its recovery.

Shanghai, which embarked on a new path toward becoming an international consumption hub in 2021, has been undertaking initiatives throughout 2023 to boost confidence and stimulate consumption, leading to significant signs of recovery.

Since February, Shanghai has been organizing a variety of themed events, including the well-known annual Double Five Shopping Festival and the Shanghai Tourism Festival. In order to continuously engage and excite consumers, the city has been hosting themed activities on a quarterly basis, expos on a monthly basis, and promotional events on a weekly basis.

In addition to organizing activities to boost consumption, Shanghai has been implementing new policies to unlock its full potential. For example, in October, the city introduced 12 measures aimed at fostering innovation in the consumption industry. The measures focused on the creation of innovative products, enhancing promotional efforts, optimizing the business environment, establishing partnerships with various stakeholders and implementing supportive policies to stimulate innovation.

Under these measures, Shanghai plans to nurture benchmark cultural programs and position itself as a premier destination for the release of new products. The city also aims to enhance the influence of domestic fashion brands; develop new travel products for the Huangpu River and Suzhou River; promote the nighttime economy and rural tourism; and introduce new policies to support innovation in consumption.

In November, Shanghai took significant steps to enhance payment options for expatriates as part of its ongoing endeavor to establish itself as an international consumption hub. A key focus was placed on expanding the acceptance of overseas bank cards in crucial consumption scenarios. By Nov 4, more than 36,000 point-of-sale devices had been installed in prominent locations such as shopping centers, tourist destinations, restaurants, hotels, airports and train stations.

According to statistics from the Shanghai government, from January to November, Shanghai's retail sales reached 1.69 trillion yuan ($237.28 billion), a year-on-year increase of 12 percent.

For global consumer businesses, despite challenges and uncertainties, Shanghai remains an ideal business destination that serves as a window for them to look into the Chinese market, capture the latest trends and reach the most fashionable groups of consumers, and contribute to their long-term development in China.

> "This dynamic environment allows brands to receive valuable multidirectional feedback from the diverse consumer base. As a result, brands like ours gain a deeper understanding of the local needs and preferences, enabling us to tailor our offerings to better serve the local market."
>
> **Cindy Ruan,** vice-president of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs of Ikea China

> "Recognizing the city as a vital economic hub and an international metropolis in China, Glico was drawn to Shanghai's remarkable economic vitality, global influence, convenient transportation and diverse market. This wise selection integrates with the unique advantages offered by the Shanghai market, establishing a strong footing for Glico's expansion in the Chinese market."
>
> **Xu Jing,** head of corporate communication department of Shanghai Ezaki Glico Foods

> "Over the past 35 years, Kenvue has experienced remarkable growth alongside Shanghai's thriving economy, owing to the city's progressive opening-up policies and exceptional business environment. These factors have further reinforced our unwavering commitment to sustaining our momentum in Shanghai."
>
> **Alex Yan,** head of Kenvue China End-to-End Supply Chain

Infinite possibilities

This year, Swedish home furnishing giant Ikea celebrates its 25th anniversary in China, a milestone that holds special significance for the company's growth in the country. So far, the company has established a supply chain that covers retail, distribution, production, design, digital development and real estate and invested 43 billion yuan in China.

In August, Ikea launched its localized three-year Growth+ strategy to invest 6.3 billion yuan in three years to add physical stores and improve its logistics, digitalization and sustainability processes in China.

"In 2023, with the pro-consumption policy being rolled out in China, we have perceived the recovering vitality of consumption and the retail market in steady pace. We are optimistic about the continuous growth in the retail and home furnishing industry," said Cindy Ruan, vice-president of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs of Ikea China. "From January till August 2023, a significant return of offline visitors has emerged, with a 30 percent increase compared to the same period last year."

According to the company, Shanghai, the beginning point of Ikea's journey in China, remains a cornerstone for the company, helping its understanding of the evolving Chinese market. As China transitions into a market characterized by high-quality development and distinctive trends of innovation, revolution and upgrading, Shanghai will continue to play a pivotal role for Ikea.

"Shanghai features an inclusive and open consumer market. The diverse groups of consumers in Shanghai are eager to embrace new digital solutions, formats and concepts, thereby fueling the vibrancy of consumption and innovation," said Ruan. "This dynamic environment allows brands to receive valuable multidirectional feedback from the diverse consumer base. As a result, brands like ours gain a deeper understanding of the local needs and preferences, enabling us to tailor our offerings to better serve the local market."

Ikea has been committed to expanding its investment in Shanghai and will continue to do so with the opening of a new standard store in 2024.

"In 1998, Ikea inaugurated its first store in Xuhui district of Shanghai. Since then, we have expanded our presence by establishing various key business units across the value chain, including distribution centers and the Test Lab and Development Centre. Shanghai was also the first market in the world to achieve 100 percent zero-emission customer delivery for Ikea," Ruan said. "Shanghai holds a strategic position as the headquarters of Ikea China, contributing significantly to our business development. As a dynamic city known for setting trends, Shanghai has been a witness to Ikea's exploration, innovation and evolution. It provides a vibrant environment that enables us to incubate new ideas and gain valuable experience for future scaling."

Promising journey

Kenvue, the former Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health company, marked its inception in Shanghai in 1988 and was among the earliest multinational companies to set roots in Shanghai. Over the past 35 years, Kenvue brought its over-the-counter and consumer brands such as Tylenol, Listerine, Johnson's Baby and Band-Aid to consumers in China. It has also established four production sites, one research and development center and 10 distribution centers around China.

"Kenvue China, headquartered in Shanghai, has become one of the most important growth engines for Kenvue globally. The history of Kenvue in Shanghai not only reflects the vibrant prosperity of the economy under the reform and opening-up initiatives but also serves as an exemplary example of how Shanghai attracts foreign investment and promotes the high-quality development of the health industry," said Alex Yan, head of Kenvue China End-to-End Supply Chain.

Kenvue announced in November it is to invest 110 million yuan in China to expand its manufacturing capacity and upgrade production facilities. The investment is to boost Kenvue's local supply chain, which includes three plants in Shanghai.

"Our local manufacturing sites supply to China and other Asia-Pacific markets. This investment will significantly increase the production capacity of our local OTC plant and strive to build a center of excellence for OTC manufacturing in Asia-Pacific. Improving supply chain production capacity is fundamental for Kenvue to deeply embrace the Chinese market and drive the localization process," said Yan.

Yan said Kenvue will also rely on its research and development center in Shanghai to foster local innovation.

"Kenvue China's R&D Center in Shanghai has more than 100 scientists, working on new product development for Chinese and Asia-Pacific markets. Kenvue will continue to introduce global innovations to China and bring Chinese consumers customized health solutions that meet local health needs," Yan said.

Kenvue China, which finalized its separation from Johnson & Johnson in September, will continue to take advantage of Shanghai's premium business environment to support the everyday care of Chinese people.

"Over the past 35 years, Kenvue has experienced remarkable growth alongside Shanghai's thriving economy, owing to the city's progressive opening-up policies and exceptional business environment. These factors have further reinforced our unwavering commitment to sustaining our momentum in Shanghai," said Yan. "Health is a shared vision for all. Under the guidance of Healthy China 2030, Kenvue will continue to embed sustainability and high-quality development into our company strategy and operations, and bring more innovative health products to Chinese consumers in the continually optimized business environment in Shanghai, and further expand our footprint in Shanghai and the broader Chinese market."

Diverse market

Japanese food enterprise Glico entered the Chinese market and set up Shanghai Ezaki Glico Foods in 1995. By the end of 2023, the snack producer had established three factories and 31 offices around China. In 2022, Glico China was certified by the Shanghai government for its regional headquarters there.

According to Xu Jing, head of the corporate communication department of Shanghai Ezaki Glico Foods, Shanghai is attractive to Glico for its diverse characteristics.

"Recognizing the city as a vital economic hub and an international metropolis in China, Glico was drawn to Shanghai's remarkable economic vitality, global influence, convenient transportation and diverse market. This wise selection integrates with the unique advantages offered by the Shanghai market, establishing a strong footing for Glico's expansion in the Chinese market," said Xu. "Meanwhile, the government's preferential policies have fostered an environment that is highly conducive to Glico's continuous growth. At the same time, the exceptional pool of talent in Shanghai acts as a formidable driving force behind the company's innovation."

In 2023, Glico established the objective of becoming a leading food enterprise in China, aligning with its corporate purpose of "Healthier days, Wellbeing for life." To accomplish this, which was raised in 2022 on the occasion of the group's 100th anniversary, the company devised a 10-year development strategy tailored to the Chinese market. With an emphasis on diversification and continuous innovation, Glico aims to cater to the evolving demands of local consumers.

Additionally, the company places importance on sustainable development and assumes environmental responsibility, striving to boost its competitive edge in the global market.

Xu said Glico China will continue to strengthen investment in talent development and R&D in Shanghai. It will partner with more local research institutions to provide more delicious and healthy products that align with the preferences of the Chinese market.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Efforts required to ensure 45th anniversary of Sino-US ties a celebration rather than a wake

As the curtain falls on 2023, the China-United States diplomatic relationship is about to greet its 45th anniversary in the new year. For all the optimism the November meeting of the two countries' leaders inspired, 2024 may still prove tricky for the lately volatile bilateral ties.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry's news briefing on Tuesday was illustrative of the less-than-optimistic atmosphere that has once again descended on China-US relations ahead of the upcoming new year.

The Chinese side has expressed strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition, and made solemn representations with the US side over the latter's National Defense Authorization Act for 2024, said spokeswoman Mao Ning. The act, which US President Joe Biden signed into law on Dec 22 after it passed the review of Congress, interferes with Chinese domestic affairs, clamors for military support for Taiwan, and violates the one-China principle and the three joint communiques between the governments of the two countries, she said. "If the US side clings obstinately to its own course," she warned, "the Chinese side would take decisive, forceful measures to resolutely safeguard its own sovereignty security and development interests".

