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BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.63 NO.40-41 OCTOBER 1, 2020

北京周报 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM

THE ROAD TO CHANGE

Mountain-locked village finds a way to prosperity

RMB6.00
USD1.70
AUD3.00
GBP1.20
CAD2.60
CHF2.60
JPY188

ISSN 1000-9140



9 771000 914208
邮发代号2-922·国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2



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Cover Photo: Zhadong, a village in Hechi, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China (ZHANG WEI)

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Beijing Review (ISSN 1000-9140) is published weekly for US\$61.00 per year by Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080, Periodical Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Beijing Review, Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080



北京周报

BEIJING REVIEW

A News Weekly Magazine
Published Since 1958

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Published every Thursday by
BEIJING REVIEW, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,
Beijing 100037, China.

Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading
Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,
Beijing 100044, China
Tel: 86-10-68413849, 1-416-497-8096 (Canada)
Fax: 86-10-68412166

E-mail: fp@mail.cibtc.com.cn
Website: <http://www.cibtc.com>

General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:
Peace Book Co. Ltd.
17/FI, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK
Tel: 852-28046687 **Fax:** 852-28046409

Beijing Review (ISSN 1000-9140 USPS 2812) is published weekly in the United States for US\$61.00 per year by Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080 News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*, Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080

EDITOR'S DESK

Men and Women With a Mission

Sixteen people from six poverty-stricken families became the biggest test for Xie Wanju, First Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhadong Village Branch, in the second half of this year.

Zhadong, a remote village in Hechi, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, south China, is surrounded by mountains. It lacked roads and arable land, which led to its underdevelopment. The 16 were the last group of people to be lifted out of poverty with improved housing, clean drinking water and electricity by the end of September.

By the end of 2019, more than 200,000 CPC members had been appointed as first secretaries in all the registered poverty-stricken villages like Zhadong. Entrusted with targeted poverty alleviation and helping improve local governance in the villages where they are sent, these first secretaries are Party members or retirees from government departments, public institutions and state-owned enterprises. Xie is one of them.

Under his watch, the mountain village now is connected to road, clean water, electricity and the Internet. Several enterprises have been established in the village, providing jobs to the farmers and ensuring a secure

income for them, helping them to cast off poverty. From an impoverished population of 314 by summer this year, the number was reduced to 16.

Xie persuaded banks to provide them loans, found a market for the agricultural and breeding enterprises that have come up in the village, and convinced the local government to make preferential policies to help them.

The good news is that the last 16 people have all reached the official standard for being taken off the poverty list by the end of 2020. They have sufficient food and clothing, access to compulsory education, basic medical services and safe housing.

However, their story will not end there, nor will Xie's work. While awaiting the assessment, Xie, the Party branch and the villagers are planning how to develop the village further as part of the rural revitalization campaign. On the anvil are growing the animal breeding industry and foraging into tourism with rural bed-and-breakfast services.

For this village, like many other villages in China, getting out of poverty is a beginning to a better life. ■

WRITETOUS

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CHINA.....RMB6.00 U.S.A.....USD1.70 AUSTRALIA.....AUD3.00 UK.....GBP1.20 CANADA.....CAD2.60 SWITZERLAND.....CHF2.60
JAPAN.....JPY188 EUROPE.....EURO1.90 TURKEY.....YTL5.00 HK.....HKD9.30 NEPAL.....RS40

主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局

主办单位：北京周报社

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印刷：北京华联印刷有限公司

北京周报 英文版2020年 第40-41期 ISSN 1000-9140 国内统一刊号：CN11-1576/G2 邮发代号：2-922

广告许可证0171号 北京市期刊登记证第733号

国内零售价：人民币6.00元



500 DAYS TO GO

Children display the mascots of the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games and Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games during a cultural event before the Great Wall in Badaling in Beijing on September 20. The day marked the start of the 500-day countdown to the Games.

“The 500-day countdown is a landmark. I hope today’s cultural activities will promote the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games to people all over China,” He Jianghai, Deputy Secretary General of the organizing committee of Beijing 2022, said.



Successful Launch

A Long March-11 carrier rocket blasts off from a ship in the Yellow Sea on September 15, sending nine satellites into planned orbit. It is China's first sea-launched rocket.

The Long March-11 is the only one among China's Long March rocket series that uses solid propellants, mainly used to carry small satellites.

Self-Driving Pilot

Beijing plans to build a cloud-based pilot area for self-driving vehicles before the end of this year, according to government sources on September 19.

The 60-square-km pilot zone, located in the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, also known as E-Town, will feature integrated smart roads, intelligent vehicles, real-time cloud, reliable network and precise maps, Kong Lei, an official with the administration of E-Town, said.

The area will be used for L4 and higher-level autonomous vehicles, as well as for the trial operation of lower-level self-driving vehicles and the testing of Internet of Vehicles (IoV) applications.

L4 automation generally requires no human involvement or oversight, while lower-level

automation such as L3 only conditionally allows drivers to take their hands off the wheel or eyes off the road at low speeds.

The pilot zone will be adjusted and upgraded every three to six months to pinpoint the synergy among roads, vehicles and the cloud, Kong said, adding that the mature pattern will be replicated in other areas of Beijing.

Fewer Dropouts

The number of dropouts in the nine-year compulsory education stage had fallen to around 2,400 by September 15, down from around 600,000 in 2019, an official with the Ministry of Education (MOE) said on September 23.

The net enrolment rate for primary education was 99.94 percent in 2019, Vice Minister of Education Zheng Fuzhi said at a press conference.

Some school-age children are

unable to attend school this year mostly due to physical challenges, Zheng said, adding that tailor-made education services are being provided for them at their home.

The authorities have ensured that no student will drop out of school because of poverty by offering financial aid to students from impoverished households, exempting all students from tuition and fees, and providing subsidies for nutritious meals for about 40 million rural children every year, Zheng said.

In 2019 alone, 212.6 billion yuan (\$31.3 billion) of financial aid was given to students from poor families. About 80 percent of the funds for basic education, ranging from preschool education to junior high school education, went to central and western regions, MOE data showed.

Zheng said conditions in rural

schools have improved.

In recent years, about 950,000 teachers have been recruited to work in 30,000 primary and secondary schools in around 1,000 impoverished counties to raise the quality of education in less developed areas.

The ministries of education and finance should establish a long-term system to ensure that teachers' salaries are not lower than civil servants', he said.

Aiding Xinjiang

The latest group of personnel from Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and state institutions and centrally administered state-owned enterprises arrived in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, on September 21 to take part in an assistance program for the region's development.

The 579 members are from over 110 Party and state institutions and enterprises, according to the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee.

They will work in key sectors including education, finance, tourism, health, and agricultural technology, or hold positions in areas of urgent need for three years.

China has been implementing the assistance program for Xinjiang's development since 1997, channeling financial support from developed regions and sending more than 20,000 cadres and professionals to the region.

Airport Milestone

The total passenger throughput at the Beijing Daxing International Airport exceeded 10 million on September 22. It began operation last September.

Currently, the airport operates 187 domestic air routes, serving 129 destinations across the country. As of September 21, it had handled take-offs and landings of 84,000 flights, with a cargo and mail throughput of about 39,000 tons.

Air carriers are transferring flight

operations from the Beijing Capital International Airport to the Daxing airport. China Southern Airlines has transferred 80 percent of its flights in Beijing. The company is estimated to operate more than 200 planes at the new airport and fly 28.8 million passengers by 2025.

Marine Expo

The 2020 East Asia Marine Expo opened in Qingdao, Shandong Province in east China, on September 22, convening more than 770 companies and institutes from over 70 countries and regions.

More than 50,000 exhibits were displayed at the six-day expo. They covered ocean engineering, offshore oil and gas exploration, seabed exploration, deep-sea aquaculture and scientific research equipment. There were also special sections showing scientific achievements in marine surveying and mapping and fishery products.

The expo, which was also accessible online, was a major part of the 2020 East Asia Marine Cooperation Platform Qingdao Forum, which was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Shandong Provincial Government.

Ancient Avenue

Archaeologists have unearthed a 2.5-km-long avenue dating back nearly 2,000 years in Luoyang, Henan Province in central China, Xinhua News Agency reported on

September 21.

The road, about 34 meters wide, was a major east-west avenue extending between the relic sites of Ximingmen and Qingyangmen in the southern part of Luoyang. It was built in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) and remained in use until the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534).

The discovery was made during excavations that started earlier this year, led by the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Researchers conducting the excavation obtained information on the location, direction and structure of the avenue, as well as the preservation condition of the underground relics, Liu Tao, a researcher with the institute, said.

The road section shows different soil layers from various time periods, with signs of ruts on many different layers.

"More than 500 years of the city's history are reflected in the road sections," Guo Xiaotao with the institute said.

At the bottom of an excavation site, the archaeologists also discovered some brick structures, measuring about 1.5-1.6 meters wide, which were likely used for water drainage.

Caregiving Tips

The China Population Welfare Foundation and the Alzheimer's Disease China, a non-profit organization, issued a series of suggestions



Festive Mood

A light decoration for the Mid-Autumn Festival in the Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on September 22. The traditional holiday for family reunion coincided with the National Day on October 1 this year.

on family care for Alzheimer's disease (AD) patients on September 21, World Alzheimer's Day.

The suggestions cover various aspects of the disease, including how to accept AD diagnosis, how the disease progresses, and how to talk about the illness with composure.

Safety is the top priority when it comes to family care for AD patients.

The suggestions also underscore

the need to ensure that patients are physically comfortable, maintain personal hygiene and consume a nutritious diet, in addition to preventing them from getting lost, taking wrong pills, falling or getting injured by sharp objects.

As the disease progresses, patients tend to express their needs increasingly through their behaviors instead of words.



Shedding Off Poverty

Farmers work in a greenhouse in Yazhong, a village in Chadmdo, Tibet Autonomous Region in southwest China, on September 21. The village has built 18 greenhouses, providing jobs to 36 farmers living under the poverty line.

FTZ Plans

The State Council has issued master plans for three new pilot free trade zones (FTZs) in Beijing and Hunan and Anhui provinces amid efforts to elevate the country's opening up to a higher level.

The plans outline the priorities for these zones and pledge to give them greater autonomy to carry out reforms and expand opening up.

The Beijing FTZ will focus on supporting the construction of an innovation center with global influence. It will also become a high-level opening-up platform for the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

The plan also details measures for creating an internationally leading environment for innovation and entrepreneurship, advancing

innovation in services trade management, and exploring the construction of an international port for the information technology industry and digital trade in the Beijing zone.

The FTZ in Hunan in central China will focus on building a world-class advanced manufacturing cluster, an international investment and trade corridor linking the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and a leading area for in-depth economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa.

Expected to set the standard for opening up in the inland region, the FTZ in Anhui in east China will center on promoting in-depth integration of scientific and technological innovation and the development of the real economy.

Trademark Progress

The National Intellectual Property Administration (NIPA) said on September 18 that China's accumulative valid trademark registrations had totaled 28.23 million as of August.

In the first eight months this year, the total applications for trademark registration reached 6.03 million, a 20.98-percent increase compared with the same period in 2019.

Since 2016, China has been implementing reforms to increase trademark application channels, enhance the efficiency of related reviews, and improve services, according to Yao Kun, Deputy Director of the Trademark Department of NIPA.

At present, the registration

review of a trademark takes four and a half months on average. There are 212 offices across the country for trademark registration and 103 for trademark pledge financing.

To facilitate application, trademark authorities provide 25 services online. In the first eight months this year, online registrations accounted for 97.83 percent of all applications.

Campus Recruitment

About 33 percent of Chinese companies have begun their autumn campus recruitment, with another 20 percent preparing to begin, according to a recent survey by Zhaopin.com, a leading career platform in China.

Among enterprises with recruitment plans, 42.6 percent saw a year-on-year increase in hiring, it said.

Those majoring in materials science and engineering, electronic science and technology, software engineering and other digitalization-related fields are in high demand, Li Qiang, Executive Vice President of Zhaopin.com, said.

Employment has remained stable in recent months, with the surveyed urban unemployment rate standing at 5.6 percent in August, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

A slew of pro-employment measures have been taken amid the novel coronavirus epidemic, such as launching online recruitment fairs and providing free training for university students.

Airbus Goals

China is expected to remain the biggest single-country market of Airbus in 2020, as the European planemaker said it plans to deliver about 100 aircraft to China this year.

Affected by the novel coronavirus pandemic, Airbus delivered only 14 aircraft to China in the first half of this year, according to George Xu, CEO of Airbus China. The company's original plan included delivery of some 160 planes in 2020.



Meeting of Minds

Participants attend the opening ceremony of the 2020 World Industrial Internet Conference in Qingdao, Shandong Province in east China, on September 20. The two-day event focused on the integrated development of the sectors of the industrial Internet, with participants from Chinese and foreign universities, research institutions and enterprises.



Enjoying Nature

Tourists at the Kanas Scenic Area in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China on September 18. Many attractions in the region have rolled out preferential policies, including free entry, to attract tourists during the National Day holiday from October 1 to 8 and even after that.

China has been a major market of Airbus, accounting for more than 20 percent of the company's total aircraft delivery. Thanks to the country's progress in taking on the epidemic and the recovery of its civil aviation market, Airbus has seen its China delivery rise since July, Xu said.

Statistics from Airbus showed by the end of August, the number of domestic air trips and flights in China had recovered to about 80 percent and 90 percent of the level in the same period last year, respectively.

