OPINION: THE ASIAD AT A GLANCE P.28 | FEATURES: QUESTIONABLE LIVESTREAM BEHAVIOR P.40

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DESIGN OF A DECADE

The Belt and Road Initiative, a game changer

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Executive Assistant: Zhao Wei
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Tel: 52-55-55127271
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E-mail: chinahoymx@gmail.com
Peru Office (Lima)
Chief: Meng Kexin
Tel: 0051-959212702
E-mail: revistachinaperu@gmail.com

General Editorial Office
Tel: 86-10-68996252
Fax: 86-10-68326628
Editorial Desk
Tel: 86-10-68996250
Partnerships
Tel: 86-10-68995807
E-mail: yecong@cicgamericas.com
Distribution
Tel: 86-10-68310644
E-mail: circulation@cicgamericas.com

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Ties That Bind

The Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, a major diplomatic event in Beijing in October, will gather representatives from around the world for discussions on topics ranging from the digital economy to green development.

During his visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward the initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt, which, together with the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road he proposed the following month in Indonesia, constitutes the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

One decade on, this initiative has distinguished itself for its broad participation, contributing to increased connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. As the BRI vision becomes a reality, it serves as a solid foundation and a strong impetus for maintaining the multilateral trading system and promoting peace and development amid growing uncertainty in the international community.

The BRI has played a crucial role in deepening policy communication among the countries involved, reshaping international trade patterns and stimulating global economic growth. China has signed more than 200 documents on Belt and Road cooperation with 152 countries and 32 international organizations, covering the fields of trade, finance, society, e-commerce, science and technology, cultural exchange, etc.

Infrastructure connectivity among participating countries has been continuously improved. For example, the China-Europe freight train service has a network of 86 lines connecting China with over 200 cities in 25 European countries and regions as well as over 100 cities in 11 Asian countries and regions.

Investment and trade cooperation among participants is also on the up. China has signed 19 free trade agreements with 26 countries and regions in Asia, Oceania, Latin America, Europe and Africa. In the past 10 years, the BRI has attracted nearly $1 trillion in investment and established more than 3,000 cooperative projects. The proportion of China's trade with other Belt and Road countries in the country's total foreign trade has increased from 25 percent to 34 percent. In the first half of this year, China's trade in goods with these countries was valued at 6.89 trillion yuan ($944 billion), a year-on-year growth of 9.8 percent.

Rather than differentiating countries by ideology or playing a zero-sum game, the BRI practices true multilateralism and ensures its benefits are shared equitably among the countries involved. **BR**

