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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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Afghanistan's Embassy in Norway to Resume Operations on March 24, 2025

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan has announced the official reopening of the country's Embassy in Norway, located in Oslo. This significant step marks the resumption of consular services and is seen as a pivotal move towards restoring diplomatic ties. In a statement released by the ministry, it was confirmed that the embassy will begin its operations on the 4th of Hamal, 1404 (corresponding to March 24, 2025). This reopening has been welcomed as a promising development in Afghanistan's diplomatic relations with the international community.



Public Health Minister and Chinese Ambassador Visit Renovation Works at Al-Shifa Hospital

The Acting Minister of Public Health, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, visited Al-Shifa Hospital alongside the Chinese Ambassador to Kabul, Mr. Zhao Xing. The visit focused on the ongoing renovation works at the hospital, which is recognized as one of the most crucial healthcare facilities in the country.

During the visit, Minister Jalali emphasized the importance of the reforms taking place at Al-Shifa Hospital, highlighting its role in providing specialized and tertiary medical services to the Afghan population.

Ambassador Zhao Xing expressed China's commitment to supporting Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts, particularly in healthcare. He assured that China would continue to provide assistance in the areas of equipment, reconstruction, and expansion of Al-Shifa Hospital, reinforcing the partnership between the two nations.

Muttaqi to Sadiq: Trade and Transit Barriers Help No One



During his visit to Kabul, Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, held talks with acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi regarding bilateral relations between Kabul and Islamabad. Muttaqi emphasized that obstacles

to trade and transit benefit neither side and stressed that unrelated issues should not be linked together. Practical steps to resolve ongoing trade and transit issues between the two countries were also discussed. Zia Ahmad Takal, head of public relations at the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs, said: "The acting foreign minister reminded the Pakistani side that creating barriers to trade and transit is in no one's interest and that matters should not be interconnected."

The gradual and dignified return of Afghan refugees was another topic

raised during the meeting. The Pakistani envoy also stated that ensuring security in Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan and the region. He pledged to ease the visa issuance process for Afghan citizens.

Yousuf Amin Zazai, a military affairs analyst, commented on the historical context of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, saying: "Based on our experience since the formation of Pakistan, this country has pursued an undeclared hostility toward the people of Afghanistan."

Jannat Faheem Chakari, a political affairs analyst, stated: "The visit of Pakistan's special envoy to Afghanistan is a positive step toward addressing migration challenges in Pakistan and clarifying the ambiguous political relations between the two countries. It could be considered a constructive move in resolving both issues."

Clashes along both sides of the hypothetical Durand Line, Pakistan's airstrikes in parts of Paktika province, and the deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan have significantly impacted bilateral relations over the past year.

After 3 Years, UN Revives Afghanistan's Ozone Protection Efforts

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has approved funding for three suspended projects led by Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency, aimed at safeguarding the Earth's ozone layer. The projects had been on hold for three years. According to the agency, the projects, valued at over \$400,000, were greenlit during the 95th meeting of the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund, held from December 4 to 8, 2024. The initiatives focus on...



Afghan Officials Dismiss ICRC Report on Water Crisis

On World Water Day, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stated that 33 million people in Afghanistan are facing water scarcity.

The committee identified access to water as a serious challenge in Afghanistan, emphasizing that the issue directly affects public health, food security, and the country's economic growth.

In its message for World Water Day, the ICRC said: "Access to safe drinking water is an internationally recognized human right, yet it is estimated that 33 million people in Afghanistan face severe water shortage."

Climate change and decades of conflict are cited as key causes of water scarcity in the country.

Meanwhile, some residents of Kabul have also expressed concerns over



the lack of water and urged the authorities to address the issue.

Mohammad Ismail, a Kabul resident, said: "We come from the Regration area in search of water. We used to have water, but due to some issue, our supply was cut, and now we come here to find water." Shiraz, another resident, said: "We don't have water. It's really difficult

to find any. As you can see, the water source is dry, and we're taking our empty barrels back home."

