

Port of prosperity

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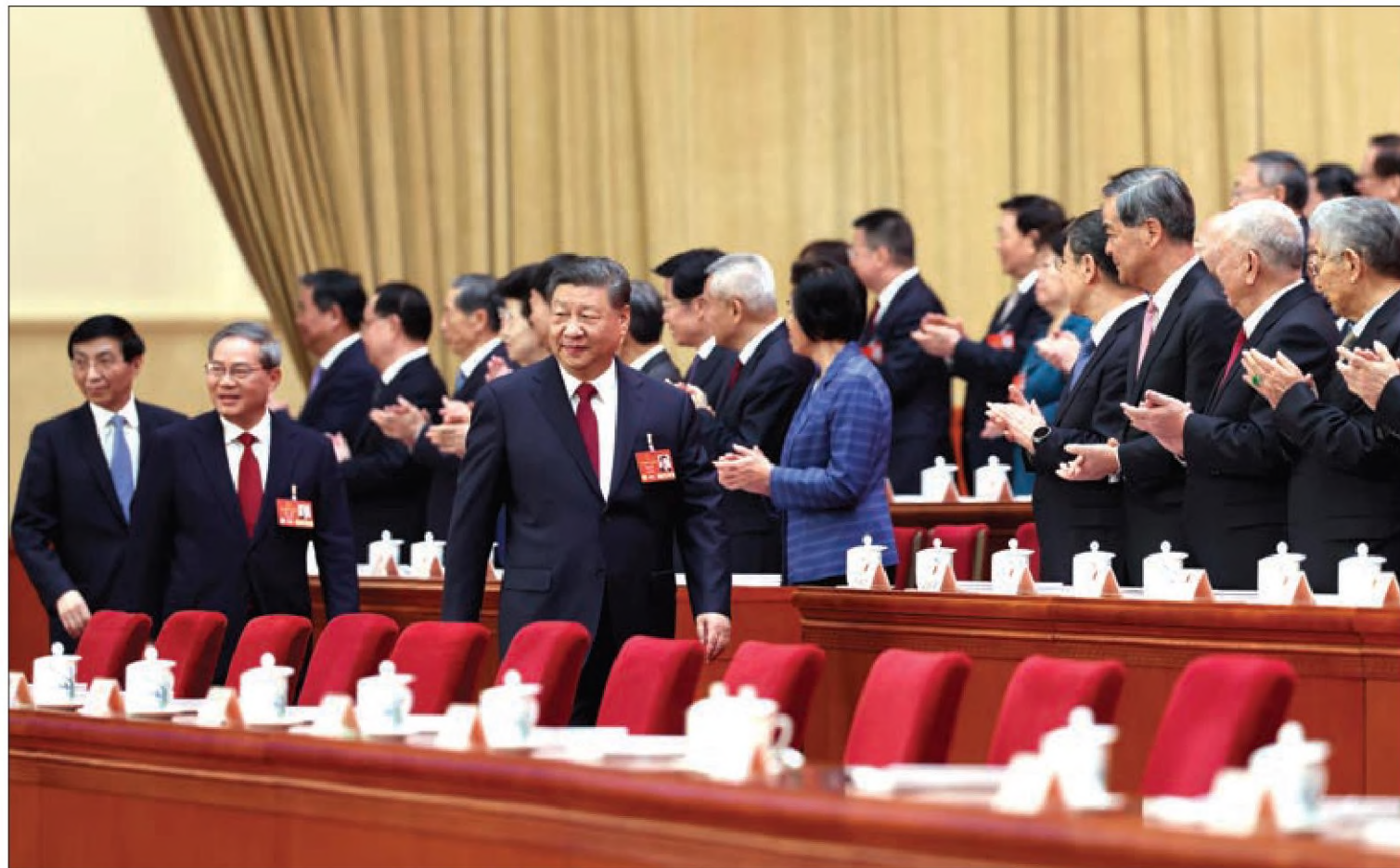


Fruitful outcome

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Deputies of National People's Congress applaud President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, and other leaders as they enter the venue of the opening of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Measures taken to counter US' unilateral tariff hikes

By ZHONG NAN
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China will impose additional tariffs on certain imports from the United States, the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council announced on Tuesday.

The decision came after the US doubled its additional tariff on all Chinese imports to 20 percent starting on Tuesday.

The commission said the US' unilateral tariff hikes undermine the multilateral trading system, increase the burden on US businesses and consumers, and disrupt the foundation of China-US economic and trade cooperation.

China will levy an additional 15 percent tariff on imports of chicken, wheat, corn and cotton from the US, starting on Monday, while US sorghum, soybeans, pork, beef, aquatic products, fruits, vegetables and dairy products will be subject to an additional 10 percent tariff, according to the commission.

Market observers view these countermeasures as China's efforts to safeguard its economic interests in response to the latest US tariff escalation.

Zhao Jinping, a researcher at the Development Research Center of the State Council, said that international trade practices have proved that taking proportional countermeasures against protectionist trade policies is one of the most effective ways to curb unfair trade actions.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 46 years ago, bilateral trade between China and the US has increased more than 200-fold, with two-way investment stock reaching about \$250 billion, according to the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

On Feb 1, the US announced an additional 10 percent tariff on all Chinese imports, prompting China to respond with tariffs on US coal and liquefied natural gas, agricultural machinery, cars with large-displacement engines, and pickup trucks.

Speaking on Tuesday at a news conference in Beijing, Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the third session of the 14th National People's Congress, said the unilateral US tariff move violates the rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization and disrupts the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains.

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Work report: GDP target 'around 5%'

China will look to broadly stimulate domestic demand and pursue a more proactive fiscal policy

By ZHOU LANXU and OUYANG SHIJIA

China has set the GDP growth target at "around 5 percent" for 2025, the same as last year's, as the world's second-largest economy emphasizes stimulating domestic demand across the board with more supportive policies, according to the Government Work Report released on Wednesday.

Premier Li Qiang, who delivered the report at the opening of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing, said that a target of around 5 percent is well aligned with the country's mid- and long-term development goals and underscores the resolve to meet difficulties head-on and strive hard to deliver.

The country will pursue a more proactive fiscal policy and exercise a moderately loose monetary policy this year, with the projected deficit-to-GDP ratio set at 4 percent for 2025, up from 3 percent last year, according to the report, which has been submitted to the country's top legislature for deliberation.

The Chinese government started to release the annual projected

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deficit ratio in 2010, with the highest reading in 2020 at 3.6 percent as COVID-19 hit, according to market tracker Wind Info.

The work report also said China will issue 1.3 trillion yuan (\$178.95 billion) in ultra-long-term special treasury bonds this year, up from 1 trillion yuan for 2024. Additionally, 500 billion yuan of special treasury bonds will be issued to support large State-owned commercial banks in replenishing capital.

This year's quota of special local government bonds will also be increased to 4.4 trillion yuan from a record high of 3.9 trillion yuan last year. This year, new government debt will total 11.86 trillion yuan, an increase of 2.9 trillion yuan over last year, enabling a notably higher level of spending, the report said.

In terms of monetary policy, the country will make timely cuts to the reserve requirement ratio and interest rates, the report said. Efforts will be taken to refine and

develop new structural monetary policy instruments to provide stronger support for the sound development of the real estate sector and the stock market.

China, as set out in the report, also targets an increase in the consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, around 2 percent, aimed at better balancing supply and demand through a combination of policies and reform measures so that the general price level will stay within an appropriate range.

This target is down from around 3 percent for 2024 and marks the first time that the target was set below 3 percent since China started specifying the figure in the Government Work Report in 2005.

Meanwhile, China, as laid out in the report, aims to create more than 12 million urban jobs this year, and keep the surveyed urban unemployment rate at around 5.5 percent.

To vigorously encourage foreign investment, the report said the country will open internet-related, cultural and other sectors in a well-regulated way and expand trials to open sectors such as telecommunications, medical services and education, while effectively protecting the lawful rights and interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs in accordance



Premier Li Qiang delivers the Government Work Report at the opening of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

with the law.

