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China, Canada vow to enhance bilateral ties

Li, Carney agree to strengthen dialogue, expand cooperation, promote stability

By CAO DESHENG in Beijing and YANG GAO in Toronto

China and Canada pledged on Thursday to jointly uphold the multilateral trading system and the core role of the United Nations in international affairs while agreeing to strengthen dialogue and promote cooperation in various fields.

Inside Premier Li Qiang and visiting Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney expressed the two countries' commitment to enhancing bilateral relations and safeguarding multilateralism during their talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Carney arrived in Beijing on Wednesday for a four-day official visit to China, the first trip to the country by a Canadian prime minister in eight years, highlighting the recent warming of bilateral ties. President Xi Jinping is expected to

meet with him during Carney's stay in Beijing.

Li said that, through joint efforts, China-Canada relations have seen a turnaround, which has been widely welcomed by various sectors in both countries.

Maintaining a healthy and stable development of China-Canada relations aligns with the common interests of both nations, he added.

Standing at a new starting point, China is willing to work with Canada to maintain the strategic partnership, strengthen dialogue and communication, enhance political mutual trust, respect each other's core interests, seek common ground while reserving differences, and continuously expand pragmatic cooperation to add greater momentum to the development of both countries, Li said. He underlined the need for the two countries to promote stable growth in bilateral trade.

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Premier Li Qiang (right, back row) and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney (left, back row) witness the signing of multiple bilateral cooperation documents on Thursday following their talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

CHINESE TEA BRANDS TASTE SUCCESS ON US MAIN STREETS

Growing number of stores reflects increasing popularity of beverage

By BILIN LIN in New York

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On the day before New Year's Eve, powerful gusts swept through New York, battering the city with brutal winter weather, making it feel like -10 C. But outside a newly opened Mixue store in Koreatown, dozens of customers waited in line patiently.

In a stark contrast to the freezing streets, the storefront felt unusually lively. Two staff members dressed in Mixue's signature snowman costumes greeted customers and passersby, while the brand's upbeat theme song played in the background, repeating its familiar refrain: "I love you, you love me, Mixue Ice Cream and Tea."

Among those waiting in line were not only Asian customers, but people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, most of them young. Customers stepped out with drinks in hand and,



unexpectedly, many of them held ice cream cones.

Inside, the store was crowded with customers waiting eagerly for their orders. Behind the counter, seven employees were in constant motion, taking orders, preparing drinks and calling out numbers without pausing.

Compared with a typical Mixue store in China, the New York location is more than twice the usual size. The second floor is currently under renovation as the store prepares for heavier customer traffic. Despite the larger footprint, the New York store retains the brand's familiar design and layout.

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Rising anxiety among Greenlanders



Protesters with Greenlandic flags attend a "Greenland is for Greenlanders" demonstration in front of the United States embassy in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, on Wednesday. Denmark will immediately beef up its military presence in Greenland, the nation's Ministry of Defence said just before talks were to start in Washington over US President Donald Trump's threats to take over the Arctic island. THOMAS TRAASDAHL / AFP See story, page 11; Editorial, page 8

All parties urged to exercise restraint on Iran situation

By ZHAO JIA zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

China has reiterated its opposition to the use or threat of force in international relations and called for resolving differences through dialogue, as Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation on Thursday with his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi.

During their talks, Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that China consistently upholds the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, emphasizing that China stands against imposing one country's will on others and opposes the world's return to the "law of the jungle."

Noting that China stands ready to play a constructive role in addressing the current situation in Iran, Wang urged all parties concerned to cherish peace and exercise restraint. He expressed confidence that the Iranian government and people will remain united, overcome difficulties, maintain national stability, and safeguard their legitimate rights and interests.

On his part, Araghchi briefed Wang on the latest developments in Iran, saying that the recent unrest was instigated by external forces and that the situation has now returned to stability. He said that Iran is prepared to respond to external interference, while emphasizing that the door to dialogue remains open. He also expressed hope that China would play a greater role in promot-

ing peace and stability in the region.

In December, protests erupted in several cities of Iran over the depreciation of the national currency and the soaring cost of living. Violence during the demonstrations resulted in casualties among both security personnel and civilians.

