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- CEPAL califica gira latinoamericana de Xi Jinping de "extremadamente importante y estratégica"
- Xinhua – 05/08/2014

SANTIAGO, 4 ago (Xinhua) -- La secretaria ejecutiva de la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), Alicia Bárcena, calificó hoy de "extremadamente importante y estratégica" la gira que realizó el presidente chino, Xi

Jinping, por América Latina.

La citada gira de Xi tiene importancia, no sólo por los países que ha visitado, siendo estos Brasil, Argentina, Venezuela y Cuba, sino también por las decisiones que se adoptaron en el ámbito de países del BRICS, grupo conformado por Brasil, Rusia, la India, China y Sudáfrica, destacó la titular de la CEPAL, con sede en Santiago de Chile.

Bárcena presentó en la CEPAL el informe "Estudio Económico de América Latina y el Caribe 2014", el cual rebajó la proyección de crecimiento de la economía regional para este año hasta un 2,2 por ciento, luego de que en la entrega de abril pasado situara la expansión en un 2,7 por ciento.

Destacó que en julio pasado el BRICS acordó en Brasil la creación del Banco de Desarrollo y de un Fondo de Reservas, en uno de los eventos más importantes de los últimos tiempos desde la reunión de 1944 en Bretton Woods, Estados Unidos, donde se decidió la creación del Fondo Monetario Internacional y del Banco Mundial.

China, que cuenta con las mayores reservas de divisas del mundo, aportará 41.000 millones de dólares al fondo, mientras que Brasil, la India y Rusia contribuirán con 18.000 millones cada uno, y Sudáfrica aportará 5.000 millones.

El Banco de Desarrollo y el Fondo de Reservas tendrán su sede en la ciudad china de Shanghai, y ayudarán a proporcionar liquidez a los países del grupo que la necesiten, los cuales a su vez recibirán fondos cuando cumplan ciertas condiciones.

"Lo más importante es la decisión política que hay detrás. Es decir, estos países están repensando seriamente que el dólar no puede ser la única salida al financiamiento de los países para el desarrollo", recalcó la secretaria ejecutiva de la CEPAL.

Agregó que la gira latinoamericana del presidente de China es fundamental para apuntalar su presencia en América Latina.

Bárcena recordó que antes de su gira por Brasil, Argentina, Venezuela y Cuba, Xi realizó visitas oficiales a México, Centroamérica y el Caribe en 2013.

"Ahora completa su recorrido por la región (de América Latina) con anuncios de inversión muy importantes" y alentadores, añadió.

• Shanghai gana la carrera para alojar el nuevo banco de los BRICs

En la reunión de la ciudad brasileña de Fortaleza, los líderes de los BRICs acordaron el sistema de funcionamiento del Nuevo Banco de Desarrollo, que tendrá presidentes rotativos y su sede en Shanghai. La presidenta brasileña sostuvo que el banco convirtió al grupo en una sociedad basada en instituciones.

Shanghai wins race to host new Brics bank

By Joe Leahy in Fortaleza, Kathrin Hille in Moscow and Geoff Dyer in Washington

Financial Times 15-07-2014

Leaders of the Brics group of large emerging countries have named Shanghai as the headquarters of their new development bank and nominated India to provide its first president.

Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff, accompanied by the leaders of Russia, India, China and South Africa, announced the plans at their sixth summit in Fortaleza after a last-minute debate between China and India over who should host the New Development Bank.

More

A statement from the group, titled the “Fortaleza Declaration”, also said a “regional centre” would be established in South Africa concurrently with the headquarters.

The declaration said Brazil would head the bank’s board of directors and Russia would lead the board of governors of the institution, which will have initial authorised capital of \$100bn aimed at fighting financial crises and initial subscribed capital of \$50bn.

“Based on sound banking principles, the NDB will strengthen co-operation among our countries and will supplement the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global development,” the declaration said.

Ms Rousseff told journalists later the establishment of the bank had turned the Brics into “a partnership based on institutions”.

Having won the right to host the head office, China is expected to be the last of the countries to receive the revolving presidency.