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编委会：李雅芳 李建国 贺鹏 刘云云 高丁博 曾文卉
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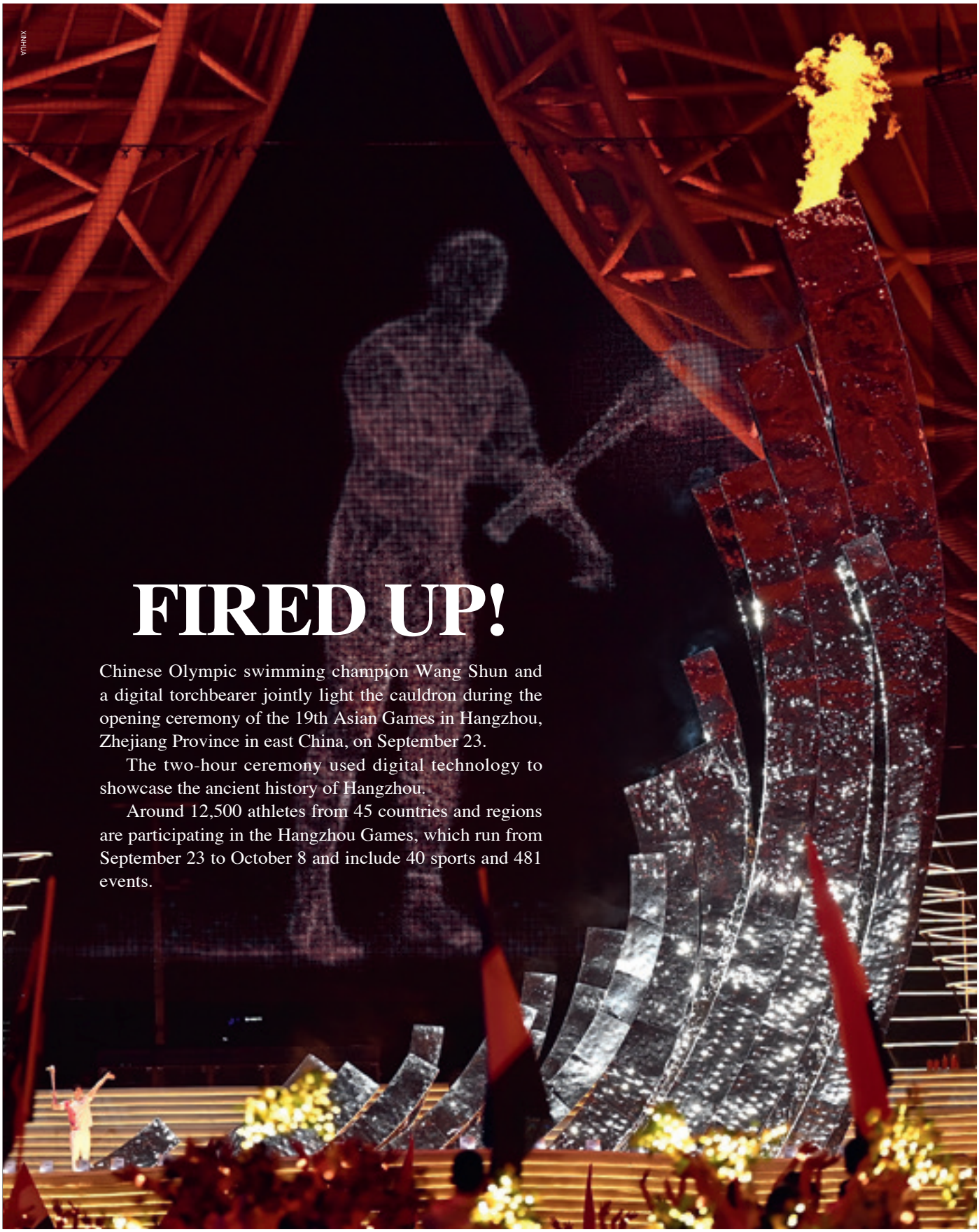

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FIRED UP!

Chinese Olympic swimming champion Wang Shun and a digital torchbearer jointly light the cauldron during the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in east China, on September 23.

The two-hour ceremony used digital technology to showcase the ancient history of Hangzhou.

Around 12,500 athletes from 45 countries and regions are participating in the Hangzhou Games, which run from September 23 to October 8 and include 40 sports and 481 events.

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Green and Clean

Technicians check equipment at a gas gathering and transmission station of the Fuling shale gas field in Fuling, Chongqing Municipality in southwest China, on September 21. The gas field brings greener and cleaner energy to more than 70 cities along the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

Multinationals Summit

The fourth Qingdao Multinationals Summit is scheduled to take place from October 10 to 12 in Qingdao, Shandong Province in east China, amid the country's efforts to promote high-quality opening up.

Themed Multinational Corporations and China, the summit will feature a range of activities, including multinational corporation symposiums and closed-door meetings on policies organized by ministries and commissions, Assistant Minister of Commerce Chen Chunjiang told a press conference on September 22.

Chen added the summit will focus on six topics, including new trends in industrial investment, achievements in optimizing the business environment and international cooperation in the digital economy.

So far, 316 multinational corporations have registered for this year's summit, together with over 500 guests from home and abroad, Song Junji, Vice Governor of Shandong Province, said.

A total of 195 foreign investment projects have been inked during the first three summits, with a combined investment of $27.42 billion.