The country will effectively prevent and defuse risks in major areas, the report said, outlining steps to introduce city-specific policies on adjusting or reducing property transaction restrictions and effectively prevent debt defaults by real estate companies. Moreover, the report said that

ultra-long special treasury bonds totaling 300 billion yuan will be issued to support consumer goods trade-in programs while strategic resource reserves and market stabilization mechanisms will be strengthened in the capital market.

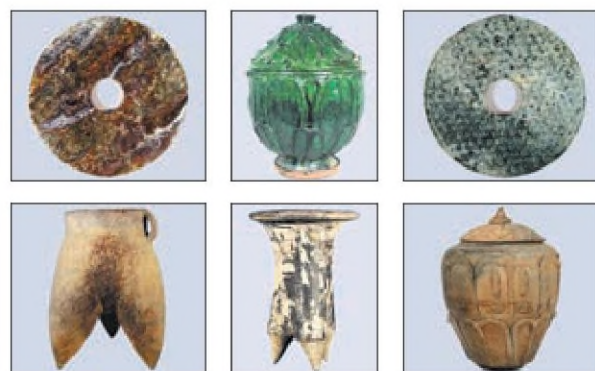
Tian Xuan, a deputy to the 14th NPC and head of the National Institute of Financial Research, Tsinghua University, said the GDP growth target of "around 5 percent" reflects the continuity and consistency of policies and is a goal that "we need to strive for and reach with extra effort, which can effectively inspire all people across the country to work hard together".

Janice Hu, China country head at UBS AG and chairperson of UBS Securities, said that the government is expected to prioritize "stabilizing growth" as the central task this year, emphasizing boosting domestic demand with more supportive macro policies.

"These much-anticipated measures could gradually help underpin household confidence and unleash consumption potential in the long run," Hu said, adding that UBS will continue to invest strategically in China.

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Return of relics



A photo collage shows some of the cultural artifacts received by China's National Cultural Heritage Administration from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in New York, the United States, on Tuesday. The 41 items included pottery, jade, bronze wares and stone carvings, among others. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY See story, page 7

China helps world in a shared future

WORLD WATCH
By Shakeel Ahmad Ramay

The annual two sessions is taking place at a critical juncture in history. Continuing conflicts, a resurgence of anti-globalization and multilateralism forces, and disrespect for rules of the United Nations have turned the world into a home of multiple problems.

According to the latest UN World Food Programme report, 3.1 billion people cannot afford healthy food and 2 billion cannot access safe drinking water. Prolonging of the Gaza and Ukrainian crises cannot be ruled out.

In this context, this year's two sessions, or the annual gatherings of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, and the 14th National Committee of

the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, are of immense importance.

As participants review challenges and step toward the centennial goal of national rejuvenation, the global community, especially the Global South, is watching to see how China can help it overcome headwinds and sustain the dreams for peace and development.

China has taken many steps in countering anti-globalization, sup-

porting multilateralism, creating new development opportunities, tackling climate change, pushing for restoration of peace in the Middle East and Europe, and promoting global prosperity.

President Xi Jinping's concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is increasingly relevant, as "mankind ... is increasingly becoming a community with a shared future in which everyone's interest is closely interlinked".

The community with a shared future is a well-placed, comprehensive vision to build a fair, rule-based, corruption-free, secure, and prosperous society.

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TWO SESSIONS

Deputy suggestion process to be standardized

NPC expands digital services to more efficiently address needs of the public at the national level

By CAO YIN

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After her suggestions related to new energy vehicles were addressed last year, national legislator Cao Jingfang plans to continue advocating for the people's interests in the automotive sector again this year.

Last year, during the second session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, Cao, a National People's Congress deputy from Shandong province, made suggestions on strengthening after-sales services for NEVs.

The deputy, who also works at a power plant in Zouxian county, called for vocational schools to add courses or offer training for NEV maintenance technicians and to establish a public spare parts supply platform.

The reason for the suggestions stemmed from the fact that many NEV owners had told her they had encountered problems in finding skilled technicians and high repair costs.

"I was elected by the people. It's my duty to speak for them and help solve difficulties they face in work and daily life," she said.

However, Cao didn't expect that her suggestions would receive the amount of attention from the NPC Standing Committee that they actually did. It prompted government departments involved in the NEV industry, including the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, to increase communication with Cao to learn more about her concerns and take action to address the issues.

As a result, the job category of NEV maintenance technician has been included in China's occupational catalog. The training and selection of outstanding technicians have also been improved, with maintenance skills competitions organized nationwide.

This process for handling suggestions from deputies is set to be standardized in a draft amendment to the Law on Deputies to the National People's Congress and to the Local People's Congresses at Various Levels.

The draft amendment is due to be reviewed by Chinese legislators at the third session of the 14th NPC, which is scheduled to begin on Wednesday in Beijing.

This means that all stages of the suggestions-related process, including making, communication, handling, response and feedback are expected to be formalized in legal terms.

"It will further encourage deputies to fulfill our duties and, more importantly, help effectively solve difficulties raised by the people," Cao said.

Closer connection

Wang Zunyi, a deputy to the people's congress in Xiangyang, Hubei province, is closely following the modification of the law. "This piece of legislation is a yardstick for guaranteeing and overseeing my own performance," he said.

"As deputies, we come from the people and need to serve the people," said Wang, who is also head of Gaozhuang community in Fancheng district.

In the past few weeks, he visited residents to learn more about their needs for elderly care services, and also researched on how to strengthen the district's greening through



Clockwise from top: Residents sit with community workers in a neighborhood square to discuss the problems they face in their daily lives in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in May. LI SHURONG / XINHUA Zhou Yefang (left) and Xu Lihong (second left), who are deputies to local people's congresses in Tongshan town of Zhuji, Zhejiang province, conduct field research at a construction site in Tongshan in September to make sure that livelihood improvement projects are progressing smoothly. XU YU / XINHUA Zhou and Xu collect senior residents' opinions on the operation of a local activity center for seniors during their field research. XU YU / XINHUA

the utilization of industrial heritage.

"I talked to the people living in my residential area and participated in inspection tours organized by the standing committee of the city's people's congress in other regions," he said. "The face-to-face communications made me more broadly aware of the public's ideas on the issues, so that I could better advocate for them."

For Jiang Yuqin, a deputy to the people's congress in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, mini programs on WeChat and websites have become quicker and more crucial channels for her to connect with the people, listen to their voices and collect their opinions.

Jiang, who is also head of Zoujiajiao community, posted QR codes at the entrances of each apartment

building. By scanning the code, residents can access an online platform where they can report any challenges they face in their daily lives.

In addition, residents can share their ideas on repairing and renovating old houses on the platform, which is also an issue Jiang is researching, involving joint participation in the maintenance and management of the community, she said.

"Face-to-face talks and group discussions are more suitable for the elderly or for figuring out complex issues," she said. "Online services are more appropriate for young people who can express their thoughts anytime and anywhere."

"The more varied the ways of communication, the greater the

likelihood that people's difficulties will be seen, and this also makes the connection between deputies and the people closer," she added.

Better problem-solving

While bridging the gap between deputies and the people, online platforms have also offered deputies a treasure trove of knowledge to enhance their performance and monitor their behaviors.

Every morning when Cao, the NPC deputy from Shandong, exercises, she opens an information platform established by the NPC Standing Committee to learn about the latest national policies and laws, as well as the experiences of other deputies.

"The learning has enriched me and given me a clearer understand-

ing of how to better speak for the people and fulfill my mission as a deputy. It has also made me stronger, enabling me to help people address difficulties more effectively," she said.

Thanks to digital services designated by the Suzhou People's Congress, Jiang has access to a wide range of learning resources and participated in numerous training activities. "Information technology breaks through the limitations of time and space," she said. "With just a mobile phone, I can contact legislative staff, businesses and even government departments right from within my community."

"The digital platform has also made my communication and interaction with other deputies more convenient and frequent. We learn

from each other and talk about hot issues, which helps us find better solutions for problems raised by the people," she added.

Both Jiang and Cao are calling for the stronger application of information technology in their duties, as this approach will contribute more to affirming that the people are the masters of the country, Cao said.