Russia used the meeting to call on the Brics group to jointly counter moves by the US to “harass” other countries as Moscow seeks to build stronger alliances in its stand-off with the west over Ukraine.

As the five leaders gathered in the Brazilian beachside city, president Vladimir Putin told the Itar-Tass news agency that Russia had been exposed to a “sanctions attack” by the US and its allies.

“Together we should think about a system of measures that would help prevent the harassment of countries that do not agree with some foreign policy decisions made by the US and their allies,” Mr Putin said.

The US has been putting pressure on the European Union, whose leaders meet in Brussels on Wednesday, to take a tougher stance over Ukraine and to approve new sanctions that will hit the Russian economy.

Under pressure from Congress, US officials have threatened unilateral action if the Europeans do not introduce new measures before their summer break. They made the case for sanctions at a meeting of EU ambassadors at the White House this week.

The state department also released a document on Monday which detailed what it claimed was continued Russian support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.

“We have no evidence that Russia’s support for the separatists has ceased,” the state department said. “In fact, we assess that Russia continues to provide them with heavy weapons, other military equipment and financing, and continues to allow militants to enter Ukraine freely.”

Mr Putin’s fellow Brics leaders released a neutral statement on Tuesday, expressing its “deep regret” about the conflict. “We call for a comprehensive dialogue, the de-escalation of the conflict and restraint from all the actors involved,” their declaration said.

Russia’s president said he would also propose regular consultations between the five countries’ foreign ministries to co-ordinate their positions on regional conflicts at the UN.

Such a strategy should be aimed at “counteracting individual states’ attempts to impose on the international community the policy of displacing unwanted regimes and promoting unilateral solutions to crisis situations”, Itar-Tass quoted Mr Putin as saying.

Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March, the US and the EU have slapped travel bans and asset freezes on several Russian officials and tycoons.

Brics trade ministers also met late on Monday night and renewed their commitment to the World Trade Organisation deal reached in Bali last December to implement measures to smooth customs procedures.

India also appeared to back down on Tuesday after threatening to work with South Africa to block the Bali deal, which faces a crucial implementation deadline on July 31. India had said they were unhappy with the progress of parallel WTO talks on food security agreed to in Bali. But trade secretary

Rajeev Kher said in New Delhi that progress on food security was no longer a condition for signing off on the Bali deal's implementation, according to Reuters.

"We are not saying there should be no deal. We are simply asking them to address our concerns," Mr Kher said.

Brazil is particularly keen to solve the impasse after lobbying hard to have one of its most respected diplomats, Roberto Azevêdo, take over leadership of the WTO last year.

Brazil also needs to revive the multilateral trading system to make up for its own lack of bilateral trade agreements.

In bilateral meetings on Tuesday, Chinese president Xi Jinping invited India's prime minister Narendra Modi to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Beijing in November.

In the 80-minute meeting, the two called for peaceful resolution of tensions on their disputed Himalayan border and Mr Xi called for them to take joint positions on global issues.

• La sombra de China sobrevuela sobre los u\$s 100.000 millones del banco de los BRICs.

.Dentro del grupo BRICs, la relación económica más importante es la que hay entre China y Brasil. El establecimiento del cuartel central del banco en Shanghai puede facilitar los contactos el poder chino y la relación con el gigante asiático puede servir en las negociaciones con las potencias occidentales. Pero los otros miembros pueden estar cambiando un poder hegemónico por otro.

China's shadow hovers over \$100bn Brics bank

By Joe Leahy in Brasília and John Paul Rathbone in London

Financial Times 16-7-14

Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff had some reason to be pleased with herself this week.

On Monday, she hosted a meeting of the leaders of the Brics – the five large developing countries that also include Russia, India, China and South Africa and account for a quarter of the world's gross domestic product. Also, her diplomats had overcome a late disagreement between India and China over who should host the headquarters of the group's \$100bn Brics development bank, with Shanghai winning the privilege.

"Shanghai is a great financial centre," Ms Rousseff told journalists afterwards, seeking to explain the choice of the Chinese city. Her finance minister Guido Mantega added: "It is close to the great Asian powers."

