



CPC leadership analyzes
2023 economic work

A meeting attended by China's top leadership called for lifting market confidence, strengthening policy coordination and optimizing COVID prevention and control measures **3**

China to promote
biodiversity framework

China's COP15 president Huang Runqiu said that China will spare no effort in promoting the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). **4**

Letter from Xi adds heat to
Chinese language fever

President Xi's visit to Saudi Arabia is a special event for all Chinese learners and enthusiasts there, as they have just received a reply letter from Xi, to their pleasant surprise **12-13**



A billboard for China-Arab States Summit is seen on December 7, 2022 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Riyadh on December 7 to attend the China-Arab States Summit, the China-GCC Summit and to pay a state visit to Saudi Arabia.
Photo: VCC

► Summits 'stepping stone' to closer collaboration, boost regional peace

Xi's Saudi trip to open up new prospects for China-Arab ties

By Yu Jincui and
Xing Xiaojing in Riyadh

China's intensive head-of-state diplomacy is set to continue in December, and this time, the focus of attention is Saudi Arabia and the broader Arab world. Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived here Wednesday afternoon to attend the first China-

Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council summit, and pay a state visit to Saudi Arabia at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

The visit is a historic undertaking as both the China-Arab States Summit and the China-GCC Summit are convened for the first time, reflecting a new

milestone in relations between China and Arab states.

Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and shockwaves across global energy markets caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as the US' and Western arbitrary sanctions on Russia, the international community faces great uncertainty in terms of economic recovery

and national development.

The move, which is seen by some observers as Arab countries collectively "looking East" marks a significant diplomatic and strategic adjustment for countries in the Middle East. The landmark summits, which are the first of their

COVID response further optimized, focusing more on vulnerable groups

By Chen Qingqing,
Du Qiongfang and Fan Wei

China further adjusted and optimized its COVID-19 response by releasing 10 new measures on Wednesday, including allowing asymptomatic carriers and patients with mild symptoms and those who meet certain requirements to quarantine at home. China's top health officials said these optimized measures do not signal a full relaxation, rather it is a comprehensive consideration based on experiences accumulated in response to the new characteristics of the virus.

The State Council's joint prevention and control mechanism against COVID-19 released a new 10-point plan to further optimize the country's COVID response, including reducing the frequency of nucleic acid testing, scrapping negative nucleic acid result and health code requirements for entering public places except for designated locations, as well as lifting COVID testing and health code requirements for domestic cross-region travel.

The new measures detail that infected individuals with mild or no symptoms who meet the requirements will be allowed to quarantine at home, although they can still choose to go a collective quarantine facility.

The 10 new measures, mainly targeting domestic epidemic control work, were released after health authorities comprehensively evaluated the current prevention and control measures and experiences, as well as existing problems especially after the 20 measures took effect in accordance to the characteristics of the virus



Arab states 'actively diversify' strategic partners

► Xi's, from Page 1

kind in contemporary Chinese-Arab history, represent a diplomatic pioneering step by China in the Middle East that will help stabilize the region, promote disputes resolving through dialogues, cushion negative effects that the US' and Western arbitrary sanctions on Russia have brought to the Arab countries, experts stated.

Observers believe Saudi Arabia is preparing a red carpet welcome for Xi, which would constitute a sharp contrast with the muted reception US President Joe Biden received when he visited the Kingdom in July.

CNN reported that at least 14 Arab leaders will attend the China-Arab States Summit and according to Saudi Press Agency, more than 20 initial agreements worth \$29.26 billion will be signed during Xi's visit.

Enthusiasm for cooperation

The anticipation for Xi's visit is palpable in Saudi Arabia and the broader Arab world. "The Arab world views China as a loyal friend and effective proponent," Yahya Mahmoud bin Junaid, chairman of the Riyadh-based Center for Research and Knowledge Communication told the Global Times.

Nadia Helmy, an expert on Chinese political affairs and professor of political science of Beni Suf University, Egypt, told the Global Times that there are considerable prospects for joint Arab-Chinese cooperation that can be discussed during the upcoming summits, adding that she believes the summits are primarily aimed at discussing ways to promote common development and integrate strategies within the framework of the Global Development Initiative and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Helmy also emphasized the importance of the efforts made by Chinese diplomacy to support Arab issues and identify peaceful solutions to existing crises in the region, and the Arab states are keen to strengthen their relations with China in various fields, which will help establish a new era for Arab-Chinese relations and contribute to creating a multipolar world.

"The relationship between China and Saudi Arabia is a vital strategic one that stems from mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, and mutual visits between the leaders of the two countries," said Junaid.