Medical Insurance

An official from China's National Healthcare Security Administration (NHSA) said on September 22 that outpatient bill reimbursement has been expanded to cover 99 percent of the medical institutions incorporated in the unified medical insurance accounts for employees as of August.

Fu Chaoqi from the NHSA said at a press conference that 320,900 medical institutions have been covered by outpatient bill reimbursement through unified accounts by August, and over 124 billion yuan ($17 billion) of the bills have been refunded.

In addition, 141,400 authorized drug stores in 25 provincial regions have been covered by unified medical accounts as of August, and 174 million bills have been reimbursed, claiming over 6.9 billion yuan ($945.4 million) in medical insurance funds.

Government subsidies for medical insurance for urban and rural residents have been increasing, the administration said.

The per-capita government subsidies for medical insurance for urban and rural residents rose from 490 yuan ($67.1) in 2018 to 640 yuan ($87.7) in 2023. Subsidies for medical insurance for urban and rural residents have reached 384 billion yuan ($52.6 billion) so far this year.

Promoting Employment

In autumn, job fairs are held across China to promote employment of college graduates, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said on September 22.

The job fairs will continue to November 20 this year, expected to feature over 10 million job vacancies suitable for college graduates, the ministry said.

China will see a record of 11.58 million new college graduates this year, data showed. The country aims to create around 12 million new urban jobs, to keep the surveyed urban unemployment rate at around 5.5 percent, according to the government work report delivered at the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, on March 5.

Protecting Terraces

A conference in Hunan Province in central China announced a consensus on the conservation and sustainable development of rice terraces.

Attracting more than 100 participants from China, Britain, the United States, Thailand, Rwanda, Pakistan and other countries, the event, named From Ziquejie Terraces to the World: Global Farming Culture

Exchange and Mutual Learning Conference, took place from September 19-21.

It featured discussions on the protection and inheritance of agricultural heritage, the development of cultural tourism and the protection and restoration of ecosystems.

The Ziquejie Terraces in Xinhua County, where the conference was held, is one of the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems and World Heritage Irrigation Structures, designated respectively by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Commission on Irrigation & Drainage.

So far, 78 systems have been listed as agricultural heritage sites by the FAO, with China topping the list with 19 such systems.

World Daoism Federation

The World Federation of Daoism was established on September 24, with 52 Daoist organizations from 20 countries and regions being its founding members.

The establishment was announced at the fifth International Daoism Forum, which kicked off on September 24 on the famous Daoist Maoshan Mountain in Jiangsu Province in east China.

The federation will work to promote unity and cooperation of Daoists around the world and facilitate the international spread of Daoism, Li Guangfu, Chairman of the Taoist Association of China, said.

Daoism is a 2,000-year-old religion that originated from the ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi, who lived around the sixth to fifth century B.C. Its key doctrines include seeking harmony with the eternal cosmic order known as the *Dao* and cherishing one's life.

Subway Express Delivery

Multiple subway lines in Beijing will participate in a pilot project to transport express parcels during off-peak hours from September 23, aiming to reduce road congestion and lower carbon emissions.

Beijing's urban rail transit network has been expanding in recent years, with 27 lines currently covering a total distance of 807 km, according to Wang Shuling from the Beijing Transport Institute.

The capital handles approximately 15 million express parcels every day, and most are delivered via urban road transportation.

The pioneering project "leverages the surplus capacity of subway systems during off-peak hours," Wang said. "It is expected to gradually alleviate traffic congestion while lowering carbon emissions."

To ensure the safe and orderly operations of the pilot lines, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport has stipulated that goods transported must not be items prohibited on Beijing subways and pass security checks, according to commission official Zhou Yuan.

Participating enterprises have designed reusable express delivery boxes that are compatible with urban rail transit dimensions, and developed dedicated trolleys that can facilitate safe and convenient transportation, Zhou said.

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Harvest Hooray

People experience harvesting millet in a field in Beijing on September 23, which marked the sixth Chinese farmers' harvest festival.