India will provide the bank's first president as consolation for not getting its headquarters. But although the Brics have sought to paint the institution as an equal partnership, the selection of Shanghai speaks to a stark truth about the central role of China in the grouping.

Each of the other Brics is most strongly connected to the group through its relationship with China, which in turn sees them as sources of energy and minerals, as markets for its products and as like-minded partners on some international trade and strategic issues.

"Without a shadow of a doubt the principal country from an economic standpoint is China," said Roberto Dumas Damas, an economist at Insper business school in São Paulo.

Among the Brics, the most important relationship is between China and Brazil, the grouping's second-biggest economy. This is shown by Chinese president Xi Jinping's extensive visit to Brazil. Following on from the Brics summit, he will attend a meeting of the Brics leaders in Brasília with Latin American heads of state on Wednesday and then start a state visit to Brazil on Thursday.

China's commercial relationship with Brazil and indeed, the rest of Latin America, is symbiotic,

analysts say. Brazil and the region have grown from being providers of iron ore and other minerals, soya beans and agricultural produce to also being consumers of Chinese manufactured goods and destinations for investment from Beijing, particularly in oil and infrastructure.

Beyond brics

“The Chinese need natural resources and Brazil has them,” said Insper’s Mr Damas.

Brazil also offers Beijing a base in Latin America from which it can broaden its drive for influence. After Brazil, Mr Xi will launch his second trip through the region since becoming president. Last year, he visited Costa Rica and Mexico. This year he will visit states where China has energy interests, notably Venezuela and Argentina, as well as Cuba. Venezuela, already a borrower from China, is seeking a fresh \$4bn credit line.

In Argentina, meanwhile, China’s offshore oil company Cnooc has a 50 per cent stake in local energy player Bidas, which Argentina would like to see commit to its gigantic shale formation, Vaca Muerta.

Among the other Brics nations, India sees China as an ally to press the west in trade talks and multilateral forums as well as an important commercial partner. Russia and South Africa, like Brazil, sell natural resources to China. Russia also sees China and the rest of the Brics as a buffer against western pressure especially over its alleged role in the Ukraine conflict.

With China such a central figure in the Brics, it makes sense for Brazil and the other partners to support having the bank’s headquarters in Shanghai, said Marcos Troyjo of the BricLab forum at Columbia University. The bank will serve as a diplomatic hub.

“It is very difficult on a bilateral basis to have close encounters, let’s say, with decision makers in China,” said Mr Troyjo. “But if you have a permanent body that deals with development [and] economic issues, you can simply access your delegate in Shanghai.”

For the Brics’ democratic leaders, however, and Brazil in particular, the danger is that they will be seen as swapping one set of hegemonic powers – the US and Europe, which control the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – for another, China.

Ms Rousseff will need to “get something” out of China during their bilateral talks this week, analysts say – whether it is greater market access for Brazilian beef or for the country’s aircraft maker, Embraer.

The Brazilian president seemed alert to the concern when quizzed by journalists this week. “I don’t believe the format of the new Brics bank will promote a new hegemony,” she said, dismissing suggestions it would simply be recreating the Bretton Woods institutions but this time with China at the helm.

• Construcción de infraestructuras brilla en asociación China-América Latina

• *Dangdai* – 26/07/14

La construcción de infraestructuras ha emergido como punto culminante en la asociación de cooperación integral China-América Latina con el potencial para elevar la cooperación bilateral a niveles más altos.

La recién concluida visita del presidente chino, Xi Jinping, a Brasil, Argentina, Venezuela y Cuba ha demostrado la fuerte voluntad de China de profundizar la cooperación con América Latina en la construcción de infraestructuras.

Durante el viaje de Xi, China y Brasil firmaron un total de 56 acuerdos de cooperación, la mayoría de ellos relacionados con la construcción de infraestructuras, inclu-

yendo el transporte ferroviario y la transmisión eléctrica de voltaje ultra alto. Además, China también suscribió un número de tratados de cooperación sobre la construcción de infraestructuras con Venezuela y Argentina.

Expertos indican que la cooperación China-América Latina en la construcción de infraestructuras, un terreno relativamente débil en América Latina, es en consideración de la urgente demanda regional.

