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THE FUNNY NAMES P4

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Greek port success highlights potential of Belt and Road

Investment by Chinese shipping company over the past 10 years has contributed to greatly increased performance. **Cecily Liu** reports

Along a 20-mile coastline outside Athens, a forest of cranes at the Port of Piraeus is busy 24 hours a day loading and unloading thousands of containers that are transported between Asia and Europe.

Flourishing trade volumes have directly created almost 2,000 local jobs in less than a decade, transforming Piraeus into the Mediterranean's busiest port.

Key to Piraeus' success is the investment made since 2008 by China COSCO Shipping to upgrade its infrastructure. At the time, the Greek government decided to privatize the port's operations amid the country's economic struggles and COSCO Shipping won a 35-year contract to operate the port.

Thanks to the COSCO investment, Piraeus shot up the rankings to become the world's 38th-busiest container port, from 93rd in 2010. During this period the port's handling volumes have grown seven-fold.

"We are witnessing a new era in the history of Piraeus," said Tassos Vamvakidis, commercial manager of Piraeus Container Terminal, a COSCO subsidiary.

Vamvakidis, a Greek, proudly points out that out of the 1,900 terminal employees, only a handful are Chinese and the rest are locals.

"COSCO has created local jobs, boosted our local economy, I am proud to be working for this company."

Piraeus' success gives a snapshot of the immense business potential possible through growing trade and

connectivity between China and Europe, highlighted by the Belt and Road Initiative.

Proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, it advocates improved connectivity of infrastructure, trade, ideas and knowledge between Europe and Asia.

Frequently cited as "project of the century", the initiative affects almost 70 countries and more than 4.8 billion people. It covers economies worth a combined \$21 trillion, accounting for 62 percent of the world's GDP.

Contrary to popular perception, the BRI does not represent a single clearly drawn trade route, nor is there an authoritative list of BRI projects. Instead, it is a vision that fosters globalization and common prosperity among all countries willing to engage,



Employees work on gantry cranes in a container yard operated by China COSCO Shipping Corp. Ltd. at the Port of Piraeus in Greece. The company is planning to take full advantage of the opportunities likely to arise from the Belt and Road Initiative. XINHUA

and is continuously expanding its reach.

For this reason, statistical projections on the BRI's impact can vary, but all forecasts agree on the vision's grand nature. HSCB estimates that BRI development projects will cost up to \$6 trillion in the next 15 years, and PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates the cost at \$5 trillion.

Fitch ratings agency believes that \$900 billion of projects were already planned or underway by last year.

Some projects, such as Piraeus, are clearly visible. One example is the Lyon-Wuhan freight rail line, opened in 2016, which greatly reduced transport time and costs compared with sea freight. Since then thousands of bottles of Bordeaux wine, car parts and French

agricultural products have been exported to China. Similarly, the "Silk Road in the air" cargo flight, connecting the trading hubs of Zhengzhou and Luxembourg, opened last year and facilitated the trade of many temperature-sensitive products, such as fresh fruit and pharmaceuticals.

SEE "INITIATIVE" ON P2



A cultural relics protection officer of the Dunhuang Academy China repairs a mural in Cave 130 of the Mogao Grottoes. SUN ZHIJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Glories of the old Silk Road revived

BY ZHU XINGXIN AND ZHANG LEI

The Dunhuang murals, colorful sculptures in a 3D virtual environment and the use of digital technology have helped revitalize the ancient Silk Road.

Since the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), Dunhuang has been the passage that connects the Middle Kingdom with the Western Regions (a Han Dynasty term for the area west of Yumenguan including what is now Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia).

Dunhuang was a famous town on the Silk Road, and in 1987 the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes were listed as a world cultural heritage.

"Dunhuang has rich, colorful historical and cultural relics, and I am here to find Nepalese art elements from my country," said Kumar Khadka, an international student from Nepal.

It was his first to Dunhuang as part of the ancient Silk Road tour, initiated by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. The event covers nine stations in China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Poland, the Czech Republic, France and the Netherlands.

Speaking about the program, Zhang Xiantang, the deputy director of the Dunhuang Academy China, said: "Dunhuang was born out of a desert, but it is closely related to the ancient Silk Road."

The Mogao Grottoes were built in 366. And although they have been eroded by nature and disfigured by humans over time, 492 caves are intact with preserved murals and colorful paintings.

The 2,499 painted sculptures and



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ZHANG XIANTANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DUNHUANG
ACADEMY CHINA

the 53,820 square yards of painted murals are the largest collection of Buddhist art treasures in the world.

Although the Mogao Grottoes area is large and the caves numerous, the size of each cave is extremely small. More than 85 percent of the caves are less than 30 square yards. And many of the colored sculptures and murals are made of fragile materials such as dirt, wood and wheat straw. So if 15 people remain in a cave for more than 10 minutes, the temperature in the cave will increase by 5 C, and the concentration of carbon dioxide increases greatly.

This means that a large number of tourists will inevitably accelerate the aging of the murals and colorful sculptures.

