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tinued to worsen, the authorities may ramp up stimulus measures to keep the economy on track.

The PMI reading, which measures factory conditions and business expectations in the world's second-largest economy, fell to 50.2 in October, the lowest since July 2016 and down from 50.8 in September. It is also significantly weaker than the average for the January-September period, which is 51.2.

But it remained above the 50-point mark that separates expansion from contraction for a 27th consecutive month.

UAE agrees to further expand cooperative ties

Vice-President Wang Qishan agreed with leaders of the United Arab Emirates to further boost cooperation between the two countries during a three-day visit that concluded on Oct 30.

Wang, who had been invited by the UAE government, met with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi.

Wang also met in Dubai with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, vice-president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai.

In the meeting with the crown prince, Wang said that the decision by President Xi Jinping and the UAE leaders to promote bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership has laid the foundation and will serve as a blueprint for future ties.

English proficiency of Chinese falls: Report

After reaching its highest ranking last year, the English proficiency of Chinese people dropped in 2018 compared with other non-English-speaking countries, said a report released on Oct 30 in Beijing.

The 2018 ranking of the English proficiency of Chinese dropped 11 places from last year to 47th among 88 countries and regions, according to the 2018 English Proficiency Index of Swedish education company EF Education First, which has produced the report for eight consecutive years.

Christopher McCormick, senior vice-president for academic affairs



Craig Cameron, an Australian volunteer, examines the eyes of middle school students on Oct 31 in Qiaojia county, Southwest China's Yunnan province. As part of Education in Sight, a joint effort by several organizations, 48 volunteers from home and abroad performed free eye exams, and glasses were provided for over 5,000 students in the county. The effort aims to solve the problem of poor sight in China's rural areas. YAN KEREN / FOR CHINA DAILY

at EF Education First, said: "We do not think the drop in rankings means China's English proficiency decreased markedly in 2018, and the English proficiency scores in cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen have improved this year."

China scored 51.94 out of 100 points in 2018, 0.51 down from 2017, which is not a big difference, he said.

Sino-Russian mission provides Arctic data

A recently concluded China-Russia joint Arctic expedition has yielded a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the Arctic Ocean that will provide scientific support for the development of a Polar Silk Road, scientists from the two countries said.

Eleven Chinese and 19 Russian researchers participated in the second joint Sino-Russian Arctic expedition, which started in Russia's eastern port of Vladivostok on Sept 6. After overcoming extreme weather and traveling 12,000 kilometers, they returned to the port of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky on Oct 21.

The 46-day expedition was jointly

organized by the Pilot National Laboratory for Marine Science and Technology, based in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, and the Russian Academy of Sciences Pacific Oceanological Institute.

The scientists carried out multidisciplinary surveys, including ocean geology, hydrometeorology, chemistry and biodiversity.

Leaders hail launch of Sino-French satellite

President Xi Jinping exchanged congratulations with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Oct 29 on China's successful launch of an ocean-observing satellite jointly developed by the two countries as part of their space cooperation.

The China-France Oceanography Satellite, atop a Long March 2C carrier rocket, took off at 8:43 am on Oct 29 from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China's Gansu province and entered a sun-synchronous orbit 520 kilometers above Earth.

Xi said in his message to Macron that space cooperation is an important part of the China-France comprehensive strategic partnership.

The joint mission between the

China National Space Administration and the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales, the French space agency, will enable 24-hour observation of the global wave spectrum, effective wave height and ocean surface wind fields.

Shenzhen joins global elite ranking: Report

For the first time, Shenzhen, in South China's Guangdong province, ranks among the top five economically competitive cities worldwide, with four other Chinese cities — Hong Kong, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing — ranking among the top 20, according to a report released jointly by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and UN-Habitat.

The Global Urban Competitiveness Report 2018-2019 was released at the New Global Cities: Nanjing Internationalization Development Forum, held in Nanjing, East China's Jiangsu province, on Oct 29. It has established an urban economic competitiveness ranking system with factors such as infrastructure, financial service, technological innovation and human resources taken into consideration to evaluate the quality of 1,007 global cities

with populations over 500,000.

In 2008, six Chinese cities ranked among the global top 100 in economic competitiveness, with the number rising to 18 this year.

Wildlife trade sees further crackdown

China will forbid and crack down on the illegal trade of rhinoceroses, tigers and their derivative products, the State Council (China's cabinet) said in a notice on Oct 29, in another step to strengthen animal protection following the prohibition of ivory trading last year.

Rhinos and tigers are endangered species, and the protection of the two species should be strengthened according to wildlife protection laws and international pacts on endangered species, the document said.

All sales, purchases, imports and exports of rhinos, tigers and their derivative products, except those approved by the government, will not be allowed, said the five-clause notice.

Administrative approvals are a prerequisite for sales, purchases, utilization and imports and exports of the animals and their products, under special circumstances, including scientific research and public education.

Profit growth slows at industrial firms

Profit growth among China's major industrial firms slowed in September, leading to a weaker 14.7 percent year-on-year profit expansion from January to September, down 1.5 percentage points compared with the first eight months, analysts said.

They added that enterprises will continue to face heavy profit headwinds in the fourth quarter, although the overall economy remains on track.

In September alone, year-on-year profit growth of industrial firms was 4.1 percent, down from 9.2 percent in August, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on Oct 27.

Major industrial firms, or above-scale enterprises, are those with over 20 million yuan (\$2.9 million) in annual sales revenue.

The weak September data was mainly driven by a pullback in product prices as well as a high comparative base from last year, NBS official He Ping said in a statement.

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