Los países latinoamericanos necesitan mejorar infraestructuras tales como ferrocarriles, carreteras y puertos, mientras que China tiene gran fuerza y rica experiencia en capital, tecnología, construcción y operación al respecto, según los expertos.

La experiencia y la tecnología avanzada de China en los ferrocarriles de alta velocidad han atraído tremenda atención en los últimos años y un proyecto de ferrocarriles transcontinentales ha sido un tema importante de la gira de Xi, señaló Xu Shicheng, famoso investigador en América Latina de la Academia de Ciencias Sociales de China.

El 7 de julio, China, Perú y Brasil emitieron una declaración conjunta sobre la cooperación en una vía ferroviaria que enlaza la costa pacífica peruana con la atlántica brasileña. En su reunión con el presidente peruano, Ollanta Humala, durante la visita, Xi propuso que los tres países establezcan un equipo de trabajo para llevar a cabo cooperación integral en el proyecto, el diseño, la construcción y la operación de la vía ferroviaria.

La vía ferroviaria no solo ayudaría a Sudamérica a mejorar su sistema de transporte y promover el comercio regional, sino que también impulsaría aún más la cooperación económica y comercial entre China y América Latina, dicen los expertos.

China no está imponiendo el llamado "neocolonialismo" en América Latina, pues su cooperación, que no se ha limitado a la energía y a la minería, sino que se ha expandido a las infraestructuras, traerá resultados de beneficio mutuo a ambas partes, según Xu.

Durante su viaje, Xi propuso el marco "1+3+6" para promover la cooperación de beneficio recíproco entre China y América Latina. "Uno" se refiere a un plan: el Plan de Cooperación China-América Latina y el Caribe (2015-2019), con el objetivo de lograr crecimiento inclusivo y desarrollo sostenible.

"Tres" significa los "tres motores" del comercio, la inversión y la cooperación financiera, mientras que "seis" se enfoca en los seis campos de energía y recursos, construcción de infraestructuras, agricultura, manufacturas, innovación científica y tecnológica, y tecnología de la información.

El presidente chino también anunció que Beijing pondrá en marcha los Préstamos Especiales de 10.000 millones de dólares para la Infraestructura China-América Latina y el Caribe y, sobre esta base, incrementará la línea de créditos hasta los 20.000 millones dólares.

Añadió que Beijing también alienta a más empresas chinas a invertir en América Latina con el fin de incrementar el volumen de la inversión china en la región a hasta los 250.000 millones de dólares en diez años.

El marco "1+3+6", que establece objetivos ambiciosos, muestra que el liderazgo chino presta suma importancia a la promoción de relaciones China-América Latina, dijo

el investigador Xu.

Los datos publicados por el Ministerio de Comercio chino indican que los proyectos emprendidos por empresas chinas en América Latina han cubierto ámbitos como gasoductos de gas natural, centrales eléctricas, carreteras, dragado de puertos e instalaciones de viviendas y telecomunicaciones.

Un alto oficial del Ministerio de Comercio chino dijo anteriormente que China y América Latina disfrutan de brillantes perspectivas para la cooperación económica y comercial, ya que sus economías son altamente complementarias.

China, como el mayor país en vías de desarrollo, tiene un gran mercado doméstico y gran futuro de desarrollo, mientras que los países de América Latina están implementando una reestructuración económica y están desarrollando sus infraestructuras con vigor.

La complementariedad entre China y América Latina se ha convertido en una importante base para la futura profundización de la cooperación de beneficio mutuo entre China y América Latina y la mayor ventaja para el desarrollo de los lazos bilaterales en el futuro, dijo el alto oficial.

Asimismo, los líderes de los países miembros del BRICS (Brasil, Rusia, la India, China y Sudáfrica) anunciaron la semana pasada el establecimiento de un banco de desarrollo del bloque.

El banco, el cual apoyará a miembros del BRICS y otras economías emergentes en la construcción de infraestructuras, se espera que beneficie también a la cooperación China-América Latina en la construcción de infraestructuras.

