

GOVERNANCE: EXPANDING CHINESE DIPLOMACY P.20 | NATION: SECOND RAIL ROUTE FOR TIBET P.26

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SAILING THROUGH

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership gets going

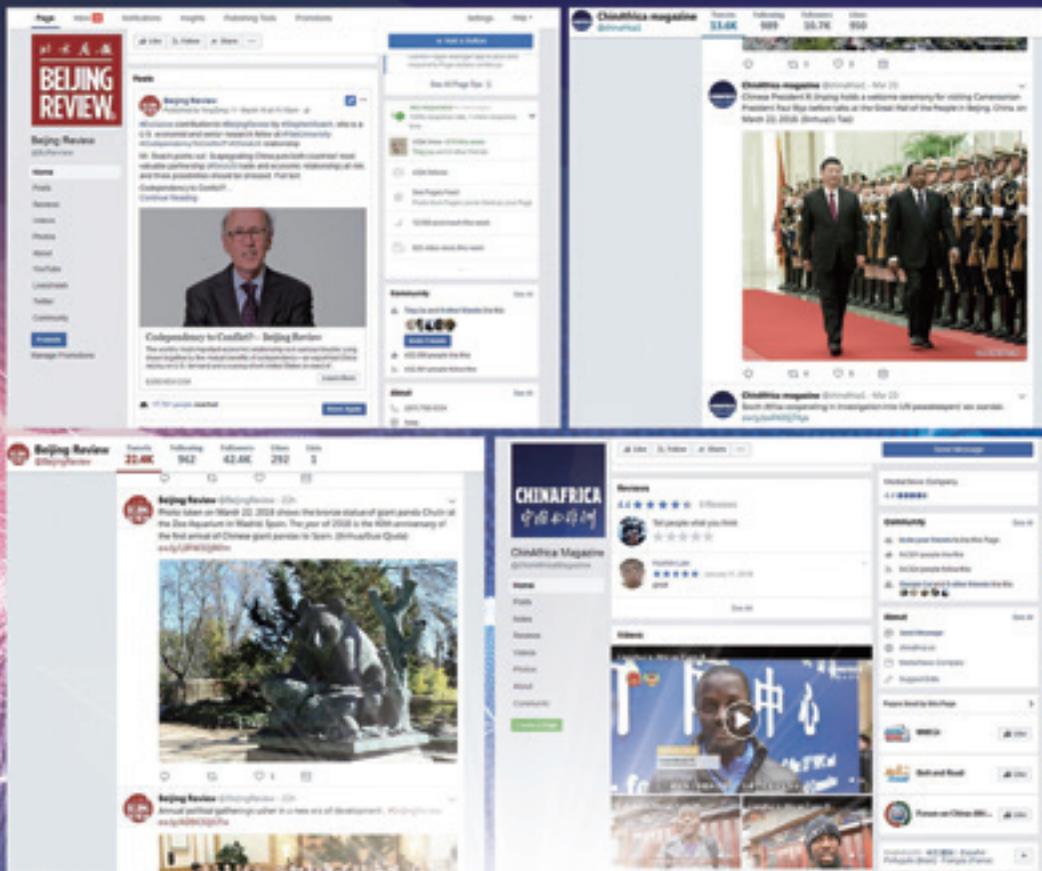
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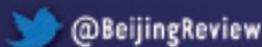
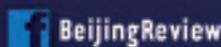
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World's Largest Free Trade Bloc Sets Sail

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement was signed on November 15, an exciting outcome after eight years of formal negotiations in 31 rounds between China, 10 ASEAN countries, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. This marks the official launch of a free trade bloc of the largest population, the largest trading scale and the greatest development potential in the world.

The 20-chapter agreement covers comprehensive market access commitments on goods, services, investment and other areas. It is a complete, modern, high-quality, and mutually beneficial free trade agreement, marking a new milestone for East Asian economic integration. The total population, economic volume and trade volume of the 15 current RCEP members account for some 30 percent of the global total, which means that about one third of the global economy makes for an integrated market.

As the novel coronavirus pandemic still wreaks havoc around the globe, the world economy has been propelled into a severe recession. Global trade and investment are shrinking; protectionism and unilateralism are escalating. Against this gloomy backdrop, the signing of the RCEP offers a ray of light and hope for those stuck in the haze. Additionally, it gives off a strong signal to the world that the signing bloc opposes unilateralism and trade protectionism, supports free trade, and upholds the multilateral trading system.