With digital services being widely utilized by deputies, they have also enabled the standing committees of people's congresses and government departments to enhance their work efficiency, thereby addressing people's difficulties more efficiently.

Data released by the NPC Standing Committee shows that it received 9,235 suggestions from NPC deputies during the second session of the 14th NPC last year.

"The large number of suggestions reflects deputies' engagement in the country's governance and decision-making," the committee said, adding that the suggestions were forwarded to 213 relevant departments for review and action, with all lawmakers receiving feedback.

To respond to the concerns of NPC deputies in a timely manner, the committee launched an information platform last year for suggestion making, communication, handling, response and feedback.

"The platform makes it easier for deputies to make and track their suggestions, and the streamlined workflow also accelerates the pace of handling suggestions," the committee said.

It added that such quick responses and efficient processes are more conducive to solving people's difficulties and implementing whole-process people's democracy.

Self-improvement

The draft amendment ready to be contemplated by all NPC members is essential for deputies, as it outlines their rights and obligations in the new era, Cao said.

"Improving the law is like updating our work manual. The new version, I believe, will be conducive to invigorating the vitality of China's democratic system, better pooling the wisdom and strength of the people into the country's development, and making policies more in line with the people's interests and more scientific," she added.

Wang said that he is looking forward to the new deputy guidance.

"After summarizing the good practices and experiences of the past decade, the legal document will also draw clearer boundaries for us on what to do, and help us understand the priorities for future work," he said.

"It will also enable us to improve the quality of duty performance and promote whole-process people's democracy."

Jiang emphasized that the people's congress system has provided an important institutional guarantee for the Chinese people, adding that amending the law will optimize the system to uphold the principle that the country is run by the people and for the people.

"I regard the modification of the law this time as an opportunity for self-improvement," she said. "It urges me to enhance my ability to serve the people, broaden my horizons and make up for my own shortcomings."

"I'll continue to contribute to the socioeconomic development of our region, and work toward improving the quality of life of the people."

Legislative steps improve congress system to better reflect voice of the people

By CAO YIN

China has stepped up efforts to improve the people's congress system through legislation over the past few years, so as to promote whole-process people's democracy that enables the Chinese people to be more broadly involved in national governance.

In China's political system, the people exercise State power through the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, and people's congresses at provincial, city, county and township levels, ensuring that their interests are reflected in the decision-making process.

For nearly 3,000 NPC deputies

attending the third session of the 14th National People's Congress, a major task is to further review the draft amendment to the Law on Deputies to the National People's Congress and to the Local People's Congresses at Various Levels.

The current law was enacted by the NPC in 1992. It underwent partial amendments in 2009, 2010 and 2015, according to the NPC Standing Committee.

Before the latest deliberation, the draft amendment was discussed by the NPC Standing Committee in November and December.

It is significant to amend the law as it is closely related to strengthening the protection and oversight of

deputies, according to Tong Weidong, an official from the NPC Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission.

He noted that the changes to the law, along with some other amended laws, will play a role in ensuring the sound operation of the fundamental political system and advancing whole-process people's democracy.

Generally, a draft becomes law after being reviewed three times by the NPC Standing Committee. However, if a piece of legislation is closely related to the nation's fundamental issues and people's basic interests, such as institutional reforms to State organs or regulating civil activities, it must be further deliber-

ated by all NPC members.

Taking a people-centered approach to legislation, China has modified several other laws in recent years to streamline the workflow of the people's congresses at each level, so that the system can guarantee that the people are the masters of the country, the NPC Standing Committee said.

In 2023, China adopted an amendment to the Legislation Law, which allows the greater participation of deputies to people's congresses in legislative activities, including lawmaking and the inspection of law enforcement.

The country also updated rules for members of the NPC Standing

Committee that year, ordering them to strengthen their connection with deputies, especially those from grassroots areas, by various means to more deeply understand people's opinions and respond in a timely manner to the public's concerns.

In 2022, the amendment to the Organic Law of the Local People's Congresses and Local People's Governments was passed, clarifying that local legislative bodies and governmental organs should put the people first, and requiring county-level legislatures to establish work stations in communities to maintain closer ties with the people.

In 2021, China also adopted the amended Organic Law and Procedur-

al Rules of the NPC. The amendments of the two legal documents urged the NPC and its standing committee to provide deputies with more chances to participate in legislative activities and make legislative information more transparent to the public.

In addition to the legislative efforts, outreach offices have been set up to encourage more people to participate in national governance and raise their suggestions on social development.

Such offices act as a bridge between the people and lawmakers, giving public advice directly to the country's top legislature and making the collection of suggestions from various walks of life more efficient.



TWO SESSIONS

More stimulus for consumer spending likely

Strong steps to bolster domestic demand and counter escalating tariffs expected

By WANG KEJU
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China's policymakers are widely expected to roll out a potent one-two punch during the country's ongoing annual political event, in order to stimulate consumption, as tepid domestic demand and escalating US tariffs weigh on the recovery momentum of the world's second-largest economy, said national legislators, political advisers and economists.

To bolster the economy, the government is expected to set the country's deficit-to-GDP ratio at the highest level yet in the Government Work Report, which will be reviewed and deliberated by the National People's Congress during the two sessions, the annual meetings of China's top legislative and political advisory bodies, they added.

Yang Chengzhang, a national political adviser and chief economist at Shenwan Hongyuan Securities, noted that the nation is dealing with the challenges of a sluggish real estate sector, which is putting pressure on domestic demand, and the lingering impact of United States tariffs on China's export performance.

"To offset these drags and sustain stable economic growth, the government will likely double down on policies aimed at boosting consumer spending and household incomes," Yang said.

In particular, channeling more fiscal funding to support consumer goods trade-in initiatives across a wider range of categories will serve as a key catalyst to shore up consumers' willingness to spend this year, Yang added.

Jia Shaoqian, a deputy to the 14th NPC and chairman of Chinese home appliance manufacturer Hisense Group, said the current trade-in program has faced some challenges in engaging smaller retailers at the county and township levels, which has limited its reach and impact.

By addressing these participation barriers and creating a more inclusive environment for smaller merchants, the government can ensure that the trade-in program's advantages are felt by a wider range of consumers, Jia said.

The National Development and Reform Commission announced in early January that the country will significantly increase funding from ultra-long-term treasury bonds to support pro-consumption efforts. Also in January, the Ministry of Finance front-loaded 81 billion yuan (\$11.16 billion) in funding for this year's consumer goods trade-in program.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, speculated on the scale of this increase, saying, "China is likely to double the funding for its consumer goods trade-in initiative this year to 300 billion yuan compared with last year."

Doubling the funding would "drive an additional 750 billion yuan in consumer spending by 2025," Wang said, adding that this could "translate into a 1.5 percentage point acceleration in the growth rate of the total retail sales of consumer goods".

The substantial increase in government bonds is only part of the more proactive fiscal policy tool kit that China vowed to use in order to boost domestic demand and weather external shocks, analysts said.

"Another focus for fiscal policy should be on enhancing public services in areas such as education and healthcare, as well as measures to facilitate the integration of migrant workers into urban areas," said Shen Jianguang, chief economist at Chinese e-commerce platform JD.

By investing in people-centered public services and improving the social safety net for low- and middle-income groups, the government can help alleviate the burden on households and unlock their consumption potential, Shen said.

Undivided attention



Foreign envoys and other participants attend the opening meeting of the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing on Tuesday.
WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

NATIONAL VISION, LOCAL ACTION

Tianjin's coastal district taps into innovation power

By YANG CHENG in Tianjin
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The Binhai New Area, a coastal district in North China's Tianjin, is spearheading efforts to enhance coordinated development across Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province by capitalizing on its prowess in technological innovation, said Shan Zefeng, governor of the district and a deputy to the National People's Congress.

Shan emphasized that Binhai aspires to emerge as a key driver of independent innovation and a central hub for original innovation, particularly in fields such as life sciences, smart technologies and low-carbon solutions.

