TOP NEWS

Envoy praises ROK-China bilateral ties

Nations urged to explore cooperation in fields like AI, biomedicine, new energy

By ZHOU JIN
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President Xi Jinping's visit to the Republic of Korea last month, his first in 11 years, has ushered bilateral relations into a new period of development, said ROK Ambassador to China Ro Jae-hun, adding that both sides are in communication regarding a potential China visit by ROK President Lee Jae-myung.

The meeting between the two heads of state in Gyeongju provided an important opportunity not only for driving the two countries' common development, but also for contributing to regional and global peace, development and prosperity, Ro told China Daily in an exclusive interview.


Ro Jae-hun

He noted that Xi has extended an invitation to Lee to visit China and the two sides have begun discussions through diplomatic channels on the timing, arrangements and potential outcomes of the visit.

Despite the changes in domestic and international environments, the fact that mutually beneficial cooperation has driven economic growth in both countries remains unchanged, Ro said, emphasizing that in the process, the two nations have gained experience in overcoming challenges.

In 2024, trade between the two countries reached $328.08 billion, a year-on-year increase of 5.6 percent. China has remained the ROK's largest trading partner for 21 consecutive years, while the ROK continues to be China's second-largest trading partner.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the bilateral free trade agreement, and the two sides have agreed to accelerate the second-phase negotiations for the FTA, which will cover service industries such as culture and tourism.

Ro said that economic cooperation between the ROK and China has built a solid foundation in terms of both scale and quality.

Affected by trade protectionism and the restructuring of global supply chains, some ROK companies are facing difficulties, such as a decline in exports to China, he noted.

However, these challenges also underscore the need for deeper cooperation between the two countries, he said, adding that if the two sides work together to explore new models of collaboration, they could not only overcome the difficulties, but also continue to advance complementary development.

As the structure of bilateral economic cooperation shifts from a vertical division of labor to a more horizontal partnership, Ro said it is important to explore cooperation in new areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, biomedicine and new energy.

The new ROK ambassador, who assumed office in October, shares a special bond with China. His father, Ro Tae-woo, laid the foundation for the establishment of bilateral diplomatic ties in 1992 as then president of the ROK. Ro Tae-woo visited China later the same year, becoming the first ROK president to make an official trip to the country.

Influenced by his father, Ro Jae-hun developed a deep interest in China, and he has been actively involved in bilateral exchanges. Ro said he feels that it is his mission and responsibility to carry forward the wisdom and courage of the older generations and contribute to new progress in bilateral relations.

ROK-China relations are rooted in the will of the two peoples, and in this regard, the friendly sentiments between the two peoples are of incomparable importance, Ro said.

Speaking of what impressed him deeply in bilateral friendly exchanges, the ambassador mentioned the story of giant panda Fu Bao, who was born in the ROK under a conservation program and was sent to China last year.

"Both Korean and Chinese people adore her, and this attention and affection truly transcend nationalities," Ro said, mentioning that he even visited the panda base in Sichuan province to see Fu Bao in person.

"What we commonly cherish brings our two peoples closer to one another, to share love, attention and care," he said, adding that he hopes this feeling of goodwill will further strengthen the bonds between the two peoples.

In November 2024, China implemented a visa-free policy for ROK citizens entering the country for tourism or business purposes, and the ROK reciprocated with a similar policy for Chinese group tourists in September this year, triggering an increase in cross-border travel.

Ro called for intensifying interactions among local governments, media organizations, think tanks, academic institutions and, especially, young people to help deepen mutual understanding and foster friendship between the two peoples.

Online
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Bamboo boom


A farmer dries bamboo strips on Tuesday at a local bamboo products processing factory in Zixi county of Fuzhou, Jiangxi province. In recent years, Zixi county has leveraged its abundant moso bamboo resources to promote the development of the bamboo industry.
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Wonderland in the making


A photo captured by a drone on Tuesday shows the Harbin Ice-Snow World under construction in the capital city of Northeast China's Heilongjiang province. The 27th edition of the popular seasonal theme park, which is scheduled to open later this month, is estimated to use more than 200,000 cubic meters of ice. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese company tests reusable rocket

By ZHAO LEI
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A leading Chinese commercial space company launched the country's first reusable rocket on Wednesday, with the spacecraft's second-stage booster managing to enter its designated orbit, despite the attempt to recover its first-stage booster remaining unsuccessful.