The RCEP will become an integrator of

economic and trade rules within the region, while all the 15 RCEP members will obey these rules and cooperate. In the meantime, the RCEP, accommodating the aspirations of all parties to the greatest extent, will foster inclusive and balanced development within the region and enable all parties to reap the full benefits thereof.

The RCEP agreement will lead countries in the region to achieve elevated levels of opening up in trade in goods, services and investment within its framework, greatly boost liberalization and facilitation for trade and investment across the region, and enhance the region's appeal and competitiveness. While giving a strong push to regional economic recovery as a whole and injecting new momentum into its development and prosperity, the RCEP agreement will also position itself as an important engine for global economic development.

For China particularly, the RCEP will be conducive to further optimizing the distribution of foreign trade and investment through a broader, more in-depth and diversified style of opening up, keeping in line with international trade and investment standards, creating a new-type and higher-level open economic system. It will also help Chinese industries to fully participate in market competition and improve China's ability to allocate resources across both domestic and international markets. To this end, China strongly advocates that the RCEP comes into effect at the earliest possible date. ■

WRITETOUS



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THE GONGBO NEW YEAR

The Gongbo New Year is celebrated in Baji, a village in Nyingchi, Tibet Autonomous Region in southwest China, on November 18.

According to the Tibetan calendar, the New Year's Day fell on November 16 this year. On the first morning of the Gongbo New Year, Tibetan families worship the goddess of harvest with wine and other offerings.



Winter Sports on Land

Students learn how to curl on land at a primary school in Cangzhou, Hebei Province in north China on November 17. The city has been promoting ice and snow sports on dry land in schools in recent years.

Eradicating Poverty

Xihaigu, one of China's most impoverished areas located in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China, saw its last impoverished county removed from the national poverty list on November 16.

The victory is another landmark in China's campaign to eradicate absolute poverty by the end of 2020, as the area used to be plagued by grinding poverty.

The region had seven poverty-stricken counties and two districts in southern and central Ningxia, under the administration of three cities: Guyuan, Zhongwei and Wuzhong.

According to historical records, Xihaigu used to be an oasis along the ancient Silk Road, lush in forests

and grasslands.

Since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), however, Xihaigu has gradually deteriorated into a drought-ridden and barren area due to climate change, wars, excessive logging, and reclamation for farming. In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), it was already known nationwide for its extreme poverty.

The Central Government continues to channel funds and other assistance into the region to boost animal husbandry and the farming of more lucrative crops such as mushrooms, daylilies and asparagus, as well as setting up over 300 workshops that employ mostly women.

Official data show that the population living in poverty in Ningxia, most of whom were from

Xihaigu, decreased from 1.19 million in 1982 to 18,800 at the end of 2019.

Xihaigu's natural environment is also in recovery, thanks to large-scale afforestation. Statistics show that the forest coverage rate in Guyuan increased from 1.4 percent in the 1970s to 28.4 percent in 2019, and the vegetation coverage rate exceeded 70 percent.

Poverty Relief Alliance

An alliance for poverty relief and development along the Belt and Road was set up in Yunnan Province in southwest China on November 17 to promote the sharing of experiences.

The Alliance of Poverty Reduction and Development, approved by the Alliance of

International Science Organizations (ANSO), was jointly established by 14 international scientific institutions and government organizations in countries and regions including China, Poland, and Hungary.

With its secretariat based in the city of Lincang, the alliance will focus on common regional challenges and major demands from countries along the Belt and Road in the areas of poverty reduction and development.

ANSO, launched in late 2018 under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, comprises scientific research organizations from countries participating in the initiative, as well as international organizations.

Sky Rail

A new container transport system featuring a sky rail is under construction at the Qingdao Port in Shandong Province in east China, which is expected to greatly cut logistics costs, reduce vehicular emissions and improve logistics efficiency.

Developed by the Qingdao Port in cooperation with CRRC Yangtze Co. Ltd., the new system will be in the port's automated container terminal and the entire line will be 9.5 km long.

The first of its kind in the global port industry, the unmanned container transport system will replace trucks for the transportation of containers at the port upon completion.