"It may take three to five years for the global aviation industry to recover fully," Xu said, adding that the Chinese market will become more prominent for Airbus in the post-pandemic era.

Cloud Device

Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing and data intelligence arm of Alibaba Group, unveiled its first cloud computer at the 2020 Apsara Conference on September 17.

The cloud device is a palm-sized personal computer (PC). Despite weighing just about 60 grams, it offers high-performance computing, thanks to robust back-end cloud resources.

By connecting the cloud computer with a normal display, a user can access computing resources anytime, anywhere, while paying on a subscription model or using it for actual cloud consumption.

It can reduce the rendering time for single frame high-resolution animation from 90 minutes on a traditional PC to 10 minutes, the company said.

Rio Tinto Operations

Rio Tinto's subsidiary Rio Tinto Mining Commercial (Shanghai) Co. Ltd. and Dalian Port Co. Ltd. signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in port handling, storage, blending, and transshipment of iron ore on September 22.

They will also cooperate in bonded-area operations and

trade and jointly build an iron ore blending and distribution center in northeast Asia, according to the document.

It was the first time for Rio Tinto to develop bonded area operations for blending iron ore at a Chinese port.

"The [blended] iron ore will be sold to steel enterprises in northeast China, Japan and the Republic of Korea," Chen Sheng, General Manager of Rio Tinto Iron Ore China, said.

Dalian Port in the northeastern province of Liaoning owns a specialized ore terminal that can handle ore ships with a loading capacity up to 400,000 tons. It has blended more than 46 million tons of iron ore since it started the business in 2016.

Sci-Tech Projects

Twenty sci-tech projects worth 16.3 billion yuan (\$2.4 billion) in total were signed at the 23rd China Beijing International High-Tech Expo on September 18.

The projects, focusing on high-end industrial chains as well as

high-level and advanced industries, included an integrated circuit core equipment industrial park of the China Electronics Technology Group Corp., a research facility of e-commerce giant JD.com, and an Internet of Things industrial park.

Some projects integrated sci-tech innovations with socio-economic development, including the headquarters of a ride-hailing company of Chinese automaker FAW's iconic sedan brand Hongqi, and a mass production project of micro gas turbines.

This year's expo attracted 11 international organizations, including the UN Industrial Development Organization and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations, as well as more than 800 tech firms from China and abroad.

First held in 1998, the expo saw more than 37,000 Chinese and foreign institutions and enterprises participating in its previous 22 sessions, with over 5,600 contracts, agreements, and letters of intent worth 1.04 trillion yuan (\$153.44 billion) signed.



Smart Vehicle

An L4 autonomous bus makes its debut at a ceremony in Chongqing in southwest China on September 17. It was jointly developed by Baidu Apollo, an open-source autonomous driving platform, and bus manufacturer King Long. L4 automation generally requires no human involvement or oversight.



UNITED NATIONS

Volkan Bozkir, President of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly, speaks at the UN headquarters in New York City on September 22. The general debate of the session opened that day with the theme *The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming Our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism—Confronting COVID-19 Through Effective Multilateral Action*



INDONESIA

People gather in Pasawahan, a village in West Java, after flash floods on September 22. Three people were missing



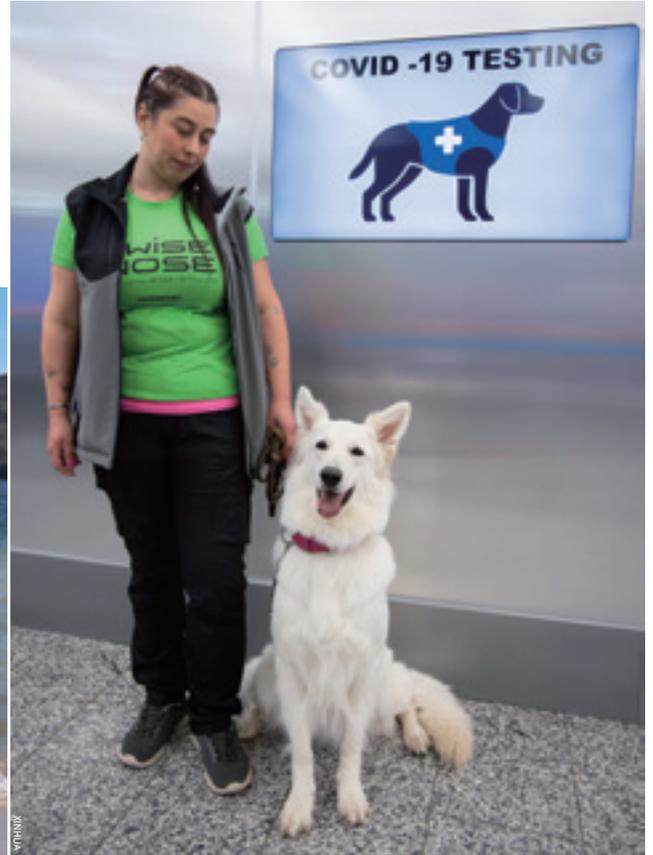
ZAMBIA

A teacher speaks to students outside the classroom at the Mejojama Primary and Secondary School in Lusaka on September 21. All schools reopened after the closure since March due to COVID-19



AUSTRALIA

Rescuers save a beached whale off the western coast of Tasmania on September 22. The area has seen 270 pilot whales stranded in recent times and about one third of them died



FINLAND

A COVID-19 sniffer dog at a press conference at the Helsinki Vantaa International Airport on September 22. Four specially trained dogs demonstrated their ability to sniff out COVID-19 in people even before they started showing symptoms



UNITED STATES

Twenty thousand flags are placed at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., on September 22 to remember the 200,000 American lives lost to COVID-19



↓ XIE ZHENYE WINS MEN'S 200 M

Sprinter **Xie Zhenye** clocked a 20.72-second win in the men's 200-meter race at the 2020 Chinese National Athletics Championships on September 17, adding to his 100-meter title.



The 27-year-old is the Asian record holder in the men's 200-meter race after he broke Nigerian-born Olympian Femi Ogunode's record at the London stop of last year's Diamond League with a timing of 19.88 seconds. He also became the first Chinese to finish the run under 20 seconds.

Despite heavy rain on September 17, Xie dominated the race from the start. It was his second gold at the championships after winning the 100-meter race with a timing of 10.31 seconds on the opening day of the event.

Children's Meals

People's Daily September 18

The saying "when the youth are strong, the country is strong" means the young generation's health determines a country's future. In many countries, improving students' nutrition has been adopted as a significant measure to promote equity and narrow the social gap. China has been implementing a nutrition enhancement program for students receiving compulsory education in rural areas since 2011. It provides 40 million rural children from the first grade to the ninth with nutritious food at school.

Studies have shown that preschool nutrition, especially before a child is 3 years old, has a significant impact on individual growth, including intellectual development and mental health. However, although the National Health Commission and many government departments

as well as the nonprofit China Children and Teenagers' Fund and other organizations have launched nutritious meal projects, they still don't cover all preschool children.

In rural areas, many children left at home by their migrant worker parents are raised by grandparents, who lack the awareness or ability to provide a healthy diet even if they have the money to do so.

In order to improve children's nutrition in rural areas, it is necessary to establish a cooperative mechanism led by the government with the participation of public interest organizations and enterprises. Also, administrations should design specific rules to clarify funding, evaluation, accountability and other issues, as well as guidelines for providing balanced and nutritious meals in kindergartens.

The guidelines should also provide some suggestions for the guardians of the left-behind children.



Bridging the Language Gap

Guangming Daily September 17

In Imamlirim, a town in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, a primary school started by a local teacher teaches Mandarin to help children from the Uygur ethnic minority group, who mostly speak Uygur at home, communicate better. Kurban Niyaz, a local lad who became a Mandarin teacher, started the school to do something for his hometown.

There are 56 ethnic groups in China. To break through the barriers of different dialects and deepen communication and understanding among people across regions, the Constitution stipulates nationwide use of

"The World Health Organization (WHO) is working to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines globally, believing it to be the fastest way to end the pandemic and accelerate global economic recovery. China's vaccines may help realize that goal in the near future because some of the vaccines have proven to be successful in clinical trials."

Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist at WHO,
on September 21

"We solemnly inform the U.S. side that 'Taiwan independence' only leads to a dead end, and efforts to condone and support 'Taiwan independence' are doomed to fail."

Wang Wenbin, Foreign Ministry spokesperson, at a press conference on September 21



Volunteers from the Northwestern Polytechnical University in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province in northwest China, teach Miao children Mandarin in a county in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China on July 29. The Miao are an ethnic minority group living mostly in south and southwest China

Mandarin. Promotion of a commonly used language also focuses on promoting cultural integration. The Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, adopted in 2000, set the status of Mandarin and standard Chinese characters as the national general language.

The Constitution also stipulates that all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their languages and cultures and to maintain or reform their customs and habits. That respects the cultural diversity of the ethnic groups, reflects the principle of equality and shared prosperity of all ethnic groups, and promotes the economic and social development of all ethnic minority areas.

In the 17 years since the school was started, students are flocking to it to learn Mandarin since the national curriculum is taught in Mandarin. That also means the traditional Uygur culture can be significantly promoted through Mandarin, contributing to national integration.

Golden Week for Tourism

Economic Daily **September 18**

This year, National Day, October 1, coincides with the Mid-Autumn Festival, which also falls on the same day as per the lunar calendar. This has extended the annual week-long National Day holiday till October 8, an eight-day period which will be a longer golden week for tourism.

As holidaymakers plan trips in droves, tourism companies are offering deals at a discount, and scenic spots have cut their ticket prices. The domestic tourism industry is looking forward to recovery during the upsurge this time while following regular prevention and control.

Epidemic containment, besides boosting economic interests, has to also ensure that the achievements are maintained to guarantee public safety. Due to the still challenging situation outside China, the authorities have to prevent a rebound at home triggered by arrivals from abroad who may carry the infection. Hence besides regular prevention measures, related administrations and scenic spots also need to have emergency plans.

During the holiday, services, including catering and accommodation, should be regulated. Local governments need to pay attention to food safety and strengthen market supervision while also ensuring there is no food wastage. Besides, they should establish online platforms where consumers can complain to ensure their legitimate rights and interests.

RENOWNED TRANSLATOR PASSES AWAY

Zheng Kelu, who had brought French literature to Chinese readers and translated the masterpieces of Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, Simone de Beauvoir and other French authors, passed away on September 20 at the age of 81.

After getting his master's degree from the Institute of Foreign Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in 1965, Zheng worked in the institute until 1984. Later he taught in several universities in China.

A translator with excellent research performance, his in-depth knowledge of French literature, studied first-hand, added authenticity to his work. Zheng had translated 20 French classics and published 18 books on French literature.

Due to his contribution in compiling a textbook for advanced study on foreign literary history, Zheng won different awards from the Ministry of Education and Shanghai Municipal Government.



“Facing rising protectionism, global economic downturn and a shrinking international market, China should accelerate dual circulation, a strategy in which domestic economic circulation plays a leading role while international economic circulation remains supplementary.”

Justin Yifu Lin, Dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics at Peking University, in an interview with China Global Television Network on September 22

“A large amount of new consumption models appeared amid the epidemic, boosting online consumption of goods and services in fields such as medical care, education and entertainment.”

Gao Gao, Deputy Secretary General of the National Development and Reform Commission, at a news briefing on September 22



COVER STORY

WHEN FORTUNE SMILES

A once inaccessible mountain village in south China changes its economic status and mindset By Li Yifan



The truck, laden with farm produce and baskets of raw silk cocoons, was ready to leave. The driver started the engine and Qin Yongfu, standing in front of his two-story house, waved goodbye to him. Soon the truck vanished on the new concrete road, leaving the village of Zhadong behind.

The mountainous village, located in the city of Hechi in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, south China, is an important silkworm base today. It has a

history of planting mulberry and raising silkworms for over 470 years.

Qin has been in this industry for 17 years. Before the concrete road came up, selling the silkworm cocoons used to be challenging.

Finding a way

Zhadong is a picturesque village but living there was tough in the past. Surrounded by mountains, it had no proper road, mak-

ing mechanical transport impossible. Even as recently as 2016, six of the 14 smaller villages that make up Zhadong had no highway, only narrow mountain paths. People lived in scattered communities, there was little arable land and life was hard.

"I had to walk all the way to the city carrying the cocoons in baskets slung from a pole over my shoulders. It meant an eight-hour journey one way. I couldn't carry more than 40 kg at a time and could make only ▶▶



Villagers pick mulberry leaves in Zhadong, a village in Hechi, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China, on August 28

400 yuan (\$58.9) per trip,” Qin said.

The lack of roads also meant he could see his children only during the weekend. Even the nearest primary school was too far away for daily commute, so they had to live in the school dormitory on school days.

The villagers longed for roads, especially highways that would link them to other parts of Guangxi and the rest of the country.

Things finally started looking up in 2016 after a military vet from Hechi came to work in Zhadong. Appointed as first secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhadong Village Branch, Xie Wanju faced a grueling trek to reach the village, and decided to make infrastructure construction a priority.

Not long after his arrival, he began raising money to build roads. However, there

were not many contributors as most of the young people had left the village to work elsewhere. He and other villagers’ committee officials then contacted enterprises for donations. He even took part in a local TV show to spread the word about the initiative, which resulted in more than 43,000 yuan (\$6,304) in donations from viewers.

Finally, there was enough money to start building roads and by the end of 2019,



LI HAOJUN



ZHANG WEI

An aerial view of the Tongfu community in Yizhou District, Hechi, on August 30

"I would have to wait for many years to save money and live a better life had it not been for the new roads," he said.