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A Touch of Tradition

A guest receives Traditional Chinese Medicine treatment at the healthcare exhibition area during the sixth China-Arab States Expo in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China, on September 21, the first day of the expo. The four-day biennial event saw expanded cooperation in both conventional and emerging sectors.

China-U.S. Groups

China and the United States have decided to establish two working groups in the economic field, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) announced on September 22.

The move is to follow through on the important common understandings reached between the presidents of the two countries at their meeting in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2022, and came after the consensus reached by He Lifeng, Chinese Vice Premier and China's lead person for China-U.S. economic and trade affairs, and U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, the finance ministry said in a statement.

The working groups will cover economic and financial sectors. The economic working group will be co-chaired by vice ministerial officials from the MOF and the U.S. Treasury Department.

The financial working group will be co-chaired by vice ministerial officials from the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, and the U.S. Treasury Department.

The two working groups will hold regular and ad-hoc meetings to strengthen communication and exchanges on economic and financial issues.

Forex Market

The Chinese foreign exchange (forex) market recorded transactions worth 26.45 trillion yuan ($3.62 trillion) in August, data from the State Administration of Foreign Exchange showed on September 22.

The transaction volume of the client market was 3.45 trillion yuan ($472.7 billion), while that of the interbank market reached 23 trillion yuan ($3.15 trillion).

The cumulative transaction volume of the spot market was 9.6 trillion yuan ($1.3 trillion), while that of the derivatives market came to 16.85 trillion yuan ($2.3 trillion).

From January to August, 173.78 trillion yuan ($23.8 trillion) was traded on the Chinese forex market.

Gallium, Germanium Export

China has approved some companies' export applications for gallium and germanium products that comply with the relevant regulations, Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) spokesperson He Yadong said on September 21.

He made the remarks in response to a related question at a press conference, noting that some Chinese companies have obtained export licenses for gallium and germanium-related items.

The ministry will continue to review other license applications and make decisions per legal procedures, he said.

The MOFCOM and the General Administration of Customs of China issued a notice on imposing export restrictions on industrial products and materials containing gallium and germanium in July. These restrictions became effective on August 1.

Outbound Direct Investment

China's non-financial outbound direct investment (ODI) increased 18.8 percent year on year to 585.61 billion yuan ($80.2 billion) in the first eight months of this year, official data showed.

ODI is a business strategy in which a domestic firm extends its operations to a foreign country.

In U.S. dollar terms, the ODI went up 11.5 percent from a year earlier, according to the MOFCOM.

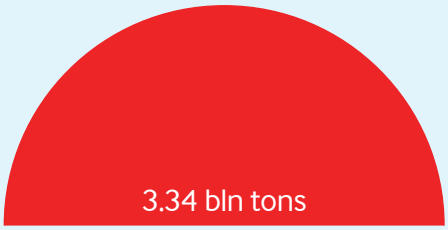
The non-financial ODI in Belt and Road partners came in at $20.07 billion in the first eight months of 2023, up 14.9

NUMBERS

Foreign Trade Logistics in January-August

(All growth rates are y.o.y.)

Total throughput for foreign trade at ports across China



Up 9.7%

16.9% higher than January-August 2019

International cargo and mail sent by air

10.32 mln tons

Up 4.9%

percent year on year. The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes.

The turnover of contracted projects overseas grew 6.1 percent year on year to 648.62 billion yuan ($88.9 billion), while the contract value of newly signed projects amounted to 863.34 billion yuan ($118.3 billion), up 2 percent from a year earlier, the ministry said.

Overseas E-Wallets

Chinese fintech firm Ant Group, operator of popular online payment service Alipay, has officially welcomed seven new leading e-wallets and payment apps from Asia to the "Alipay+-in-China" (A+China) Program, according to the press release of Ant Group on September 19.

Users of mPay (Macao Special Administrative Region, China), Hipay (Mongolia), Changi Pay (Singapore), OCBC (Singapore), Naver Pay (the Republic of Korea or ROK), Toss Pay (ROK) and TrueMoney (Thailand) will be able to use their familiar home e-wallets on their own phone to enjoy seamless mobile payment experience on the Chinese mainland across Alipay's merchant network.