"Efforts will be intensified to advance crucial core technologies

and overcome various technological bottlenecks in the industrial chain," he said.

Plans are underway to establish mechanisms for translating scientific and technological breakthroughs into tangible products and foster more startup platforms for high-tech companies that can attract top talent to Binhai, Shan said.

For example, the district will release an upgraded version of the "Haihe Elite Project," which was launched by the Tianjin municipal government in 2018 and lowered the threshold for securing hukou, or household registration, for university graduates and leading technology personnel.

Expressing optimism about recent breakthroughs in coordinated



Chinese and foreign journalists attend a news conference on the third session of the 14th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. The NPC's annual session starts on Wednesday. KUANG LINHUA / CHINA DAILY

China, Europe foster mutual success

By WANG QINGYUN
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China highly values its relations with Europe, and hopes to strengthen cooperation with Europe to address global challenges, oppose unilateralism and provide more stability for the world, said Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the third session of the 14th National People's Congress.

"There are neither fundamental interest clashes nor geopolitical conflicts between China and Europe; they are partners that contribute to each other's success," Lou said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday.

Sound bilateral ties serve the fundamental and long-term interests of both China and Europe, and meet the common expectations of the world, he said, urging both sides to stay confident and determined in developing the ties in spite of "winds and waves".

In addition, China and Europe can complement each other's strengths and achieve mutual benefit in many areas through cooperation, Lou said. Bilateral economic

and trade cooperation has not only boosted each side's own growth, but also contributed to the stability of global supply chains and the world economy, he said.

Lou cited the cooperation between Chinese automaker Chery and Spanish auto brand Ebro to produce automobiles at a factory in Barcelona, saying that this cooperation has revived the brand and created a large number of jobs for local people.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union. China has made it clear on various occasions that it views the EU as a strategic force in the international landscape, and regards the development of ties with the EU as a priority in its foreign policy.

In his speech at the Munich Security Conference in February, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China and Europe are partners, not rivals.

Feng Zhongping, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of European Studies, said that cooperation has been a

major characteristic of China-Europe relations over the past few years, though the relations have experienced bumps caused by issues such as the EU's additional tariffs on electric vehicles produced in China.

Both sides benefit from the current international order and hope to maintain the order, Feng said, adding that they share common ground in upholding multilateralism, and their cooperation will help inject stability into the turbulent world.

Also at Tuesday's news conference, Lou, the spokesman, reaffirmed China's commitment to the solidarity and development of the Global South. The nation has always stood with the Global South through thick and thin, and has always been a participant in and leading contributor to South-South cooperation, he said.

China has provided development assistance to more than 160 countries and cooperated with more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations under the Belt and Road Initiative, according to the spokesman.

Curbs: Trade protectionism fragments global economic and trade cooperation

From page 1

China stands ready to work with the US to address each other's concerns through dialogue and consultation on the basis of mutual respect, equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit, but will never accept the use of pressure or threats, Lou said.

"We will firmly defend our national sovereignty, security and development interests," he added.

While advocating dialogue, China also took other concrete measures to protect its economic and national security interests.

Citing national security concerns, the Ministry of Commerce announced on Tuesday that, effective immediately, it has added 15 US entities, including Leidos and Sourceamp Inc, to its export control list.

Zhang Jian, vice-president of the Beijing-based China Institutes of

Contemporary International Relations, said the rise of trade protectionism will fragment global economic and trade activities, as well as trade and economic cooperation policies among countries, raising policy-related costs for businesses engaged in international commerce.

John Quelch, a marketing professor at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business in Durham, North Carolina, said that in order to deal with these challenges, China and its exporters should adopt a strategic, measured approach to mitigating immediate risks while accelerating long-term supply chain diversification, innovation and expansion into new markets.

Ningbo Beilun ARC Automotive, a manufacturer of auto parts and airbags in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, has been heading in that direction. The company's export value grew 17.8 percent year-on-

year to 58.3 million yuan (\$8 million) in the first two months of 2025, according to data from Ningbo Customs.

"In the early days, our business mainly catered to customers in the European and US markets," said Gai Yancheng, the company's marketing manager. "Benefiting from the tangible growth of the Belt and Road Initiative, we have successfully expanded into the Southeast Asian market in recent years, becoming a key supplier for many major new energy and traditional fuel vehicle manufacturers."

To safeguard China's ecological security and food safety, the General Administration of Customs announced on Tuesday that, effective immediately, imports of US timber have been suspended and the export qualifications of three companies supplying US soybeans to China have been revoked.

Prosperity: Initiatives, platforms help sustain development

From page 1

This can be achieved through rule of law, a balanced economy, and people-centric governance.

As Chinese philosophy states, policies, plans and visions without actions are merely thoughts; nothing else. China has supported the concept with at least five pillars. The Belt and Road Initiative is spreading all over the world while adhering to the traditional wisdom of shared growth. The Global Development Initiative was introduced in accordance with the vision of shared prosperity. The Global Security Initiative aims for common, comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable security. The Global Civilization Initiative highlights harmony in diversity. Furthermore, President Xi has stressed the construction of ecological civilization derived from the philosophy of harmony between the planet and humans and among humans.

China also helped launch two significant platforms: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the China International Import Expo. The AIIB assists poor and developing countries, demonstrating China's commitment to achieving prosperity for all. The CIIE promotes trade and generates opportunities for the developing world.

China has accelerated its efforts to sustain multilateralism. The speech by Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the UN Security Council on Feb 18 is an example.

Wang's speech expounded China's commitment to addressing challenges, working together with the rest of the world and creating a fair, prosperous and peaceful world for everyone. He denounced the trend of prioritizing self-interest and unfairness, and called for respect for sovereignty and human life and a peaceful settlement in Gaza.

He emphasized that the vision of a community with a shared future provides the framework for reforming the system and striving for a peaceful and prosperous world.

It is hard to achieve national rejuvenation without sharing prosperity and dividends of peace globally. President Xi's vision distinguishes itself by furthering the idea of cosmopolitanism.

China believes development is key to solving all problems, yet we cannot achieve sustainable peace and prosperity without fairness, respect for diversity, sovereignty, human rights, and the development of everyone. China has been advancing these common values.

It is expected that the two sessions will prove China continues to be a firm supporter of the Global South in achieving sustainable development against all odds while being an active player with the rest of the world to navigate challenges and strive for political and diplomatic ending of conflicts.

The author is CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development in Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Shan Zefeng

development, Shan said that notable efforts include the establishment of a new State-owned enterprise, the China Resources Recycling Group, last year to promote technological upgrades in recycling and reusing resources.

In January, the group launched a project for the safe recycling and disposal of mobile phones in Tianjin and Shantou, Guangdong province. The project, the first of its kind in the country, features state-of-the-art technologies.

Shan said the Sinopec Research Institute of Petroleum Processing has established its presence in

Binhai, along with multiple technological experimental zones, showcasing a collaborative industrial model involving research and development in Beijing and experimentation in Binhai.

He said a new generation of technological application clusters in Binhai have been designated as State-level industrial clusters.

"The area has made strides in promoting regional coordinated growth, including the removal of various barriers and the adoption of mutual recognition of qualifications for projects among Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei," he said.

According to the governor, the introduction of a one-stop window for more than 1,100 registration services, along with the availability of

online self-service in most cases, has considerably streamlined things.

To alleviate the industrial burden on Beijing's technological hub Zhongguancun, the Binhai-Zhongguancun Science Park, located 140 kilometers away, has welcomed a surge of enterprises — from 1,443 in 2019 to 5,800 this year. Among these are 606 national-level high-tech and small and medium-sized high-tech companies.

In addition, the Tianjin Port in Binhai is maintaining trade relations with more than 500 ports in about 180 countries and regions worldwide, Shan said.

The port has established unique direct shipping routes connecting China with the East Coast of the United States and Central America, along with a dedicated route for cherries from Chile. The number of container shipping routes has risen to 147, with 68 routes linking ports

in countries and regions participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Tianjin Port has evolved into a critical hub facilitating connectivity between land and sea and fostering mutual benefits for both the East and the West, Shan said. "We will harness the port's capabilities to propel local technologies and industries forward," he added.