Rebuilding lives

There are many new homes, spacious and well-lit, on the outskirts of Yizhou, a district in Hechi. Besides neat rows of seven-story residential buildings stand grocery stores, supermarkets and restaurants. Some of the buildings house workshops for ancillary businesses that have sprung from silkworm farming. For example, on the first floor of a building, workers, mostly women, are busy making cardboard boxes needed to breed silkworms.

This is the Tongfu Community, a relocation site. The district has four such relocation sites, built to accommodate 8,000 villagers officially registered as living below the poverty line.

Ben Yonghong is one of the relocatees. Her five-member family moved here in 2018 along with nearly 180 other villagers. She used to live in a tiny village with just 10 people. Although the village was connected with other parts of Guangxi after the roads were built, people's living standards did not improve significantly.

Ben's husband became a migrant worker while she stayed in the village, looking after the children and farming. But when the children grew older, there were no schools nearby and she had to rent a small house in an urban area. It meant constant travel back and forth between the village and the city.

So when the relocation policy was implemented, Ben was one of the first poor families in Yizhou to move into the relocation area. Last year, she was elected secretary of the community branch of the CPC.

During the battle on poverty, people living in remote areas with limited or no income have been offered opportunities to relocate to new housing in more developed areas, with the government paying a fraction or the entire amount for the new housing. To ensure their livelihood, factories and workshops have been established in the community or nearby, providing jobs to residents.

"After we moved here, my husband returned and found a job nearby and we were finally reunited," Ben said. "Without the government support, we might never be able to afford living in the city."

the villages had been connected to each other by concrete roads and to the outside world through highways.

Now Qin no longer needs to carry his baskets and walk for hours to sell them. The buyers drive up to his home every month. He has built a new house in place of the old ramshackle one. He lives on one floor while the other is used to breed silkworms.

However, some villagers have chosen to stay where they were. In January, there were still 131 impoverished people in Zhadong.

“Many of them are elderly people,” Xie said. “They have lived in the village throughout their life and are emotionally attached to the place. But though they chose not to relocate, we will ensure that they have improved housing.”

In early 2016, over 100 families in

Zhadong still lived in old adobe houses with leaky roofs and cracked walls. During the rainy season, the houses were liable to collapse, posing a threat to life.

To improve the environments, the local government has renovated the dilapidated houses or built new brick ones with bedrooms, kitchens and toilets.

New growth drivers

Zhadong is also witnessing the develop-

ment of distinctive industries. Passion fruit cultivation is one of them.

Qin Yongqiu left the village a few years ago with her husband to work in Yizhou but returned when the new roads were built. Following Xie’s advice, they started growing passion fruit in their corn field.

The soil in the village is suitable for growing the cash crop, which fetches greater revenue than corn. According to Xie, growing corn in a small plot generated



ZHANGWEI

An aerial view of Zhadong

around 300 yuan (\$44) per year. However, passion fruit can triple or quadruple the income. To encourage farmers to plant the new crop, the government has provided them free seeds and subsidies.

This year, due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Qins could not work in their fruit orchard for several months under virus prevention measures. Then came the floods in July and August, severely affecting the crop in the entire village. Her husband had to leave again to work outside. So Qin Yongqiu is being helped by the villagers' committee to find a new source of income.

She is not alone. Silkworm farmer Qin Yongfu has also suffered headwinds. Though Yizhou has many silk processing enterprises, which export to more than 10 countries and regions such as Japan, Italy and Romania, the pandemic has halted exports.

So he is considering branching out into another industry. Cattle raising has become a profitable industry in recent years with a high domestic demand, and he is keen to expand to beef cattle breeding.

Catalyst for change

Five years ago, Zhadong had 314 people living below the poverty line, almost 49 percent of the population. But after these years of efforts, by the end of August this year, only 16 people—six families—were still on the list of the registered poor. By September, the entire village had enough food and clothing, access to compulsory education and basic medical services as well as safe housing. The official confirmation that Zhadong has been removed from the list of impoverished villages is expected soon.

Xie attributes the change to the transformation in villagers' way of thinking. Previously, some were not aware they were impoverished and lacked the willingness to change things. This has changed after the roads were built, distinctive industries developed and relocation started.

"Along with the development of the village, more and more people have started to proactively explore new ways to improve their income and step out of poverty, which is a major progress," he said. ■



An old adobe house in Zhadong on August 31



Farmers work in the field in Zhadong on August 30

COVER STORY

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Military vet picked for spearheading poverty alleviation fulfills a village's dreams

By Li Yifan

Four years ago, when Xie Wanju, a military veteran, was selected to head the poverty alleviation work in Zhadong, a mountainous village in Hechi, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China, he was reluctant. The job came with a lot of pressure and would leave him little time for his family. Though he finally accepted his new position—First Secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhadong Village Branch—all he wanted was the two-year term to come to an end as soon as possible, even before he had gone there.

But when he finally reached the village, the abject poverty he saw there jerked him out of his reluctance. “There was only a small path in the mountains and it took me four hours to reach my first household,” Xie told *Beijing Review*. “I had to clamber up using my hands as well. The house was dilapidated, like the other houses in the village, and couldn’t keep the rain and wind

out. In their cooking pot there was nothing but corn and wild roots.”

It was hard to believe that such dire poverty existed only 20 km from the flourishing district of Yizhou, where he lived. “I must do something here,” he thought.

So he threw himself into his new assignment with fervor. His first strategy was to develop new agricultural industries with local characteristics and get roads built to connect the village to the outside world.

China’s vast rural areas have long been plagued by poverty. As part of the drive to eradicate poverty by the end of 2020, over 200,000 first secretaries like Xie have been chosen based on their outstanding performance in other jobs, and sent to impoverished villages nationwide to implement targeted poverty alleviation measures suiting individual villages.

Finding a way out of poverty for

Zhadong was a huge challenge. Xie explored the village and found it had limited arable land and the soil was of poor quality. Villagers grew some rice, corn and soybean but the crops didn’t bring them much money. So he decided he would ask them to plant cash crops instead. After calculations, he picked on the passion fruit, as it can survive poor soil and grows fast.

To his surprise, the villagers rejected his proposal. They didn’t think passion fruit, something they had never even heard of before, would lead them to prosperity. They put their trust in the traditional crops grown in the village for generations. Worse still, he found some villagers were resigned to their poverty.

“At that moment, I realized that the core of poverty alleviation is to persuade people to take action; to awaken their desire to end poverty, instead of trying to make them do something against their will,” he said.

That was the toughest challenge. To persuade them, Xie and the villagers’ committee staff decided to lead by example. They planted passion fruit saplings in a garden and when the fruit ripened, sold them successfully. Seeing that the fruit sold at a good price, some villagers were then swayed into following suit. Together with Xie, they planted saplings in the land owned by the village collective. After the fruit brought them money, the more adventurous villagers began to plant the saplings in their own plots.

At the end of 2019, the village was growing the fruit on almost 20 hectares and some of the villagers had managed to get rid of poverty.

“As Party officials, we have to set an example first,” Xie said. “When the fruit ripens, we help the villagers sell it through various channels.”

Though passion fruit planting turned out to be a success, not every household could grow it due to differences in the soil of their fields. Xie had to think of other



The passion fruit is now a prime cash crop in Zhadong, a village in Hechi, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, south China



Xie Wanju (right), First Secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhadong Village Branch, briefs a Japanese journalist on growing watermelons on August 28

alternatives. The villagers' committee introduced other plant varieties, first growing them themselves and recommending them to villagers only after they brought in profits.

Xie is proud about the fruits and vegetables he has carefully selected for the villagers to grow. For instance, the yellow watermelon has been chosen for its size is right for a family of three. An eggplant variety has been selected for being both tasty and easy to grow.

"We still have six households living in poverty, with 16 members in all. We have already helped them access improved housing and clean drinking water. They now have stable incomes and we are confident we can steer all the villagers toward a much better life," he said with confidence.

When the two-year term ended, Xie was unwilling to leave. "The roads were still under construction and the work to develop

industries for poverty alleviation had not been finished yet," he said. He decided to ask for an extension.

Almost three more years have passed since then and Zhadong is no longer the poor village Xie had found on his arrival. It has concrete roads, the villagers have moved into new brick houses, their incomes are growing and so is their happiness.

Currently, Zhadong is awaiting an official assessment as to whether it has met the standards to be removed from the list of impoverished villages. But Xie's work is not over yet, not by a long chalk. His phone keeps ringing with queries, he has detailed reports to write on the work in the village, and he still keeps his hand in the daily farming.

On a scorching hot day, he could be seen donning his straw hat and carrying his scissors and hoe to a passion fruit and wa-

termelon orchard, where he got busy with pruning, watering, digging and removing weeds.

He is also planning future development of the village. His ideas include cattle breeding and rural tourism. To his joy, a lot of young people who used to do odd jobs in the cities have come back. They are now working on the new economic projects.

He often talks to them about the future of the village. "Poverty alleviation is only the first step toward a moderately prosperous life for the entire village, and my work is just the beginning of this first step," he said. "Ultimately, lasting prosperity of the village depends on the young generations' efforts." ■

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COVER STORY

AN UNUSUAL HELPER

Retired police officer from Luxembourg joins efforts to eradicate poverty By Liu Ting

Zhadong, a remote village in south China, has gone through notable changes in the past three years during a campaign against poverty. Every villager has witnessed the process, including 60-year-old Nico Hansen, a retired police officer from Luxembourg. He has stayed in the village since early 2018.

After retiring, Hansen came to China as a tourist in 2015. Stunned by the fantastic scenery and fascinated with the rich culture in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, he settled down in Hechi.

In March 2018, a Chinese friend asked

him to go to a nearby village to help with some farm work. He went there, not knowing that this small favor would end up in an over-two-year stay.

The village was like a heavenly retreat in Hansen's eyes. With mist cloaking the green mountains, its tranquility and beauty looked surreal. But as he stepped into the villagers' houses, he was sad to find nothing but dire poverty.

"It broke my heart," Hansen told *Beijing Review*. "It gave me motivation to help these people."

Decision to stay

The village had been struggling with poverty for years. When Hansen arrived there, half of the village didn't have a paved asphalt road. Walking was the only way to get to other places.

"No one could have imagined that at the end of the dirt road, there were houses and people lived there," Hansen said. With cracks in the wall and leaking roofs, many of the houses were dangerous to live in.

He also found that the villagers fetched



Nico Hansen prunes passion fruit vines in Zhadong Village, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China, on August 28

drinking water from a reservoir. "The water was dirty and the reservoir was full of frogs and snakes," Hansen said.

He decided to stay in the village to help with the poverty alleviation work and regarded it as the new goal of his life. He met Xie Wanju, First Secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhadong Village Branch, and expressed his idea.

Xie didn't take it seriously. This foreigner, holding a camera and wearing sunglasses, looked more like a tourist. The poverty alleviation work in the village was hard, even for the locals. What could a foreigner, who couldn't speak Chinese and knew nothing of the village, do?

He thought the foreigner made the decision on impulse and replied, "You can stay, but you won't get paid for whatever you do." Hansen agreed.

To get familiar with the village and figure out what he could do, Hansen followed Xie everywhere in the village. At first, his appearance attracted many curious eyes as it was very rare for a foreigner to show up in the village. But gradually, they got used to him.

A foreign local

In the old days, the villagers relied solely on corn for their living. Xie encouraged them to take up niche income-generating activities such as growing passion fruit and yellow watermelon and breeding silkworm.

Road, water and housing were three key issues in the village. Among them, roads were of utmost importance. After walking around the village, Hansen mapped out what he could do for the road plan. He and Xie, a retired police officer and a veteran, spent four hours each day walking in the village, getting every detail of the geographical conditions. United by a common goal, they soon became bosom pals, despite the language barrier.

Based on their research, and along with financial support from the local government and donations, a paved road was finally built.

With the road, agricultural products can be more easily transported to markets. In Hechi, a vending station was set up exclusively for selling products from the village. At peak harvest season, they would set up street stalls in the city with Hansen pitching in to promote the products.

Villagers now regard him as a local. He



Nico Hansen and Xie Wanju feed silkworms in Zhadong on August 28

followed Xie to every household and learnt to speak simple sentences in the Zhuang language. He saw Xie write down the problems of every family in his notebook and try his best to solve them even though some of the issues were beyond Xie's responsibility. "In Luxembourg, the government provides the poor with subsidies; they give money and do nothing more. Here, village leaders assist the poor to move out of poverty in person, giving them new ideas and cheering them up," Hansen said.

Now the village has taken on a brand new look compared with three years ago. The residents have access to tap water and the government built new houses for the villagers living in cracked old houses free.

"The changes in Zhadong in the past three years demonstrate how successful China's poverty alleviation is. I believe the same changes have happened in many other villages all over China," Hansen said. "In Europe and in the rest of the world, everybody is talking about China's poverty eradication drive. This year, the United Nations said that the Chinese model should

be adopted by other countries."

Despite all the energy and effort he has put into eradicating poverty in Zhadong, Hansen has never asked for a penny. The experience in the village is precious to him and makes him feel content and happy, which, in his own words, is far more precious than money.