In response, the Ministry of Energy and Water has rejected the Red Cross's recent report claiming that 80% of Afghan citizens lack access to water. Matiullah Abid, spokesperson for the ministry, said the Islamic Emirate is...

Muslim World...

support their fellow Muslims in the violence-wracked and impoverished Arab Peninsula country. The United States has escalated its fatal attacks against Yemen, with President Donald Trump pledging to “annihilate” Yemen’s Ansarallah popular resistance movement as a means of trying to stop the pro-Palestinian operations that Sana’a has been performing in support of the Gazans. For his part, Prince Farhan reiterated Riyadh’s firm stance in condemning the Israeli regime’s deadly aggression. He stressed the necessity for coordination and close cooperation among regional countries to prevent escalation of the crisis.

U.S. Military...

warships escorting the USS Harry S. Truman. The Houthis said they had also launched a ballistic missile attack on Israel’s Ben Gurion Airport, an assault the Israeli military said was intercepted late on Friday. The Houthis, which control much of northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa, have been fighting against the internationally-recognized government since 2014. Tensions between the Houthis and the U.S. military have escalated since Washington launched fresh airstrikes on Yemen on March 15. The strikes followed Houthi threats to resume attacks on Israeli targets unless humanitarian aid is allowed into Gaza.

By: Zhao Xing; Chinese Ambassador in Afghanistan

Viewing China Through The Two Sessions: China Provides Certainty to The Uncertain World

We are living in a changing and turbulent world, where certainty is becoming a scarce resource. The choices made by countries, especially major countries, will determine the trajectory of our times and shape the future of the world. At the recently concluded Third Session of the 14th National People’s Congress and the Third Session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, China announced a series of firm and decisive policy measures. These actions fully demonstrate the superiority of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and a high level of confidence in the nation’s governance system and capabilities, providing the world with unprecedented “certainty”.
I. Upholding the Leadership of Communist Party of China and Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively
This year marks the final year of the 14th Five-Year Plan(2021-2025). Under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, China has successfully fulfilled the targets and tasks of the 14th Five-Year Plan to a high standard, thereby laying a solid foundation for a good start to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030). The Two Sessions have clarified specific measures for steadily advancing various deepening reforms. Those measures of improving a unified national market, further reforming state-owned enterprises, spurring the growth of the private sector, coordinating urban and rural development, improving the people’s well-being, and strengthening environmental protection, reflect a people-centered development philosophy. In the future, when faced with various risks and challenges, China will always maintain strategic determination to ensure policy continuity.
II. Pursuing Progress While Ensuring Stability to Achieve High-Quality Development
At a time when the global economic recovery is sluggish and external uncertainties continue to mount, China has consistently adhered to the principle of pursuing progress while ensuring stability. In 2024, China’s GDP grew by 5%



year-on-year, contributing approximately 30% to global economic growth. With humanoid robots making a debut on the Spring Festival Gala, DeepSeek astonishing the world, and IP such as Black Myth and Nezha becoming global sensations, new industries, business models, and development modes emerge in rapid succession. In 2025, the Report on the Work of the Government clearly set an economic growth target of around 5%, reflecting China’s confidence in actively confronting risks and challenges amid global economic competition. From expanding domestic demand and promoting consumption upgrades to intensifying technological innovation and industrial transformation, China is advancing structural economic optimization with a series of precise policy measures. This approach ensures ample endogenous momentum for economic development and contributes Chinese wisdom and solutions to global economic stability.
III. Adhering to the Foundational Mission of China’s diplomacy and Safeguarding World Peace and Stability
In the face of unprecedented global changes unseen in a century, China

is demonstrating its great power responsibility through concrete actions—injecting strong momentum into world development and providing invaluable governance wisdom and opportunities for international cooperation. The Report on the Work of the Government once again emphasized that, China will continue to promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, would consolidate and expand partnerships across the world, stay committed to true multilateralism, and play a positive and constructive role in addressing global challenges and resolving regional and international hotspot issues. With these efforts, China will make important contributions to peace and development in the world. China’s diplomacy will stand firm on the right side of history and on the side of human progress. China will always provide certainty to this uncertain world. In addressing regional hotspot issues, China’s stance has always been objective and impartial. China advocates for peaceful negotiation and political settlement for the Ukraine crisis and calls for adherence to the two-State solution as well as the principle of Palestinians governing Palestine to resolve the

Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In expanding cooperation with the Global South, China has actively promoted the construction of a community with a shared future with Africa and Latin America, continuously built the BRICS mechanism bigger and stronger, and announced eight actions China would take in support of global development, generating new energy for faster Global South development. Regarding the relations with neighboring countries, China adheres to the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, and advocates the building of a common home. China firmly opposes the U.S. deployment of mid-range capability missile system in the region and the use of the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” to create discord in the region. China actively works with ASEAN countries on implementing the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), accelerating the formulation of Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) to ensure long-term stability in the region. Afghanistan and China share a friendship that spans over a thousand years, and are important neighbors to both countries. In 2024, China announced a zero-tariff policy on all products for Afghanistan, and bilateral trade exceeded US\$1.5 billion. On multilateral platforms, China has firmly advocated on behalf of Afghanistan, calling for the lifting of sanctions and the return of frozen overseas Afghan assets. 2025 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Afghanistan. China is willing to continue supporting Afghanistan’s post-war reconstruction and development through concrete actions. Together with Afghan, China will promote the building of a community with a shared future between the two countries, thereby adding further “certainty” to regional long-term stability and lasting prosperity. We have every reason to believe that, with the joint efforts of China and all peace-loving countries around the world, a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous world is gradually taking shape.

Editorial

A Brighter Future Is Impossible Without Girls’ Education

The new academic year has once again begun in Afghanistan under circumstances where school doors beyond grade six and higher education institutions remain closed to girls. This situation not only violates the fundamental right to education but also stands as a major obstacle to the nation’s progress, stability, and future. Afghans, who have endured years of war, sacrifice, and hardship, now have a clear and singular demand from their government: open the doors of education to girls without further delay. Fortunately, this new school year coincides with a period of unprecedented peace, stability, and relative order in Afghanistan. Today, across all provinces, districts, and villages of the country, conflict has ceased, security prevails, and people go about their daily lives with confidence. This achievement, considered one of the most significant accomplishments of the Afghan caretaker government, presents a historic opportunity — one that must be seized for the

collective well-being and prosperity of the nation. However, peace must serve as a foundation for progress, not as an excuse for deprivation. It is unacceptable for a nation to enjoy security while half of its population remains deprived of education. Girls, who are the backbone of every society’s structure and development, must not be denied access to knowledge, skills, and civic participation. This situation contradicts not only Islamic principles but also undermines Afghanistan’s national interests, economic growth, and international standing. The value of education extends far beyond individual benefits. Education fosters intellectual development across society, paves the way for economic advancement, and strengthens the foundations of reconciliation, patience, tolerance, and civic life. When girls are prevented from attending school and university, it is not only a loss for them — the entire society is deprived of half its potential, talent, and intellect. Islamic values strongly support

the pursuit of knowledge. The first revealed verse of the Holy Quran, “Iqra” (Read), is a clear emphasis on the importance of education. Throughout Islamic history, esteemed women such as Khadijah, Aisha, and Fatima (may Allah be pleased with them) have stood as symbols of knowledge, piety, and wisdom. Islam recognizes education as a right for both men and women — a belief deeply rooted in Afghan society. It is essential for the Afghan caretaker government to listen to the voice of its people. This is not a call motivated by fashion, foreign pressure, or imitation; it is the heartfelt voice of a weary, war-torn nation that now yearns to lead its sons and daughters toward knowledge, awareness, and a better future. Continuing to block girls’ education is a missed opportunity of historic proportions, and if this situation persists, Afghanistan risks falling further behind in progress, international credibility, and internal cohesion. In conclusion, we urge the leaders of the Afghan caretaker government to respond positively to this just, humane, and national demand of the people. The foundation of a peaceful, dignified, civilized... **P3**