On the same occasion, the spokeswoman announced sanctions against a US company and two individuals for concocting and spreading "false narratives related to Xinjiang". The subjects of sanctions will be barred from entering China, or working with any Chinese entities, and any assets they have in the country have been frozen. The move, as Mao indicated, was in response to the US sanctioning two Chinese officials earlier this month, and is another step down the Xinjiang tit-for-tat path, highlighting relations continue to be fraught in the run-up to what should be a celebratory anniversary.

When the Chinese leader and his US counterpart met in San Francisco, the general anticipation was that they would manage to stabilize bilateral ties. The progress on fentanyl collaboration and high-level military dialogue was indeed conducive to stopping the worrisome downward spiral in ties. What has happened thereafter, however, shows the mutual distrust, if not outright animosity, between Beijing and Washington runs so deep that it is going to require a major booster to alter the downward trajectory of ties.

For 2024, a diplomatic thaw in its usual sense may be difficult to achieve. So, instead of pursuing the unachievable, Beijing and Washington should concentrate more on the true imperative of the San Francisco vision, demonstrate genuine realism, and work harder to stabilize the wayward relationship.

Like a person in his or her 40s, who in the Confucian ideal should be wise enough about affairs of the world, the soon 45-year-old China-US relationship, too, needs adult wisdom to stop it fraying.

Washington claims about Xinjiang blatant lies

According to the United States' Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, the US State Department has to submit an annual report on the imposition of sanctions.

The four-page report submitted this year repeats the same old lies and unsubstantiated allegations tirelessly spread by Uygur secessionists, extremists and terrorist elements that have been on the US' payroll for years. And the individuals the US government has imposed sanctions on, who range from grassroots police officers to key lawmakers, are exactly those playing important roles in safeguarding Xinjiang's stability, and who are the enemy of the "performers" and "witnesses" living on Washington's funding.

Washington always claims that Beijing is guilty of the genocide of Uygurs in Xinjiang. The facts expose the accusation to be a lie. Over the past six decades, the population of Uygur people in Xinjiang has swelled from about 5 million to nearly 13 million, their average life span has increased from 30 plus years to about 72. The living standards of local residents have improved dramatically over that period, as shown by the per capita disposable income increasing by more than 200 times.

The US also accuses China of trying to eradicate the Uygur culture and that of other minority ethnic groups. But there are more than 24,400 mosques in Xinjiang, more than 10 times the number in the US where the Muslim population is about half of that of Xinjiang. Xinjiang has more than 5,400 intangible cultural heritages of various levels that are strictly protected and passed down to future generations with the funding of governments, the majority of which are related to the Uygur.

The most absurd claim in the report is that China is using its "poverty alleviation" campaign as a disguise to cover up its human rights violations. Yet that is belied by the deaths of more than 1,800 grassroots civil servants, mostly members of the Communist Party of China, who have died in the noble cause over the past few years to lift all the rural population in the country out of abject poverty. Apart from the US and its key allies, almost all countries and world bodies praise China's remarkable poverty alleviation achievements which stand in stark contrast to the meager crumbs of assistance provided to the poverty-stricken population in the US over the years by successive administrations.

The report and related sanctions constitute grave interference in China's internal affairs and violate international law and the basic norms of international relations. It is right that Beijing should take countermeasures in accordance with China's Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law. The State Department report actually does a disservice to the Uygurs in Xinjiang but that should come as no surprise given the recent wars it has waged. The US condoning of what is happening in Gaza shows how much it cares for Muslim people.

Review and Outlook

Offering hope that troubled world can be calmed

The conflicts between Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Hamas have not only brought heavy losses to the belligerent parties and untold sufferings to innocent civilians but also cast a dark shadow on the already anemic post-pandemic economic recovery.

Despite pledging to help "for as long as it takes", the West's support for Ukraine is beginning to show signs of fatigue. Both the US and its European allies are increasingly reluctant to provide more assistance to Kiev as their politicians are facing mounting pressure at home to pay more attention to address domestic woes rather than continuously funneling taxpayers' money into a conflict that increasingly looks like a stalemate. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has just concluded his third begging-for-assistance visit to the United States since the fighting started with empty hands.

The United States is also facing a strong backlash to its uncritical support of Israel's military operation against Hamas. The brutal Israeli military operations have resulted in heavy civilian fatalities and an ever-worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, triggering a tsunami of international condemnation.

In stark contrast to the US-led West's one-sided support of Ukraine and Israel, which has contributed not an iota to ending the two conflicts, let alone a permanent solution to the differences that have triggered the two conflicts, China has maintained a just, impartial stance and is playing a responsible and constructive role in promoting peace efforts.

Earlier this year, Beijing put forward a 12-point proposal to resolve the Ukraine issue through political settlement. It urged efforts to address both the symptoms and root causes of the crisis, and reiterated the necessity to end the conflict through dialogue and negotiation.

For the Gaza conflict, apart from intensified diplomatic mediation within the United Nations framework, China has also put forward a five-point position paper, calling for a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution to the Palestinian issue and stressing immediate implementation of a cease-fire, effective protection of civilians and ensuring humanitarian assistance. Its efforts to promote an end to the hostilities in Europe and the Middle East are a further demonstration that China is a reliable force upholding fairness and justice in the world.

But the international community also needs to reflect on the broader picture and how to prevent differences erupting into conflict. The Global Security Initiative that China has proposed, and the Concept Paper which expounded on it, offer a solid foundation on which the international community can work together to eliminate the root causes of international conflicts, improve global security governance, and encourage joint international efforts to bring more stability and certainty to the volatile global situation.

As the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza show, snuffing out the flames of war, brokering peace and working to prevent conflicts must be at the top of the world's to-do list as we enter the new year.

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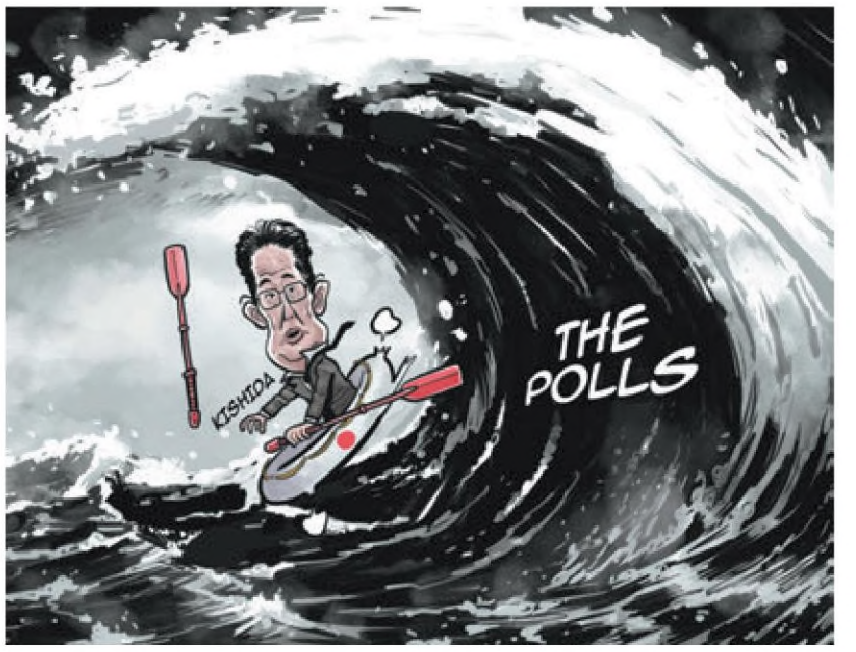
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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Expanding middle-income group part of economic reform, growth

To increase domestic demand by expanding the middle-income group is of critical importance to China's economic development. The huge Chinese market, which is mainly composed of middle-income people, can provide a strong guarantee for sustained growth.

China now has more than 400 million middle-income people, but that is only about 30 percent of its more than 1.4 billion population. Furthermore, the internal structure of the middle-income group is unbalanced, with relatively low-income people accounting for a large proportion and some middle-income people lacking stable employment and facing the possibility of slipping back into low income groups again.

To expand the size of the middle-income group, China must spur people's enthusiasm, initiative and creativity, maintain macroeconomic stability, and achieve higher quality, more efficient, fairer, and more sustainable development.

Without a solid material foundation, employment cannot be guaranteed, income levels cannot be raised and continued expansion of the middle-income group will not be possible.

To expand the size of the middle-income group, the country should comprehensively reform the income distribution system in order to narrow the income gap, and break the barriers of entrenched interests.

It should speed up the improvement of the social security system, and accelerate the equalization of basic public services. It should try to improve the fundamental market economy systems such as the ones on property rights protection, market access, fair competition, and social credit, optimize the business environment and increase people's sense of security about their property.

Expanding the middle-income group will also help release China's reform dividend. With the two promoting each other, a series of strategic goals the country has set itself will be realized.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

Japan's defense spending rings alarms for region

Japan has finalized its defense budget for the fiscal year starting April 2024 at 7.95 trillion yen ($55.76 billion), over 1.13 trillion yen, or 16 percent, more than that in the last fiscal year. The decision was taken on Dec 22. Additionally, the Japanese government has decided to relax weapon export controls by shipping Patriot defense missiles to the United States, marking a significant shift in Japan's defense policy since World War II.

In the budget, Japan has allocated around 2 trillion yen to address its spare parts shortage and increase its conflict readiness; approximately 930 billion yen to build up its ammunition reserves to improve sustained combat capability; about 800 billion yen for the maintenance of its Self-Defense Forces' facilities and the improvement of ammunition depots; around 380 billion yen for the construction of an "Aegis" warship, which is expected to enter service by 2027; and approximately 640 billion yen for jointly developing next-generation fighter jets with the United Kingdom and Italy.