Looking ahead, Hansen said Zhadong will develop ecotourism so that more people can visit this rural paradise. He also hopes that his efforts will pay off and that the younger generations now working as migrant workers in cities will come back to Zhadong and contribute to its revival. ■



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President Xi Jinping addresses a high-level meeting to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN via video link on September 21

A China Plan for Sustainable Development

At a meeting on September 21 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN and also at the general debate of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly on September 22, President Xi Jinping shared his thoughts on global development and the role of the UN in the post-novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) era. Edited excerpts of Xinhua News Agency reports follow:

At the high-level meeting to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN, President Xi Jinping urged all countries to oppose unilateralism, bullying and acting like the "boss of the world." Stressing that the UN must stand firm for justice, Xi said no country has the right to dominate global affairs, control the destiny of others, or keep all development advantages for itself. The representation of developing countries must be increased so that the UN is more balanced in reflecting the interests and wishes of the majority of countries in the world.

Rule-based relations

Xi said the UN must uphold the rule of law. Relations among countries and coordination of their interests must be based only on rules and institutions. "They must not be lorded over by those who wave a strong fist at others."

Big countries should lead by example in advocating and upholding the international rule of law and honoring their commitments, he added. "There must be no exceptionalism or double standard. Nor should international law be distorted and used as a pretext to undermine other countries' legitimate rights and interests or world peace and stability."

The Chinese president said the UN must promote cooperation, since "a Cold War mentality, ideological lines or zero-sum game are no solution to a country's problems, still less an answer to humanity's common challenges." "What we need to do is to replace conflict with dialogue, coercion with consultation and zero-sum with win-win," he added. Xi also said the UN must focus on real action: "To put into practice the principle of multilateralism, we must act, not just talk. There must be a cure, not just a therapy."

The UN should aim at problem solving and move toward tangible outcomes as it advances security, development and human rights in parallel, he added. In particular, priority should be given to addressing non-traditional security challenges such as public health.

An extraordinary journey

Xi lauded the UN's role in 75 years, saying it has traveled an extraordinary journey. The 75 years have seen dramatic progress in human society and profound changes in the international situation, and been a period of rapid development of multilateralism.

He said China firmly defends the central role of the UN in international affairs,

the UN-centered international system and the international order underpinned by international law. "Let us renew our firm commitment to multilateralism and work to promote a community with a shared future for humanity," he said.

Addressing the general debate of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly on September 22, which was held virtually for the first time due to the pandemic, Xi said countries should put people and life first and enhance solidarity. "COVID-19 reminds us that we are living in an interconnected global village with a common stake. This is why we should embrace the vision of a community with a shared future in which everyone is bound together," he said, calling on countries to see each other as members of the same big family, pursue win-win cooperation, rise above ideological disputes and not to fall into the trap of "clash of civilizations."

"We should respect a country's independent choice of development path and model," he said. No country can gain from others' difficulties or maintain stability by taking advantage of others' troubles. Any attempt to politicize the pandemic or stigmatize must be rejected. Concern should be shown for the need of developing countries, especially African countries.

Xi said economic globalization is an indisputable reality and a historical trend. The world will never return to isolation, and no one can sever the ties between countries. He called for full and balanced development that delivers benefit to people from all countries, sectors and backgrounds in an equitable way. He also called on countries to pursue open and inclusive development, remain committed to building an open world economy, and uphold the multilateral trading regime with the World Trade Organization as its cornerstone.

"We should say no to unilateralism and protectionism, and work to ensure the stable and smooth functioning of global industrial and supply chains," he said.

Green revolution

The pandemic reminds the world that humankind should launch a green revolution and move faster to create a green way of development and life, Xi said, urging all countries to pursue innovative, coordinated, green and open development for all, seize the historic opportunities presented by the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, and achieve a green

recovery of the world economy in the post-COVID-19 era.

China will scale up its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions by adopting more vigorous policies and measures, he said. China aims to ensure its carbon dioxide emissions peak before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

COVID-19 is not only a major test of the governance capacity of countries but also a test of the global governance system. "We should stay true to multilateralism and safeguard the international system with the UN at its core," he said.

Global governance should be based on the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits to ensure all countries enjoy equal rights and opportunities and follow the same rules. The global governance system should adapt itself to evolving global political and economic dynamics, meet global challenges and embrace the underlying trend of peace, development and win-win cooperation.

Competition between countries should be positive and healthy and not breach the moral standard, Xi said. He called on major countries to provide more global public goods, take up their due responsibilities and live up to people's expectations. "We have no intention to fight either a Cold War or a hot war with any country," he said, adding that China will continue to narrow differences and resolve disputes with others through dialogue and negotiation.

Ruan Zongze, Executive Vice President of the China Institute of International Studies, said Xi's remarks once again show that solidarity and cooperation is the most powerful weapon in the face of COVID-19.

Instead of shying away from problems, China is actively promoting a new type of better and balanced globalization, and contributing a China plan to achieve sustainable development for all UN member states, Ruan said.

"China's commitment to promoting an open world economy represents the historical trend of globalization and the general direction of world development, which speaks volumes about China's sense of responsibility as a major country," said Gao Fei, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University. ■

Turning Challenge Into Opportunity

China responds to U.S. attempts at decoupling with opening up and innovation

By Tao Wenzhao



The author is a researcher with the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Discussions about a possible China-U.S. decoupling have been ongoing for over a year, with scholars from many countries airing various opinions. Even though the U.S. hasn't formally defined its policy, related remarks by President Donald Trump and his team, as well as their actions over the past two years, show that their decoupling has both long-term and near-term considerations.

Ultimately, they want to cut off exchanges in all aspects between the two countries and downgrade bilateral interactions to the level of the U.S.-Soviet Union relationship during the Cold War, as Trump said the U.S. reserves "complete decoupling from

China" as a policy option. Currently, the U.S. strategic orientation is to make every effort possible to limit, restrain and reduce cooperation with China and suppress China by all means.

Unrealistic attempts

A full decoupling between China and the U.S. is impossible. Since they established diplomatic ties four decades ago, there have been close and complex links between the two societies, which can't be cut off with a single executive order by any government. The two economies are inseparable due to their extensive interdependence.

China boasts tremendous development potential and is expected to continue contributing a third of global economic growth over the next decade. With a population of 1.4 billion, its huge consumption potential is appealing to U.S. businesses.

More importantly, it is up to the market to decide whether the world's two largest

economies will decouple. An annual report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai showed that U.S. businesses still see the Chinese market as a great opportunity. Despite trade and political tensions between the two countries, 92 percent of these firms have no plans to leave China, with more than two thirds saying they will maintain their current staff size. Only 4.3 percent said they would reshore their businesses in the U.S., mostly small companies.

Through the past decades of globalization, China has become an important part of the world economy. In recent years in particular, it has worked hard to develop balanced trade, with imports from and exports to ASEAN and EU countries both growing rapidly. Therefore, the U.S. clamor about decoupling will disrupt global industrial and supply chains, and has stirred profound anxiety in the international community. Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's *Foreign Affairs* article titled *Endangered Asian Century* and remarks by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other EU officials indicate that other countries will not follow suit if the U.S. seeks to decouple from China.

For many U.S. allies and partners, trade with China is also essential to their economic growth. Thus their reaction to China's development is different from the U.S. While the U.S. worries about a possible Chinese challenge to its global hegemony, these countries don't share that concern.

It is normal for a business to enter into or exit from an overseas market or relocate its supply chains in line with supply-demand changes, but such decisions have nothing to do with the so-called decoupling.

Currently, the intensified U.S. efforts to suppress China in an all-around manner have severely affected cooperation between the two countries, particularly on core technologies. For many years, the U.S. has led global scientific research and technological innovation, boasting the most Nobel laureates and



The 2020 Global Key & Core Technology Innovation Conference opens in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province in northwest China, on September 16

intellectual property rights (IPRs). Its information technology industry has been the most developed in the world since the 1990s.

The U.S. remains by and large the global tech leader, but in some areas, such as 5G and artificial intelligence, China has either overtaken the U.S. or is quickly catching up. This is unacceptable to the U.S. that wants to maintain its leadership.

The U.S. focus is on chips. The Trump administration has issued multiple executive orders, prohibiting government agencies and private firms from using Chinese tech giant Huawei's technologies and products. It has also banned U.S. firms from doing business with or supplying chips to Huawei, and forced foreign companies using U.S. technologies to cut off business relations with Huawei by threatening them with long-arm jurisdiction and sanctions. Top U.S. officials have spared no efforts in pressuring European allies and partners to exclude Huawei in their 5G deployment, resorting to carrot-and-stick tactics. The Trump administration's suppression of Huawei, a private firm, is unprecedented in international relations history.

But the crackdown on Huawei doesn't hurt the company alone. Huawei is a major client of many U.S. businesses. In 2019, it purchased \$18.7 billion worth of parts from them. Severing ties with Huawei will deprive these firms of one of their important sources of profit, while endangering perhaps thousands of U.S. jobs. A recent study by the Boston Consulting Group showed that in the long term, China-U.S. decoupling would result in U.S. chip manufacturers' revenues shrinking by 37 percent and greatly reducing their global market shares. Is the Trump administration ready to pay such a high price?

Remaining resolute

China has no choice but to cope with the U.S. suppression. Its main countermeasures have been opening up and innovation. China has placed great importance on opening up since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Communist Party of China Central Committee decided to make it and reform the key development drivers. Despite the U.S.-initiated trade war, the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and some unfavorable external circumstances, the commitment to opening up has remained unchanged.

China has further revised and shortened its negative list of sectors off-limits to foreign investment. The Central Government has pledged full support to the southern province of Hainan in its efforts to deepen reform, expand opening up and build the entire island into a free trade port. Beijing



A pedestrian passes by St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, the U.S., on September 20

held the world's first post-epidemic offline international fair in September for trade in services, and plans to build a comprehensive demonstration zone for expanding service trade.

China's door is opening wider to the rest of the world. This will increase its attraction to economic and trading partners all over the world, and serve as a powerful response to the U.S. decoupling threat. In the first eight months of 2020, paid-in foreign investment in China totaled 619.78 billion yuan (\$91 billion), a 2.6-percent year-on-year increase, despite the COVID-19 fallout. In August alone, it reached 84.13 billion yuan (\$12.3 billion), up 18.7 percent from a year earlier. These facts show that China's opening-up efforts have paid off.

After over 40 years of reform and opening up, China's economic growth has transformed from high speed to high quality, with a priority on mastering more core technologies through innovation. It is unrealistic for a large developing country like China to rely on overseas technologies for long-term economic progress. China is already a big manufacturing country, but not yet strong enough. It will remain vulnerable as long as it is technologically underdeveloped. Even without U.S. suppression, China has to overcome this challenge in the process of

becoming a great modern country.

In recent years, China has made some breakthroughs. For instance, its proprietary high-speed railway technologies are the most advanced in the world.

The U.S. suppression of Chinese technological progress will not ease in the foreseeable future, while bilateral competition in the field of science and technology will be long. There is a big gap between China and the U.S. in chips and semiconductor-related technologies. While U.S.-imposed restrictions bring difficulties, at the same time they give a powerful push to independent Chinese innovation.

As part of a national strategy to boost research and development, the state and enterprises are increasing their input, more efforts are being made to foster respect for knowledge and talented people in society, and IPR protection is being strengthened.

All difficulties before the industrious and intelligent Chinese people are temporary and surmountable. The U.S. attempts to contain China's development via decoupling will only backfire on itself. ■

The article was first published on the China-US Focus website

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A Sound Path

New China-EU agreement charts the course for easier trade exchanges By Dong Yifan



The author is a research fellow with China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

Chinese President Xi Jinping co-hosted a China-Germany-EU leaders' meeting in Beijing on September 14 via video link with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Germany holds the EU's rotating presidency.

The leaders reached an agreement on strengthening cooperation in major fields such as a bilateral investment treaty (BIT), climate change and the digital economy.

They also announced the signing of a bilateral geographical indication (GI) deal, which demonstrates that China-EU cooperation is on track to make new progress.

GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. For example, if suppliers label cheese products not originating from Feta as Feta cheese, they infringe upon the legitimate rights of producers in the Greek region.

There are many traditional food brands in China and the EU with unique histories, flavors and recipes. If some businesses imitate these foods and take advantage of their public recognition to promote the counterfeits, the interest of the authentic goods will be damaged. The establishment of the GI agreement will protect the agri-food sector's legitimate rights in both China and the EU.

Multiple effects

The agreement is China's first comprehensive, high-level bilateral agreement on GIs, and the first major trade pact between China and the EU in recent years, covering 100 product names from each side. The protected status in China means the names and descriptions of the European products cannot be used for similar goods. The Chinese GIs will enjoy the same status in the 27-member EU.

With the improvement of living conditions, Chinese consumers, especially those in big cities, have a growing demand for imported food. Products such as French wine, Spanish ham and Italian pasta have gained popularity among this group.

China is one of the largest markets for the EU's agri-food sector. Last year, China was the third destination for EU agri-food products, with exports totaling \$17 billion. In 2009, the EU had an agri-food trade deficit with China, but in 2019, its surplus exceeded \$10 billion. China is also the second destination of EU exports of products protected as GIs, accounting for 9 percent by value, including wines, agri-food products and spirit. Thus, it is important to establish a regime to protect the EU's GI rights in China and vice versa.

EU member states welcomed the significant deal with China. The Portuguese Government released a statement saying the GI agreement reflected the EU and China's readiness to "honor the commitments made at previous summits and apply international rules as a basis for commercial relations."

Adam Dunnett, Secretary General of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China, said the signing of the GI agreement showed that the EU and China can work together.