By: Huang Lanlan

4 Months On, Chancay Port Sees Fruitful Achievements, Hitting Back Hard At Western Smears

Four months have passed since the opening of the Chancay Port in Peru. Situated 80 kilometers north of the capital Lima, this megaport, invested by Chinese enterprises, has significantly reduced the transportation time of goods exported from South America to the Asian market from about 35 days to 25 days. The project benefits various industries and businesses in Peru and beyond, across Latin America, serving as a new example of cooperation between China and Latin America under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In Lima, many people know that the Chancay Port, which is the only smart, green, and deep port in South America, has a huge impact not only on Peru, but also on the neighbors and South America as a whole, Peru’s Ambassador to China Marco Vinicio Balarezo Lizaraburu told media during just concluded two sessions on March 9. The benefits and development opportunities that the Chancay Port brings to South American countries including Peru are evident. However, this achievement seems to have displeased the US. From an earlier proposal of a 60-percent tariff on goods entering the US through

the Chancay Port, to Trump’s inaugural speech claiming that China “controlled” the Panama Canal, the US has been meddling in issues related to the Chancay Port and the Panama Canal, causing unease among some South American countries. Its narratives, including claims that the port has brought a “military threat” to Peru and that it was realized through “economic coercion,” are actually clichéd rumors increasingly regurgitated by the US since construction of the project began in 2021. Zhu Feng, director of School of International Studies at Nanjing University, told Singapore-based Lianhe Zaobao in February that the Panama Canal issue reflects the US government’s intention to compress China’s BRI cooperation in Latin America, and “there will definitely be further actions [from the country].” Zhu speculated that the Chancay Port may be the next target of US pressure on China. However, the skepticism and smears surrounding the Chancay Port cannot overshadow the tangible benefits it has already brought to Peru and other related countries. Statistic data and voices from Peru have... **P3**

Afghan Carpets Smuggled and Exported Under Iranian and Pakistani Names

Local officials and carpet sellers in Herat have that Afghan carpets, after being smuggled to Iran and Pakistan, are exported to the world under the names of these countries.

According to some carpet sellers in Herat, due to the decline in official carpet exports and the smuggling of carpets to neighboring countries, the price of traditional Afghan carpets has dropped in the markets.

Carpet sellers in Herat have called on the interim government to not only prevent the smuggling of Afghan handwoven carpets to neighboring countries but also to facilitate their export under Afghanistan's name. Izzatullah Yousofi, the representative of handwoven carpet sellers in Herat, told: "Afghan handmade carpets are smuggled to Iran and Pakistan and then exported to other countries under the names of Iranian and Pakistani carpets." These carpets are



crafted with the skill and hard work of female carpet weavers, who now struggle to find buyers. Not long ago, the intricate patterns and vibrant colors of these handwoven carpets served as ambassadors of Afghan culture and art in global markets; however, their demand has now diminished even within the country. Abdul Ghafoor Iqbal, a carpet seller in

Herat, said: "Afghan carpets are taken to Pakistan, where they are washed and then exported to Germany, the U.S., and other countries under the name of Pakistani carpets."

The decline in exports and the smuggling of these handwoven carpets to neighboring countries have led to a drop in their prices in domestic markets. As a result, carpet

weavers have reduced their production. Aqa Mohammad, another carpet seller in Herat, said: "Carpets are not being exported. We buy yarn at 600 afghanis per kilogram, but when we sell the carpet, we can't even make back 300 afghanis per kilogram. For example, making a carpet costs 3,000 afghanis, but no one buys it for even 2,000 afghanis."