Moreover, Japan aims to increase investment in the development of hypersonic missiles, precision-guided missiles and the acquisition of new naval vessels. Particularly noteworthy is Japan's plan to introduce approximately 30 mobile landing craft and transport helicopters for the rapid deployment of SDF troops and supplies in its southwestern islands. About 400 billion yen is allocated for this purpose. Japan will also establish an SDF maritime transport group by integrating the ground, maritime, and air SDF to facilitate the deployment of forces and supplies to the southwest islands.

Given that Japan has identified China as its "greatest strategic challenge ever", the significant defense spending in its southwest islands is clearly aimed at China. One should read this in light of the US having just passed a military budget worth $886 billion for the coming fiscal year, with China presented as cause for concern. The way it is sprinting toward 430 trillion yen in defense expenditure in the next five years, Japan must worry about the risks it may pose to its debt burden in the future.

— BEIJING NEWS

What They Say

Manila should stop saying one thing, doing another

In an interview with Japanese media last week, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr pointed out that despite the United States' assistance, the maritime dispute with China is "purely a Filipino concern" and Manila considers it "a Philippine problem and we intend to solve that problem ourselves".

But even though he said, "We cannot stop trying and we cannot stop doing everything that we can to promote peace", the Philippine president claimed that Manila is ready to move forward with oil exploration projects in some disputed waters in the South China Sea, which is nothing but an open provocation to China and other claimant parties in the region.

Last week, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo had what Manila called a "frank and candid" exchange on the two countries' maritime dispute. In the dialogue, Wang reiterated China's consistent stance on the issue and urged Manila to resolve it through negotiation with Beijing.

Manalo, on his part, expressed the hope that the differences between the two countries can be managed in a way acceptable to both sides, so as to cool down tensions and prevent conflict. The Philippines, he said, is willing to strengthen dialogue with China in good faith, make good use of the bilateral communication mechanism on maritime issues, and jointly seek a solution to their differences.

But although the two sides agreed to actively create favorable conditions for a meeting of the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea as soon as possible, no concrete progress has been made in that regard.

Wang has made it crystal clear that the root cause of the current difficulties confronting bilateral ties lies in Manila's change of policy and position, its refusal to honor the commitments it has made to Beijing and its repeated provocations that undermine China's legitimate and lawful rights and interests.

Marcos' interview shows Manila is intent on saying one thing and doing another by taking full advantage of the support offered by the US and Japan.

Beijing's commitment to properly manage the maritime dispute through dialogue and consultation has not changed; its willingness to work with the Philippines to implement the previously reached understandings has not changed; and its resolve to safeguard China's sovereignty and legitimate rights and interests has not changed.

Manila should avoid being used as a proxy by the US and its allies in the region and prudently handle the maritime dispute with China.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Liu Xinghua

Protect polar regions to prevent climate crisis

Countries around the world need to address the environmental and climate problems caused by rapid industrialization, excessive exploitation of natural resources and increased consumption over the past 200 years by, for instance, establishing mechanisms to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. This is necessary to protect the polar regions, which influence global climate through a number of processes.

The Earth's snow and ice covers are melting at more than twice the average rate because of global warming. As spring snow and summer sea ice cover decrease due to increasing human activity, more heat is absorbed at the surface, and there is growing evidence that ongoing changes in the Arctic, primarily sea ice loss, can potentially influence mid-latitude weather. As temperatures increase in the Arctic, permafrost soils in northern regions store less carbon, and the release of carbon dioxide and methane from the land into the atmosphere will further contribute to global warming.

By the way, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) have hit at an all-time high with 54 billion tons of CO_2 being emitted every year. Global warming is significantly changing the polar ecosystem, because polar animals, plants and microorganisms are more sensitive to temperature rise, and the polar ecosystem is much more fragile than other ecosystems.

Hence, any damage to the polar ecosystem can affect the living conditions of humans. And if the destructive phenomenon continues, the deterioration of the polar ecosystem and climate change will form a vicious circle.

Since reducing GHG emissions is key to protecting the polar environment and addressing climate change, it is essential to establish, as early as possible, a uniform mechanism for fixing responsibilities, accounting, pricing and monitoring GHG emissions in order to ensure the world achieves the goals of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on schedule.

The debate on the definition and accounting of GHG emissions is focused on four areas: the polluter-pays principle, the user-pays principle, the beneficiary-pays principle, and the sharing responsibility principle. The existing carbon accounting system follows the polluter-pays principle, which has some inherent disadvantages.

The existing global value chain, international division of labor, and complex industry and supply chains were formed on the basis of economic globalization that began in the 1970s, closely linking the production, circulation and consumption across the world. Global trade has unwittingly caused the export and import of huge amounts of carbon emissions, whose relations with the goals and responsibility of carbon neutrality should be made clear.

As such, consensuses should be reached on five issues by all countries. First, all the countries should reach a consensus on working together to address climate change.

Second, there should be an agreement on the fact that all countries' right to carbon emissions is equal and users should bear the cost of carbon emissions from the products they use.

Third, there should a global agreement saying consumers have the right to know and choose, and digital technologies should be used to measure the carbon footprint of users, and ensure real-time market information and prices are timely disseminated.

Fourth, a global agreement is required to make sure developed and developing countries all shoulder their due responsibilities for emitting carbon, with high carbon emitters bearing a much higher cost.

And fifth, a consensus is needed to make sure carbon emissions accounting is standardized to promote global free trade.

Besides, stricter measures should be taken to better protect the fragile polar environment. Since human activities are more frequent in the Arctic than the Antarctic, it is necessary to attach more importance to the former's environment and treat the Arctic as very important part of the global ecosystem that should be well protected.

The impact of human activity on the Arctic's ecological environment should be minimized, by cautiously using local energy and resources, and reducing mining, fishing and tourism as much as possible, limiting pollutant emissions and better protecting natural habitats, and facilitating the increase of wild animals. In particular, indiscriminate hunting and fishing should be banned.

The marine environment is a significant part of the polar environment, so countries around the Arctic Ocean must reduce land-based pollutants in accordance with international norms, and check the sources of marine environmental pollution, such as shipping emissions, ocean dumping and air pollution.

The international community needs to cooperate more closely and deeply to protect the polar environment and ecology, and international organizations should provide financial and technological support to countries in the polar region to conduct research and establish an inclusive monitoring network.

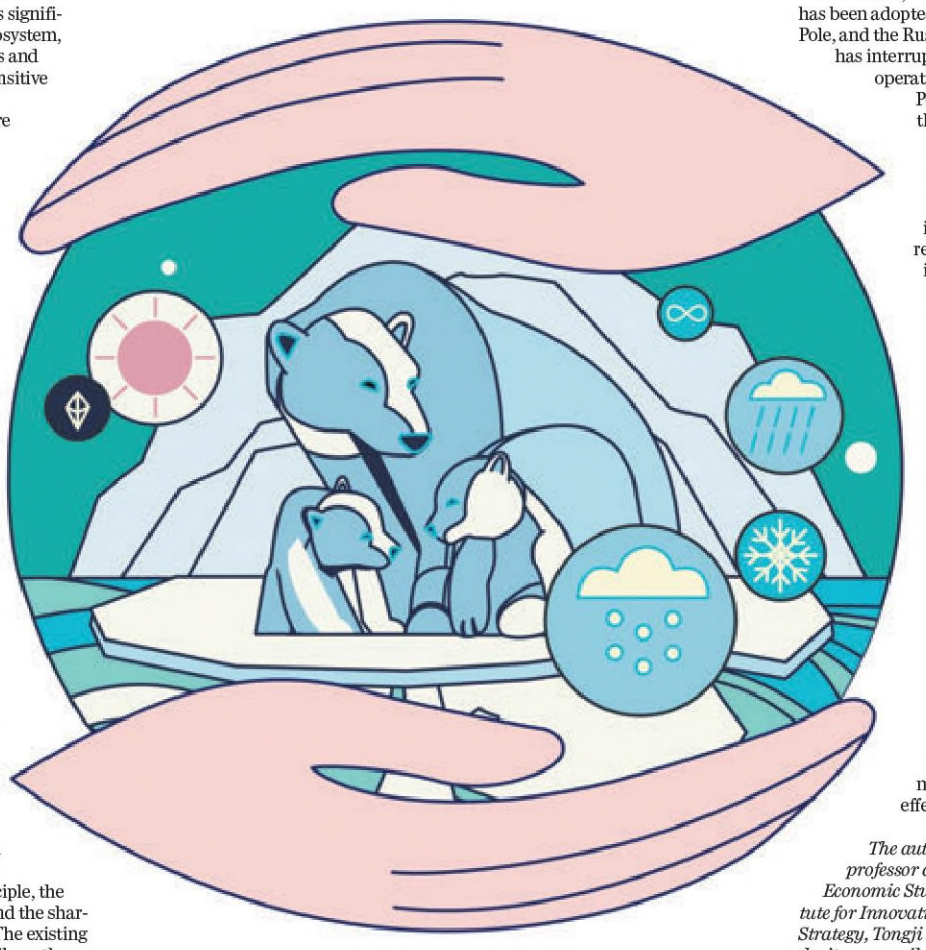
The North and South Poles have great research value, with the former playing an important role in many fields including strategy, trade, sea channels and natural resources against the backdrop of climate change. The Antarctic enjoys peace and stability thanks to the Antarctic Treaty, which prohibits countries from laying any claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica.

In contrast, no uniform global treaty has been adopted to protect the North Pole, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict has interrupted the Arctic Council's operations.

Polar regions, especially the Arctic, offer new development opportunities as well as risks. The Arctic belongs to the world and it is the international society's responsibility to ensure it continues to enjoy peace and development.