The cargo handling capacity of the new system can reach nearly four to five times that of road transport.

The first phase of the project will be put into operation in June of next year. Annual transportation capacity will reach 1.5 million twenty-foot equivalent units after the completion of the entire system.

New Sino-U.S. Book

Strategic planning and the ability to compete are vital to a country's future, prominent economist Chen Wenting said.

"Despite changes in the international landscape, China's

long-term growth trend will remain unchanged,” Chen, chief economist with the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said at the launch of her new book in Beijing on November 16.

The book, titled *Change*, is a collection of her essays on Sino-U.S. relations since 2016, including views expressed during discussions with leading U.S. scholars and analyses of the U.S. Government’s China policy adjustments during Donald Trump’s presidency.

Pondering on the future of Sino-U.S. relations with a sober mind is a shared mission of think tanks across both countries, former Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing stated, adding that Chen’s book introduces many new ideas that call for deeper contemplation.

Unmanned Farm

Shanghai has piloted the city’s first unmanned farm in an effort to raise farming efficiency and cut labor costs, Xinhua reported on November 17.

So far, autonomous agricultural machinery has been used in the entire farming process of over 13.33 hectares of rice fields in Waigang Township of Shanghai.

Currently, experts in Waigang are modifying more agricultural machinery, such as rice transplanters, pesticide sprayers and harvesters, into unmanned ones.

Compared with the traditional way of agriculture, unmanned farming can save more than 2 kg of seeds

and increase the yield by 150 kg per hectare.

Fuel and labor costs will be reduced by over 50 percent and 65 percent respectively, while the land use rate will go up by 0.5 to 1 percent.

Local authorities in Waigang will further promote automated farming by using technologies such as the Internet of Things, 5G and artificial intelligence.

The demonstration area of unmanned farming in Waigang is expected to be expanded to 107 hectares by the end of 2022.

Over the next five years, Shanghai plans to build 13 pilot farming areas where high-quality agriculture will be promoted.

Online Charity

China will designate more online platforms to promote programs and raise funds for charity organizations, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said in a statement on November 16.

The platforms will be picked from those which are influential and enjoy credibility on the Internet and in the charity sector. Operators of these platforms should qualify for Internet information services.

Applicants have been asked to submit their applications before December 10 and the finalists will be announced by the ministry after review and evaluation.

Online philanthropy has become popular in China as many believe it offers more convenience



Tying the Knot

A traditional Chinese group wedding is held in the Confucius Academy in Guiyang, Guizhou Province in southwest China on November 16.

and transparency compared to traditional methods of donating.

China has 7,169 registered charity organizations with 172 million volunteers across the country. Information on over 3.9 million volunteer projects has been made public and volunteers have rendered more than 2.19 billion hours of service.

Uyur Population

The population of the ethnic Uyurs in China’s Xinjiang Uyur

Autonomous Region rose by 25 percent from 10.17 million in 2010 to 12.72 million in 2018, or an increase of 2.55 million over eight years, Zhao Lijian, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on November 16.

The growth rate is about twice the 14-percent growth rate of the overall Xinjiang population, and is significantly higher than the 2-percent growth rate of the Han population, Zhao stated during a press briefing.



Police Training

Policemen from the Jinan Public Security Bureau in Jinan, capital of Shandong Province in east China, carry out a comprehensive drill on November 17.

Grain Production

The General Office of the State Council released a guideline on preventing non-grain use of arable land and stabilizing grain production on November 17.

Underscoring food security as the top priority in agricultural development, the document urged related departments to optimize the grain production structure, implement strict farmland protection policies, and use arable land properly.

It also imposed strict restrictions on converting arable land into other types of agricultural land, such as forests and gardens.

Efforts should also go into preventing the disorderly production of inedible produces with a surplus in the market, it said.

The guideline stressed fulfilling the target of protecting permanent

basic farmland, calling for efforts to regulate production and business activities, and prohibit the destructive use of the land.

The government will implement incentive policies and improve the economic compensation mechanism in major grain-producing regions while rolling out measures to encourage local governments and farmers in grain production, it said.

Investment Recovery

The growth of fixed assets investment in China is likely to accelerate in the fourth quarter of the year, leading to a mild increase for 2020, Fitch Ratings said in a recent report, adding that such a trend suggests stable growth in 2021.