Since the inaugural run of an express train linking the Tianjin Port with Xingtai in Hebei in May, other cities in Hebei, such as Shijiazhuang and Baoding, have seen the start of regular train services to the port. This has led to the gradual enhancement of the regional logistics network, according to the governor.

Data from the Binhai Statistics Bureau shows that in 2024, the district's GDP increased 5.5 percent year-on-year, surpassing the national average, while also exceeding the city average by 0.4 percentage point.



TWO SESSIONS

PERSPECTIVE

China can help Africa unlock AI potential

Global collaboration in technology drives progress for emerging markets

By EDITH MUTETHYA in Nairobi
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Artificial intelligence is one of the promising areas of cooperation between China and Africa. The continent's flourishing tech hubs and young tech-savvy population are well complemented by the Asian powerhouse's wealth of expertise and investment capability.

Speaking ahead of the two sessions, the annual meetings of China's National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Lawrence Nderu, a research fellow in the Department of Computing at Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, said that China is revolutionizing the AI sector.

He said that through the development of DeepSeek, China has proven that it's possible to develop AI solutions with fewer computing capabilities as long as the developer is efficient at the algorithm level.

This, he said, has particularly given confidence to the Global South, which lacks computing capability and will leapfrog the region's ability to benefit from AI and create meaningful solutions.

Nderu hopes that the two sessions could hold discussions that will pave the way for collaborations between Chinese and African scientists to build solutions that can upscale, taking note of Africa's constrained resources in terms of computing capability.

Nderu said that AI can help Africa improve its agriculture and healthcare sectors as well as address climate change and security challenges. In the education sector, he said that AI can be used for personalized learning. Teachers and lecturers can also build lesson plans using AI or create solutions that students can use for science, technology, engineering and mathematics-based courses.

In light of corruption that has plagued some African countries for a long time, he said that AI can be used to ensure that resources are utilized properly. Financial institutions or tax authorities can deploy AI solutions to uncover money laundering, fraud, or tax evasion.

AI applications have the ability to work with datasets too large for manual handling, making it possible to reveal or even predict corruption or fraud that previously was nearly or completely impossible to



Lawrence Nderu

for technology transfer capability to Africa.

With DeepSeek having sent shockwaves through the US tech establishment, Nderu said that he expects heightened competition in the development of AI solutions and building of more optimized solutions. "Going forward, this kind of competition has its own advantage as well, because here in Africa, where we believed that it would take a bit of years for us to get to that computing power, we know we can do it now," he said.

Nderu said that contrary to the current scenario, many people would expect China and the US to cooperate, which could result in the development of the best solutions because they both have tech-intensive industries.

In what appears to be efforts to maintain its global lead in AI technology, the US has been imposing export sanctions on China for some key components. In December, the US imposed new export controls to China that restrict the sale of cutting-edge semiconductor manufacturing equipment and high-bandwidth memory.

However, Nderu said despite the importation controls, the Asian powerhouse continues to make progress as a big investor. "China has shown that they can think differently and create real solutions that have an impact and are efficient," he said.

For Africa to catch up with the rest of the world on AI development, he urged universities across the continent to ensure that they equip the youth with highly technical and knowledge skills.

"Here at the university, we have a policy to try and make sure that AI is recognized as a tool that we can use to improve our productivity whether it is in the office operations, research level, or supporting students," he said.



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detect, according to some anti-corruption experts.

Noting that China is known for its production capability, which also involves the use of AI in some industries, Nderu suggested the need



Yang Yongxiu works at a factory of China FAW Group in Changchun, Jilin province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Bridging gap between education and industry

By LIU MINGTAI and ZHOU HUIYING in Changchun

Yang Yongxiu felt a greater sense of duty upon his appointment as one of the deputies to the National People's Congress, China's top legislative body, from the northeastern province of Jilin.

"I am committed to learning and enhancing my skills at the meeting, as well as fully dedicating myself to my responsibilities as a deputy," said Yang, the 38-year-old chief technical expert of China FAW Group and a senior technician at FAW's research and development center in Changchun, capital of Jilin.

For the ongoing annual session of the National People's Congress, Yang said he hoped to propose the promotion of high-level training for skilled workers in the field of new energy vehicles, catering to the transformation and upgrading of the country's automotive industry.

"We need to make those highly skilled workers gain more theoretical knowledge to support innovation and allow them to play a more important role in developing new quality productive forces. Therefore, I made the proposal that national ministries, local governments, and enterprises should strengthen their support in paving the pathway for high-level skilled talent to obtain postgraduate education," he said. "Through the combination of in-depth learning and practical experience in their positions, they can further enhance

innovation levels and facilitate the transformation of achievements." He also plans to propose more policy and financial support for vocational education. "I expect that the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and other relevant departments can accelerate the institutional and mechanism reforms of vocational schools with various supporting policies, such as increasing financial investment, establishing special funds, supporting infrastructure construction, talent cultivation and research innovation," he said. "Various departments should

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Yang Yongxiu, NPC deputy and chief technical expert of China FAW Group

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jointly formulate industry incentive policies to promote the co-construction of vocational schools by the government and enterprises, which will fully leverage the collaborative policy advantages, resource advantages, and technological advantages of government-enterprise cooperation."

Yang joined FAW in 2010, and since then, he has specialized in numerical control technology and mastered the skill of making engine cylinders that meet extremely high standards, with error tolerances of less than 0.015 millimeters.

So far, Yang has obtained 18 national patents and solved over 130 production-related problems.

Born in a rural family in Shangqiu, Henan province, Yang dreamed of making cars when he was young.

"When I was a child, I liked watching cars driving on the road. Especially when I saw the Hongqi car running in front of Tian'anmen Square, I felt quite proud," he said.

In 2007, he took the *gaokao*, the national college entrance examination, and surpassed the admission threshold for an undergraduate university program. Despite meeting the requirements, he opted to pursue his dream and enrolled in numerical control technology at the Changchun Automobile Industry Institute, a vocational school.

After graduating, Yang joined the research and development department at FAW.

"In the group, I had access to

many newer and more advanced technologies and equipment used for making auto parts," he said. "What I learned at the institute was barely enough for me to do my job properly, so I had to learn and practice more."

During those days, Yang worked with a more experienced technician and noted everything he learned. After work, he would stay at the workshop to practice on the lathes until midnight.

It took him only two years to be awarded the "FAW Group Technical Expert" title, which is an extraordinary achievement.

At the beginning of 2020, Yang became a mentor responsible for teaching and coaching young workers for vocational skill competitions.

He has trained about 1,200 people until now, some of whom have won awards, including 33 at the national level.

In June 2020, a studio in his name was established. It has served as a platform for solving production issues, exchanging technical experience and improving skills among colleagues.

He received the China Youth May 4 Medal, the highest honor awarded to Chinese youth who have distinguished themselves in their fields. "I will continue to promote technical training," he said. "I hope I can do more work to bring in more young talent."

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Pursuit of innovation fosters nation's future growth

As I step into the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for my inaugural coverage of China's national two sessions, I feel a blend of excitement and nervous anticipation. As a novice reporter, I'm here to explore how the nation's unwavering pursuit of technology and innovation is reshaping its future — and potentially impacting my own journey in a subtle yet significant manner.

One of the most anticipated topics this year stands as the advancement of China's technological capabilities. With the global tech race intensifying, the common thread is clear: the country is betting big on innovation to drive its next chapter of growth.

From the policy signals released during local two sessions, AI, future industries, and information technology innovation have emerged as the core directions of future technological development.

For example, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province is accelerating industrial upgrading through "the deep integration of the digital economy and the real economy", while regions such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Jiangsu province have outlined clear plans for future industries,



Li Jiaying
Reporter's log

covering cutting-edge fields such as humanoid robotics, quantum technology, and the low-altitude economy.

Remarkably, recent advancements, exemplified by breakthroughs like DeepSeek's AI models, are reshaping the nation's economic and social landscape. AI-powered tools make services such as manufacturing, healthcare, education and retail more efficient and accessible.