In recent days, the United States has repeatedly threatened military intervention in Iran, further escalating tensions between the two countries. Media reports said that Washington is redeploying the USS *Abraham Lincoln* carrier strike group to the Middle East.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular news briefing in Beijing on Wednesday that China firmly opposes external interference in other countries' internal affairs and hopes that all parties will

act in ways conducive to peace and stability in the Middle East.

Li Zixin, an assistant research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said that Foreign Minister Wang's remarks reflect China's consistent principles and stance on geopolitical issues and regional flashpoints, highlighting the nation's commitment to international law and the basic norms governing international relations.

Niu Xinchun, executive director of the China-Arab Research Institute at Ningxia University, warned that threats of military action not only endanger Iran's security, but also undermine stability across the entire region.

He added that China's position reflects the prevailing view of the international community.

Authentic chili sauce resonates with diverse appetites

By WANG ZHUOQIONG wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Lao Gan Ma, the iconic brand of chili sauce that has been a fixture in Chinese kitchens for decades, continues to enjoy unabated popularity abroad thanks to its distinct taste that has remained unchanged over the years.

According to the 2025 Top 100 Enterprises in Guizhou, condiment maker Guiyang Nanming Laoganma Special Flavour Foodstuffs Co, which produces 3 million bottles of the Lao Gan Ma chili sauce daily, posted revenue of 5.39 billion yuan (\$754.6 million) in 2024, up slightly from 5.38 billion yuan in 2023. The latest figures mark its third consecutive year of growth, bringing it close to its 2020 revenue peak of 5.4 billion yuan.

The company's overseas revenue rose 30 percent in 2023, supported by steady growth in popularity and increased social media visibility. Unlike many food brands expanding internationally, Lao Gan Ma has made few concessions to local tastes, refusing to tweak the recipe that has defined its appeal in China for decades.

But the brand's success isn't just about revenue figures. Its real achievement lies in staying true to its roots, offering a bold, spicy and

umami-rich flavor that consumers cannot seem to get enough of.

Li Miaoxing, general manager and son of company founder Tao Huabi, told Xinhua News Agency in 2024 that the company's chili sauce, "crafted with traditional techniques, is the heart of our brand — it's the product that started it all."

Lao Gan Ma has today become a symbol of Chinese culinary heritage. Zhu Danpeng, a food industry expert, said, "The brand represents authentic Chinese flavors, rooted in centuries-old agricultural practices and handmade techniques."

The authentic taste resonates with consumers worldwide. The traditional Chinese flavor is a hit in diverse markets. "For overseas Chinese, it's a taste of home. For international consumers, it offers a direct link to authentic Chinese culinary experiences," said Zhu.

The brand's international expansion has been nothing short of remarkable. Lei Bangchao, head of personnel and administration at the brand's Guiding county branch, said that Lao Gan Ma's exports now account for 10 percent of its total revenue.

The sauce is available in more than 160 countries and can be found on the shelves of one-third of all mainstream supermarkets in the United States and Europe.



A full shelf of Lao Gan Ma chili sauce is seen at a supermarket in London, the United Kingdom, on Thursday.

WAN JINDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

It has also reached South America and Africa, selling in Peru, Brazil, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The global chili sauce market, valued at \$5.72 billion in 2023, is expected to grow to \$6.52 billion by 2028, according to Euroonitor International, a London-based market research company.

Lao Gan Ma's global rise can be attributed to two primary factors: its distinctive flavor and the viral power of social media. Word-of-

mouth, particularly among the Chinese diaspora, combined with social media buzz on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, has ensured that Lao Gan Ma's popularity remains intact globally. Influencers, who have described the sauce as a "cupboard staple", have embraced the condiment enthusiastically, experimenting with unconventional pairings such as ice cream and avocado.

The brand's journey has not been without challenges. A dip in sales in 2017 and 2018 was linked to the sourcing of peppers. The altered taste did not go down well with consumers. The return of its founder Tao to active management in 2019 helped restore the original recipe and rebuild consumer trust, Beijing Business Today reported.

The company's focus on quality ingredients, particularly the chili peppers from Guizhou province, has ensured its flavor consistency. Known for their aromatic complexity and balanced spiciness, these peppers are difficult to replicate.

Tao's principles have been key to Lao Gan Ma's steady growth. By focusing solely on chili sauce and avoiding diversification, the company has remained privately held and financially independent.

Liu Boqian in Guiyang contributed to this story.