The deal is also helpful for food-related cultural exchanges between China and the EU. For example, the protected status of Chinese food brands such as Pixian Dou Ban (Pixian Bean Paste), Anji Bai Cha (Anji White Tea) and Panjin Da Mi (Panjin Rice) will be good advertisement for them in the EU market. On the other hand, many Chinese consumers are not familiar with European wines, but some names listed in the GI agreement may soon become household names among them. More



A tea maker processes white tea at a workshop in Anji County, Zhejiang Province in east China, on January 18



A railway worker and a business representative review shipping procedures for cargos to be delivered to European customers at Haicang Station in Xiamen, Fujian Province in southeast China, on September 13

importantly, during the period of adapting to the new rules, enterprises, consumers and government officials from China and the EU can learn why the protected GIs matter to their original countries, presenting a good opportunity to expand the influence of their cultures.

Greater significance

Beyond boosting agri-food trade, the signing of the GI agreement shows that China is determined to create a better business environment for foreign companies and enhance economic ties with the EU.

For many years, the EU has called on China to strengthen protection of European companies' interests. The agreement demonstrated how China is absorbing some EU rules and regulations in order to prevent EU brands from counterfeits.

It also means that the Chinese market is opening up wider to European food exporters, making it easier for them to reach local consumers. In fact, negotiations on the GI agreement were finalized in November 2019 during the Second China International Import Expo in Shanghai. The deal is an embodiment of China's will

to fulfill its commitment to upholding the rules-based global economic order and protecting trading partners' legitimate rights and interests.

In the future, China and the EU will work together to finish a series of economic cooperation deals.

Leaders from both sides have announced that negotiations on BIT should be finished by the end of the year. The process will most likely face more difficulties and differences on issues involving market access, state-owned enterprises and a level playing field. However, the signing of the GI agreement indicates that China and the EU can address common concerns through negotiations and that China can accept the EU getting more benefits from a deal, since the EU has much more agri-food exports to China than China has to the EU.

In addition, China will make more efforts to push forward BIT negotiations and combine China-EU economic cooperation with the process of opening up and reform.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of China-EU diplomatic ties. With the novel coronavirus pandemic leading to the worst recession of the world

economy since World War II, the international community needs more cooperation to regain economic vitality instead of unilateral action, conflict or a blame game.

Both China and the EU are major powers in the world economy, firm supporters of a multipolar world, and staunch upholders of a global order with the UN at the core. China-EU economic cooperation is not only mutually beneficial, but it also means that the two large markets in the world are more open and inclusive, and they can inject more momentum into the post-pandemic world economic recovery.

The GI agreement is a good start in furthering bilateral cooperation and charting a course for China-EU relations. Both sides are willing to accommodate each other's interests and concerns, and they can formulate common rules for trade. It also shows that communication and negotiations can create more opportunities and push greater integration between the markets in China and the EU. ■

Walking a Tightrope

Japan's new PM takes the reins of the world's third largest economy as it faces many difficulties By Shi Yongming



The author is an op-ed contributor to *Beijing Review* and a senior researcher on international studies

Yoshihide Suga, a long-time right-hand man of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, was elected to the top government post at an extraordinary parliamentary session on September 16. His campaign slogan was to carry on Abe's unfinished mission.

The political turmoil in the 1990s and at the turn of the 2010s led to a strong desire for stability in Japanese society. The long administration of Junichiro Koizumi (2001-06) and Abe (second, third and fourth terms, 2012-20) gave the people just that, even if they didn't help tackle the country's deep-rooted problems. Thus Abe's abrupt resignation in late August due

to health concerns, though shocking, did not reverse the tendency. Against this backdrop, Suga will likely continue much of Abe's policies.

Suga assumed the post of prime minister after succeeding Abe as president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). But his term as LDP leader will be limited to the remainder of Abe's three-year term until September 2021. If he wants to remain in power for longer, he may have to call a snap general election later this year to improve his chances of winning a full three-year party leadership term. It remains to be seen whether he is merely a transitional figure, or whether he will create his own era.

Down-to-earth style

Suga, 71, is from a family of strawberry farmers in rural Akita Prefecture. He moved to Tokyo after high school and then worked on a series of jobs to save enough money

for university. Finally, he enrolled in Hosei University in Tokyo in 1969, majoring in law.

Suga entered politics in 1996 by first becoming a local representative, an important way for ordinary people to embark on political careers. His successful political career is partly due to his down-to-earth work style.

He was a cabinet minister during Abe's first term as prime minister in 2006, accompanied Abe through his resignation a year later and encouraged him to make a comeback. When Abe returned as prime minister in 2012, Suga kept a low profile after being appointed chief cabinet secretary. He remained at the influential post throughout Abe's stint as the longest-serving prime minister in Japanese history. His political record suggests he could be the right man for Japan at this time.

Thorny issues

Politicians in Japan must now make a choice between maintaining stability or implementing reforms. Since the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, the nation has been struggling to find a way to restore economic development. Abenomics has had mixed success. It brought renewed profits to major companies, but small and medium-sized enterprises benefited little. Rising consumption taxes and stagnant income growth have widened the gap between the rich and the poor. For example, the number of heat strokes and resulting deaths in Tokyo rose sharply this summer, with a surprising number of people leaving their air conditioners off due to high electricity bills.

Abenomics actually has many paradoxes. For example, it encourages women to get jobs but in reality, the policy increases the burden on their families. This is probably an important reason for Japan's low fertility rate, which, in turn, limits economic growth. The younger generation feels incapable of achieving career and personal goals, giving rise to a so-called low desire society.



Yoshihide Suga (right) presents flowers to outgoing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after he was elected to succeed Abe's presidency of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in Tokyo, Japan, on September 14

Japanese politicians and society are already unable to deal with these economic and political challenges. Worse still, the rightwing elements, which remember fondly imperial times, have long rejected to appropriately reflect on wartime history, making it difficult for constructive discussions about the development direction of the country and the world at large.

All this has pushed Japanese politics back to the traditional pattern of governance. Major factions within the LDP trade interests in order to maintain political stability and prevent chaos arising from the mounting populism or external conflicts.

A balancing act

Before the LDP leadership election on September 14, all the three candidates—Suga, former Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and former Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba—outlined their policy priorities if elected. Suga stressed the need to work on Abe's unfinished policies, including normalizing ties with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and signing a peace treaty with Russia to settle a territorial dispute and formally end hostilities dating back to World War II. Kishida, the LDP's policy chief, touted the importance of "soft power" diplomacy. Ishiba focused more on continuing to expand the right of collective self-defense.

These positions, similar to Abe's, fail to address the root causes of Japan's problems, as its real challenge is how to make the right choices in the new era.

For nearly two decades, Japan has wrestled with China on the issue of national strength. It views as unacceptable that the economic aggregate of China, with 1.4 billion people, has exceeded Japan's, and believes this is what has resulted in the decline of Japan's status in the international arena.

This misleading belief has led Japan to invoke the so-called "balance of power," attempting to elevate its position by aligning itself with the U.S. and other Western countries. Abe, in his last hurrah, stressed the importance of keeping Japan's position intact. But a diplomatic policy based on its alliance with the U.S. will inevitably push Japan into being a subordinate of the super power.

The real conflict between China and the U.S. today is whether to establish a new world order in which all countries cooperate on an equal footing or to continue the U.S.-dominated hegemonic system.



Visitors make clay craft objects at the booth of the Japan National Tourism Organization during the China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing on September 5



A woman walks past cartoon characters wearing face masks in front of a store in Tokyo, Japan, on August 15

Japan may have a different understanding of China-U.S. ties or the future direction of the world, making it hard for the nation to overcome its self-made structural dilemmas.

Suga has indicated that he would continue Abe's policy to maintain stable China-

Japan relations. But it remains to be seen how long this will last, and whether his pragmatic diplomacy can finally get Japan out of its own mess. ■

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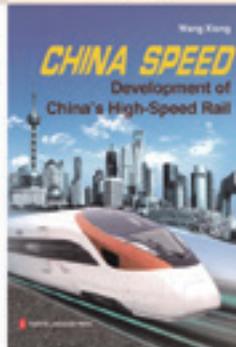
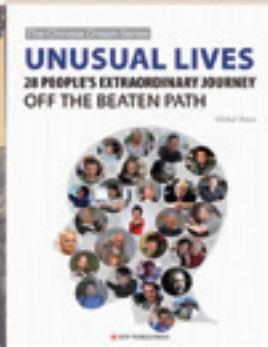
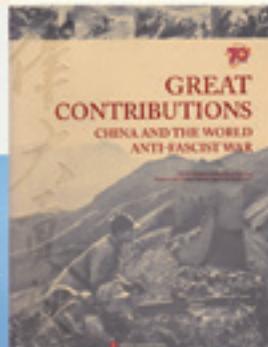
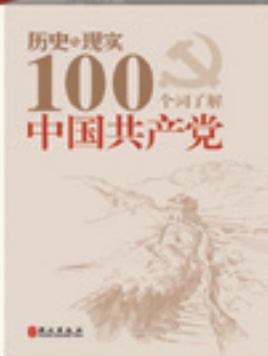
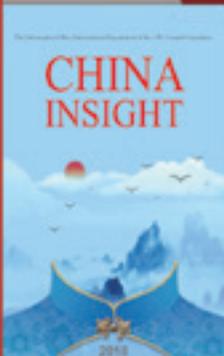
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Through Thick And Thin

Charity faces opportunities availed by new technology

By Ji Jing

At the 99 Giving Day, an annual charity event held on September 9, donations poured in from Internet users, enterprises and the Tencent Charity Foundation of technology company Tencent. They totaled more than 3 billion yuan (\$443 million), marking a new high in the cause of charity in China.

On that day, various charitable activities were held across the country. Many charities live-streamed their projects on various social media platforms while viewers donated during the live shows.

The Changchun XinYu Volunteer Association in Jilin Province in northeast China received funding from several charitable foundations.

The association engages volunteers from local universities to raise funds for disabled children and children from poor households and

offer them tutoring services and psychological counseling.

Launched in 2015 by Tencent, together with other organizations and celebrities, 99 Giving Day demonstrates the power of technology to help vulnerable groups. Tencent leverages technologies to enable the digitalization of charitable activities.

The digitalization of charitable activities is a new trend mentioned in the Blue Book of Philanthropy: Annual Report on China's Philanthropy Development released by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Social Sciences Academic Press and the China Lingshan Council for the Promotion of Philanthropy on July 26.

The report pointed out new trends as well as opportunities and challenges facing charities in China.

New trends

An increasing number of charity organizations are seeking to solve social problems with science and technology, while technology firms are providing technical solutions.

On September 5, at another annual charity event, the 95 Charity Week, launched by e-commerce giant Alibaba and others in 2017, famous actress Ma Yili said her experience of doing charitable work made her realize the importance of using science and technology in the work.

To help a child whose family couldn't afford a surgery, she once raised money by talking to her friends one by one to persuade them to donate. However, she later realized this approach was not only time- and energy-consuming but also unsustainable.

When she became the ambassador of China Social Welfare Foundation's charity program Free Lunch for Children, she learnt that people can donate through Alipay, an online payment platform of fintech firm Ant Financial, or Weibo, a social networking platform.

"Anyone can take part in charity anywhere, anytime," she said. Since the free lunch project was started, 95 percent of donations have come from ordinary Internet users. The Internet has also helped the project to be more transparent. Schools that benefit from the project are required to post photos of children having lunch on Weibo every day.

Luo Yuping, a student from the Miao ethnic group in Chengbu County, Hunan Province in central China, saw her college dream come true with help from Ant Financial. Under a charity plan of the company, when users make transactions through Alipay, a tiny portion will go into charity. Through the program, Luo received 6,000 yuan (\$880) during her high school years, coming from more than 70,000 persons who made online payments. Now a student in the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, she expressed her gratitude to her helpers at a recent charity forum.

Ant Financial has used blockchain technology to make money transactions traceable. Blockchain technology was also used for this year's 99 Giving Day event.

"In the post-pandemic age... the charity ecosystem will face more opportunities and challenges," said Charles Chen, co-founder of Tencent and founder of Tencent Charity Foundation at the opening ceremony of this year's campaign. "Tencent's charity platform will continue to deploy more technical strength and partner with charitable organizations to keep improving the transparency, digitalization and efficiency of Internet-based charities."

Financial hurdles

Although technology has promoted the growth of charity, it cannot solve all its problems. Charity



Children learn to make craft articles at the Qilu Children's Hospital in Jinan, Shandong Province in east China, on May 29. The lessons are given under the New Sunshine Wards charity project



Volunteers collect garbage and disinfect recreational facilities at Lianhuachi Park in Beijing on May 1

in China still faces many challenges.

According to the blue book, lack of funding is still the biggest challenge for charities, reported by 87.3 percent of those under study. Also, over 40 percent of charities said that they had difficulty finding suitable volunteers in 2019.

The management of charity assets is still conservative. Over two thirds of foundations said they deposited money but made no investment last year. Since the enactment of the Charity Law in 2016, charitable trusts have become an important way of asset management

for charity organizations.

In addition to funding shortage, 2019 also saw several controversial incidents related to charities. For instance, the Spring Bud Project of the China Children and Teenagers' Fund was questioned because the project, supposed to help schoolgirls from financially strapped families, was found to help male students as well.

A lack of social workers in rural areas is also a problem. Nearly 40,000 social workers are trained every year in China, yet few of them go to work in rural areas where they are needed the most. Most university graduates majoring in social work would like to find jobs in cities rather than go to work in rural areas. Also, the social work curriculum in Chinese universities has little content on agriculture and rural areas. As a result, social work students lack interest in learning about rural areas.