The ZQ 3 Y1 carrier rocket — a gigantic vessel designed and manufactured by Beijing-based LandSpace and primarily made of stainless steel — blasted off at noon from its launch service tower at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China. The code name Y1 signifies that the rocket is the first in the ZQ 3 series.

After a short flight, the rocket's second-stage booster reached its preset orbital position, but the first-stage booster burst into a fireball over a designated recovery site in Minqin county in Gansu province, about 390 kilometers from the launch site.

The mission verified the overall plan for the testing, launch and flight of the ZQ 3 model, and demonstrated the compatibility of interfaces between various systems, according to LandSpace.

It successfully obtained critical technical data during the flight, laying a solid foundation for optimizing the rocket's design, enhancing its overall reliability, and realizing recovery, the company said.

Technical specifications from LandSpace show that the ZQ 3 Y1 is 66.1 meters tall and 4.5 meters wide, and weighs nearly 560 metric tons when fully fueled. With a liftoff thrust of over 750 tons, it is capable of transporting heavy satellites to low-Earth or sun-synchronous orbits.

The rocket was propelled by LandSpace's own methane engines — the first stage had nine TQ 12A engines, creating the major lift for the rocket, while the second stage had a TQ 15A engine. Compared with traditional types of rocket engines that can function only once, a methane engine is reusable and more environment-friendly.

The rocket's propellant tanks are constructed with stainless steel, which features good strength, resistance to high temperatures and corrosion, and a very competitive cost. There were four grid fins and four landing legs on the vessel, which were meant to allow the first-stage booster to make a soft landing.

LandSpace has invested a considerable amount of resources in the research and development of ZQ 3, as the company wants to use the reusable model to compete for lucrative launch service contracts, an opportunity created by China's grand plan of establishing a massive internet satellite network.

In July 2023, LandSpace conducted the world's first orbital mission of a methane-propelled carrier rocket when it launched the ZQ 2 rocket. To date, the ZQ 2 and its modified variant have made a total of six launches.

Spirit: Volunteers facilitate intl exchanges

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Commending young volunteers' dedication during the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics, Xi pointed out at a grand gathering that "the volunteers offered warm services with their youthful vigor and dedication, showing the vibrant and energetic image of the Chinese youth to the world".

He called for efforts to promote throughout society the spirit of volunteers and to better leverage the active role of volunteers in order to facilitate social progress.

Meanwhile, Chinese volunteers have become ambassadors of international cooperation, from providing technical and sports education assistance in Laos to supporting wildlife conservation in South Africa.

When Xi visited the Republic of Korea in 2014, he told the story of Zhang Bao, a Chinese marrow donor who helped a patient in the ROK, in his speech at Seoul National University.

To better promote volunteer services, China launched the "Four 100" initiative in 2015. Each year, the event honors outstanding volunteer service individuals, organizations, programs and communities.

Among the 100 exemplary organizations honored this June was the "Little Water Drops" Volunteer Service League from Danjiangkou in Central China's Hubei province.

Members of the league are primarily volunteers dedicated to protecting the ecosystem of the Danjiangkou Reservoir, the source for the middle route of China's South-to-North Water Diversion Project.

The organization, which was established in 2021, now includes 162,000 registered members actively participating in activities such as shoreline cleanups, river patrols and public awareness campaigns.

In recognition of their efforts, Xi applauded this endeavor in 2024, encouraging the volunteers to motivate more people to consciously conserve water resources and work together to build a beautiful China.

Yuan Hui, deputy head of the league, expressed her hope that these individual "small drops" of effort by the environmental volunteers in Danjiangkou will converge into a "mighty force" in safeguarding the pristine waters of the reservoir.

As volunteers have contributed in various ways to serving both national strategies and public well-being, volunteer service is no longer seen as an activity only for the young. A growing number of senior citizens are now joining the cause.

The Silver Age Action national voluntary initiative, for instance, has seen participation exceeding 7 million person-times, with many elderly volunteers using their expertise to aid the development of underdeveloped areas.

In response to expanding participation in volunteer services, China's central authorities issued systematic guidelines in 2024 — the first comprehensive framework of its kind in the new era — to further improve the voluntary service system.