These advancements are also creating new markets and consumer behaviors. Businesses integrate AI into everything from cloud services to consumer electronics, driving a new wave of innovation and economic activity. From AI-driven entertainment to electric vehicles, individual Chinese consumers are also embracing tech-enabled lifestyles, which is boosting domestic consumption, a key pillar of China's economic strategy.

Being a first-time reporter at the

two sessions is both exhilarating and humbling. Every conversation feels like a revelation, every statistic a puzzle piece in a larger narrative. My focus this year will be on technology. Still, as a reporter, I'm also keen to explore how I can make sense of the complex interplay between cutting-edge technologies like AI and ordinary people's everyday lives.

To date, we have witnessed new tech trends, not as abstract concepts but as tools to solve real-world problems. AI-powered healthcare systems that can diagnose diseases faster and more accurately. Robots that can assist older people or perform dangerous tasks in factories. Cloud computing that could revolutionize industries from logistics to finance. These are not just buzzwords but technologies that could soon touch every aspect of our lives.

However, as I learn about the grand visions, I ask something new: "How will these advancements translate into tangible benefits for the average person? How will a farmer in rural areas or a factory worker experience this technological revolution?"

I also want to delve into the challenges: "How do we ensure that innovation benefits everyone, not just a select few? How do we navigate the challenges of privacy, security, and inequality in a world increasingly shaped by algorithms and automation?"

Moreover, I'm also curious about human stories behind the headlines, such as the scientists pushing the boundaries of what's possible, the policymakers navigating uncharted territory, and the ordinary citizens whose lives are being reshaped by these advancements.

I may not have all the answers in the days ahead, but I'm determined to ask the right questions. In the end, the true measure of the new quality productive forces is not just their technological genius but their ability to improve the lives of the people they are meant to serve.

As I left the venue, the city lights of Beijing twinkled in the distance, a reminder of the countless stories waiting to be told. As a novice reporter, I'm ready to embrace the unknown, one story at a time.

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What NPC deputies say



Chen Jie, secretary of CPC Yunlong district committee in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province

Based on the public nature of online culture, legislative efforts should be made to include the regulation of vulgar online content within the scope of prosecutorial public interest litigation. This would establish a public interest litigation system to safeguard

online cultural development.



Jia Yu, director of the Shanghai High People's Court

The lack of transparency in income distribution and a high-intensity workload have heightened the survival strain on delivery workers. Relevant laws should be revised to safeguard workers' wages in flexible employment better and regulate their working hours. In addition, specialized legislation should be introduced to

clearly define rights and obligations, ensuring the basic rights and interests of individuals with flexible employment.



Sun Jingnan, chief skills expert of CRRC Corporation Limited

Based on the issues identified in the research, the reform of the industrial workforce should be further deepened, and a demand-oriented skills training system should be established. It is hoped that relevant departments regularly publish a catalog of high-demand occupations and offer targeted subsidies for newly established programs at vocational schools.



Miao Wei, senior vice-president of ZTE Corporation

The existing legal framework faces compatibility challenges in regulating telemarketing. Relevant regulations lack detailed and explicit provisions regarding entry requirements, conduct guidelines, data security standards, and complaint-handling procedures. Legal supervision and regulation should be strengthened to address public concerns such as spam calls and deceptive marketing.

LI SHANGYI

TWO SESSIONS



Confident move

Above: Political advisers walk to the Great Hall of the People before the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference opens in Beijing on Tuesday.

Left: The opening meeting of the third session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday.

JIN LIANGKUI / XINHUA

ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Stronger ties with SARs, GBA aid pledged ahead of session

Nearly 3,000 NPC deputies arrive in capital city to attend annual meeting

By WILLIAM XU in Beijing and OASIS HU in Hong Kong

China's top legislature and political advisers on Tuesday pledged to enhance support for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and further maintain and deepen ties among the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and the Chinese mainland.

A day before the opening of the National People's Congress annual session in Beijing, Lou Qinqian, spokesperson for the third session of the 14th NPC, said that Hong Kong and Macao, which for decades have served as critical windows for the nation's opening-up efforts, hold a unique position, contribute significantly and play an irreplaceable role.

During a news conference teeming with domestic and international reporters, Lou said that this year, the Standing Committee will carry

out thematic research to further unlock the GBAs potential in legislative aspects, facilitating the region's integration into national strategies and benefiting its people.

With the aid of the policies rolled out by the central authorities, the GBA has seen stronger hard connectivity of infrastructure, soft connectivity of rules and institutions, and heartfelt connectivity among the people of Hong Kong, Macao and Guangdong province, Lou said.

The GBA development also gives the special administrative regions a chance to tackle their deep-seated problems, according to Lou.

With strong support from the central government, Hong Kong has increased its land coverage and housing supply to improve people's livelihoods, while Macao's newly completed Island Healthcare Complex, a joint effort between the city and Peking Union Medical College Hospital, has largely enhanced its

healthcare capacity, Lou added.

Also on Tuesday afternoon, as the 14th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee — the country's top political advisory body — commenced its third session at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the nation's top political adviser said maintaining and enhancing ties with various Hong Kong and Macao sectors and groups — particularly young people — was an important task for the CPPCC National Committee.

At the meeting, while delivering a work report on behalf of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, Wang Huning, chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, said last year, the national committee fully leveraged its role as a united front organization, initiating a series of communication activities between the mainland and the two special administrative regions.

Particularly, the CPPCC National Committee held 75 international seminars in campuses to enhance

ties with young people from Hong Kong and Macao, Wang noted.

The committee also organized visits with its Hong Kong and Macao members to learn their opinions, while holding meetings to discuss issues such as how to better leverage the roles of the regions in the country's efforts to establish a new system for a higher-level open economy, Wang said.

The NPC annual session is set to begin on Wednesday and will continue until March 11. So far, 2,893 of the 2,929 NPC deputies have registered for the event.

Hong Kong is represented by 36 deputies in the top legislature, and Macao by 12. Honoring a long-standing tradition, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu and Macao Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai will be present as guests at the session's opening.

The third session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee will conclude on Monday morning.

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Raise trade practices to global standards, deputy says

By CAO DESHENG and HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou

Huang Maoxing, a deputy to China's National People's Congress from Fujian province, has called for greater efforts to align domestic economic and trade practices with global standards, laying a solid foundation for a new open economic system.

Huang, who is also vice-president of the Fujian Academy of Social Sciences in Fuzhou, has submitted suggestions to the top legislature's annual session every year since 2018.

One of his suggestions this year focuses on fostering institutional innovations to develop systems that align with international rules and standards, advancing higher-



Huang Maoxing

level opening-up. "In the face of an increasingly complex international environment, China needs to focus on key areas and comprehensively enhance its adaptability and capabilities to meet international trade and economic rules and standards," he said.

Huang stressed the need for greater coordination and an efficient collaborative management system to ensure the orderly implementation and enforcement of reforms.

He also called for stronger legal safeguards to support alignment with high-standard global economic and trade rules.

Fujian has long served as a key

hub for China's opening-up policies. The Xiamen Special Economic Zone, one of four such zones in the country, remains at the forefront of reform.

During an inspection tour of Fujian in October, President Xi Jinping urged the province to adapt to global changes and steadily advance institutional opening-up, producing more achievements in institutional innovation to support China's broader push for high-level opening-up.

Huang said further reforms should focus on streamlining administration, delegating power, improving regulation and upgrading services to foster a level playing field.

Strengthening intellectual property rights protection is also crucial

to safeguarding innovation, he said. He proposed creating new models for international trade and economic cooperation, particularly by using digital technology to enhance trade facilitation.

Huang also emphasized the need to expand markets in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative and other emerging economies to build a more open and diverse international trade landscape.

He called for stronger international production capacity cooperation and encouraged competitive domestic industries to expand overseas, deepening the integration of global industrial, supply and value chains.

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Peruvian envoy highlights China's economic stability

By MO JINGXI
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China remains a key driver of global economic growth despite rising protectionism, with its economic resilience, trade expansion and technological leadership making it an indispensable force in the global economy, Peru's top envoy to China said.