Sardar Mohammad, another carpet seller, said: "Currently, there are no buyers, and yarn is expensive. Those who weave carpets do not make a profit, and production has significantly decreased." The beauty and elegance of Afghan handwoven carpets remain as strong as ever, yet the markets have lost their vibrancy. These carpets are globally renowned for their high quality and diversity. A significant portion of Afghan handwoven and traditional carpets is produced in the northern and western regions of the country.

Afghan Ministry Rejects...

implementing various projects to combat drought. Abid stated: "We completely reject the Red Cross's report suggesting that 33 million people in Afghanistan lack access to water. We don't know on what basis or through what kind of survey this claim was made. Fortunately, the Ministry of Energy and Water is actively working on major projects to tackle drought."

Najibullah Sadid, a water management expert, told TOLONews: "Work must be done on water storage infrastructure, including the construction of small, medium, and large dams, as well as watershed management. Additionally, efforts must be made to improve water use efficiency; irrigation and agriculture systems should be modernized."

The ICRC report also noted that a significant portion of Afghanistan's freshwater comes from snowmelt and glacier runoff, warning that the rapid melting of glaciers poses a serious threat to the country's water resources.

A Brighter...

and independent Afghanistan is built on education. The obstruction of girls' education must come to an end — so that tomorrow may be filled with knowledge, awareness, and unity.

After 3 Years, UN Revives...

gradually reducing refrigerant consumption, promoting ozone-friendly alternatives, raising public awareness, building stakeholder capacity, and establishing facilities for recycling hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).

The projects will be implemented by UNIDO in collaboration with the National Environmental Protection Agency and other relevant institutions, marking a significant step forward in environmental conservation efforts.

4 Months On...

demonstrated that this Chinese-invested project has been, and will continue to be, beneficial for Latin America and its people.

Win-win cooperation

On an early spring day at a dock in the Waigaoqiao port area of Shanghai, 301 Chinese domestically produced cars were loaded onto the ship Yuheng Pioneer, awaiting export to the Chancay Port. The day before, the shipping vessel Prince Rupert of China COSCO Shipping Corp (COSCO), which had departed from Chancay, docked at a terminal in Shanghai's Yangshan Port, unloading 509 tons of imported goods including fish meal.

Such a busy and orderly scene is a common sight at Shanghai's ports. Currently, the "Chancay-Shanghai" shipping route operates two regular weekly services between Chancay and Shanghai, as reported by the People's Daily on March 4. Products from China and Peru are continuously and efficiently reaching each other's markets through this new route.

Since the launch of this new shipping route, Shanghai Customs has supervised the import and export of 22,000 tons of goods valued at 610 million yuan (\$84.2). The Chancay Port has reduced logistics costs for shipping from Peru to China by over 20 percent, according to the People's Daily. Data shows how trade between China and Peru has further flourished through the Chancay Port. According to statistics from Shanghai Customs, in December 2024, the first month following the launch of the direct shipping route from Chancay to Shanghai, the total import and export value at the Shanghai ports with Peru reached 4.68 billion yuan, marking a year-on-year increase of 46.1 percent. In the whole year of 2024, the total import and export value between the Shanghai ports and Peru amounted to 51.5 billion yuan, a 23-percent increase compared to the previous year.

Peru is one of the first Latin American countries to participate in the BRI. China is also Latin America's second-largest trading partner, with trade volume reaching \$427.4 billion with this region in the first three quarters of 2024. "The expectation we have regarding China is extremely high," Juan José Santiváñez, interior minister of Peru, told the Global

Times in previous interview. He said that Chancay places Peru as one of the main players in Latin America, becoming the most important hub, and will definitely contribute greatly to the economy of Peru.

Powerful counterattack

The win-win project of Chancay, however, has been described by some in the US as a "threat" to the US security and economic interests in Latin America.