The country's fixed assets investment went up by 0.8 percent year on year in the first three quarters,

the first gain in 2020, official data showed.

During that period, infrastructure investment recovery was weaker than expected, the report said. The rating agency attributed the slower growth partly to the longer-than-expected approval process and project commencement delays due to a prolonged rainy season in July.

"This may imply some investments will be carried over into the fourth quarter and early 2021," the report said.

The full-year investment growth in 2021 may be constrained by the special bond quota, which has yet to be announced, it added.

Risk Control

The government will tighten supervision and strengthen cross-department coordination to mitigate

risks of corporate bond defaults, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said on November 17.

Local governments will be required to carry out stricter supervision through measures such as project screening and inspection, Meng Wei, a spokesperson for the NDRC, told a press conference.

Efforts will be made to establish a cross-department coordination mechanism, improve information disclosure and further unify disclosure rules of the bond market. A prevention and control system will also be put in place to help identify, discover and handle cases as early as possible, while plans to reduce market risks shall be formulated, Meng said.

Amid efforts to better leverage corporate bonds to support the real economy, China began implementing a registration-based system for the public issuance of corporate bonds starting from March, and unveiled regulations on processing and approving bond issuance applications.

Despite new challenges at home and abroad, there have been no corporate bond defaults this year, Meng said.

Official data showed that the issuance of corporate bonds in China reached 476.78 billion yuan (\$72.69 billion) as of November 10, a positive growth compared with the same period last year.

Cultural Investment

A fund of funds (FOF) for cultural industry investment was launched on November 18 with a target size of 50 billion yuan (\$7.62 billion), of which 31.7 billion yuan (\$4.8 billion) has already been raised.

The FOF will focus on supporting the restructuring, mergers and acquisitions of cultural enterprises, facilitating the integration of cultural resources and industrial structure adjustment, and promoting the high-quality development of the cultural industry, Xinhua News



Fruitful Life

A villager picks tangerines in Furong Town, Hunan Province in central China, on November 14. With favorable natural conditions, the town has focused on tangerine planting, improving the income of over 600 households in 2019.



Smart Construction

Engineers of a subsidiary of the China Construction Third Engineering Bureau operate a smart robot to disseminate safety information at a construction site in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province in east China, on November 17. The constructors have adopted a smart system that integrates computing technologies and the Internet of Things to ensure safety and enhance work efficiency.

Agency reported.

It will mainly invest in news and information services, integrated media development, and new forms of cultural business, as well as tourism, sports and film industry.

The establishment of the fund, co-initiated by the Ministry of Finance, is a significant move in forging a modern cultural industry and developing a great socialist culture, Xinhua said.

5G Deployment

China has built nearly 700,000 5G base stations, more than twice the total installation in the rest of the world, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The number of terminal devices connected to the network has exceeded 180 million, as well-developed infrastructure facilitates more 5G-based applications, Vice Minister Liu Liehong said at the China Development Forum. The forum was held in Beijing on

November 11-13.

In the next three years, the country is expected to be at the introduction stage of 5G development, so industry insiders say it is necessary to make proactive moves in construction.

5G is playing an important role, especially in stabilizing investment, promoting consumption and fostering new drivers of economic development.

During the first 10 months of the year, 5G mobile phone shipments reached 124 million units with a total of 183 new models hitting the market.

Hydropower Record

The Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric project on the Yangtze River, has set a new record for annual power output, the China Three Gorges Corp. said on November 18.

Power generation reached 103.1-billion-kWh at 8:20 a.m. on November 15, surpassing the

103.098-billion-kWh record set by the Itaipu Dam in South America in 2016, it said.

The clean electricity, which otherwise would be generated through burning 31.71 million tons of standard coal equivalent, has helped reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 86.71 million tons, sulfur dioxide by 20,600 tons, and nitrogen oxides by 19,600 tons.

Featuring efficient water resource utilization, the Three Gorges project controls and prevents flood-water along the Yangtze River basin and generates electricity.

The project, which became operational in 2003, has 34 turbo-generators with a combined generating capacity of 22.5 million kw.

Coffee Park

The construction of the Starbucks China Coffee Innovation Park in Kunshan, Jiangsu Province in east China, started on November 16.