The blue book pointed out that to realize rural revitalization, rural social work needs to be developed by improving the talent cultivation system. ■

Charitable Organizations in China

The number of registered charitable organizations has risen rapidly. By the end of 2019, there were over 7,500 registered charity organizations, up by 40 percent year on year. In comparison, last year saw the number of social organizations in China grow by 6.2 percent to 867,000.

Overseas non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became more active in China in 2019. There were 534 overseas NGOs registered in China, mostly in Beijing and Shanghai as well as Guangdong, Yunnan and Sichuan provinces. They carried out programs in a wide range of areas including education, medical care and poverty alleviation, becoming an important force in promoting charity.

The number of volunteers has also increased. By March 16, the number of volunteers registered with real names reached 169 million, up 13.9 percent from 2018. The total volunteer service time crossed 2 billion hours, up 3.2 percent over 2018. Volunteer service covered multiple areas including medical care, education, poverty alleviation, elderly care and environmental protection. It has become an important force for national development.

(Source: *The Blue Book of Philanthropy: Annual Report on China's Philanthropy Development*)

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Green Leaves, Gold Mines

Tea industry becomes a pillar for poverty alleviation in a prefecture in central China
By Zhao Piao



A tea plantation in Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Hubei Province in central China, on August 26

If you ask the locals to name one thing that has played a key role in shaking off poverty in Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei Province, central China, many would reply, "Tea."

The warm and humid climate, plenty of rainfall and rolling hills make this area an ideal place for growing tea. But what has made this particular region stand out among numerous tea-growing areas in the country is its efforts in developing rare and high-quality teas.

At an international tea expo held in Shanghai on August 27-30, there were nearly 500 tea companies from 69 prominent tea-producing areas across China. Among them, 35 companies were from Enshi, which is something that its people could hardly have imagined just 10 years ago.

Nanmu Village in Enshi did not venture into tea growing from traditional crop planting until Tian Yunqi was elected head of the villagers'

committee in 2008.

Native to the village, Tian left home to work in the city when he was young. After making some money, he returned, hoping to help the village out of poverty. At the time, villagers lived on very limited arable land growing grain crops. Although Lichuan has a long history of tea production, poor transportation had blocked Nanmu, surrounded by mostly barren mountains, from the industry.

Tea teams

Tian saw new opportunities after the completion of a newly paved road to the village. With support from the local government, he announced a bold plan: reclaiming the farmland and the barren mountains to grow tea. Villagers mostly responded negatively, arguing that tea was not food. "If we can't sell tea and get money to buy food, what can we eat?" they asked. Tian thought about this. Even if they could

grow tea and find a market, the profit might be very low based on regular market prices and relatively higher transportation costs for the remote village.

They had to grow some special tea varieties with higher profit margin, Tian thought. He turned to Hu Jiaxiong, Deputy Director of the Lichuan Tea Bureau, for recommendation of tea breeds with "high yield and a good market." Hu introduced him to a low-yield breed instead and persuaded him to give it a try.

The breed was a black tea with cream down, which is the effect of precipitation formed after the tea cools down and a sign of high quality. Hu said that it was found in a general survey of tea species in Enshi in the early 1980s, but since the yield is very low, few people wanted to grow it before 2000.

Encouraged by the market potential of the breed, Tian bought over 20,000 seedlings and planted them in a tea garden with other breeds.

But good results didn't come easily. Compared with other tea breeds, the creamed down tea leaves are much larger and thicker and require much more skill for processing. The villagers couldn't do it and all the efforts in the first year were ultimately wasted.

Tian used his own money to compensate the financial losses of the tea growers and sought solutions from experts. Qiu Jianhong, the chief tea maker from a leading tea company in Lichuan, happened to be conducting a study on this very issue.

Qiu formed a team to work on this problem in 2009. They finally discovered that it was the withering in the processing that caused the problem. Withering is the first and a key step in black tea processing, where tea leaves are spread out in a thin layer to dry. It is hard to wither the leaves evenly by hand, which greatly affects the tea's taste.

Qiu and his team invented a special withering machine for this tea breed that proved to be very successful. After this problem was solved, the tea gained popularity among more consumers. Local tea companies then joined in poverty alleviation efforts. They paired with poor households providing financial and technical support to tea plantations, gradually making the tea the pillar industry.

In April 2018, the village's cream down black tea was the official tea of the second China-India informal summit held in Wuhan, capital city of Hubei in central China. Now, every household in the village plants tea, expanding the tea plantation from 53 hectares to over 167 hectares, including 16 hectares for the special cream down black tea. "Today, the whole village has bid farewell to poverty," Tian told *Beijing Review*. "The average annual disposal income of villagers exceeds 13,000 yuan (\$1,860) and half of the households now own cars."

Tradition to production line

Zhang Wenqi, a tea entrepreneur in Enshi, attended the tea expo in Shanghai in August and the tea he brought with him sold out soon. Zhang is from Jiangsu Province in east China. In 2004, he went to Enshi with the intent to invest in tourism. As a tea lover, he specifically wanted to buy a green tea unique to Enshi, which was included in the top 10 tea breeds in China in 1965.

But Zhang couldn't find the tea in any local market. He soon learnt that due to complicated processing techniques, the production of that tea couldn't be mechanized, while manual processing was too time consuming and labor intensive. Since the mid-1990s, the tea had virtually disappeared from the market.

This changed Zhang's initial investment plan from tourism to tea production. In 2005, he set up a tea company and worked to resume the traditional green tea processing. Luckily,



Tian Yunqi picks spring tea leaves in a tea garden in Nanmu Village, Hubei Province, central China, on April 2, 2017. Tian is the head of the villagers' committee.



Qiu Jianhong, a tea-making expert, makes cream down tea in Lichuan, Hubei Province, on April 6, 2019

there were some senior tea makers to transmit the skills. Yang Shengwei, born in 1937, was one of them. After retiring from an agricultural school in Enshi, he devoted himself to the development and promotion of Enshi tea culture. He still loves to demonstrate the complicated tea picking and processing skills at tea gardens, companies and schools.

With the expertise of these skillful tea makers, the company finally realized mechanized production of the special green tea in 2008. In addition, the opening of expressways and railways ushered in more opportunities for the tea's distribution. In 2019, its annual output was

1,820 tons and the brand value surpassed 2 billion yuan (\$285 million). In 2019, it was the official tea of the Seventh International Military Sports Council Military World Games held in Wuhan.

In July 2015, Zhang invested in the establishment of the first tea museum in Enshi. "With the display of tea culture, tea making skills, and tea ceremony performances, it has promoted the integrated development of tea and tourism," Zhang said. ■

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New Cooperation Channels

Hi-tech fairs facilitate China's opening-up policy By Wang Xiaosong



The author is a research fellow with the National Academy of Development and Strategy of Renmin University of China

The annual China International Fair for Investment and Trade (CIFIT), held in Xiamen, Fujian Province in southeast China, from September 8 to 11, had an online version too for the first time, this being a special period of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic prevention and control measures. Matching its new form, it focused on new themes as well, such as new infrastructure, the digital economy and technological innovation, exhibiting products with new technologies.

Besides CIFIT, other expos held recently

in China have also adopted new technologies and new forms to promote economic activities while ensuring COVID-19 prevention measures. The spring China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair), once postponed, was held online in June, a first in its history. Advertising campaigns, matchmakings between buyers and sellers, negotiations and all other activities made it possible for participants in any part of the world to conduct business without leaving home. The autumn edition of the fair will also be held online in October.

The China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS), held in Beijing in September, had both actual-virtual and offline-online versions. The cloud CIFTIS had three dimensional virtual exhibition booths using 5G, live-streaming and online translation. There were all-media video broadcasts of conferences, breaking geographical and language restrictions.

This year's CIFIT, Canton Fair, as well as CIFTIS were held against the backdrop of profound changes in both the domestic and overseas markets, restricted international economic activities and a global recession. The adoption of new forms at major expos has not only become an alternative in this special period, but also reflects the actual need of the market, as well as the backbone role played by innovative technologies.

Boosting two-way investment

Fairs with innovative concepts and new forms demonstrate the Chinese Government's resolution to promote high-level opening up and restore global confidence through two-way investment promotion.

Opening up is a basic national policy of China. Since the reform and opening-up policy



The online version of the China International Fair for Investment and Trade (CIFIT) on September 8

was adopted in 1978, China has been constantly improving the domestic environment to attract foreign investment, which, in turn, has advanced its open economy and stimulated its economic growth. The scale of foreign investment has expanded, foreign capital utilization has been enhanced, and the industrial structure of foreign investment optimized. Also, foreign investment in China is now increasingly spent in inland regions.

Chinese enterprises have also made big strides in investing abroad. In 2000, the government put forward the “going global” strategy for Chinese companies. Since 2012, China has further coordinated the domestic market and the international market, encouraging Chinese companies to invest in overseas markets. In 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed to encourage Chinese capital, technology, products, services and culture to go global, marking the beginning of a new phase in China’s outbound investment.

China’s investment in the world has been increasing steadily, which has not only improved Chinese companies’ international competitiveness, but also prompted industrial transformation and upgrade of China’s economy, achieving mutual benefits and common

development with other countries.

However, with an anti-globalization trend prevailing in recent years, protectionism is on the rise around the world, impeding the flow of global commodities and capital. China is facing a number of challenges such as intensified trade and economic frictions, a low-end position on the global value chain and lack of primary energy resources. If China fails to upgrade the pattern of opening up, it might lose the momentum for transformation, upgrading and sustainable development.

Since the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted global value chains and inflicted heavy losses on the world economy. It has caused a global recession and affected confidence in all walks of life. Under such circumstances, the Chinese Government has launched a raft of measures to promote opening up in an all-round way. Large-scale projects have been signed and implemented, favorable policies to facilitate two-way investment have been released and the negative list for foreign investors has been shortened. Foreign investors have wider access to the Chinese market, while the major expos have created an important platform for international cooperation and communication and high-level opening up.

CIFIT’s new mission

While the Canton Fair aims to boost commodity trade and CIFTIS focuses on service trade, CIFIT promotes investment, especially two-way investment. The three fairs, each with their own characteristics, complement one another, building a system of trade fairs that further advances the opening-up policy.

Compared with the trade in goods and services, the flow of production factors in the international market can better reflect the depth and breadth of a country’s participation in global economic activities. Investment growth has a particular bearing on high-level opening up. This year, 41 major projects were signed at CIFIT, many of which are from sectors once closed to foreign investment such as power, energy and smart transportation. This means CIFIT has implemented the shortened negative list for foreign investment and expanded the scope for foreign investors.

Taking CIFIT as an opportunity, some local governments launched high-value investment projects, including in strategic emerging industries, modern service and agriculture, infrastructure and equity cooperation. This indicates that governments at all levels in China are taking concrete action to implement the Foreign Investment Law and its supporting regulations, striving to create a stable, fair, transparent, and predictable business environment.

In the future, the government will substantially increase the sectors open to foreign investment and encourage more foreign companies to avail of the beneficiary policies. At present, the authorities are stepping up with policies and measures to stabilize foreign trade and investment as well as facilitate outbound investment.

With the impact of COVID-19, global cross-border investment has witnessed a sharp decrease. But major fairs like CIFIT demonstrate China’s unswerving determination to adhere to a high-level opening-up policy and globalization. This will promote the cross-border circulation of various production factors as well as steady and orderly development of two-way investment, accelerating global economic recovery. The presentation of major new economy projects at CIFIT indicated the future direction of development. It will shore up global investment confidence and combat the fallouts of COVID-19 for healthy development. ■



A visitor looks at a video demonstration system at CIFIT in Xiamen, Fujian Province in southeast China, on September 8

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Big But Not Strong Enough

Top 500 Chinese private firms show growth while grappling with greater problems

By Wang Jun

The top 500 private enterprises in China have all registered growth in 2019, with the city of Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province, east China, maintaining its reputation as home to the largest number—39—for 18 consecutive years. However, despite the growth in revenue, they face several challenges, with the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) this year being a new hurdle.

These are among the key facts that emerged from the Top 500 Private Enterprises Summit 2020 held in Beijing on September 10, where the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce released their annual list of the top 500 private firms and a survey report on them.

Last year, 94.6 percent of these companies took the initiative in pursuing business transformation toward high-quality development, the report said.

“Despite the challenges of increasing economic downward pressure and intensifying trade frictions last year, Chinese private enterprises advanced supply-side structural reform and achieved new breakthroughs in improving quality and profits, optimizing the corporate structure and carrying out transformation,” Gao Yunlong, chair of the federation, said at the summit.

Higher threshold

The threshold to make it to the list increased to 20.2 billion yuan (\$2.99 billion) in revenue, up by 1.62 billion yuan (\$239.64 million) from 2018.

The top three companies in terms of operating income were technology giant Huawei with an operating income of over 800 billion yuan (\$118 billion), followed by retail and investment company Suning Holdings and

non-ferrous metal company Zhengwei International with over 600 billion yuan (\$88.37 billion) each. The top 10 companies all recorded an annual sales revenue of over 300 billion yuan (\$44.38 billion).

The list has 80 enterprises with total assets of more than 100 billion yuan (\$14.79 billion), four more than last year’s number. Real estate developer Evergrande Group, which came sixth in revenue, topped in total assets, with its assets valued at 21 trillion yuan (\$326.92 billion).