The US has been hyping smears against the project since the construction of the Chancay Port began. And in recent months, it has intensified their efforts in continuously reviving false narratives such as "military use" and "economic coercion" of the port, maliciously portraying China's "expansion of influence" in Latin America.

"China is exercising our playbook" of being present economically and equipping the US' hemispheric neighbors militarily, the then US Southern Command's commander Laura Richardson told the US House Armed Services Committee in March, according to the US Naval Institute website. Richardson later hinted to the Financial Times (FT) that Chancay "could be used by Beijing's navy," FT reported on November 4, 2024.

Theoretically speaking, nowadays many large commercial ports around the world are capable of accommodating warships, and the claim that China helped build the Chancay Port for its military purposes is logically untenable, said Lü Xiang, an expert in US studies at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. "Aside from friendly exchanges, I see no reason for the Chinese Navy to deploy warships there."

The claim that China is using the Chancay Port to economically coerce Peru is yet another false assertion propagated by the US. In October 2024, the Diálogo Americas website published two articles about Chancay replete with defamatory statements against the port and China. The first article published on October 18 extensively portrayed Chancay as China's economic pressure tool. "We are facing a clear example of China's economic coercion, which takes advantage of the economic dependence it has generated in countries like Peru to pressure and penalize if a country tries to change the rules of the game," the

article cited an Argentine writer and journalist Agustín Barletti as saying.

The quadrilingual website that is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole, appears to be backed by local media or academic institutions in Latin America. However, it is actually a digital military magazine published by the US Southern Command, the Global Times found.

Economist and senior fellow at the Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University, Yu Xiang, refuted this false claim. Yu explained that Chancay project follows the typical BOT (build-operate-transfer) model, a form of project delivery method common seen all over the world, particularly for large-scale infrastructure projects.

"The BOT mode model was not originally created by China; it is something that Chinese enterprises learned from the West," Yu told the Global Times.

Data shows that Chancay can bring significant benefits to Peru's economy. The port is expected to generate \$4.5 billion in annual economic benefit for Peru, equivalent to 1.8 percent of the country's GDP. The construction of the port generated 1,300 direct jobs, and around 8,000 indirect jobs due to the economic dynamics already observed in the area, according to Lima-based magazine AméricaEconomía.

Including the Chancay project, the BRI cooperation "attracts and increases investment in key sectors, supporting economic development and job creation," Luis Cabello, commercial counsellor, and representative of Promperú (Promotion Agency of Peru for Exports and Tourism), in Beijing, told the Global Times in a previous interview.

More than 20 Latin American countries have signed cooperation agreements under the BRI.

"China welcomes increased investment and cooperation in Latin America from all countries, including the US, to jointly promote the prosperity and development of the region," said Lü. "The US should recognize that instead of futilely hyping up the supposed 'threats' posed by some Chinese projects there, it would be more productive to focusing on creating tangible benefits for the people of Latin America."

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| | | |
|---------|-------|---------|
| 70.9857 | \$ | 70.7857 |
| 75.7093 | € | 75.1093 |
| 90.5400 | £ | 89.7400 |
| 254.5 | Rp | 247.0 |
| 19.2633 | රුපිය | 19.1633 |
| 796.5 | ₹ | 786.5 |

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Muslim World Should Take Drastic Effort to Stop Israeli Crime

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has strongly condemned Israeli regime's atrocities against Palestinians in Gaza Strip, emphasizing urgent need for unified and immediate action by Muslim countries to halt these crimes.

The top Iranian diplomat made the remarks in a telephone conversation with his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan on Saturday evening, urging Muslim countries across the world to take "drastic and collective" efforts to confront Israeli aggression against Palestinian people in Gaza Strip, Press TV reported.

Araghchi pointed to the Israeli regime's resumption of its genocidal war on Gaza since Tuesday in outright breach of Tel Aviv's ceasefire agreement with the coastal sliver's Hamas resistance movement.