• China dice que se exageran las tensiones en el Mar del Sur de China

En una reunión de la ASEAN, ministro chino rechaza las acusaciones de que su país realiza acciones provocativas en el citado Mar y recuerda que China y sus vecinos acordaron, el año pasado, negociar un código de conducta para el Mar. Esas conversaciones tuvieron escasos progresos.

China says South China Sea tension exaggerated

By Gabriel Wildau in Shanghai

Financial Times August 10, 2014

China rejected calls from the US and the Philippines for countries to refrain from “provocative actions” that would raise tension in the South China Sea where it has taken an increasingly assertive stance in pursuing sovereignty claims over disputed islands.

“Someone has been exaggerating or even playing up the so-called tension in the South China Sea,” Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a press conference at a foreign ministers’ meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on Saturday. “We do not agree with such a practice, and we call for vigilance in the motives behind them.”

Mr Wang characterised the proposal by John Kerry, US secretary of state, and a similar one from Albert Del Rosario, Philippine foreign minister, as “setting up a separate kitchen”, saying it was unneces-

sary given an agreement last year in which China and its neighbours agreed to talk about a code of conduct for the South China Sea.

Those talks have yielded little progress however, and a series of incidents have heightened tensions between China, Vietnam and the Philippines. The Philippines has clashed with China over competing claims to the Spratly Islands.

The US has pointed to China's placement of an oil rig near the Paracel Islands, over which both Vietnam and China claim sovereignty, as an example of the kind of provocative action it hopes to avoid. That action provoked deadly anti-Chinese riots in Vietnam.

Last week, China also announced it was building lighthouses on five land formations in the South China Sea. China said the lighthouses were necessary to improve navigation safety.

A joint communiqué issued by participants at the Asean meeting on Saturday called on all parties to "avoid actions which would complicate the situation and undermine peace, stability, and security in the South China Sea and to settle disputes through peaceful means."

The communiqué from the Asean summit in Naypyidaw, Myanmar, also covered trade and development issues, but South China Sea issues dominated the meeting.

China reiterated its preference on Saturday for resolving South China Sea disputes bilaterally. Analysts say this is intended to minimise US influence over negotiations.

"The United States and Asean have a common responsibility to ensure the maritime security of critical global sea lanes and ports," Mr Kerry said to the conference on Saturday.

Mr Wang said at the press briefing that China will exercise restraint but will "respond to provocations unequivocally and resolutely at the same time".

The briefing began on a sour note when Mr Wang criticised Mr Kerry for arriving more than half an hour late. This elicited an apology from Kerry, according to the official Xinhua news service.

• China encuentra signos de petróleo y gas en aguas en disputa.

China finalizó perforaciones en aguas cercanas a Vietnam –y que este país reclama– y anunció que descubrió petróleo y gas. El fin de la búsqueda permitirá mantener negociaciones con Vietnam, que busca el apoyo de EE.UU. y Japón en su disputa con China

China finds signs of oil and gas in disputed waters

By Lucy Hornby in Beijing

Financial Times 16./07/ 2014

China has concluded drilling in disputed waters near Vietnam with an announcement that it has discovered signs of oil and gas, which should help tensions with its neighbour to recede in the near-term, ahead of an Asian security meeting next month.

The deployment of the \$1bn "Cnooc 981" deepwater drilling rig in May in waters 17 nautical miles from Triton Island, a Chinese-controlled islet in the disputed Paracels archipelago, set off a maritime stand-off between Chinese and Vietnamese ships and provoked deadly anti-Chinese riots in Vietnam.

The nearly three-month confrontation involving dozens of ships from the two nations was the latest flare-up as China gradually stakes out its claim to nearly all the waters of the South China Sea, most of which are also claimed by other neighbouring nations.

Wrapping up drilling and removing the rig allows China to meet Vietnamese diplomats and curtail Vietnam's efforts to engage support from the US or Japan, said Carl Thayer, professor emeritus with the University of South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, who specialises in South China Sea issues. It also allows China to frame the dispute as a bilateral issue before a meeting of Asean foreign

ministers in Myanmar.

“This completely changes the dynamics,” he said. “Vietnam which has been biting its nails will now have to climb back to the negotiating table.”