The international community needs to establish a mechanism to encourage countries, organizations and NGOs to cooperate in fields such as climate change, scientific research, environmental protection, sea channels, resources and talent, with the United Nations playing a bigger role in the mechanism.

In other words, all countries should join hands to protect the polar region's environment to mitigate the effects of climate change.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

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Wang Lei

Peace in Middle East still nowhere in sight

The Israel-Palestine conflict, which broke out more than two months ago, has already claimed over 20,000 lives, mostly of children and women.

There is no immediate end in sight to the conflict. But despite pounding Gaza for more than two and a half months, Israel is far from achieving its military goals. Nor have its attacks forced Palestinians in Gaza to distance themselves from Hamas. Instead, the attacks have exacerbated Palestinian resentment against Israel.

So what happens next? Judging from the current situation, the short-term cease-fire doesn't seem to be working.

For Israel, the priority is to take advantage of the US' favoritism to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas's remaining strongholds in Gaza. And for Hamas, the priority is to hang on until Israel, failing to achieve its biggest military goal, is forced into political negotiations.

Indeed, some factors are restricting the escalation, if not continuation, of the conflict. The longer the war drags on, the higher the economic cost Israel has to pay. Israel's tourism, services and construction sectors have been hit hard since Oct 7, with Israel suffering direct economic losses of more than $8 billion in the first month of the conflict, and witnessing a seven-fold increase in the national budget deficit, currency depreciation, and an increasing risk of investment outflows.

Also, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has evoked international calls for a truce, and domestic opposition to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing government is intensifying.

As for Hamas, a prolonged conflict with Israel would mean losing influence in Gaza. So far, though, Hamas has survived Israel's intense military campaign.

Moreover, there are signs that the US and other countries are trying to promote other political forces to replace Hamas and orchestrate a default takeover of Gaza after the war. As such, Hamas is also facing pressure to change its struggle strategy, flexibly respond to changes, and return to political negotiations.

The US and other Western countries, on the other hand, have no reason to support Israel given the bloody civilian casualties in Gaza, and are bound to damage their international image if they continue to back Israel. In fact, the Western camp is divided on the Palestine-Israel issue, with the Western countries under pressure to change their policies and restrain Israel's reckless behavior.

The Joe Biden administration seems intent on completing its strategic withdrawal from the Middle East and using its resources to take advantage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. If the Palestine-Israel conflict drags on or escalates, it will affect the US' strategic deployment of resources, and impact its relations with Arab countries and its interests in the Middle East.

Despite the insistence of Israel to continue pounding Gaza, the international community should still try to de-escalate the situation by opening a political dialogue and finally reaching a cease-fire agreement.

The temporary humanitarian cease-fire agreed between Israel and Palestine on Nov 22 was a welcome development, as it led to a significant exchange of detainees, a multi-day cease-fire in Gaza, and safe access for humanitarian aid. As long as the international community works together to help end the conflict by promoting peace talks, tensions between Palestine and Israel can be eased. To restore lasting peace, however, more direct channels of communication have to be established.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, China has maintained close communication and strengthened cooperation with Arab countries and the Islamic world, providing humanitarian assistance and making arduous efforts to end the fighting.

In contrast, the US and other Western countries have not yet shouldered their due responsibility of brokering a settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In fact, the conflict has dragged on for more than two and a half months because of the misplaced policy of Western countries, led by the US, to blindly favor Israel and ignore Palestinian interests. This has to change.

The pressing task now is to broker a cease-fire and help arrange for an exchange of detained civilians so as to prevent the loss of more lives, and the international community needs to fully implement the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 2712, clearing the way for adequate humanitarian supplies to enter Gaza and humanitarian agencies to carry out their work safely.

Since the Rafah port alone cannot handle the needed volume of humanitarian supplies, more relief channels to Gaza should be opened. For a long-term resolution to the Israel-Palestine issue, however, the international community has to return to the "two-state solution", because the root cause of the conflict is denial of the rights to statehood, existence and return to the Palestinian state by Israel and its Western backers.

The international community should use this crisis to further build consensus for peace, rebuild credible multilateral processes, restart direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel, and work for the permanent settlement of the Palestinian issue.

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Wang Yan

Education key to realize shared Sino-African goals

Africa is a land of immense beauty and promise, and China is a rising nation with huge potential in different fields. But despite being different in many ways, culturally, politically and socially, the two sides share the same aspirations for development and the well-being and prosperity of their people.

Education, the linchpin of sustainable development, plays a key role in Sino-African cooperation. Education facilitates exchanges of ideas, spreads knowledge and fosters skills. It serves as a driver for equitable, quality and inclusive education, and a catalyst for achieving sustainable development goals. And deeper cooperation between Africa and China in education will help advance economic growth, enhance social cohesion and strengthen nation-building.

There have been a variety of education exchanges and cooperation activities between Africa and China since the 1950s. Many students from Africa have come to China for higher studies thanks to the scholarships offered by the Chinese government and higher education institutions, and more have learned (and are learning) the Chinese language and history at Confucius Institutes, in order to brighten their career prospects in China.

On the other hand, the Luban Workshop, since its establishment as the first of its kind platform in Djibouti in 2019, has been offering a range of skill development programs, combining academic education and vocational training, to promote youth employment and improve the quality of life of the African people.

While it is more about quality education in China, it is about universalizing education at the primary and secondary level in Africa, partly due to a shortage of teachers.

Recent years have seen increasing Sino-African institutionalized cooperation arrangements, including inter-university networks. For instance, the China-Africa Universities 20+20 Cooperation Plan in 2010, which links 20 African universities with 20 Chinese universities, has been scaled up to "China-Africa 100 Universities Cooperation Program".

Moreover, ways to deepen Africa-China education cooperation is being discussed even at high-level meetings such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation's ministerial conference and multilateral platforms such as BRICS and the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

In August 2023, the Plan for China-Africa Cooperation on Talent Development was launched at the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa. Asserting that talent is the primary resource underpinning economic and social development, the plan aims to train 500 principals and high-caliber teachers of vocational colleges every year, and 10,000 technical personnel with both Chinese language and vocational skills for Africa, as well as invite 20,000 government officials and technicians from African countries to participate in workshops and seminars.

As a result, a Sino-African education cooperation architecture has taken shape. Yet it will take time to have an impact on people in such a large and diverse continent as Africa and country as China. To be sure, the challenges Africa and China face in developing education are different. While it is more about quality education in China, it is about universalizing education at the primary and secondary level in Africa, partly due to a shortage of teachers.

Nonetheless, there is more common ground between the two sides: both aim to provide inclusive, equitable and quality education, and shift from the examination-oriented education to competency-based education. And both recognize technology as a catalyst for educational development for digital empowerment.

What binds Africa and China together are developmental needs and their shared future. China's education policy and approach to education development over the past decades could inspire African countries to reform their policies, and synergize their measures with China and other relevant stakeholders to produce better and more deliverables.

The potential for boosting Sino-African cooperation is huge. But for that, it is necessary to scale up exchanges of students and academicians through not only government scholarships but also other types of scholarships including those offered by local administrations, higher education institutions, and industries and businesses.

There is also a need for the two sides to use digital technologies to expand virtual mobility as well as exchange and cooperation in science and technology in universities and beyond, scale up exchanges and deepen cooperation in skill development, particularly through government-industry-academia cooperation to boost the employability of youths and fuel economic development.

This will not only enhance South-South learning and capacity building, but also bring about positive changes by creating more and better education and employment opportunities for youths in both China and Africa.

The author is an associate research fellow at the Academy of Regional and Global Governance, Beijing Foreign Studies University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

ENRIQUE DUSSEL PETERS

Dynamic inputs and outputs

LAC investment in China of growing significance

China's incoming foreign direct investments have been an important source of modernization for China in past decades. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Chinese mainland has become the second-largest recipient of FDI, only after the United States, and accounting for 14.61 percent of global FDI in 2022 (and 23.7 percent with the addition of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region). By region, China's FDI from Latin America and the Caribbean, with a share of 10.27 percent of China's total FDI during 2003-21 (or above $11 billion annually on average), has become increasingly important. From this perspective, China's FDI is still macroeconomically important and relevant in specific global value chains (GVC), but it has significantly shifted. In light of 2023 being the 45th anniversary of the launch of China's reform and opening-up policy, FDI is increasingly related to its high-tech requirements and depending on the specific modernization demands of its GVC.

In spite of these important macroeconomic dynamics, China's FDI from LAC has received surprisingly little attention in recent years; while the LAC region is mainly an FDI receiver, around 20 percent of LAC countries' FDI was exported as outward FDI in 2022 according to UNCTAD. Overall globalization and LAC's reorienting to the East, specifically China, have become increasingly significant.

The Academic Network of Latin America and the Caribbean on China (Red ALC-China) recently published a detailed analysis on LAC's overseas foreign direct investment to China in eight chapters, including a regional perspective, as well as historical and detailed country-analysis for Argentina, Brazil, the Caribbean, Central America, Chile, Mexico and Peru. In addition, the document examines the experiences of 15 multinational companies from LAC developing their businesses in China (including Accenture, Bimbo, Camposol, Coledo, Elecmetal, Ebraer, Herbalife, Interceramic, Suzano, and Tenaris). The analysis is very rich from several perspectives.

First, the experience of LAC's companies in China is not only macroeconomically relevant for LAC and China, but they also substantially enrich the LAC-China socioeconomic relationship. The LAC-China socioeconomic relationship accounts for not only China's increasing presence in LAC, but also for the very dynamic LAC presence in China, in this case specifically regarding LAC investments. Bilateral institutions should improve their knowledge and mechanisms to enhance the bilateral investment flows.