The Mogao Grottoes are the highlight of Dunhuang, but Dunhuang has more to offer.

Five years ago, with the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, Dunhuang once again became the focus of the Silk Road, and more tourists began to visit it.

Zhang said that the focus on Dunhuang will help awaken the common memory of the countries along the ancient Belt and Road route.

Unmanned robots delivering a smart future

BY FAN FEIFEI AND SHI JING

Delayed food and drink deliveries could soon be a thing of the past as autonomous delivery robots start to appear in shopping malls and office buildings, making deliveries faster, smarter and more cost-efficient.

Segway Robotics, a wholly owned subsidiary of Segway-Ninebot, a high-tech startup in Beijing, has installed an autonomous delivery robot in Chaoyang Joy City in Chaoyang district of Beijing.

Wang Ye, president of Segway-Ninebot, said the robot can carry 50 kilograms and travel at up to 78 yards a minute. It can work for 10 hours a day, travel in elevators on its own, avoid pedestrians and obstacles intelligently at any time, and design optimal paths.

"When the robot arrives at an elevator, it sends instructions to the central control system of the elevator over a wireless network, and then the doors open," Wang said.

The application of the delivery robots will be extended from buildings to outdoor spaces, and the company will mass produce such robots and launch more delivery robotics services with its partners, Wang said.

Segway Robotics, founded in 2015, is a privately held company that focuses on developing and commercializing personal robots. It has notable backers including Sequoia Capital,



An autonomous delivery robot operates in the Chaoyang Joy City in Chaoyang district of Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Intel Capital and Xiaomi Corp. It has partnered with Meituan-Dianping, China's largest on-demand service provider, to accelerate the application and commercialization of unmanned delivery technologies.

Similar robots have also appeared

50

kilograms

carrying capacity of an autonomous delivery robot of Segway Robotics

Estate Management Co.'s Shanghai branch, said the robot is connected to the office building's access control system and the lifts. When the lift doors open, the robot enters once it has confirmed there is no obstacle inside. It also greets to warn people of its presence. In one month the robot has delivered about 30 orders.

"We used to have a box in the corner of the lobby for food deliveries," Geng said. "This got rid of the lines of delivery people waiting at the gate, but we could not keep the food warm or the box clean and tidy. With this robot, such problems can be easily solved."

Zhao Ming, founder of Yogo Robot, said robots are designed to change people's way of life and make their lives more interesting. This is why they have been introduced to take care of indoor deliveries as they can help office buildings better manage the process, he said.

Yogo Robot was founded in January 2016 and raised more than 10 million yuan (\$1.5 million) 10 months later.

Before the launch of the Kago series of food delivery robots, in 2016 Yogo introduced the Mingo robot, which specializes in providing information to hotel guests and taking orders at restaurants. In late 2016 Mingo robots were put into operation in Shanghai.

SEE "ROBOTS" ON P3

Runners with vision

BY ZHOU JIN

Running a marathon takes determination, courage, perseverance. It is an arduous undertaking that requires months of dedicated training. But some of the runners in the Beijing marathon on Sept. 16 had to overcome challenges far greater than most of those they competed against. For 21 of the runners pounding the Chinese capital's roads were visually impaired and had to compete tied to another runner for guidance.

"I feel relieved after all of them completed the race safely, and the 87 volunteer guides who gave up their own participation to help our visually impaired runners did an incredible job," Li Yubao, a guide and trainer, said.

Li is a volunteer who has been guiding those runners for more than two years. Now he is the leader of a group of volunteers in a running group providing professional training for the visually impaired.

To prepare for the Beijing marathon

he arranged regular training for volunteers and participant runners for two months.

It is a great honor to run the Beijing marathon for normal runners, not to mention those with visual impairment, Li said, adding that their competition results are better than predicted and two runners even finished the race within four hours.

On the weekends Li, 39, a systems engineer in Beijing, becomes the eyes and navigator for the visually impaired and runs with them in the Olympic Green every Saturday morning.

The He Yajun Running Group, named after the runner who initially set it up in 2015, now has more than 1,000 visually impaired runners and has more than 600 people willing to help.

When jogging in the park one day in 2016, Li's attention was caught by a special group of runners who were tied to each other in pairs with a rope, with "visually impaired" and "guide" marked in the back of their running gear.

"I was curious and asked around



A volunteer guide helps a visually impaired runner during a training session at the Olympic Green in Beijing on Sept. 8. CHEN ZEBING / CHINA DAILY

about them", he said. Li finally joined the group and became a volunteer guide in August 2016.

Li has already guided all the members in the group. The group has taken part in more than 20 marathons, and some of the runners have run in events in Europe.

Visually impaired runners can be divided into partially or totally without sight.

"Volunteer guides typically need to be in better physical condition than the disabled runners," Li said.

"Guides must have the energy to take care of the runners. A guide is expected to keep visually impaired runners safe and informed at all times, help them with pacing and warn them about obstacles.

SEE "RACE" ON P4