On Tuesday, the Chinese foreign ministry said countries outside the region should “strictly maintain neutrality . . . and earnestly respect the joint efforts of countries in the region to maintain regional peace and stability” in an apparent response to US comments calling for a freeze in stoking tensions.

In the long term however, development of the field could allow China to strategically accelerate or slow down gas production as tensions with Vietnam flare or recede. It pursues a similar strategy in gasfields in the East China Sea that are also claimed by Japan.

“Others might see the 981 oil rig as a galvanising factor, but for a long time, Vietnam has had its own drilling activities. After all, each country will seek to maximise its own interest,” said Hong Nong, a specialist in maritime law at China’s National Institute for South China Sea Studies.

The discoveries by China come after ExxonMobil found oil and gas in 2011 and 2012 in nearby blocks much closer to the Vietnamese coast, but which also fall within waters claimed by China. At the time, China warned foreign firms against exploring in disputed waters, without naming ExxonMobil.

State-owned oil group China National Petroleum Corp will now assess the drilling results and decide on the next step, CNPC said in a statement on its website. Signs of gas flaring from the rig in satellite images imply that the block contains more natural gas, consistent with discoveries elsewhere in the region.

Previously, the Chinese side had only conducted seismic exploration in the area.

The rig’s operator China Oilfield Services, a unit of state-owned China National Offshore Oil Corp or Cnooc, said in May that its drilling programme would last until August. The typhoon season begins in late July.

• El alimento seguro es una invención que debería ser copiada libremente

Un paseo por un mercado local en China muestra que hay poco control de calidad e higiene. Los medios critican este problema pero el principal acusado es un proveedor de cadenas de comida rápida occidentales. Sin embargo, un analista sostiene que los estándares de seguridad son mayores en esas cadenas.

Safer food is an invention that should be freely copied

By Robert Boxwell

Financial Times, July 27, 2014

Stroll through a local market in China and there is little sign of quality control or hygiene

Chinese news videos of workers grinding expired meat into fresh and putting hamburger patties that had fallen on the floor back into production at Shanghai Husi Food Co created a scandal last week, as they should. That is just the press doing its job – like in the UK, where a poultry scandal was covered last week. But, in the ensuing media outcry, much of the opprobrium fell on Husi’s customers – fast-food chains such as McDonald’s and KFC. This does Chinese consumers more harm than good. Upscale hotels aside, western chains are among the most hygienic places to eat in Asia. Implying that they are unsafe risks sending people to less salubrious joints.

Stroll through a local market in China and there is little sign of quality control, hygiene or refrigeration. Chickens, ducks, piglets and animals that westerners might take for a walk hang from hooks all day at ambient temperature. Love your dinner on Jalan Alor, the Kuala Lumpur street famed for its open-air restaurants? Then do not look behind the shops, where dishes are washed in buckets of cold water

with little soap and the effluvia dumped in the gutter.

I once saw friends wiping their silverware with a napkin before eating, and told them that would be an insult to one's host back home. They told me I could do whatever I wanted – and kept wiping. Ice with that drink? Follow the locals who take their water warm, a sign it has just been boiled. It is not uncommon to visit homes in Malaysia or Thailand and see food cooked in the morning and sit out all day in a hot room, covered by a plastic screen dome to keep the bugs off. It is no different in China – maybe worse in the countryside. A little stall on Huai Hai Zhong Road in Shanghai is said to have the best dumplings in town but its cleanliness wins no prizes.

American fast-food chains, like car manufacturers and electronics brands, have brought valuable technologies to Asia. Chief among them is food safety. Branches of companies such as KFC and McDonald's are built to American specifications. Foods that require refrigeration are never allowed to warm up, meat is cooked at the proper temperature, ice machines are filled with filtered water, and strict time limits are observed so that food is served fresh.

Months of work go into finding and certifying local suppliers to ensure proper hygiene and quality, with some chains going so far as set up their own distribution networks or producing some ingredients themselves. I founded and ran a chain of speciality coffee shops with operations in six Asian countries, and the biggest decision we had to make in each new market was who was going to supply our fresh milk. It was a lot harder than it sounds.