Specific cooperation — bilaterally and in the CELAC-China Forum — could not only address the overall challenges facing LAC companies in China, but could also improve the establishment of their relations with local and provincial institutions in China, provide them with a clear understanding of national and local incentives, and offer support to enhance supplier-systems and specialized companies in their respective GVC.

Second, LAC companies in China present an astonishingly important group of experiences and characteristics. Most of LAC companies in China initiated their experiences as trade representatives in China to deepen their manufacturing and service activities. These processes took over a decade in several cases because of difficulties of comprehending details of China's respective markets. Companies such as Bimbo supply complex products and services that the company does not offer in any other country. Bimbo's learning process — and that of several other LAC companies required a long and expensive process to achieve the current results in China. At least as important is to understand that LAC companies, with exceptions — Brazil's Embraer canceled its FDI in China in 2016 — attempted to reap the benefits of low cost in China in the early 21st century in terms of labor power and a large consumption market. China today, however, has become an extremely sophisticated market and LAC companies have allowed their headquarters to learn globally.

Third, the analysis is particularly fruitful in terms of recent development. Considering their learning process and the profound socioeconomic transition of China since its reform and opening-up, LAC companies investing in China since the early 21st century have been able to not only integrate into the most dynamic domestic market, but also to learn from China with direct implications for their headquarters and global representation. This has been the case in terms of innovations, design, change in consumption, suppliers, new sales and payment formats in which China has become a global trendsetter.

LAC companies in China have made important efforts not only in raw materials, but also in adding value to raw materials, food, beverages, electronics, vaccines and overall consumption goods in China. Their experiences in over two decades — not only in terms of acquiring Chinese companies, but also in new (greenfield) investments — are also significant for other foreign companies in China.

Specific cooperation — bilaterally and in the CELAC-China Forum — could not only address the overall challenges facing LAC companies in China, but could also improve the establishment of their relations with local and provincial institutions in China, provide them with a clear understanding of national and local incentives, and offer support to enhance supplier-systems and specialized companies in their respective GVC.

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ZHAO JIANWEI

Counter measure

China needs to boost its innovation capabilities as the US is intensifying its weaponizing of science and technology

In the context of the intensified US-China competition, the Joe Biden administration, reevaluating the limitations of market-driven methods, is developing a comprehensive science, technology and innovation strategy. This strategic initiative is designed to recalibrate the balance between private sector strategies and state involvement, reshaping the innovation ecosystem within the nation and redefining the contours of the US' technological rivalry globally. Its overarching aim is to fortify and sustain the country's preeminence in the realms of science and technology.

A central element of Biden's strategy involves striking a balance between economic interests and national security concerns. However, the security aspects seem to be advancing more rapidly than the economic gains. To date, this strategy has led to certain outcomes. These include progress in reshoring initiatives, attracting leading chip manufacturers to the US, and preventing Chinese acquisition of advanced chip and semiconductor technologies. But despite these developments, this approach still faces considerable challenges.

Policies driven by political and security objectives are disrupting the international division of labor, which was established through free-market competition in the era of rapid globalization. From the end of the Cold War to the 2008 financial crisis, the global investment and procurement strategies of most US companies were primarily driven by economic logic, focusing on cost efficiency and leading to cheaper, more efficient offshore production. However, under the intensifying geopolitical competition and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, considerations of security have become increasingly prominent in US strategy. In an effort to correct market-driven logic with state-driven approaches, the Biden administration has continued the approach of the former Donald Trump administration by proposing transitioning from efficient to more "resilient" supply chains, prioritizing national security over market efficiency. Consequently, this strategic shift has substantially escalated economic costs for US companies. It remains uncertain whether the US can strike a realistic balance between security and efficiency through "painful" adjustments and successfully establish resilient supply chain networks in the future. Various factors may jeopardize the intended outcome.

Export controls and investment restrictions, grounded in security considerations, may provide some reassurance to policymakers in Washington. These measures will help to stem the flow of critical and emerging technologies to China to some extent, thereby slowing down China's technological progress. However, the heightened focus on security within technological development has also inadvertently stifled certain aspects of the US innovation system. In the short term, some mature high-tech companies will inevitably suffer direct economic losses. In the long run, they may even permanently lose the Chinese market for high-tech products, resulting in incalculable losses, thus reducing their R&D investment and other expenses in US domestic factories. If misused, export controls and investment restrictions, intended as tools of technological and economic statecraft, might severely harm the US innovation system. Many institutions and individuals, represented by the Semiconductor Industry Association and Colette Kress, executive vice-president and chief financial officer of Nvidia, have expressed these concerns explicitly.

Additionally, inherent contradictions exist within the so-called democratic tech alliance, both among governments of different countries and between governments and enterprises. The Biden administration's policies, such as "Buy American" and subsidizing US companies, have significantly increased the disputes between the US and its allies. Its export controls and investment restrictions on China have also sparked dissatisfaction and protests from enterprises and associations in allied countries. The de-risking dilemma lies in the fact that Western companies are not listening to politicians' rhetoric; instead, they are taking costly steps to restructure their relationship with China. It remains to be seen how much the allies are willing to bear the cost and adhere to the US government's lead. As long as the US government persists with this approach, challenges are likely to endure and even intensify over the long term. These challenges encompass questions from domestic political and commercial groups in the US, as well as enterprises and interest groups in allied countries, about the effectiveness of tech sanctions and controls, coupled with increasing demands for expanding technological trade with China.

Furthermore, the perceived "double standard" of advocating healthy competition domestically while promoting unhealthy competition internationally has cast doubts on Biden's narrative of science, technology and innovation. Lael Brainard, the director of the White House National Economic Council, has highlighted the significance of healthy competition as a foundational principle of economic theory and a vital US value, central to the essence of capitalism. Nonetheless, the administration's approach to fostering open and fair competition appears to be predominantly focused on the domestic market. From the perspective of the global innovation ecosystem, the intention to "slow down competitors" through abusing weaponized interdependence and other tools is tarnishing the US' standing in the global science and technology arena.

Despite facing challenges, the US government is likely to continue incorporating security policies into its science, technology and innovation strategy for the foreseeable future, regardless of any change of administration. This shift in the US strategy for science, technology and innovation presents complex and severe challenges to China's development of cutting-edge technologies and the protection of its technology security. As China moves up the global value chain, the US is expected to persist in utilizing the asymmetric network structures to weaponize its technological strengths in the prolonged competition with China. This competition is deeply rooted in the structural dynamics of both economies.

In response, China should concentrate on fostering its own innovation capabilities while synergizing the efforts of the government, private sector and global partnerships. This strategy involves developing an effective and open national innovation system, to boost the overall efficiency of its innovation processes.

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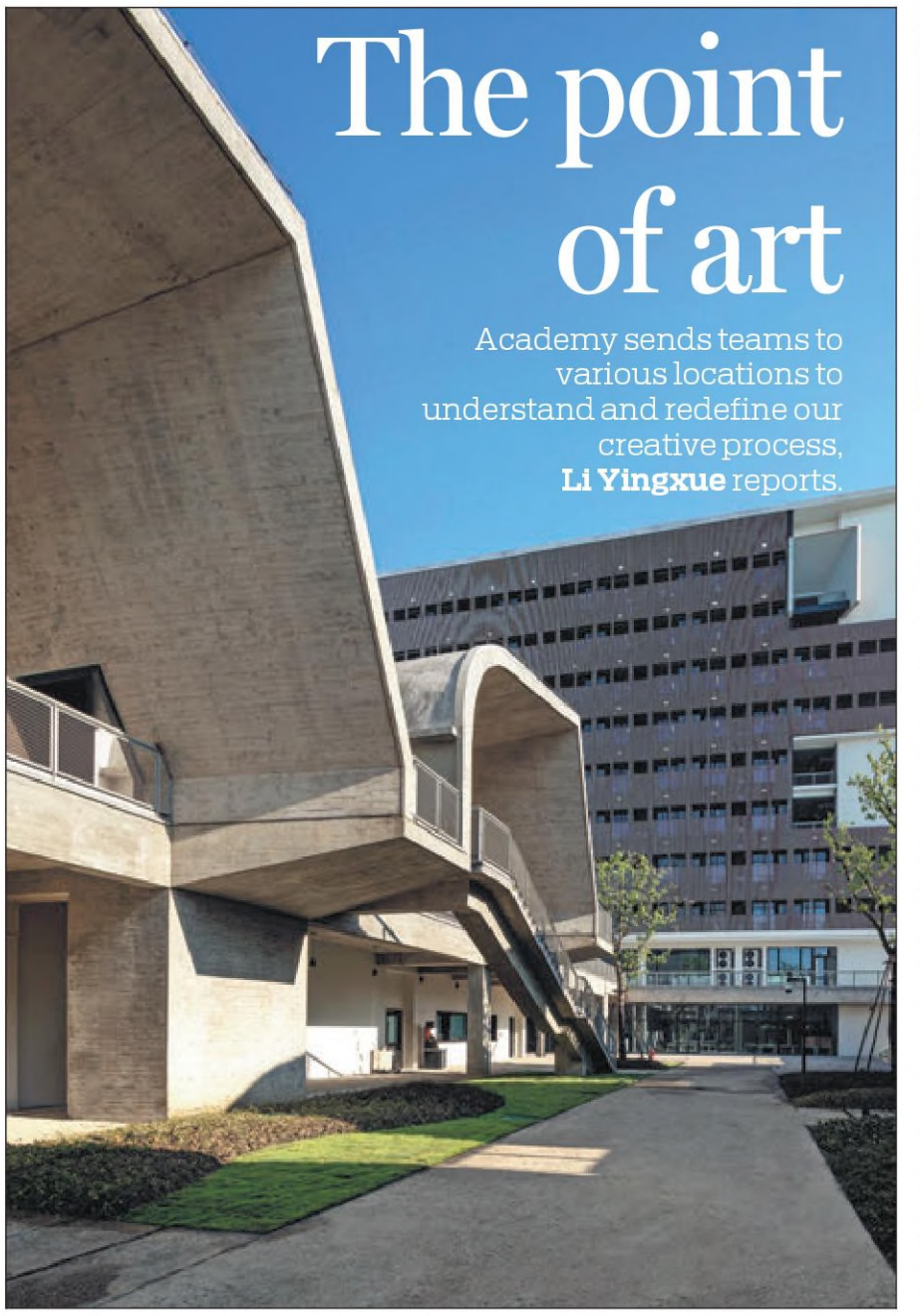
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LIFE



The point of art

Academy sends teams to various locations to understand and redefine our creative process, **Li Yingxue** reports.