The new additions bring the number of overseas e-wallets accepted on the Chinese mainland to 10. AlipayHK (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China), Touch 'n Go eWallet (Malaysia) and Kakao Pay (ROK) piloted the program in late 2022. These payment methods reach a combined population of over 175 million in Southeast and East Asia.

Users of these e-wallets may use their own payment apps wherever Alipay works, to enjoy secure, smooth and cashless payment as well as transparent and competitive exchange rates.

A suite of cross-border mobile payment, marketing and digitalization solutions developed by Alipay+, the international business group of Ant Group, enables payment partners to connect global and local merchants to cross-border digital consumers.

Top 500 Enterprises

The China Enterprise Confederation and the China Enterprise Directors Association published the top 500 Chinese enterprises for 2023 on September 20, with 264 companies from the manufacturing sector on the list, an increase of eight over the previous year, maintaining growth for the third consecutive year.

The entry threshold in terms of revenue for the top 500 enterprises in China stood at 46.998 billion yuan ($6.44 billion), registering a year-on-year increase of 2.37 billion yuan ($324.7 million).

According to the list, the State Grid Corp. of China, China National Petroleum Corp. and China Petrochemical Corp. occupy the top three spots, respectively.

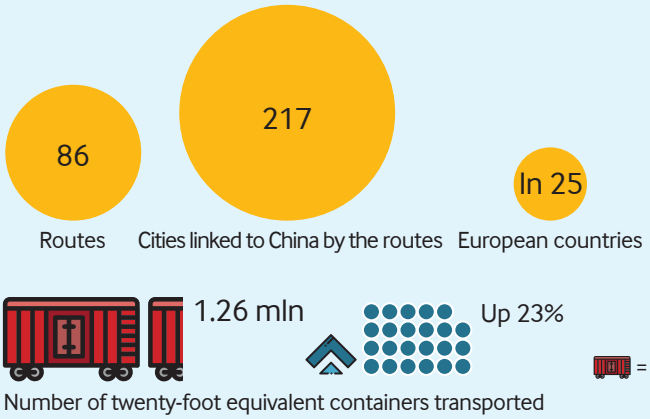
The number of companies whose revenues exceeded 100 billion yuan ($13.7 billion) rose to 254, with 16 of them reporting revenues of over 1 trillion yuan ($137 billion).

The top 500 companies saw stable growth in revenue in 2022. They generated combined revenues of 108.36 trillion yuan ($14.8 trillion), a rise of 5.74 percent compared to that generated by the companies on the 2022 list.

Net profits of these companies totaled 4.29 trillion yuan ($587.8 billion) last year, down 3.8 percent from the previous year, the data showed.

Research and development feature high on the agenda of these enterprises. Their related investment amounted to 1.58 trillion yuan ($216.5 billion), up 9.07 percent year on year.

China-Europe freight train routes



(Source: *Ministry of Transport*)

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SINGAPORE

A pavilion-shaped Mid-Autumn Festival lantern on display at the Gardens by the Bay in Singapore on September 21. The festival fell on September 29 this year

BRAZIL

Firefighters work to contain a wildfire in the Serra do Coco forest area in Riachao das Neves, Bahia State, on September 22. Fueled by hot, dry conditions and fierce winds, the flames engulfed swaths of tropical woodland

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UNITED STATES

Employees rally during a strike at a machinery plant in Belleville, Michigan, on September 22. A breakdown in contract negotiations pushed 5,600 workers at John Deere facilities in 20 states to launch the strike

KENYA

Crew members greet passengers at Nairobi Terminus Station of the China-built Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) on September 20 in Nairobi. Since opening over six years ago, the railway has created nearly 50,000 jobs for Kenyans and trained over 2,800 railway professionals