Speaking ahead of the annual session of the National People's Congress, which begins on Wednesday, Marco V. Balarezo, Ambassador of Peru to China, said he is closely watching China's economic growth targets and its focus on high-quality development.

"In recent years, China has maintained a stable growth trajectory, and the GDP target for 2025 will be critical in assessing its ability to sustain economic momentum amid global uncertainties," Balarezo said in a written interview with China Daily.

Last year, China's economy successfully met its growth target with a 5 percent year-on-year increase, despite a challenging domestic and global environment.

Starting on Wednesday, national lawmakers will deliberate the Government Work Report, which will outline key targets for the nation's socioeconomic development this year and unveil measures to bolster the recovery of the world's second-largest economy.

Balarezo said the legislative session and the concurrent session of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, provide a crucial opportunity for people to learn about China's economic policies, governance reforms and global engagement priorities.

He expects the Government Work Report to detail measures aimed at stimulating domestic demand, supporting private enterprises and enhancing industrial innovation.

The envoy said he is also monitoring China's focus on developing new quality productive forces and industrial upgrading. The two ses-

sions, he said, provide insights into how China intends to further develop digital infrastructure, expand renewable energy investments and enhance high-tech manufacturing capabilities.

"As global trade faces increasing protectionist measures, China's continued commitment to expanding trade partnerships and attracting foreign direct investment will be key for the international business community," Balarezo said.

The ambassador said the Belt and Road Initiative and global economic cooperation will also be closely watched during the gathering of national lawmakers and political advisers.

"The two sessions will clarify China's approach to strengthening international infrastructure investments, improving supply chain resilience and enhancing digital connectivity," he said.

Citing the Chancery Port in Peru, a flagship China-Latin America BRI project, Balarezo said the port stands to benefit from China's sustained commitment to global infrastructure development.

The two sessions are not only an economic and legislative gathering, but also a demonstration of China's whole-process people's democracy, he added.

"This governance model integrates broad-based consultations, public participation and structured policy-making, ensuring that major national decisions reflect societal needs and aspirations," he said.

Balarezo noted that the two sessions also serve as a global platform where China outlines its diplomatic stance and economic strategy in multilateral frameworks. "China's commitment to trade cooperation, global infrastructure development and international governance participation is frequently reaffirmed during these discussions," he said.



Marco V. Balarezo

What CPPCC members say



Political advisers (from front) Qiao Hong, Jin Li and Huang Miansong attend a group interview ahead of the opening meeting of the third session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Jin Li, vice-president of the Southern University of Science and Technology

Driven by its aging population and injecting fresh vitality into the economic landscape, China's silver economy is poised for significant growth with the potential to create 100 million job opportunities by 2050, and tap into a market worth \$4 trillion by 2035. Currently, the number of people age 60 and above in China has surpassed 300 million, a figure expected to exceed 400 million by 2035. Aging demographics do not necessarily signal the end of the demographic dividend. In fact, as education levels and healthcare conditions steadily improve, older individuals can still make significant contributions to the workforce and society. The needs of the country's aging population are evolving from mere survival necessities to a focus on personal growth.

Zhao Hong, chief physician at the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences' Cancer Hospital

China has achieved remarkable strides in biopharmaceutical innovation in recent years to better safeguard the health of its people. Last year, the nation approved 48 novel drugs and 65 innovative medical devices, along with a number of novel medicines in the pipeline, that are ranked the second highest globally. Similarly, a growing array of domestically developed immune cell therapy drugs have made significant inroads into the global market, and homegrown medical devices such as surgical robots and artificial hearts have been gaining attention. China has transitioned from imitation to innovation in the biopharmaceutical realm and has boosted its prowess, with a promising trajectory ahead.

Zhou Lan, chairwoman of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee of Jiusan Society

China has channeled greater resources to renovate old residential areas for people to have modern and convenient living environments. The nation has so far carried out over 66,000 urban renewal projects nationwide with about 250,000 old residential areas in cities being updated or renovated. These urban renewal projects have benefited over 100 million residents. They have not only optimized local residents' living environments, but have also drawn a great deal of new and robust investment to these cities, protecting their cultures and history. It's important to plan urban renewal projects systematically and solicit advice from the public to get to know the real needs of the residents. Highlighting the innovations and artistry of designs is also important as they can add charm to the spaces.

CHINA DAILY



TWO SESSIONS

Song Bao'an

Green agriculture for rural vitalization

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee have made it clear that technological innovation is the core driver of rural vitalization and modernizing agriculture. Innovation helps to improve production efficiency and promote industrial upgrading in rural areas, and the development of eco-friendly (or green) agriculture helps protect the environment and resources.

Technological innovation can reduce the use of resources and cut carbon emissions while boosting integrated production and promoting rural vitalization.

The development of eco-friendly or green agriculture is necessary for China to enhance its agricultural competitiveness, foster a new development philosophy, and reform the supply side of the agricultural sector. The development of green agriculture is also important to ensure China's grain resource and ecology security, and people's well-being.

China is at a pivotal stage of transforming its agricultural development model from one that emphasizes both quantity and quality to one that ensures all-factor productivity and ecological preservation. Hence, the country should accelerate the upgrading of agriculture, which can be achieved by promoting green agriculture.

As climate change and environmental protection pose challenges to agriculture, the traditional agricultural production mode can hardly ensure grain security.

By promoting green agricultural production, marked by the use of organic fertilizers, bio-pesticides and water-saving irrigation modes, green agriculture can effectively reduce resource consumption and carbon emissions while improving soil quality. Green agricultural practices can also help mitigate risks and ensure stable production output even under extreme weather



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

conditions, by using crop varieties that can survive in droughts and floods, and resist pest attacks.

Green agriculture can also overcome the strains of resource shortage and environmental problems. True, the agricultural revolution represented by the inputs of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation has made significant contributions to increasing agricultural productivity and addressing the global food supply challenge. But in doing so, it has caused pollution, consumed huge amounts of resources and created some food safety risks.

With laws and regulations implemented to prevent waste and destruction of natural resources, there is an urgent need for stabilizing the ecosystem by upgrading the agricultural sector. The development of green agriculture lays emphasis on recycling of resources — using straw and wastes produced by livestock and poultry as manures, increasing the recycling rate of some resources, reducing the amount of waste, and better protecting arable land.

An apt example of how green agricultural practices can better protect the environment and eco-

logy can be found in the work of the China-Sri Lanka joint laboratory. Established at Guizhou University, as a project under the Belt and Road Initiative, the laboratory's research is focused on using eco-friendly methods to prevent and control diseases and pests in tea cultivation. To reduce the high risks associated with and the low efficiency and high residue rate of traditional pesticides in tea gardens in both China and Sri Lanka, the laboratory has been conducting research on critical technologies to reduce the use of chemical pesticides, and use eco-friendly means to control pests in tea gardens.

By promoting green agricultural practices and adopting eco-friendly technologies, we can improve productivity, increase the added value of products, and boost their market competitiveness. Such practices can also drive the development of agricultural product processing and ecotourism, increasing farmers' incomes. By reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, green agriculture provides consumers with safe and healthy farm food products.

Green agriculture also emphasizes the importance of resource recycling and ecological preservation, promoting sustainable productivity. With policy support, technology promotion and market guidance, green agriculture can improve overall agricultural efficiency and facilitate the transition toward high-quality and sustainable development.

Despite the challenges, green agriculture can be further developed with the help of government policy support and guidance.

The author is an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, and president of Guizhou University, and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Miao Xiaoping

Multiple treatment needed to manage multimorbidity

With China's economy developing, people's lifestyle changing and the population aging, chronic diseases have become a significant public health challenge. In particular, multimorbidity, or two or more chronic non-communicable diseases in an individual, is becoming increasingly common.

Studies show that 40-80 percent of chronic disease patients may develop multimorbidity, with the prevalence exceeding 50 percent among people aged 65 or above. Multimorbidity severely impacts the patients' quality of life, increases the risk of repeated hospitalization and brings about premature death, putting immense pressure on family caregivers and public health services.