Art reflects the time it was created and also the locality. The China Academy of Art, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, decided to delve into the historical and anthropological significance underlying the realm of art, extracting profound insights from each unique locale.

The locations 12 selected teams from the academy went to throughout the summer were inspirational. These places included Lufeng Dinosaur Valley in China's Yunnan province, the Amazon Basin in South America, Icelandic volcanoes, and the Rusakov Workers' Club in Russia, among other pivotal sites.

Last month, the teams from the academy convened at the recently inaugurated Liangzhu campus, in Hangzhou, to host the *Reports From the World* event and the *Starplex* exhibition. During this gathering, they collectively shared thoughts, posed intriguing questions, and presented key findings arising from their diverse global expeditions.

The whole project, themed on "mutual learning of civilizations", is the centerpiece of a series of events celebrating the 95th anniversary of the academy, which aims to view human civilization as a whole, transcending temporal and spatial boundaries.

This series of events turned the Liangzhu campus into a vibrant hub of artistic reaction, facilitating an enriching exchange of ideas and fostering a spirit of mutual learning among civilizations.

Gao Shiming, president of the academy, says that it is a long-term project that aims to reconsider the fundamental issues of art education from the perspective of world civilization history. The project is designed to interweave diverse disciplines internally, broaden both the conceptual and practical realms of art, while forging novel connections externally and constructing a network of international academic partnerships.

"This is a post-pandemic era 'Academic Initiative' and also a part of our academy's journey toward the centennial of our founding," he says, adding that the goal is to transcend existing concepts of art history and professional views, to reopen the vistas of art and the concerns of the academy, interpreting the history of civilization through art and understanding art from the height of civilization history.

According to Jiang Jun, general planner of the series of events, the exhibition has been held across the entirety of the Liangzhu campus, transforming it into a comprehensive theater with cultural exchange as its central theme.

"We want students to actively engage with various scenes," Jiang says.

In the exhibition, a focal point was the central area featuring six prominent platforms, aptly named "desks", which served as a collective showcase of the desk work undertaken by the teams. Additionally, 12 documentary films were placed and broadcast throughout the exhibition hall, offering a visual presentation of the tangible outcomes resulting from the team efforts.

"The display adopted a montage-style approach, skillfully organizing a multitude of seemingly unrelated cases through speculative and dialectical methods. It not only created a cohesive presentation but also provided a relevant context for the narrative of the films," Jiang says.



Top left: A project, themed on "mutual learning of civilizations", is the centerpiece of a series of events celebrating the 95th anniversary of the China Academy of Art. **Top center:** Many events are held at its Liangzhu campus. **Above:** A roundtable discussion featuring 12 teams of people who tried to explore the concept of "mutual learning of civilizations". **Far top right:** Tan Bin, a member of one of the 12 teams. **Top right:** Published works on such topics as education, fashion and film. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The team that researched landscapes and basins created a film, *The Nonindifferent Nature — Seeking Macondo*, recording its trip to the Amazon rainforest in South America.

According to Tan Bin, one of the team members and creators of the film, it's a trip about an imaginary world. "Macondo serves as a fictitious town in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a novel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, often symbolizing Colombia. The exploration of Colombia is inherently complex, which encapsulates most of the elements associated with our imagination of South America," he says.

"Our journey led us from the southernmost point to the northernmost point, traversing from the Amazon River to the Caribbean Sea. This expedition encompassed both spatial and historical dimensions of geography," Tan recalls.

Tan says that the three-part film, which unfolds a myriad of natural scenes, portrays three layers of Macondo. The first part unveils the mystique and enchantment of the rainforest, and the second delves into the early 20th-century life along the Caribbean coast. In the third part, the narrative circles back to colonial history, intertwining local knowledge with scientific understanding.

"Our intention is for nature, or more precisely, 'nature that is far from indifferent', to emerge as the central narrative element," he says. "Simultaneously, it stands as the authentic witness to the extensive passage of time, akin to the towering tree featured at the movie's outset — a living testament with a history spanning over 500 years, coinciding with the arrival of the Spanish in the New World," Tan says.

The other films cover various themes, such as personal computers, social proposals and cosmic mapping, earthly writing and the containment of time and so on.

Throughout the exhibition, a variety of activities were organized to facilitate the exchange of perspectives among all 12 teams. One of the activities was themed on "total catalog", which involved a comprehensive sharing of insights, and a roundtable discussion featuring 12 groups of people who tried to explore the concept of "mutual learning of civilizations".

Additionally, there was a forum for practitioners, called Roadside Picnic, where representatives of the 12 films engaged with teachers and students. It was an interactive session of Q&A and dialogues, conducted through open-air classes in 12 camping tents on the Liangzhu campus.

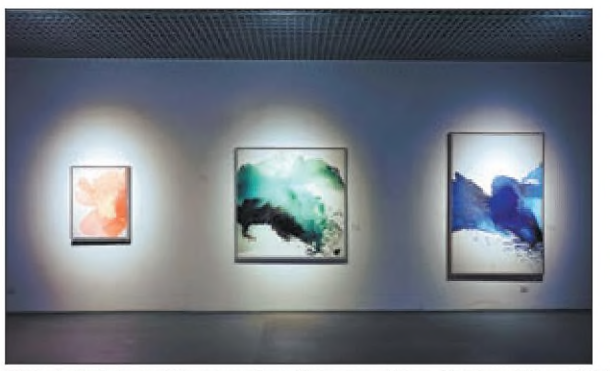
The concluding event of the project was the *Inside-Out* dialogue. This session highlighted Yung Ho Chang, architect of the Liangzhu Campus, with four crossover experts engaging in discussions on such topics as education, fashion, and film.

"We aim to be both grounded and visionary — neither solely focused on the path ahead without observing the sky, nor fixated solely on the sky without advancing. Through our actions, we consistently challenge our boundaries and probe into universal issues," Jiang says.

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Moving forward-themed exhibition kicks off in Beijing

By **YANG FEIYUE**
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From left: Some of the more than 100 artworks on display at the exhibition on the theme of "moving forward with a clear mind" at the Songzhuang Contemporary Art Archive in Beijing. Visitors appreciate artworks at the exhibition that will run until Feb 19 (not open during Spring Festival). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Two paintings with a dark empty background have caught the attention of visitors to the Songzhuang Contemporary Art Archive in Beijing since this month. They are works by Chinese artist Hang Chunhui, who says he wants to redefine relations between certainties and uncertainties.

"In fact, the frame is a painting, while the central part, which is supposed to be the (content of) painting, is not," Hang explains. "Yet, the central part can present the content that will be caught and reflected by the glass surface, which somehow reverses relations in the work."

Hang's works are among more than 100 artworks on display at an exhibition on the theme of "moving forward with a clear mind" that opened to the public at the Songzhuang Contemporary Art Archive in Beijing.

"Moving forward is happening in the art circle of today," Hang says.

He believes his work offers a new perspective toward traditional painting, which can be counted as a way of moving forward.

The Beijing exhibition aims to showcase the unique connotations and zeitgeist of contemporary art, as well as reflections on the changes of the times.

It will run until Feb 19 (not open during Spring Festival).

"We hope to convey the artistic spirit of 'moving forward', 'paying homage' and 'never giving up' through different presentation methods of contemporary art exhibitions," says Bai Yao, who initiated the exhibition that showcases contemporary artworks by more than 40 artists in China.

They are put into three categories: figurative and expressive, abstract and material-based, and cartoon and trendy.

"Many contemporary artists are forging ahead, and things have not been quite optimistic for many art markets," Bai says.

"We are targeting the current state of this era, and the artists we invited for this exhibition have presented their works in the era after the pandemic," Bai adds.

Many of those works were a result of the artists' contemplation after being exposed to the impact of metaverse and new media, he observes.

Yang Cheng, another Chinese artist, mixed real-life with surreal elements in his acrylic paintings on canvas at the exhibition. Yang says: "They were recent experimental creation based on my reflections of life in contemporary language."

An important theme of his works is how an artist can maintain composure in a time full of rapid changes, and concentrate on exploring the language of art, while actively responding to the world.

Yang points out that arrangement of the multiple elements in his works represents his way of dealing with the complexity of the world.

"I want my work to show that everyone is a processor of the mega fragmented information today, and it includes diverse values, narratives and understandings, all being equal," he says.

Hu Bingquan, curator of the exhibition, says most of the works have conveyed a sense of intrepidity and readiness to face challenges.

"In fact, these two years have not been easy, but there are still many artists around us who are actually very persistent and still creating," Hu says. "Many of them are actually innovating and breaking through, and their works, in my opinion, have improved, compared to their creations two years ago."

The exhibition will continue to focus on the current domestic and international contemporary art environment, as well as the future development trends of the global art market, Bai says.

"We will consistently pay attention to outstanding contemporary artists in China and provide them with more diverse development opportunities."

Considering himself an artist whose technique evolves from traditions, Hang says people should all take a moving-forward attitude.