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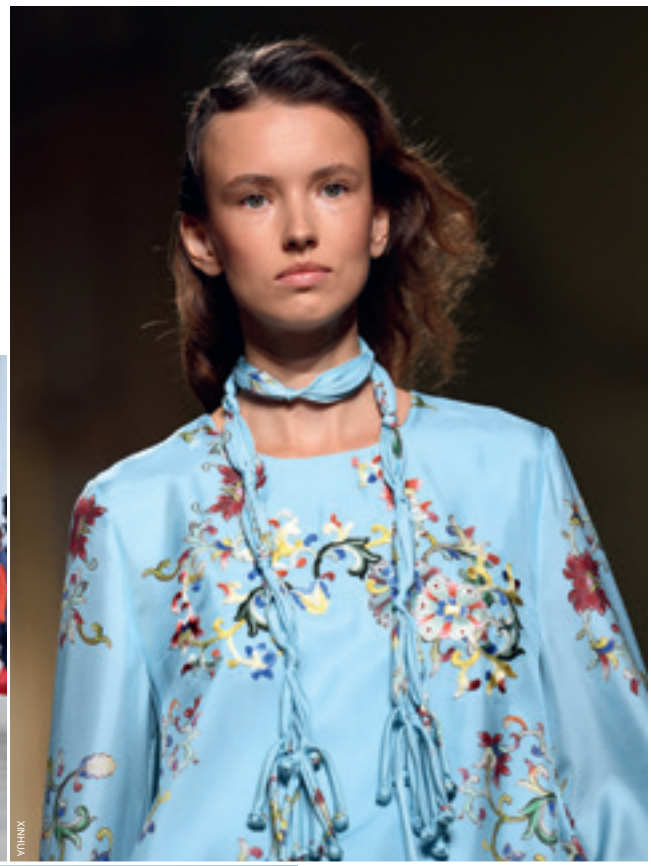

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ITALY

A model wears a design featuring Miao ethnic embroidery from southwest China's Guizhou Province during Milan Fashion Week on September 24

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MALTA

Aircraft streak across the sky during an aerobatic demonstration at the Malta International Airshow in Bugibba on September 23. The two-day airshow, held on September 23-24, thrilled crowds with dazzling displays from planes and pilots

ASIAD OPENING CEREMONY DIRECTOR

Sha Xiaolan, chief director and chief producer of the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games, said the ceremony, held on September 23 in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, "took one step further" than expected.

"Through the various chapters of the performance, we showed the continuity of Chinese innovation and culture," Sha said.

The ceremony paid homage to Chinese cultural heritage, prominently featuring landmarks such as the famed West Lake, as well as traditional calligraphy and paintings. In a historic first for the Asian Games, the torch-lighting ceremony was conducted together with over 100 million people participating on digital platforms to collectively illuminate the cauldron.

Sha, deputy head of the China Institute of Stage Design, was also chief director of the closing ceremony of the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022.

Public Pianos

Beijing Evening News

September 21

Recently, numerous curbside piano booths have popped up in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. Equipped with air-conditioners, these mini-stations are open 24/7 to anyone who wishes to practice in a relatively private setting. People can simply log onto a mini program on Chinese super app Weixin to make free reservations for practice sessions inside these booths. Those who are beginners can also connect to an app where they can find free piano tutorials.

It's no accident that these facilities made their debut in Shenzhen, where there has been a continuous influx of domestic migrants for decades. Many of them, still caught up in the daily struggle of trying to settle into their new surroundings, cannot afford a piano. What's more, these new settlers usually live in staff quarters in high-rise apartment buildings, where piano practice is often considered a nuisance.

This April, a video of a 56-year-old construction worker playing a street piano in Shenzhen went immensely viral online. And now, countless piano booths have found their way into high streets and parks across the city. Trivial as they may seem, these tiny booths are part of the city's ongoing effort to create a more welcoming and sustainable urban environment.

Coffee Craze

Oriental Outlook

August 24

This summer, a coffee fair bonanza has swept across China. Featuring pop-up cafés and coffee brands from China and abroad, these coffee fairs celebrate coffee as not just a universal beverage, but as a lifestyle that has been increasingly popular among Chinese Gen Z consumers.