Building on this momentum, the China Volunteer Service Federation released three practical guides in June this year, covering volunteer service project management, volunteer recruitment and training, and community-based volunteer initiatives.

"Over the years, volunteer service in China has made significant progress in institutional development, organizational growth, service innovation and public participation," said Ding Yuanzhu, director of the theoretical research committee of the China Volunteer Service Federation. "It has become an indispensable force in social governance and the public service system."

Lyu Shiming, vice-president of the federation, noted that the Party leadership has made it clear in the recommendations for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development that it is imperative to "continue to develop volunteer services and better manage organizations operating in this field".

Lyu said, "We will leverage our role in leading, uniting, serving and facilitating progress in volunteer service."

Appetite for imported goods boosts consumption

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese consumers are displaying vibrant purchasing power for imported products and foreign brands, and this has become a key driver for consumption upgrade fueled by enhanced logistic efficiencies, preferential policies such as lower tariffs, and an expanded list of permitted imported goods.

Experts noted that those living in first-tier cities remain the primary purchasers of imported goods, while shoppers in lower-tier cities and townships are showing keen interest in buying such commodities.

JD Cross-Border, the cross-border import e-commerce arm of JD, teamed up with global retailers such as Amazon and Walmart during the just-concluded Black Friday global shopping festival.

This allowed Chinese consumers to select from a wide array of foreign goods across key categories such as electronics, beauty and skin care, apparel, luxuries, food and beverage, and local specialties via cross-broader online marketplaces, JD said.

Falling on Nov 28 this year, Black Friday marked the start of the Christmas shopping season in the West. An increasing number of Chinese consumers participated in the global shopping carnival this year.

Li Yanchuan, head of Amazon Global Store Asia-Pacific and Amazon Singapore e-commerce, said the cross-border shopping behavior of Chinese consumers has undergone significant changes. They are no longer simply purchasing commodities with low prices, but are paying more attention to online shopping search experiences, the process of customs clearance, logistics and after-sales service, Li said.

Amazon Global Store promised steep discounts on more than 3 million foreign products, covering about 30,000 international brands across 35 categories.

Li said niche and personalized products that match Chinese buyers' interests and specific usage scenarios are gaining increasing popularity, with outdoor sports apparel, cycling gear and rock-climbing equipment seeing robust growth in sales.

According to a JD report, smartphones, personal care products, cosmetics, watches, eyeglasses, infant and maternal goods, nutrition and healthcare products are the categories most favored by Chinese consumers among all imported merchandise.

People in the 26 to 35 age group are the main consumers of imported products, accounting for nearly 50 percent of all buyers. The 46 to 55 age group is now the fastest growing segment, the report said.

China has introduced preferential policies, such as lowering import taxes and expanding the range of goods allowed to be imported, along with the expansion of domestic demand and advancements in emerging retail technologies.

Market consultancy iiMedia Research said that with China's further opening-up and gradual improvement in logistics and deliveries, the demand for imported goods will continue to increase and provide a big boost to consumption upgrade.

Political Lens

Premier highlights new-type urbanization

Premier Li Qiang stressed on Wednesday the need to uphold a people-centered approach in the process of urbanization and to fully unleash the enormous potential of integrated urban-rural development, in order to provide strong momentum for economic and social growth.

Presiding over a State Council study session, Li said that new-type urbanization is an important driver for expanding domestic demand, advancing industrial upgrading, and strengthening domestic economic circulation.

To promote new-type urbanization as the country advances Chinese modernization, Li said that it is important to promote the all-around development of people, enhance urban quality, and upgrade industrial clusters in a mutually reinforcing manner.

He called for tailored implementation of new-type urbanization plans based on local conditions, scientific and orderly progress in granting permanent urban residency to rural migrants, and deeper promotion of urban renewal initiatives, among other measures.

Top political adviser makes official visit to Laos

China's top political adviser Wang Huning led a Party and government delegation from China on an official visit to Laos from Monday to Wednesday, and attended celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

During the visit, Wang, who is a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, met separately with Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao president, Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, and Lao National Assembly President Saysomphone Phomvihane. He also held talks with Sinlavong Khoutphaythoune, president of the Central Committee of the Lao Front for National Development.

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