"Only by moving forward can you jump out of the comfort zone and create works out of the uncertain and unknown, rather than staying put," Hang says.

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LIFE

Meeting plans route to boost tourism

Various incentives under discussion and importance of high quality stressed for sector, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Government officials, experts and key participants in tourism met to discuss ways of stimulating domestic consumption in the sector in Ganzhou, Southeast China's Jiangxi province in early December.

Since the beginning of this year, the tourism industry has rapidly rebounded and shown robust recovery, said Du Jiang, vice-minister of culture and tourism, at the China Tourism Industry Development Annual Conference on Dec 8.

A recent report by the China Tourism Academy forecasts that domestic tourism visits will reach more than 5.4 billion, with the number roughly hitting 90 percent of that in 2019, before COVID-19 hit.

Tourism-related revenue this year is expected to reach 5.2 trillion yuan ($728 billion), about 91 percent of that of 2019, the report says.

"High-level recovery and high-quality development have become the most prominent labels of the tourism industry this year," Du says, adding that they stem from the resilience, potential and vitality of the economy, the continuous reform and innovation in the industry, and deep integration of culture and tourism.

Du urges related parties to further enrich the supply of high-quality tourism products, unlock the potential of tourism consumption, and fuel the vitality of the tourism market.

The goal is to better leverage the strong momentum of the tourism industry in stimulating consumption, supporting wider cultural understanding and contributing to the high-quality development of the economy.

Zhang Conglong, a senior expert from the cultural and communication industry research institute with China Telecom, says that efforts have been made to deliver new cultural tourism experiences.

For instance, the institute has built a dedicated 5G network in the Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve of Sichuan province and realized the transmission of real-time video feeds.

"Using drones, we fly 12 kilometers into the scenic area, providing a live broadcast and adding a 30-minute night tour," Zhang says.

"Through this approach, we create an immersive experience for visitors."

At the same time, the institute has carried out several experiences integrating 5G with the metaverse that have received positive response from the market.

They range from a metaverse fireworks display during the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, and a re-creation of historical buildings in the ancient streets of Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

"We hope that the culture of Jiangnan (the southern region along the lower reaches of the Yangtze River) can endure in the world of the metaverse, or the digital realm," Zhang says.









Top: Ethnic Kazak riders perform *diaoyang* (a horse-riding game) in Xinyuan county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Dec 22. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY **Middle:** Harbin Ice and Snow World is open from Dec 17. TIAN WEITAO / FOR CHINA DAILY **Above:** Visitors pose for photos at the Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve, Sichuan province, on June 7. ZHANG CHAOQUN / XINHUA **Right:** Snowboarders enjoy indoor slopes in Huzhou, Zhejiang province. WU ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Experts expect these approaches to stimulate interest in travel and encourage real-world tourism consumption.

On the big data front, telecommunications serve as a comprehensive data source that enables more convenient analysis of visitor flow patterns, thus providing better support for decision-making and improving tourism experiences, Zhang says.

He believes the time has come to use AI-generated content in the cultural and tourism industry, such as customized travel routes and services, tour guidance and digital marketing for destinations.

Jiang Yiyi, deputy dean of the sport, leisure and tourism school of Beijing Sport University, proposes more input into sports tourism, which has shown strong potential.

"Tourists often flock to a city for a sports event. Major international events such as the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the Hangzhou Asian Games, and the Chengdu FISU World University Games have become iconic intellectual properties themselves," Jiang says.

To date, many cities have staged marathons and winter sports that have packed in visitors from home and abroad, she adds.

"Sports programs have certain technical thresholds, but once consumers master these skills, they are likely to engage in repetitive consumption," she says.

"Sports tourism can also be a strong force to drive sales of related consumer goods."

Jiang has noticed that many consumers may purchase skiing equipment and travel to ski resorts when winter comes.

She points out that more attention should be paid to how to transform sports venues into carriers for the integrated development of sports, culture and tourism after hosting major events, so as to continuously satisfy the needs of sports enthusiasts.

She calls upon various regions to establish a sports events hosting mechanism and differentiate sports programs to continuously attract tourists.

"Attention should be given to the diverse needs of nonprofessionals and consumer groups such as women and families with children," Jiang says.

Zhang Bo, deputy director of culture and tourism bureau of Yantai, shares the city's experiences in increasing its high-quality tourism product supply and stimulating consumption potential.

Yantai was the first city in Shandong to propose advancing the marine cultural tourism industry chain, according to Zhang Bo.

In addition to launching policies to enhance incentives for greater consumption, distinctive culture and tourism scenes have been created to boost travel spending.

"Yantai has 1,000 km of coastline and hundreds of islands, and we have launched products by leveraging these advantageous resources," Zhang Bo says.

They include bird watching and night tours of the islands, he adds.

Sea tours integrating sightseeing, leisure, accommodation, catering and learning have also been developed.

From January to August, Yantai received 59.85 million traveler visits, generating tourism revenue exceeding 73 billion yuan, the official says.

The number of tourists increased by 44.9 percent compared to the same period last year, and tourism revenue saw a year-on-year growth of 53.7 percent.

"The growth in revenue significantly outpaced the increase in the number of visitors," Zhang Bo says.

"Currently, Yantai is leading the consumer market through themed festival activities, expanding consumption space through distinctive regional industries, and creating consumption hot spots through artistic and cultural experiences," he adds.

Those measures aim to make the local tourism consumer market more dynamic and attractive, he says.

Yin Long, CEO of Beijing Midi Music Media, has planned a nationwide music tour to help boost tourism.

The campaign has received support from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Yin says.

"It will be an original music competition staged across several cities and provinces," he says, adding that music tapping into local culture and customs will be encouraged.

Large-scale concerts and music festivals will also be staged after the competition, he says.

There are in excess of 300 music festivals hosting over 10,000 people across the country this year, and more than 900 large-scale concerts, according to Yin.

The strong public demand for related activities and government support are behind the booming music event market, which has given tourism a shot in the arm, he says.

He suggests staging regular music performances and festivals at scenic spots around the country to enhance travel experiences.

Zhang Hui, deputy director of the experts' committee of the Beijing-based World Tourism Cities Federation, highlights the role of investment in advancing sustainable tourism development.

"The opportunities for tourism investment lie in tapping into the potential of tourism consumption, meeting the requirements of high-quality tourism development ... and addressing the shortcomings in China's tourism supply," he says, adding that it's also important to explore investment opportunities in urban planning.

He says that future investment will go to tourism products that are centered around health, learning, leisure streets, theme parks, art centers, villages and high-tech immersive experiences.

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Aquaman makes waves at the box office

By **XU FAN**
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Five years ago a scene featuring a long-haired man, wielding a trident, leaping from the jaws of a sea monster in a tumultuous sea, captivated audiences in thousands of theaters across the country.

With its innovative visual effects showcasing an underwater world, the film *Aquaman* swiftly ascended to become the highest-grossing DC superhero film on the Chinese mainland. It raked in a staggering box-office revenue of 2.01 billion yuan ($281.4 million), following *Avengers: Infinity War* and *Venom*, to become the third highest-grossing foreign movie on the Chinese mainland in 2018.

Recently, the director of the movie, James Wan, and the actor portraying the titular character, Jason Momoa, returned to China, embarking on a promotional tour for the sequel, *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*. They visited four cities — Beijing, Shanghai, Sichuan's Chengdu, and Guangzhou, Guangdong province — to share the behind-the-scenes stories from the new epic.

Picking up where it left off in the first installment, the new movie sees the titular protagonist face off against a new threat from his foe, Black Manta, who is still driven by the need to avenge his father's death in the first movie. In an attempt to stop the super villain, whose actions will cause a catastrophe for both the land and the ocean, Aquaman has to turn to his imprisoned brother, set aside their differences and forge an unlikely alliance.





Left: A still from the Hollywood superhero blockbuster, *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*, features the titular character, played by Jason Momoa, and his infant son. **Right:** Momoa and director James Wan attend the film's Beijing premiere on Dec 6. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wan, also known among Chinese fans for the Hollywood blockbuster *Furious 7*, says he feels excited to return to the country, and says that the Chinese audience will discover how Aquaman has changed in the sequel.

"Five years later, he (Aquaman) is not just the king of Atlantis. He's married. He's a husband. He's also a dad. So, part of the fun is seeing how he juggles the responsibility of being a king and a dad. Sometimes, being a superhero is about waking up each morning and doing the work that you may not want to do," says the director with a smile.

In the Aquaman franchise, the protagonist is depicted as the son of a human being and the queen of the fictional underwater kingdom of Atlantis, which sank to the bottom of the ocean a long time ago. Despite enjoying more heartwarming moments, such as taking care of his infant son with his father, a lighthouse keeper, in their cozy home located in Amnesty Bay, Maine, Aquaman still has to dive back into the deep sea to fulfill his responsibilities as the king.

Wan reveals that the new movie features bigger, brighter, more colorful, and more vibrant visual effects. Some of the movie's most visually stunning scenes showcase the icy landscape of Antarctica and the underwater spectacle of a lost kingdom.

Momoa, who sat alongside Wan during the interview on Dec 7, recalled that they also visited several iconic sites such as the Forbidden City and the Great Wall, and tasted the capital's signature dish, Peking duck, during their tour of Beijing.

Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, Momoa was cast in the role of Aquaman in 2014.

Referring to the Aquaman franchise as the longest time he has ever played a character, he says, "I think when you play a character for 12 years, it becomes a part of you. You were hired for a specific reason, with certain aspects of life that contribute to the character's flavor. It comes from within your brain".

On some popular video streaming platforms in China, there is a highly viewed trailer for the sequel, featuring a funny scene. After freeing his brother from prison, Aquaman takes him to a mysterious jungle where he introduces his brother to various land-based delicacies, like cheeseburgers and spaghetti.