Nineteen of these companies are also among the global top 500.

According to the report, the aggregate sales revenue of the top 500 reached 30.17 trillion yuan (\$4.46 trillion), a year-on-year increase of 5.85 percent. Their assets totaled 36.96 trillion yuan (\$5.47 trillion), up by 6.78 percent than a year before. Their after-tax net profits totaled 1.39 trillion yuan (\$205.62 billion), rising 8.06 percent.

By industrial structure, 331 enterprises from the secondary industry entered the list, including 288 manufacturers; and 164 from the service industry, which was seven more than in 2018. The assets and sales revenues of those from the service industry accounted for 59.34 percent and 36.34 percent of the total among the top 500 respectively.

“These figures show that China’s industrial structure has kept optimizing,” federation vice chair Huang Rong said.

R&D growth factor

The toppers have upped their investment in research and development (R&D). For 321 of the companies, R&D staff accounted for over 3 percent of their total staff while in 186 companies the proportion went beyond 10 percent.

Besides, 59 had the proportion of R&D input to their total sales revenue surpass 3 percent, and five crossed this index to over 10 percent; 402 had developed their key technologies independently. The number of valid patents held by the top 500 grew by 8.46 percent, the report said.

Considering the complicated and volatile



An engineer works at an automobile plant of Geely, which ranks 10th on the list of the top 500 Chinese private companies, in Baoji, Shaanxi Province in northwest China, on April 15



Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic tours Huawei's Innovations and Development Center in Belgrade on September 14, the day the center opened

international environment, the ace 500 have become more prudent in going global, with many slowing down their global investment programs.

In 2019, their total exports stood at \$121.24 billion, 14.77 percent lower than in the previous year. Exports by these enterprises accounted for 4.85 percent of China's total exports, 0.87 percentage point lower than in the previous year.

Among the top 500 private enterprises, 243 had overseas investment, which was 0.83 percent higher than in 2018. They invested in 1,858 overseas projects, employed 569,900 foreign staff and generated \$673.6 billion from their overseas projects.

Pressing problems

Huang said analysis of the top 500 private enterprises' performance showed some problems worthy of attention. For instance, some business indicators showed a continued slowdown in growth. Sales revenues of these enterprises slowed down by 10.59 percentage points, net profits by 5.81 percentage points, and total assets by 15.99 percentage points.

"Taxes, financing costs and raw material costs are still the major cost burdens and these

enterprises are facing more challenges in making a profit," Huang said.

According to the report, in 2019, 274 companies experienced financing difficulties, including higher costs. In 2017, the number was 254. The proportion of direct financing was still low. Only 45.4 percent got financing through the capital market and 21.8 percent through strategic investors.

Xu Lejiang, another vice chair of the federation, said compared with world-leading businesses, Chinese private enterprises still have a significant gap in innovation ability, resource utilization efficiency and information technology application. They also lag in internal governance structure as well as quality and brand efficiency. "They are large, but not strong enough," Xu said.

Another challenge was trade frictions. According to the report, 30.4 percent of the top 500 said they were increasingly influenced by the trade frictions between China and the United States. For instance, the growing tariffs slapped by the Trump administration increased their costs of exports to the U.S. and led to a decline in exports.

Besides, the uncertainties in the U.S. business environment were increasing. In addition, the number of private enterprises resorting to

litigation or arbitration to cope with frictions was also increasing.

The COVID-19 outbreak has added to the difficulties, especially for micro, small and medium ones. Mounting risks are also spreading through the industrial chains.

The survey showed that 96 percent of the top 500 private enterprises from 50 industries said the epidemic affected their production and operations. Among them, 64.2 percent said their business costs were increasing, 60.8 percent had orders but were unable to maintain normal production, and 54.8 percent said their orders were decreasing.

Profit expectations, export business, and the supply and capital chains of the top 500 had also been affected by the coronavirus, the report said.

However, despite the difficulties, the top 500 have played an active role in the implementation of national strategies, especially the coordinated development of regions. Huang said they have also been involved in poverty alleviation, pollution control and revitalization of rural areas. ■

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Supply Chain Adjustment Doesn't Mean Market Exit

Both domestic and foreign-funded companies in China have been readjusting their supply chains amid dynamics in total costs, uncertainty in tariffs, vulnerabilities of globalized supply chains and governmental push for reshoring.

Nonetheless, the supply chain shifting outside of the global manufacturing powerhouse doesn't mean companies are leaving China, according to experts.

The globalization of supply chains over the past quarter century has improved economic efficiency, but at the cost of economic resilience and sustainability, partner and emerging market strategist with Macro Research Board Partners Mehran Nakhjavani said recently.

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, arriving on the back of the U.S.-China trade tensions, has clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of global supply chains, Lucy Qiu, strategist at UBS Global Wealth Management, told Xinhua on September 16.

It is likely that some supply chain duplication will be necessary to improve resilience in the face of mounting policy risk, Nakhjavani told Xinhua.

Following the pandemic crisis, companies and governments will likely seek to diversify their supply chains or bring them closer to home, Qiu said. It doesn't necessarily mean onshoring to high-wage countries in Western Europe or North America, but perhaps Eastern Europe, Mexico, or other Asian countries.

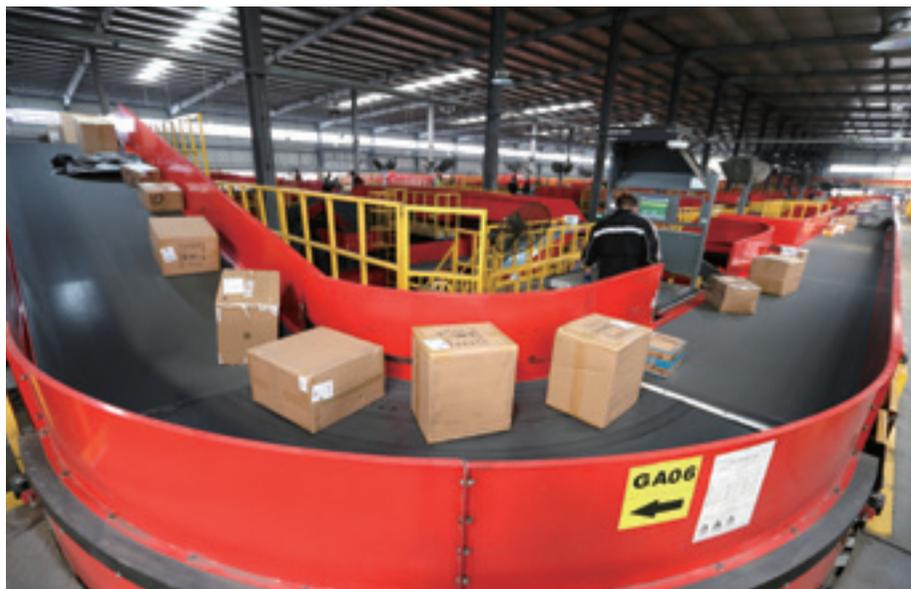
Economies such as India and some Southeast Asian or sub-Saharan African countries could possibly emerge as future "workshops of the world" at a time when the perils of protectionism have been understood, according to Nakhjavani.

"Considering the high wage costs, if companies decide to onshore, we see automation and robotics as long-term beneficiaries of this trend," Qiu said.

Qiu added that the importance of multilateral trade and economic integration should in fact grow in light of the challenging growth environment amid COVID-19.

Amid higher labor costs and China's effort to climb up the value-added ladder, supply chains have been gradually shifting out of China. This structural trend is accelerated by U.S.-China trade tensions, not caused by them, Qiu said.

With China increasingly striving to become self-reliant in high-value technology products like semiconductors and investing



Parcels are processed through an intelligent distribution system in Qingdao, Shandong Province in east China, on April 15

more in this area, low-end manufacturing should gradually leave the country, Qiu said.

There is no evidence of any hollowing out of the Chinese industrial base, however, because much of the current supply chain targets the domestic and non-U.S. markets, Qiu added.

Industrial companies are not moving the supply chain outside of China, "but what they are doing is something called China plus one," chief economist of Horizon Financial Kevin Chen told Xinhua recently.

"So basically they want to keep their facilities in China. They want to tap into the huge market in China, but also to mitigate the risk," Chen said.

Industrial companies will build up the new factories outside of China in Viet Nam, India, Malaysia, Italy and other countries, according to Chen.

U.S. companies remain committed to the China market, with 78.6 percent of companies reporting no change in their investment allocations, a 5.1-percent increase compared to 2019, according to a recent survey of 346 U.S. companies associated with AmCham Shanghai.

Business communities from Europe, China and the United States do want to be in one another's marketplaces, regardless

of what's happening at the policy level, Craig Stronberg, China analysis leader with PwC Intelligence of PwC U.S., said at a recent panel discussion.

"They want to be in China," Stronberg said referring to U.S. companies' operations in China, adding that they also want to produce Chinese goods.

In an increasingly multipolar world economy, the primary strategic objective of any multinational corporation is to maintain a strong and competitive presence in each of the major economies like the United States, the EU, China and others in order to maintain market share, supply chains and regulatory approvals in each economic zone, Nakhjavani said.

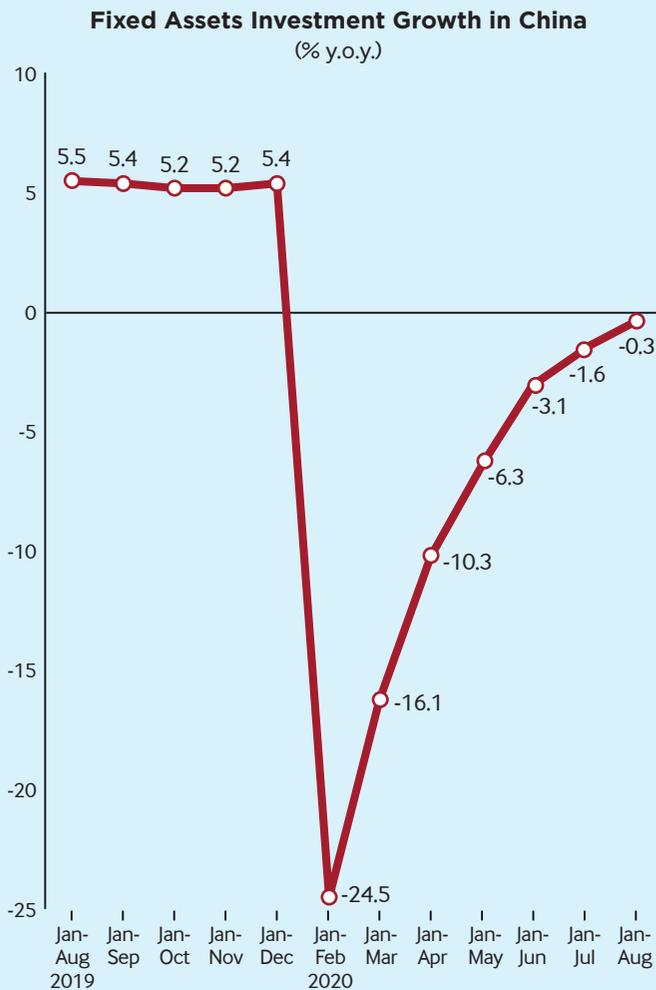
One of the few corporate defenses against tit-for-tat sanctions and other protectionist measures is the leverage afforded in each jurisdiction by having a large domestic workforce paying significant domestic taxes, according to Nakhjavani.

Financial institutions also follow similar approaches by going to China and investing a lot, but doing risk management by building other investment at the same time, according to Chen. ■

This is an edited version of an article published by Xinhua News Agency
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NUMBERS

(\$1=6.9 yuan)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

The National Development and Reform Commission approved six fixed assets investment projects with investment totaling

88.2 billion yuan in August. The projects were mainly in the transportation and information industries.

8,408 companies were listed on the National Equities Exchange and Quotations (NEEQ) as of September 18. Launched in 2013, NEEQ offers small and medium-sized enterprises a new financing channel with low costs and simple listing procedures.

China's natural gas consumption is expected to expand by 13 billion cubic meters to

320 billion cubic meters in 2020 as it steps up exploration and development of the energy source.

(Source: Xinhua News Agency)

The background of the advertisement is a vibrant, blue-toned digital cityscape. Several skyscrapers are visible, with the word "Internet" written vertically on their sides. The scene is overlaid with a grid of binary code (0s and 1s) and various data-like text elements, such as "TIME 47.739532%", "CHECKING STAT", "DATA DOCUMENT", "ORIGINAL: 2987", "DATA UNITS COM", "TURN: 092783", "PROGRAM: K2387", "S: OK -12837", and "COMPILE". The overall aesthetic is futuristic and tech-oriented.

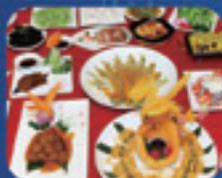
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Hail to the Harvest

Millions of farmers celebrated the third harvest festival on September 22, anticipating a bumper crop. Despite floods in the south, droughts in the north, typhoons and the novel coronavirus disease, the hard-won autumn harvest has fulfilled expectations.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said this year's autumn grain production remains on target, citing better-than-expected pest control and quick recovery from the summer floods. Autumn grain cultivation, which accounts for the bulk of the yearly production, is expected to reach 85.6 million hectares this

year, an increase of over 333,000 hectares.

The Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival was started in 2018 to promote the development of agriculture and rural areas. It coincides with the autumnal equinox, falling between September 22 and 24 during the harvest season.