Located in the Kunshan

Economic and Technological Development Zone, the park covers 80,000 square meters. It will likely be one of Starbucks' greenest coffee roasting factories globally.

According to the management of the zone, the introduction of new technologies in roasting production in the park can reduce carbon emissions by more than 30 percent compared with traditional methods.

The park will also use more intelligent baking production and logistics distribution systems to improve coffee roasting capacity and energy efficiency.

The project was signed in March, becoming the first industrial project funded by one of the top 500 U.S. enterprises in China this year.

The zone is home to 2,497 projects from 51 countries and regions worth nearly \$40 billion. It has become a hub for global capital, technologies and talents with industries such as photoelectric semiconductors, new-energy vehicles and coffee.



Engagement for Fun

Visitors interact with animals in a farm in Gucheng Village, Huzhou City in Zhejiang Province in east China, on November 17. The farm has attracted a large number of tourists since its opening in May through integrating camping and pet-viewing activities, boosting local industrial upgrade.

THIS WEEK WORLD



UNITED KINGDOM

Government representatives sign documents on the return of 68 smuggled cultural relics from Britain to China in London on November 16. Seized by the British police in 1995, the artifacts date back up to nearly 3,000 years



EGYPT

People visit the Egyptian Museum in Cairo on November 17, as the country marked its 118th anniversary. The museum was built during the reign of Khedive Abbas Helmi II in 1897 and opened for visitors in mid-November 1902



FRANCE

French President Emmanuel Macron (left) welcomes European Council President Charles Michel ahead of the Third Paris Peace Forum at the Elysee Palace in Paris on November 12. The forum took the theme of building a better world after the coronavirus pandemic



UNITED STATES

A woman visits a mask fashion exhibition in Dallas, Texas, on November 12



THE PHILIPPINES

A resident retrieves his belongings from his destroyed home in Rizal Province after Typhoon *Varro* hit the country on November 16. The death toll exceeded 70



LATVIA

President Egils Levits (front right) and other officials attend a ceremony in capital city Riga on November 18, Latvia's 102nd Independence Day

↓ CHINESE JUDGE REELECTED TO TOP UN COURT

Xue Hanqin, Vice President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), has been reelected to the top UN judicial panel. The newly elected ICJ judges will serve for nine years, beginning on February 6 next year.

Xue was first elected to the ICJ in June 2010 and reelected in November 2011. She has been vice president of the 15-member court since February 2018. She is the first woman from China to serve on the bench, and the first female vice president of the court.

The ICJ, which is based in The Hague, the Netherlands, and began its operations in 1946, is the UN's principal judicial organ. The court's role is to settle legal disputes submitted to it by states and give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to by UN bodies such as the General Assembly and the Security Council.



Green Credit Incentive

Beijing Youth Daily

November 11

People in Shiqifang Village in Zhejiang Province, east China, have recently witnessed a unique mechanism to promote garbage sorting. They have been given a green deposit book each that records credits if they do well in sorting their garbage. The accumulated credits can be used to buy daily necessities and food, such as soap and rice, or services, including gym hours, medical services and health examinations.

Deepening industrialization and marketization generate more garbage today and

farmers can buy more with greater convenience. However, many lack understanding of garbage sorting and its importance, making it more difficult to implement garbage sorting in rural areas than in cities. Therefore, an incentive mechanism helps to form good habits. The green deposit books encourage people to participate in environmental protection and ensure they benefit from it.

Villagers with limited education have to undergo a series of changes in their understanding of garbage sorting, from shock and rejection to acceptance and making it a habit. As a new policy, garbage sorting reduces costs and enhances people's benefits if they follow the rules. Also, it is helpful in adopting advanced technologies to make waste sorting convenient and easy.

New Mobile Phone Virus

China Youth Daily

November 13

During the Double 11 shopping festival on November 11, many people were bombarded with marketing messages introducing products and discount campaigns. Some unsubscribed from those advertisers but spam messages continued to disturb their lives every day.

Before messaging apps like WeChat became popular, text messaging used to be a major way to connect with friends and family. Although we received a few advertisements from time to time, the inboxes were not dominated by marketing messages.

