



Culture-rooted confidence in Chinese modernization

The confidence in Chinese modernization stems from its historical culture. No nation or civilization has maintained strength for as long as thousands of years **6**

Four athletes' peaks mirror era's evolution

From "looking up the world" to "looking at the world on equal footing": China embarks on journey to a leading sporting nation with confidence **8-9**

Holiday spending surge powers China's economic growth

China's consumption soared during the 2024 National Day holidays, as tourism boom boosted the economy. This surge reflects a strong consumer market, driven by a stable economy and solid policy support **13**



Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone (center) leads the 45th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in Vientiane on October 9, 2024. Photo: VCG

▶ Meeting will highlight consensus in resolving disputes via dialogue

ASEAN summit to expand cooperation with China

By Zhao Yusha

Leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries convened a summit on Wednesday in Vientiane, capital city of the Laos, with the meeting's goal of boosting the region's economic and security cooperation under spotlight.

ASEAN's commitment to

accelerating development and enhancing connectivity has expanded its cooperation potential with China, ASEAN's largest trading partner. Additionally, discussions surrounding security issues, such as those in the South China Sea, will highlight the consensus between China and ASEAN to resolve disputes through dialogue, according to Chinese experts.

In contrast to China's mutually beneficial and peace-promoting approach in collaborating with ASEAN members, the US' tendency to form small alliances and use the ASEAN as a pawn in geopolitical competition undermines regional countries' aspirations for peaceful development, experts noted.

Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone welcomed

new leaders from Thailand and Singapore to the summit in his opening speech on Wednesday. He said Laos, the current ASEAN chair, aims to help members work together to manage geopolitical and economic challenges under its chairmanship.

"We help one another, and work together the ASEAN way," he said.

China deeply concerned over escalation of Israel-Iran crisis

By Yang Sheng

China is deeply concerned over the turmoil in the Middle East and is calling for a "major country" with influence to play its due role to prevent a spillover of the crisis, said the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, as Israel, with support or tolerance from the US, intends to retaliate significantly against Iran. This has brought increasing concern among the international community that a loss of control over the situation could spiral into an all-out war in the Middle East.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a routine press conference on Wednesday that "We oppose moves that fuel antagonism and expand conflict, and call on all parties to handle the current situation with a calm, rational and responsible attitude in the interest of peace and stability in the region. The international community, especially major countries with influence, needs to play a constructive role and avoid further turmoil."

"To end this conflict, we need political will and diplomatic efforts, not weapons, ammunition and unilateral sanctions. Major country needs to play its due role, be objective and just, take the lead in observing international law, and make positive efforts to end the fighting as soon as possible, put the situation under control and prevent a spillover of the crisis," Mao remarked on Wednesday.

Mao's remarks came in response to a question about US military aids to Israel and whether potential Israeli strikes against Iran could target oil production facilities.

New presidency



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban presents the program for Hungary's six-month presidency of the Council of the EU as part of a plenary session at the European Parliament on October 9, 2024. "The EU needs to change," Orban said, stressing that the Hungarian Presidency aims to be the voice and catalyst for change. Photo: VCC

Political will, diplomatic efforts needed, not weapons, sanctions: Chinese FM spokesperson

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nuclear facilities and other strategic sites inside Iran.

In an hours-long security meeting in Tel Aviv Tuesday night, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to key decisions — along with his top ministers, security and military officials — about the impending Israeli attack on Iran, according to an Israeli official. The Times of Israel reported on Wednesday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said on Tuesday that "any attack from Israel will be met with a firm response," media reported.

US President Joe Biden said on October 2 that Israel has the right to hit back, and Washington and its allies agreed to sanction Iran over the missile attack, media reported.

Experts said the "major country with influence" mentioned by the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson refers to the US without any doubt. According to Reuters, Biden was expected to speak on Wednesday with Netanyahu, with the conversation set to include discussion of any plans to strike Iran, according to a person familiar with the matter.

However, Biden also warned Israel not to bomb Iran's nuclear sites, saying any response from Israel should be "proportionate" to the Iranian attack on Israel last week, essentially acknowledging that some counterstrike is appropriate, according to The New York Times.

The latest conflict between Iran and Israel, as well as Israel's bloody operation in Lebanon and other regional countries have proven that the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict that started on October 7, 2023 has escalated to the entire region. This risks another all-out war in the Middle East, but the main reason why the international community has failed to prevent this escalation is due to the US' one-sided policy which has enabled the situation to get worse and worse, said Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University. Without the US support and tolerance of Israel, the conflict would not have been able to escalate into such a terrible situation, Chinese experts noted.