The festival is also a stimulus to farmers to participate in the development of the areas where they live and work. ■

(Photos by Xinhua News Agency)

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1. Celebration of a bumper harvest at Jiyang Village, Fujian Province in southeast China, on September 20

2. Villagers wear traditional Miao ethnic clothes to celebrate a bumper harvest at Dangzao Village in Guizhou Province, southwest China, on September 20

3. Children take part in an agriculture-themed game at a kindergarten in Yantai, Shandong Province, east China, on September 21

4. A visitor poses for a photo beside a granary model in Jiande, Zhejiang Province, east China, on September 22

5. Agricultural products on display in Kaifeng, Henan Province, central China, on September 22



How Can Food Delivery People's Working Conditions Be Improved?

A recent investigative report by a Chinese monthly magazine, *Renwu*, gave an insight into the working conditions of China's food delivery people, circulating widely on social media.

It revealed how food delivery drivers are pushed by companies to deliver food in an increasingly short timeframe, all at the behest of algorithms that often turn a blind eye to real-life situations including traffic conditions and regularly send them on dangerous routes (against traffic, down footpaths and on highways), and penalize them if meals are even one second late.

The system constantly assesses a driver's on-time performance and assigns a ranking, which affects whether he is assigned more work. As a result delivery

people are constantly risking their life to deliver meals on time, resulting in a rising number of traffic accidents.

Meituan and Ele.me, China's top two food delivery service platforms, responded by saying that they will make some adjustments to make life easier for their drivers. Ele.me announced that it would create a new option for customers to indicate that they don't mind waiting an extra 5 or 10 minutes for their food, while Meituan will allocate an extra 8 minutes as elastic time.

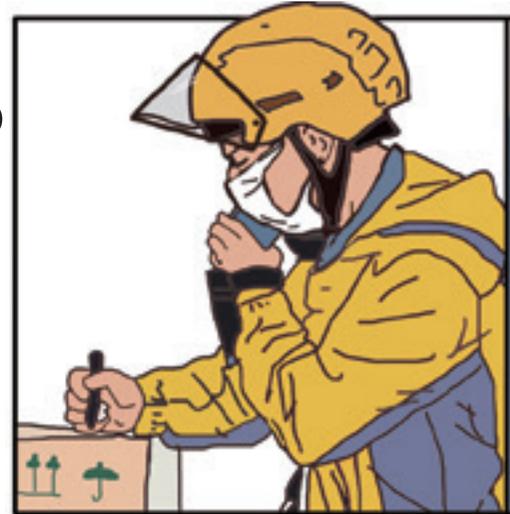
Some people believe these new measures will help to ensure drivers' safety, but most people argue that they will not help to fix the fundamental conflict between limited delivery time and drivers' safety since food delivery sites' algorithms work out routes and times based on the pursuit of maximum profit and the largest market share possible.

Danger of timeframe

Guan Yin (*Xinmin Evening News*): The article claimed that food delivery, driven by food delivery sites' algorithms, has become a very dangerous occupation since drivers often have to run red lights, speed through traffic and take risky routes in order to avoid incurring negative reviews or reduced bonuses.

According to data from food delivery sites, drivers were given a maximum of 60 minutes to deliver food within a distance of 3 km in 2016. But by 2017, the time limit was cut to 45 minutes, while in 2018, it dropped to 39 minutes. Meanwhile, data from the Shanghai police department showed that by the beginning of this year, the police had handled some 43,000 traffic violation cases involving food delivery people.

Food delivery sites' algorithms are focused on delivery time. Late delivery is liable to incur negative reviews for the drivers, declining income and ultimately, termination. As long as this rigid measuring



system remains, drivers will never see improvement in their working conditions.

Speed should not be the only criterion for food delivery service. To sustain long-term and high-quality service, it is necessary to rationally distribute costs and design the service.

Editorial (www.rednet.cn): At the end of 2017, the technical team of Meituan pointed out in an article on upgrading the delivery system that thanks to better algorithms, delivery capacity loss dropped by 19 percent, which meant that the work of five delivery people could be done by four. It indicated that the goal was efficiency and cost saving.

In other words, cutting delivery time is to attract more customers and save more costs so that the company can make bigger profits. Superficially, drivers are manipulated by algorithms, but actually, it is capital that is tightening its chokehold on them. Thus, their safety, or the safety of those sharing the streets with them, is not taken into account by corporate profit.

At the same time, the convenience brought about by digital technologies is making customers increasingly picky. They are always ready to jump on better service provided by another supplier, including food delivery services. As a result, food delivery sites fiercely compete for customers.

It's fine that they try to offer the speedi-

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est and best service, but this must be based on the science of algorithms. Sites should not infinitely bend to customer demand. They should not pressure their drivers to deliver food to customers within 5 minutes, even though customers are asking for it.

Food delivery sites keep shortening their delivery time to the point that now it is so extremely tight that a lot of drivers have to violate traffic rules to meet customer demand.

Ele.me is now giving customers a choice to wait for 5 or 10 minutes more for the arrival of their food. By doing so, it is transferring the accountability for putting drivers in dangerous situations to the customer. The company is demanding that customers sympathize with drivers, as it pretends to have no role in the situation.

Balance three parties

Ye Dan (Nanfang Daily): It's not news that food delivery people violate traffic rules due to rigid regulations imposed by food delivery sites' evaluation system. The key to getting out of this quagmire is to strike a balance among drivers' income, sites' evaluation, customers' satisfaction and industrial competition.

Cutthroat competition between food delivery companies benefits the customer, since the quicker food is delivered, the better for the consumer. However, this also

forces drivers to deliver faster and faster. To spur their drivers, food delivery sites link their speed to performance appraisals. As a result, drivers have to weave perilously through traffic every day, risking their life in order to deliver food as quickly as possible.

Ma Jihua (zhuanlan.zhihu.com): There is an intense battle in China for food delivery market shares, so it's not easy for industrial titans to forge reforms at this critical moment. However, the dire situation facing delivery people is also obvious and complicated. But it's impossible to improve their working conditions by just blaming the companies. Food delivery is a modern service; there is nothing wrong with using algorithms since this is a result of enhanced social productivity.

Being a delivery person is a tough job, but still many people choose to do it. Many of them are in the mid- to high-income group in some cities, earning more than assembly line workers. Therefore, the spotlight shouldn't be just on their hardships, but also on the relatively "high returns" of their job.

Both consumers and drivers have the right to choose. To make delivery safer and allow drivers to have a better work life is society's aspiration. But in real life, there is a big price to be paid by the drivers: They will see their wages decline, leading to fewer people joining the delivery army. As a result, consumers will have to wait much longer for their food. The real issue is finding

a balance that all sides can accept.

A key factor in the surge in the food delivery industry is its rising efficiency. Three years of all-around inputs have shortened the delivery time by 10 minutes in China. Thus, we are not so naïve to believe that either Meituan or Ele.me will go back to three years ago.

To extend delivery time will increase business costs and consumer dissatisfaction. Algorithms will continue to push up the efficiency of the food delivery industry, otherwise cost hikes will have to be transferred to food prices, leading to a reduction in orders and lower wages for drivers.

For example, at Ele.me, food is required to be delivered to consumers in 30 minutes within a short distance, but in cities where there is a lot of traffic and the landscape is complicated, the time limit is 40 minutes, with weather conditions also taken into consideration.

Ultimately, drivers' interests should be better reflected in the design of systems and their performance assessments. And delivery companies should gradually give up the principle of always putting customers' interests first. In the long run, more care should be given to drivers and their working conditions. ■

National Interest Or Self-Interest?

By Yan Wei



When U.S. President Donald Trump allegedly downplayed the severity of the novel coronavirus in the early days of its spread, did he take his country's best interests into consideration? In his new book *Rage*, veteran journalist Bob Woodward has quoted Trump as saying that he kept information about the virus' deadliness from the public because he did not want to "create a panic."

Unsurprisingly, Trump's narrative has failed to convince Americans. When White House trade adviser Peter Navarro tried to dodge a question on September 13 about why Trump was not straightforward with the American people, a CNN host cut the interview short with a pointed statement: "The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population, and the United States has more than 20 percent of the world's coronavirus deaths."

As the coronavirus death toll in the U.S. exceeds 200,000, there has been a clarion call for reflection. It has become a common belief that if Trump had given clear and consistent warnings, the U.S. could have done better coping with the pandemic. In this context, any defense of the White House seems untenable.

Moreover, attempts by Navarro and other politicians to whitewash the Trump administration's undesirable performance can backfire. They easily remind people of other instances where those in power in Washington disguised self-interest or vested interests as national interest. Concerns are justified given controversies from the launch of the Iraq War in 2003 to Trump's recent touting of quick progress in vaccine development.

The ongoing smear campaign against China is another case in point. A few U.S. politicians purposefully refuse to tell the truth about China and the China-U.S. relationship. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, for one, has gone so far as to deny all progress made in bilateral relations over the past decades. He has also attempted to drive a wedge between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the people the Party represents and serves.

It is widely acknowledged that the verbal

For the Trump administration, now is the time to reexamine its mishandling of the coronavirus crisis, in the spirit of doing justice to the American people and the international community

offensive against China and the CPC is indicative of the U.S. intent to contain China's development and find a scapegoat for domestic policy failures in the run-up to the presidential election. The U.S. has pursued this offensive in spite of China's willingness to cooperate in the fight against the coronavirus. Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi revealed in May that China had exported at least 12 billion masks to the U.S., or 40 per capita.

In the wake of its poor handling of the pandemic, the U.S. international reputation has further declined. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center shows favorable views of the U.S. have fallen to record lows. In France and Germany, the ratio of respondents who view the U.S. positively dropped to or neared the low level recorded in 2003 when the two U.S. allies opposed the Iraq War. Pew also found that a median of just 15 percent of respondents said the U.S. has done a good job in its coronavirus response.

In the 1972 Shanghai Communique that marked the end of hostilities and paved the way for the establishment of China-U.S. diplomatic relations seven years later, the U.S. stated, "No country should claim infallibility and each country should be prepared to reexamine its own attitudes for the common good."

For the Trump administration, now is the time to reexamine its mishandling of the coronavirus crisis, in the spirit of doing justice to the American people and the international community.

In the U.S., a country founded on the primacy of the individual, the battle between self-interest and national interest has long been the norm in the political realm. At this challenging juncture, it is imperative that politicians have the courage to get rid of brinkmanship and put the latter above the former. ■

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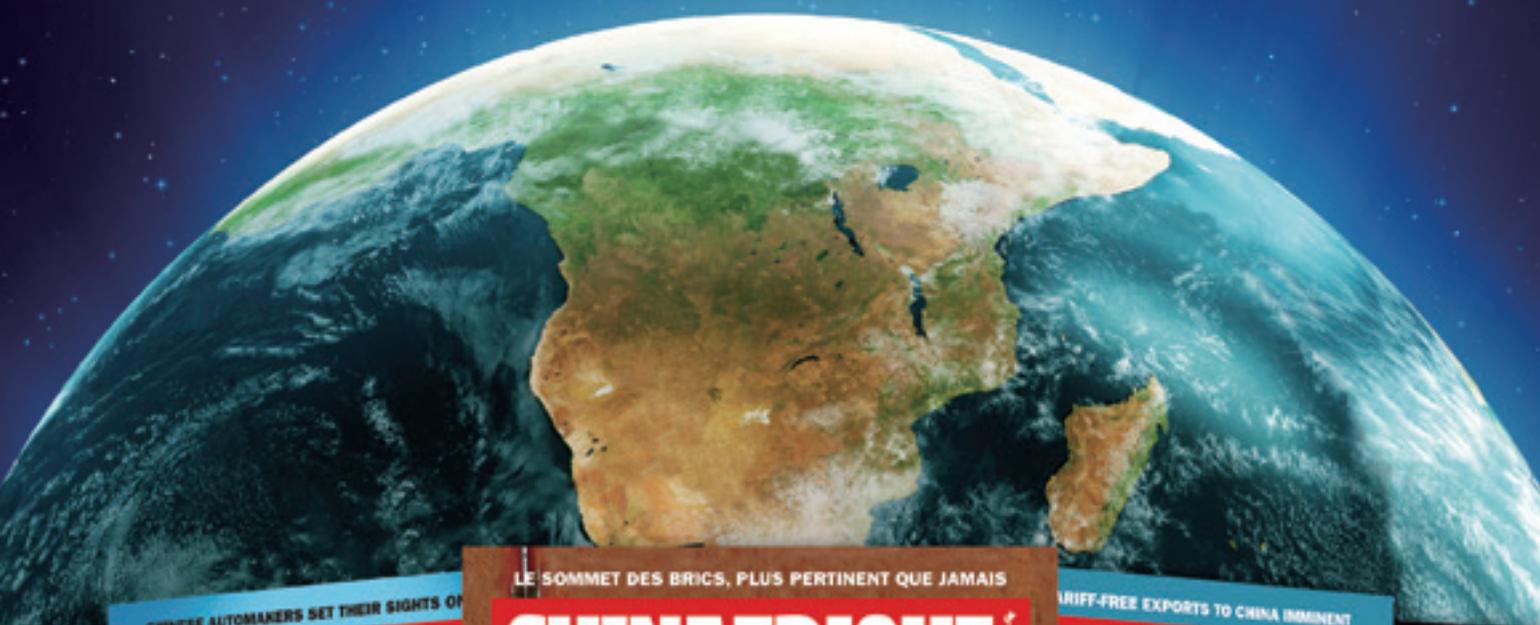
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