In response to the proliferation of marketing messages during the shopping festival, *Beijing Evening News*, *Southern Metropolis Daily* and other media conducted a survey. Some consumers said though they had unsubscribed from those pestering companies, they were still bothered by over 10 unwanted messages every day.

Also, some companies sent them five or more similar advertisements in succession under the names of different e-commerce platforms. Marketing texts have become a torment for consumers, who are asking the authorities to pay attention to this issue with effective regulations on



“The role of China and the United States in global affairs will depend on cooperation rather than conflict. Both stand to lose as will the rest of the world if the China-U.S. conflicts and differences intensify.”

Chandran Nair, the founder and CEO of The Global Institute for Tomorrow, in an article in *China Daily* on November 19

“BRICS should commit to improving global health systems and assisting the World Health Organization to fight the [COVID-19] pandemic.

The production and distribution of vaccines being developed by China and Russia can play a key role in that push.”

Mauricio Santoro, a professor on international relations at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency on November 19



Police officers tell residents how to avoid mobile phone fraud in Shanghai, east China, on August 9, 2018

advertising messages.

The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Consumer Rights and Interests says operators should not call consumers for marketing purposes or send commercial messages to their e-mails without their consent. However, in practice, we rarely see vendors asking for people's permission.

On the contrary, operators take advantage of the disclosure of personal data to make illegal profit. Telecom service providers and market regulators should take countermeasures to standardize marketing actions and ensure advertising messages do not violate people's privacy. The authorities should punish the companies that violate rules to protect the legitimate rights and interests of mobile phone users.

Linking Markets, Bridging Gaps

People's Daily
November 12

For revitalizing rural areas, it is vital to improve the urban and rural labor markets and bridge the gaps between them.

When the urban and rural labor markets are closely connected, it not only broadens ways for villagers to increase their income but also improves resource allocation in cities and the countryside. With a combined market providing employment information, the surplus rural labor can shift from agricultural activities to cities' service industries. That can increase both their incomes and consumption. The improvement will be a fundamental force during urban-rural integration.

Also, in this way, rural laborers can understand the market competition and enhance their ability to adapt to the situation.

At the same time, local governments should design an incentive mechanism for people returning to villages and starting their own businesses. With entrepreneurship subsidies and infrastructural support, college graduates, migrant workers, veterans, and other cities' talents can contribute to rural innovation and create more jobs.

An improved support system including training, professional title appraisal and social security will guarantee an integrated urban-rural market. Governments at all levels should launch projects to nurture new farmers, who are modern agricultural practitioners working in the sector with complementary professional skills.

↓ TABLE TENNIS STAR CREATES RECORD

Fan Zhendong became the first winner of three straight World Cup titles after he was crowned at the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF)'s World Cup finals in Weihai, Shandong Province in east China, on November 15.

The 23-year-old world No.1 overcame fellow Chinese star, Ma Long, the No.2 seed. He won four rounds in a thrilling seven-game final to clinch his third consecutive World Cup title and fourth altogether. He is the second player to win four World Cup titles in the 40-year history of the event, tying with table tennis legend Ma Lin.

"It feels so good to win a championship. I cherish this one even more as it comes from a very tough match," Fan said.

After joining the Chinese national table tennis team in 2012 as its youngest member, Fan became the youngest ITTF World Tour Champion and the youngest World Table Tennis Champion.



"Some European and American countries have hyped that countries should not rely on external supplies for the sake of national security. The G20 has noticed such a trend. Its contribution proves the importance of multilateralism and can help stabilize the global situation."

Su Xiaohui, a researcher with China Institute of International Studies in an article in *Global Times* on November 18

"It's absolutely essential that the U.S. and China, which are the two largest carbon emitters in the world, work together. Without that cooperation, we're just not going to reach our global climate goals."

Barbara Finamore, Senior Strategic Director for Asia at the Natural Resources Defense Council, in an interview with CGTN on November 19

COVER STORY

MARCH FORWARD

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement was signed on November 15, marking a landmark achievement in East Asian regional integration. Scholars believe the pact will facilitate regional economic and trade cooperation, and inject new stability into an unstable world. Edited excerpts of their comments follow:



The Guangxi Pingxiang Integrated Free Trade Zone in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in south China on April 13. The zone is a flagship project for facilitating economic interaction between China and ASEAN countries