Coffee market insiders have attributed this astounding growth to two major factors: One is growing consumer demand,

"In view of the price index level, demand recovery, economic growth and monetary supply, there is no deflation at present."

Cong Liang, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, speaking at a September 20 press conference in response to a question on deflationary risks

"China has a complete industrial supply chain, a significant advantage in raw material costs and a strong emphasis on production cost control. This is why Chinese electric vehicles often enjoy a price advantage."

Seksin Srivatananukulkit, former Dean of the Faculty of Social Science at Chiang Mai University in Thailand, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

and the other is the continuous integration of China into the global market. In 1989, Nestlé's instant coffee entered the Chinese market. In 1999, Starbucks opened its first Chinese outlet in Beijing. Since then, the country's coffee market has expanded, keeping pace with China's broader economy, as well as the changing perceptions of younger generations, who are always on the lookout for new experiences and new flavors.

In recent years, China's coffee scene has not only seen a great influx of foreign chain brands, but also witnessed the rise of domestic brands. Some examples are Luckin Coffee, China's largest coffee chain, based in Xiamen, Fujian Province, and Shanghai-based Manner Coffee and M Stand. These domestic brands have together created a new Chinese style that combines coffee with traditional Chinese flavors, such as tea and even *baijiu* (Chinese distilled liquor).

The country has also seen a recent boom in boutique coffeehouses, which have mushroomed in not only megacities like Beijing and Shanghai, but also in many smaller cities and rural regions. Featuring special coffee flavors and stylish décor, these startup cafés have become a means for young people to showcase their chosen lifestyles.

Rural Influencer Revitalized

Rednet.cn
September 21

Two years after her disappearance from the spotlight amid a legal dispute with her agent, Li Ziqi, a top Chinese influencer famous for her poetic portrayal of rural life, made a comeback on September 15. In her latest video, Li recounts her past experience with video blogging, which she sees as a powerful means for capturing beauty in the mundane. The video message concluded with Li saying that she will continue to make quality rural-centered content for her fans.

Since 2016, Li has been creating beautifully crafted clips that teach viewers how to use natural materials to make everything from food to clothes in the Chinese countryside. These videos have won her over 25 million followers on Weibo, a major Chinese microblogging app. Her YouTube channel, having amassed 17 million subscribers, holds the Guinness World Record for "the most subscribers for a Chinese language channel on YouTube."

As one of the few Chinese influencers whose fame has grown internationally, Li showcases how traditional culture and rural life can have a place in the age of social media. Li's whole-hearted embrace of rural life continues to serve as a source of inspiration for other influencers.

ROWERS WIN GOLD

Chinese duo **Zou Jiaqi** (left) and **Qiu Xiuping** clinched the gold medal in the women's lightweight double sculls final at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, on September 24, securing the first gold medal of this edition of the Asian Games.

The pair finished in 7 minutes, 6.78 seconds, with Uzbekistan's Luizakhon Islamova and Malika Tagmativa taking the silver, almost 10 seconds behind.

Both in their early 20s, Zou and Qiu began training as rowers in their teens. The duo placed sixth at the 2023 World Rowing Championships in early September, securing a place at the 2024 Olympic Summer Games in Paris.

This is the sixth consecutive edition of the Asian Games in which China has secured the first gold medal.

"Security has become a much bigger problem. We've moved into an area where peace can no longer be taken for granted."

Martin Jacques, a former senior fellow with Cambridge University, speaking at the 2023 Conference of the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum in Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province, on September 20

"Culture empowers a transformative shift in traditional toy manufacturing and in this new race of art toys, there are more opportunities and a larger global market."

Luo Xiaoxing, general manager of a startup company in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, commenting on the rise of Chinese brands in the global art toy market in an interview with Xinhua

XINHUA

COVER STORY

THE ROAD TRAVELED

Ten years on, the BRI remains an important contributor to global development

By Ma Miaomiao