Experts believe Saudi Arabia's proactive attitude toward enhancing cooperation with China reflects a new paradigm of "looking East" in its foreign policy

and the strategic direction of placing higher priority on China.

China-Saudi Arabia relations could become a template for other Arab countries, Meshari Abahusain, a Saudi Arabian who is working as investment director of Saudi Silk Road Industrial Services Limited Liability Company, a Chinese-Saudi joint venture which provides investment services in Saudi Arabia, told the Global Times. He believes as bilateral relations become increasingly mature, all parties and other countries in the Middle East will both benefit and follow.

US anxiety

Xi's visit and the two summits between China and Arab states come at a time when Saudi-US relations have been strained by issues including Saudi Arabia's rejection of US President Joe Biden's request to increase oil production and disagreement on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. After the Ukraine crisis escalated, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries showed strategic independence and autonomy, displeasing Washington lawmakers and the White House.

China emphasizes the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefits and win-win cooperation in developing ties

with Saudi and development-through-peace approach in the region while the US prioritizes human rights and democracy subjects and issues diktats to Saudi and other Arabia countries, which many in the region increasingly do not tolerate, Ebrahim Hashem, a UAE strategist told the Global Times.

US officials and media are baselessly claiming that China is taking advantage of US row with Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries to expand footprint and influence in the region, with an intention of "kicking the US out of Middle East," which only lays bare US anxiety toward improving China-Arab relations, experts say.

"China is not aiming to replace any other country but looking to achieve mutual gains in its relations with the Arab countries and the Kingdom, and therefore it does not pose any threat or challenge to the US," Junaid said.

"The US is facing a paradox – it wants the Middle East countries to cooperate with it on the Ukraine-Russia conflict, but it has neither ability nor willingness to bring benefits to regional countries, Arab countries are fully aware of this," according to Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

10 new measures point to more precise, scientific direction of virus fight

► COVID, from Page 1

variant and epidemic situation, Chinese public health officials said.

Some public health experts said the 10 measures are important steps toward a more precise and scientific direction of COVID prevention and control measures, as the prevalence of the Omicron mutant strain and its evolutionary branches made the previous epidemic prevention approach too costly and it eventually became ineffective. Now, we need to continuously adjust and optimize the epidemic prevention work to allocate strained medical resources to those in need and focus on vulnerable populations, they said.

Not 'lying flat'

The latest measures are expected to give a huge boost to cross-region travel as online searches and bookings of flights and train tickets skyrocketed in the immediate wake of the announcement. Ticket searches for the impending 2023 Spring Festival in January hit a three-year high on a number of travel platforms.

China has recorded surging domestic COVID-19 infections in recent weeks, particularly some major cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Chongqing.



Long lines are seen back at a train station in Jinan, East China's Shandong Province, on December 7, 2022, as China further optimized COVID response and relaxed controls. Photo: IC

Adjustment and optimization do not mean letting the epidemic grow out of control, officials and experts said, as China has been taking small steps forward by adjusting in a dynamic way. "If the epidemic becomes severe and heavily affects social functioning, we would probably take relatively stricter measures," Li Tongzeng, a medical expert at Bei-

jing's Xiaotangshan Hospital, told the Global Times.

"As for now, it's fully opening because we need to adjust in accordance to the mutation of the virus, the severity of the epidemic, the capacity of the hospital, and the pressure from all aspects of society," Li said on Wednesday.

While most public places no longer require nucleic acid test

results and health codes, designated locations such as nursing homes, welfare homes, medical institutions, childcare facilities, and primary and secondary schools still require tests, a targeted move to protect highly vulnerable populations as the next focus in China's epidemic work.

"Places such as nursing homes, medical institutions

and schools are still required to check negative nucleic acid test results and health codes, which is very important as those are places where high risk groups gather, and we should prevent transmission inside hospitals to reduce secondary medical disasters," Chen Xi, an assistant professor of public health at Yale University, told the Global Times on Wednesday.

The new measures released on Wednesday also underline the need to accelerate vaccination rates especially for those aged between 60 to 79 years old, and those 80 or above, noting that special arrangements should be put in place.

In mobilizing more elderly people to get vaccinated, China could learn from other countries' experiences including collecting adverse reactions from both individuals and medical institutions and regularly releasing that information to society to dispel public doubts about vaccines, Chen said.

Allowing some infected people to quarantine at home will also help relieve strained medical resources, allocating resources from people with low risk of serious illness and death to high-risk groups, according to experts.