However, when he spots a cockroach, he mischievously tricks his brother into believing it's the land dwellers' equivalent to shrimp in the ocean, and his brother actually eats it.

When asked about the inspiration behind this scene, Momoa recalls that he pitched the idea to the director, believing that the protagonist mischievously "torturing" his younger brother adds a touch of humanity to the film.

The sequel, which was released across the Chinese mainland on Dec 20, two days earlier than in North America, held top position in the box-office charts for five consecutive days as of Wednesday, grossing around 270 million yuan.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE

A city where history is at home

Researchers in Nanjing reveal further evidence of its rich and colorful past, **Wang Qian** reports.

A city's name can often indicate its status in a nation's history.

Nanjing means "southern capital city" in Chinese. Only Beijing, meaning "northern capital city" can claim such a descriptive identity.

The city, now capital of East China's Jiangsu province, was once widely considered to have an urban history of 2,500 years, but new archaeological research rewrites that. This has found that it was founded more than 3,100 years ago when an ancient city, named "Changgan", was recently excavated.

Dating to the Shang and Zhou dynasties (c.16th century-256 BC), archaeologists found that the "city's walls were flanked by trenches", which is an important indicator of a fortification system used by ancient cities, says Chen Dahai, head of the archaeological excavation team, and an associate professor at the Nanjing Archaeological Research Institute.

Chen made the comments during a seminar last week discussing the latest findings in Nanjing.

In the history of the ancient fortification system, trenches emerged before walls. They surrounded the living area to prevent floods and deter enemies, according to Chen. He says at least four encompassing trenches built in different periods during the Shang and Zhou dynasties were detected.

Aside from portions of the city's walls and trenches, archaeologists discovered a fascinating history of a city with water wells built in the late Shang Dynasty, kilns for brick firing and a pit for pig sacrifices. Covering about 12,000 square meters, the area of Xijie, or west street, has seen more than 500 heritage sites unearthed and more than 10,000 cultural relics, such as pottery vessels, jade discs, ceramics and copper tools.

"The site provides important clues to decode Nanjing's past and how it developed," Chen says.

Often hailed as the "ancient capital of six dynasties", Nanjing has served as the center of dynasties and kingdoms throughout its rich history. The city was the seat of imperial power of six dynasties ruling the southern China from the 3rd to 6th century. It was also the national capital of a united China from 1368 to 1420 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

Historians used to estimate that Nanjing was founded in 472 BC, when Gou Jian, the king of the Yue vassal state, built city walls at the southwest corner of the present Zhonghua Gate in Nanjing.

"Although no obvious heritage structure was unearthed, such as a gatehouse and turrets, we discovered clear evidence and clues indicating the reason for the city's construction and its development over thousands of years," Chen says, adding that the city's original site may have been destroyed.







Top: Archaeologists have unearthed the ancient city of Changgan, which has pushed back the recorded history of Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province, by 600 years. **Above left and right:** Covering about 12,000 square meters, the site has produced more than 10,000 cultural relics, such as pottery vessels, jade discs, ceramics and copper tools. PHOTOS BY VISUAL NANJING

He says building on higher terrain, Changgan ancient city was located at the mouth of the ancient Qinhuai River, which was easy to defend and hard to attack, making it a significant military location.

The latest archaeological findings may reshape the city's history, with its emergence tracing back to more than 3,100 years ago. Wang Wei, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Archaeology Department, highlights the discovery as a remarkable archaeological finding in tracing the Nanjing's origins.

As archaeologists dug, different soil layers were revealed, which documented the chronology of the city's change and evolution from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-771 BC), to the Ming and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, according to Chen.

Among the unearthed pottery, some have patterns or characteristics found in the Erligang culture in the Shang Dynasty (c.16th century-11th century BC), the 3,300-year-old Yinxu Ruins and the Maqiao culture in Taihu Lake region, He Yun'ao, a professor of history at Nanjing University, told the seminar.

"Due to its geographic location, Nanjing has played an important role in the development of the Chinese civilization. Starting from the ancient city of Changgan, it has become a place for the inheritance and continuation of the Chinese civilization and a hub for the convergence and dissemination of the northern and southern cultures for more than 3,000 years," He says.

The excavation began in 2017 after the Nanjing government launched predevelopment work for urban planning in the city's southern area, which is located in the Changganli Ancient City relics site. This is one of Nanjing's key protection zones for subterranean heritage. In 2020, archaeologists conducted a proactive archaeological survey of the site.

Wang suggested developing the Changgan ancient city site into a relics park and a museum to let the public be better involved in sharing the archaeological discoveries and the latest excavation process.

Wang Kaihao and Cang Wei contributed to this story.

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Experts find more from Xia Dynasty dig

ZHENGZHOU — The remains of a palace and barns dating back about 4,000 years have been found at two important archaeological sites in Central China's Henan province, archaeologists said last week.

The two sites — the Zhuqiu Temple and the Xinmi ancient city site — are believed to have been built in the Xia Dynasty (c.21st century-16th century BC). The discoveries have provided archaeologists with further data on the activities and structures of that period.

The ruins of the Xinmi ancient city were discovered in 1997 on the eastern bank of the Zhentou River, covering a rectangular area of 176,000 square meters. It is believed to be a large-scale, well-preserved city built in the late period of the Longshan culture, a civilization found in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River.

Archaeologists at the site have discovered a rammed-earth foundation structure they believe to be part of the city's ancient palace compound. Measuring 60 meters long and 30 meters wide, and covering about 1,800 square meters, it is high at the center and low on all four sides, with a flat surface and rows of column holes evenly distributed.

"From the holes, we believe that the foundation belonged to a house complex with terraces in the south and north, cloisters in the east and west, and a yard at the center," says Li Bo, head of the excavation team.

Rammed-earth remains were found to the east of the foundation, which archaeologists say is part of the same building cluster.

"Our previous excavation results showed that the central eastern area of the ancient city was the core of the complex," Li says. "The remains, together with the foundations of a palace and corridor, constitute a complex in the quadrangle style."

He notes that the findings could improve people's understanding about the layout of ancient cities, and provide evidence for studies of the origin and development of the Xia Dynasty's palace buildings.

Archaeologists working at the Zhuqiu Temple site have unearthed more than 100 relics, including the remains of ash pits, ditches and architecture. The settlement venue dates back to the late Longshan culture period and the Xia Dynasty.

Among the findings, there are remains of two circular buildings consisting of earth columns and adobe walls that were used for grain storage, with a similar age and structure to the barns in the early Xia Dynasty. Fang Lixia, who led the excavation team, says that the discovery will provide new material for studying the development of dry farming agriculture, grain storage technology and the history of barn building in ancient northern China.

XINHUA

1,800-year-old documents provide intriguing insight into governance

By **WANG KAIHAO**
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From house ruins and abandoned wells in Chenzhou, Hunan province, archaeologists recently unearthed a find of nearly 10,000 wooden slips used for recording various items from 1,800 years ago.

They helped to portray a detailed picture of social life during an era which was full of conflict as well as being a time of legends.

Dutou ancient city ruins in Linwu county, Chenzhou, yielded key findings on the past of a county with a rich history, according to last week's media conference by the National Cultural Heritage Administration in Beijing.

Historical recordings showed that the site was the center of an eponymous county from the Han Dynasty (206 BC to AD 220) through to the 6th century. This was supported by around 400 tombs found in the region from this period.

Excavations in 2022 and 2023 focused on an area that was believed to be the county government. This in turn led to the discovery of the wooden slips, says Chen Bin, a researcher with the Hunan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology. Most of the unearthed pieces were official documents.

The slips, known in Chinese as *jiandu*, were a primary method of documentation in China before paper became widely used.

Year markings on the slips indicated they were from the Wu Dynasty (222 to 280). Wu, with its capital in present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu province, for most of its time, once ruled a vast territory in East and South China.

In spite of its relatively short era, one of the trilateral powers in China from the last years of the Han Dynasty to the Three Kingdom period (220-280), its stories and folklore became familiar to the public due to the iconic novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

The new findings compose the largest-scale discovery of Wu slips in history.

"We got a lot of material from these documents that enhances our understanding of administrative divisions, taxation, farming and the mining industry," Chen says.

For example, some slips reveal how townships and villages were designated and governed during the Wu era. Other unearthed pieces showed contracts for paying tax and recordings of the operation of tin mines, which reflected in detail the economic activities of the city.





Left: The wooden slips, known in Chinese as *jiandu*, unearthed at Dutou ancient city ruins in Linwu county, Chenzhou, Hunan province.
Right: An aerial photo of the excavation site.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Indeed, researchers, through this information, were able to locate a tin mine and smelting site about 10 kilometers away from the city ruins. Chen considers the mutually matched evidence to provide key references for further study of nonferrous metal utilization in the Hunan region.

The province is a national hub for the industry even today.

Trivial details about office life can also be illuminating. Slips were used by officials to practice their writing while others documented where they stayed overnight during business trips.

"Some slips are like today's business cards," Chen adds. "People wrote down their names, honorary titles, and native places on the wood to socialize. They often wrote their own names in an artistic way. So these slips were not only for practical use, but also as a way to appreciate each other's calligraphy."

Qi Dongfang, an archaeology professor at Peking University, says that "in history books, we see grand pictures of national affairs and key events. Thanks to these slips, we can vividly understand history from the mundane details of people's everyday life, which is more touching."

Other than the highlighted documentations, archaeologists also unearthed urban roads, moats and other constructions, gradually portraying a comprehensive portrait of a key city on the ancient route linking today's Hunan and nearby Guangdong provinces.

"The site is a microcosm of how the central dynasty governed and developed the regions along the Nanling Mountains in South China," Chen says. "It's physical evidence to mark how the unity of our country emerged from diversity."

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