I once saw friends wiping silverware with a napkin at dinner, and explained this would be an insult to the host back home

Domestic companies are usually loath to spend serious money training staff because, like restaurant workers everywhere, they are constantly on the lookout for better employment. Local employees are often paid more at western chains and trained well; many have not been exposed to the idea of food safety. Local companies cannot, or do not want to, adopt these practices and they do not want to pay top yuan for staff.

The McDonald's brand carries far more cachet in Shanghai and Beijing than it does in San Francisco or Barcelona. In its early days in a market, it is a place for some to show off, to be seen as aficionados who know how to order and eat western food and can afford it. That might sound strange to westerners but understanding the context helps. Try eating a burger for the first time when you have grown up using chopsticks. Our employees never batted an eyelid when customers ordered a caffè mocha, pronouncing it "mo-cha" instead of "mo-ka"; not long before, some had done the same.

A Big Mac costs a few bucks everywhere in the world because, no matter where you are, that is roughly how much it costs to make one. A few bucks for a single meal is still a lot of money for many in Asia. That safety problems now create such a storm is a sign that the chains are generally trusted. Turning problems at a supplier into a crusade against the foreign chains themselves might help local competitors. It would be better if more of them helped themselves by adopting the food safety ideas behind the western brands' success.

The writer is director of Opera Advisors, the consultancy, based in Kuala Lumpur

- **El nivel del “espíritu” (El nivel de las bebidas espirituosas) Los chinos están bebiendo más.**

La preocupación por los efectos del alcohol en China son bajas porque, por siglos, los chinos bebieron en las celebraciones, pero pocos en forma regular. Pero el aumento de los ingresos trajo también un aumento del consumo de alcohol. Según un experto chino, el riesgo por ingesta de alcohol alcanza proporciones epidémicas.

The spirit level

The Chinese are drinking more

The Economist. 9,-08-2014 | BEIJING

LI JUN, a construction worker from Shandong, sips a large bottle of Yanjing beer as he squats on the pavement and shares a lunchtime bag of noodles with a colleague. On such a hot day the beer quenches his thirst, he says; the alcohol will not affect his work because he is resting while he drinks. Many of his fellow workers are also enjoying a bottle.

Awareness of the effects of alcohol is extremely low in China. For centuries people enjoyed booze at celebrations, but few drank regularly. As incomes have shot up over the past 35 years, alcohol consumption has accelerated. Average annual consumption rose from 2.5 litres of pure alcohol in 1978 to 6.7 litres in 2010. Nearly 70% of that is spirits.

Until recently social norms favoured moderate consumption. Most people quaffed only with meals; solitary boozing was rare. Few women drank and young Chinese mostly abstained. Biology encouraged moderation, too. About a third of the population finds it hard to metabolise alcohol. Those affected rarely drink.

Consumption still looks tame by international standards. Intake per person is around half that of Germany or France, according to the World Health Organisation. But the countrywide statistics hide a grimmer picture. More than half the Chinese population is teetotal. Those who do drink often do so to great excess. Male Chinese drinkers down far more than Japanese ones, and almost as much as notoriously sozzled British, Australian or Irish boozers. Binge-drinking is prevalent and high-risk drinking has reached "epidemic proportions" in China, reckons Hao Wei of Central South University in Changsha, the capital of Hunan province.

In China drinking with clients and colleagues is now seen as vital to career advancement; some job adverts even call for "good drinking capacity". One study found that civil servants had a far higher incidence of alcohol-related liver diseases than the population at large (the higher the rank, the worse their health prospects).

Traditions such as toasting at banquets encourage excess; drinking games are played by middle-aged men rather than university students. That is why Chinese people drink more, and more often, as they get older, whereas in Europe and North America consumption peaks by the early 20s. Worryingly, young Chinese are now taking to drink, too, often without food. Women are also upping their intake.

The state has taken some action in response. Drink-driving cases fell by nearly 40% in the two years after May 2011, when the government started to clamp down and increase penalties. President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive has quashed lavish banquets (although this has made high-end liquor much cheaper).