The fresh genocidal campaign has claimed the lives of more than 1,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, in addition to the roughly 48,000 people that the brutal military onslaught had already killed.

Amid the deadly atrocities, the Israeli regime's minister for military affairs, Israel Katz threatened to annex parts of Gaza unless Hamas released the Zionist captives, who remained in the Palestinian territory.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Araghchi denounced the underway military aggression by the United States and the United Kingdom against Yemen, highlighting the resulting casualties among innocent women and children, as well as the destruction of the country's infrastructures.

He underscored the shared responsibility of the global Muslim community to... **P2**

A look at the world

Letter From China: Global South Cooperation In The Spotlight In Beijing

"Global South" and "cooperation" were undoubtedly the keywords I heard most during the just concluded 2025 Global South Financiers Forum. The three-day event, hosted by Xinhua News Agency from March 19 to 21, was attended by scholars and representatives of government departments, financial institutions, multinational firms, international organizations and media outlets from more than 30 countries and regions. Focusing on topics such as the driving role of sci-tech innovation in capital development, the advancement of inclusive, green and digital finance development, and the dissemination of financial stories, the occasion could not have been more attractive to journalists covering economic news like me. "The financial sector is the lifeblood of a nation's economy," reads a slogan on a wall in the Lize Financial Business District, a new financial cluster in Beijing where the forum was held. This sentiment was reflected in the broad, insightful discussions that took place during the forum.

Many attendees acknowledged the crucial role of the financial sector in driving the growth of economies in the Global South, noting also that the Global South as a whole suffers from a lack of representation within international, Global-North-dominated financial architecture. Countries in the Global South have achieved remarkable economic growth, which has not only injected stability and vitality into the world economy but also helped stabilize the global financial landscape, said Jiao Jie, dean of Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance. The weight these countries carry in key global indices is increasing. Moreover, there is minor correlation between the yields of these countries and those of major developed economies, thus reducing the overall volatility of investment portfolios and providing essential opportunities for



risk diversification among global investors, Jiao said. But the Global South -- a bloc of developing countries, emerging economies and the world's least-developed nations -- still faces a disparity between economic contributions and influence in the current international financial system. This was a key message I took from the forum.

U.S. Military Launches Fresh Strikes on Yemen's Hodeidah Airport, Central Province

The U.S. naval forces carried out three strikes on the Hodeidah airport in the Yemeni Red Sea port city, and five strikes on the Majzar district in Yemen's central province of Marib on Saturday night, Houthi-run al-Masirah TV reported. The report did not provide details on casualties or damage caused by the attacks, and there has been no comment from the U.S. side yet. The Hodeidah airport




has been closed to civilian flights since late 2014 when the Houthi group seized control over several northern cities, including the strategic city of Hodeidah. The airport has also been a frequent target of previous U.S. airstrikes. Earlier on Saturday, the Houthis said they had carried out a sixth attack on U.S. naval forces in the northern Red Sea since March 15, launching several drones at... **P2**

Trump Signs Order Aimed At Dismantling US Department of Education



Flanked by students and educators, U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday signed an executive order intended to essentially dismantle the federal Department of Education, making good on a longstanding campaign promise to conservatives. The order is designed to leave school policy almost entirely in the hands of states and local boards, a prospect that alarms liberal education advocates, Reuters reported. Thursday's order was a first step "to eliminate" the department, Trump said at a signing ceremony in the East Room of the White House. Shutting the agency completely requires an act of Congress, and Trump lacks the votes for that. "We're going to be returning education, very simply, back to the states where it belongs," said Trump in front of a colorful backdrop of state flags. Young students invited to the event sat at classroom desks encircling the president and signed their own mock executive orders alongside him. The signing followed the department's announcement last week that it would lay off nearly half of its staff, in step with Trump's sweeping efforts to reduce the size of a federal government he considers to be bloated and inefficient.



Ramadan Kareem

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