Mao said at the Wednesday press conference that "The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been protracted for over a year, causing the death of over 40,000 people in Gaza, most of whom are women and children. The international community has agreed on the need to de-escalate tensions, end the fighting and violence, protect civilians and avoid humanitarian disaster."

Unfortunately, the US is still sponsoring Israel's deadly military operations in the region. Israel said on September 26 that it had secured an \$8.7 billion aid package from the US to support its "ongoing military efforts and to maintain a qualitative military edge in the region," Reuters reported.

Wang Jin, director of the Israeli Studies Program and Center at Northwestern University in Xi'an, told the Global Times on Wednesday that "at this moment, Israel is yet to launch a strike against Iran, as it's waiting to see the US' stance." The Biden administration does not want an escalation, and Iran also has no intention to further escalate, so if Israel chooses not to strike Iran, an escalation can be prevented. But if Israel attacks Iran, the situation is highly likely to spiral out of control, Wang noted.

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US' tendency of using ASEAN as pawn fully displayed: expert

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"We will discuss and strengthen cooperation between ASEAN members and other dialogue partners, along with upholding the unity and centrality of ASEAN," he was quoted as saying by the AP.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang will attend the 27th China-ASEAN Summit, the 27th ASEAN Plus Three Summit and the 19th East Asia Summit to be held in Vientiane, Laos, from October 9 to 12, and pay an official visit to Laos, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning announced on Tuesday. Li's visit is at the invitation of Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the current ASEAN chair, the spokesperson said.

Li will also pay an official visit to Vietnam from October 12 to 14, at the invitation of Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh of Vietnam, Mao said.

The theme for Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2024 is "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience." Enhancing connectivity and resilience is of utmost importance to ensure ASEAN collective efforts in the strengthening of the ASEAN community to seize opportunities and address present and emerging challenges effectively, according to ASEAN website.

Currently, ASEAN member countries are still focused on development issues, but ASEAN is facing some challenges. For example, economically, there are significant disparities in the levels of development among member states, said Ge Hongliang, vice dean of the ASEAN College at the Guangxi Minzu University.

As both China and ASEAN members are pushing forward economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic, the two sides share great potential in enhancing bilateral cooperation in terms of regional economic resilience and in restructuring and upgrading industrial chains, said Ge.

Especially since the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership entered into force in 2022, China and some ASEAN members have made significant efforts in terms of overall economic development and integration in the region, particularly in the area of trade and investment liberalization, said experts.

Premier Li's ongoing trip to the ASEAN is expected to boost bilateral relations, foster deeper substantive cooperation, and enhance people-to-people exchanges, which will further catalyze regional peace, stability and prosperity, Chen Xiangmiao, director of the World Navy Research Center at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, told the Global Times.

A peaceful solution of the South China Sea dispute is what most ASEAN members want to see and those countries are against further escalation of the situation, said Ge. That said, the hyping of the South China Sea issue at the summit is not welcomed by all except a few certain countries.

US sowing discord

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will represent the US at summits with Asian leaders in Laos this week and expects to discuss human rights in Myanmar, China's "irresponsible" behavior in the South China Sea and Ukraine, US officials said on Tuesday, as Reuters reported.

US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink told reporters that a number of China-related issues would come up during Blinken's trip, including its "escalatory and irresponsible steps designed to coerce and pressure many of the South China Sea claimants."

On the Ukraine crisis, he said: "Our concerns regarding China's strong support for the Russian defense industrial base, they remain, they are ongoing, and I would say they are growing."

Chen observed that Washington often employs international platforms to criticize China, turning these venues into arenas for China-US competition.

This approach reflects a typical Cold War mentality, as the US views the ASEAN merely as a pawn in its efforts to counter China, while disregarding the region's desire for peaceful development and its growing resentment at being used as a tool in major geopolitical rivalries.

In the State of Southeast Asia 2024 survey conducted by the Singapore-based ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in April this year, more than half of people in Southeast Asia said they would side with China over the US if forced to choose. China was also chosen as the most influential economic power in the region by most respondents, with 59.9 percent of respondents picking it over the US.

Emphasizing its support for Ukraine in both bilateral and multilateral settings is a hallmark of US policy. However, Southeast Asian countries maybe more concerned about the conflicts in the Middle East, said Chen. He noted that Islamic countries like Indonesia and Malaysia with huge Muslim population firmly support Palestinian and condemn Israel over the Gaza crisis and Israel's military operations that harm other nations in the Middle East. Therefore, the voices of Southeast Asian countries regarding the Middle East conflict may pose a challenge for the US, who has long indulged Israel, during this year's summit.

Earlier this month, speaking at the UN in New York, Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hassan demanded that the UN Security Council impose an immediate arms embargo against Israel.

"They have already crossed the line, and we need to take drastic action to curb their barbarism," he said, according to Malaysian media Bernama.