But the government has done little to promote public education. Other countries have curbed drinking by increasing tax on booze. In 2006 China lowered its already paltry liquor tax. Its health services and professionals are poorly equipped to deal with alcohol-related problems, says Yilang Tang of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. There are no national guidelines on responsible drinking and the minimum drinking age is ambiguous. Rules relating to the sale, consumption and advertising of alcohol are weak or ill-enforced. As Central South University's Mr Hao puts it: "Alcohol can be bought anywhere, at any time, by any person."

• Terremoto en China deja más de 380 muertos

BBC Mundo - 03/08/14

Al menos 381 personas murieron y más de 1.800 resultaron heridas en un terremoto de magnitud 6,1 en la escala de Richter que sacudió este domingo a la provincia de Yunnan, en el sur de China.

Este lunes, el presidente Xi Jinping ordenó el envío de unos 2.500 soldados a la zona para contribuir con los esfuerzos de rescate de víctimas.

Las tropas trabajarán junto a 300 policías y bomberos provenientes de la ciudad de Zhaotong y unos 400 trabajadores de emergencia y perros que han llegado de toda la provincia.

La cadena de televisión estatal china CCTV aseguró que el terremoto fue el que más fuerte a golpeado a la provincia montañosa en 14 años.

Según la agencia de noticias Xinhua, unas 12.000 viviendas quedaron destruidas y otras 30.000 sufrieron daños.

El sismo también se sintió en las vecinas provincias de Guizhou y Sichuan.

"Campo de batalla después de un bombardeo".

El Servicio Geológico de EE.UU. dijo que el terremoto ocurrió unos 11 kilómetros al noroeste de Wenping, en la provincia de Yunnan, a las 16:30 hora local (08:30 GMT). El epicentro del terremoto se localizó en Longtoushan, en el condado de Ludian, en Yunnan.

Según datos del servicio estadounidense, el epicentro ocurrió a una profundidad de unos 10 km en una remota zona montañosa de la provincia.

Ma Liya, residente de Zhaotong, dijo a la agencia Xinhua que las calles eran como un "campo de batalla después del bombardeo". La casa de su vecino, un edificio nuevo de dos plantas, se derrumbó.

El gobierno también ha enviado unas 2.000 tiendas de campaña, 3.000 camas plegables, 3.000 mantas y 3.000 abrigos a la zona del desastre.

Tras el terremoto, los suministros de electricidad fueron cortados y las comunicaciones se vieron seriamente afectadas.

El suroeste de China se encuentra en un área propensa a los terremotos. En 2008, un sismo en Sichuan mató a miles de personas. En 1970, un terremoto de magnitud 7,7 mató al menos a 15.000 personas en Yunnan.

• La deuda china llega al 250% del ingreso nacional

.El nivel de deuda china es elevado para los estándares de países emergentes y plantea el desafío de impulsar el crecimiento sin provocar una crisis financiera. El nivel de deuda de las potencias occidentales y Japón es algo mayor.

China debt tops 250% of national income

Financial Times, 22 -08-2014

China's outstanding debt has climbed to more than two and a half times the size of its economy, highlighting the huge challenge facing the nation as it seeks to spur growth and avoid a financial crisis, the Financial Times reported.

The debt to gross domestic product ratio in the world's second-largest economy reached 251 percent at the end of June, up from just 147 percent at the end of 2008, the newspaper said, citing a Stan-

dard Chartered Bank estimate.

The rapid debt build-up is more worrying than the country's debt level since sharp increases in such a short period have almost always been followed by financial turmoil in other economies, the report said.

"China's current level of debt is already very high by emerging markets standards and the few economies with higher debt ratios are all high-income ones," Chen Long, an economist at research consultancy Gavekal Dragonomics, was quoted as saying. "In other words, China has become indebted before it has become rich."

According to Standard Chartered, the United States had a total debt-to-GDP ratio of about 260 percent by the end of last year, Britain's ratio was 277 percent, while Japan ranked highest at 415 percent.

Following the 2008 global financial crisis, China tried to sustain its rapid economic expansion through massive injection of funds into the economy. But it has now realized that boosting growth through ever-increasing debt dependency is unsustainable, the report said.