The complexity of causes, and the long duration and diversity of conditions make managing multimorbidity a serious challenge. In clinical practice, most disease management guidelines focus on single diseases and struggle to deal with the complexity and range of conditions that multimorbidity entails. This results in a lack of systemic and effective management, with conflicting treatment methods arising from the application of multiple guidelines.

Besides, basic public health services are not equipped to manage multimorbidity. The coordination between community health centers and higher-level hospitals remains inadequate, while healthcare reimbursement policies do not align with the needs of managing multimorbidity, with the disease-related payment system increasing the financial burden on patients. Public awareness of health issues and lifestyle, too, needs to change, as unhealthy lifestyle contributes significantly to the increase in multimorbidity.

In recent years, national policies such as the Medium-to-Long Term Plan for the Prevention and Treatment of Chronic Disease (2017-25), Healthy China Initiative (2019-30), and the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Health have provided guidance on how to prevent chronic diseases and multimorbidity. But the policies and implementation rules for managing multimorbidity need further refinement.

Given the rising cases of multimorbidity and limited healthcare resources, we propose the following strategies for improving multimorbidity management:

First, there is a need to integrate multidisciplinary resources and develop unified management guidelines. Focusing on general medicine, integrating resources from different medical disciplines to establish a comprehensive management mechanism for multimorbidity is essential, while local adaptation to national guidelines should be encouraged to ensure they are practical and applicable across different regions and healthcare facilities.

Second, the authorities should optimize clinical methods and promote shared decision-making to better manage multimorbidity, while healthcare providers should understand every patient's personal

background, factors such as marital status, work environment and incorporate them in the personalized treatment and management plans. A shared decision-making model is needed for healthcare providers to explain all the treatment options, and their potential outcomes and risks to the patients.

Third, improving primary healthcare as well as overall healthcare service systems is necessary. Primary healthcare institutions, given their proximity to the community, should play a more significant role in multimorbidity management by, for example, using electronic health records for early identification and treatment of multimorbidity patients.

Fourth, the authorities should also reform the health insurance system and explore a multi-tiered, bundled payment system based on disease groups. For patients with complex conditions and long treatment cycles, the reimbursement rate should be increased by raising the payment cap, and the long-term care insurance system expanded to cover multimorbidity patients, so as to reduce financial and care-giving burdens on families.

Digital technology should be leveraged to develop innovative management models.

Digital technology should be leveraged to develop innovative management models. Big data, artificial intelligence, the internet of things, and smart healthcare technologies should be employed to improve multimorbidity management. By establishing a high-quality medicine database that integrates clinical data, research findings and patient health information, the authorities can facilitate the technological innovation needed to improve multimorbidity management. They should also use AI to timely and accurately analyze a patient's condition, offering decision-making support to healthcare providers, and making diagnoses more efficient.

And fifth, health education should be strengthened and proactive health behaviors promoted, while health education campaigns should focus on chronic disease prevention and multimorbidity management at the community level. And knowledge about disease prevention and healthy lifestyles should be disseminated through different media channels to ensure people do regular physical exercise, have a healthy diet, undergo regular health check-up, and pay attention to their mental well-being.

By implementing these measures, China can create an environment conducive to managing multimorbidity.

The author is head of the School of Public Health at Wuhan University and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Meng Nan

Xinjiang has an ancient chapter in China's history

Xinjiang was known as Xiyu, or the Western Regions, in ancient China. Following its unification during the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1735-96) of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Western Regions were renamed Xinjiang, meaning "newly stabilized region". In the 10th year of Emperor Guangxu's reign (1884), Xinjiang was officially turned into a province and named "Xinjiang province" to signify its "return to the homeland".

Even before the Qin Dynasty (before 221 BC), the Western Regions had close ties with the Central Plains. Many archaeological discoveries have shown that Xinjiang bore the imprint of Chinese civilization from its earliest days, with ancient trade routes between the Western Regions and the Central Plains facilitating the exchange of cereals, jade, silk, painted pottery and other goods.

The county governance system originated during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods.

After unifying China in 221 BC, the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huang, implemented a system of counties and prefectures nationwide. This move significantly bolstered the central government's authority in guiding local administrations. The Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) later advanced and further solidified this system.

In 60 BC, the Han court established the Western Regions Frontier Command, adopting the "ruling according to local customs" governance policy. While the status of the states in the Western Regions was maintained, their leaders and officials were granted permission to use the seals and ribbons of the central government. This means their status was akin to vassal states of the Central Plains. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the county governance system had become more widespread in the Western Regions.

In the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), the system of administrative provinces was adopted for the first time in the Western Regions, which

was a breakthrough in the central government's governance in the region.

From the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) to the Qing Dynasty, the central government continuously refined its administrative system in Xinjiang, gradually implementing the county system. This progress paved the way for Xinjiang to harmonize its administrative structure with that of the inland regions.

The concept of a unified multi-ethnic country started taking root among the members of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang in ancient times, with the region becoming a place where multiple ethnic groups, diverse cultures and different religions thrived.

Throughout history, the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have welcomed national unity. Their local leaders' loyalty to the emperors reflected their political allegiance to the central government, facilitating the effective governance of the Western Regions by successive dynasties.

Moreover, the ancient Silk Road positioned Xinjiang at the forefront of cultural and commercial exchanges between Eastern and Western civilizations, promoting economic prosperity and intermingling of cultures, religions and technologies.

History shows Xinjiang's fate has always been part of the Chinese nation, and the region's development reflects the evolution of a unified multi-ethnic country and the growth of the Chinese nation. People of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have contributed to the unity of the nation, and helped write China's glorious history.

The development of Xinjiang is a microcosm of the broader development of China as a unified multi-ethnic country.

The author is a professor of the School of History at Xinjiang University and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Pan Yue

Digital sector development will shape global trade in the future

Digital trade, once a technical term largely confined to industry insiders, has now emerged as a cornerstone of global economic activity. With the world facing slowing growth and increasingly complex trade relations, China's digital trade has managed to rise above the tide, showcasing its remarkable level of resilience.

But China's success in the digital economy is not limited to these figures. Digitally deliverable services and cross-border e-commerce increased rapidly, too. Most remarkably, the release of *Black Myth: Wukong*, a Chinese-made game, catapulted to the top of Steam's global charts, reflecting how digital entertainment and culture are becoming integral to China's digital export success.

Black Myth: Wukong is perhaps

the most striking example of China's rise in digital trade. For many, this game is more than just a success story in entertainment, because it represents a moment when China's digital exports — traditionally dominated by tech giants such as the United States and European Union — commanded serious attention of the world. This shift is emblematic of a broader change: China is not only consuming digital technologies but also shaping them, setting the stage for a new era of global digital leadership.

A key factor behind China's rise in the digital area is its forward-thinking policies. From the Three-Year Action Plan for Digital Commerce (2024-26) to the promotion of reform and innovative development of digital trade in 2024, the policies have been designed to expedite innovation,

attract more global investment, and ensure China remains competitive in the digital economy. This shows China is setting the future agenda for global digital trade.

However, as with any success story, there are complexities that lie beneath the surface. One of them is the structural imbalance in China's digital trade. While China has made remarkable strides in digital services and products, its reliance on outsourcing in information and communications technology services puts it at a disadvantage in the global value chain. Despite being a leader in the production of digital goods, China still faces significant barriers to moving up the value chain, especially when it comes to high-tech services. This means that while China's digital economy is growing, there is still room for improvement in its structure.

The complexities of digital services are rapidly increasing. With more countries developing their digital economies, digital trade governance is becoming increasingly difficult. As such, China's challenge is to not just expand its digital economy but also create a governance framework that can keep pace with the global changes in the field. This calls for enacting regulations that foster innovation and meet global standards. To maintain its role as a global digital leader, China must do more than simply follow the rules; it must help shape them.

Another challenge is the restrictions on cross-border data flow. Many countries have implemented data localization laws on the pretext of safeguarding their national security, when the reality is that such measures are barriers to digital trade. As China's digital trade

continues to expand, it must find a way to balance its own and other countries' national security concerns with the need for open data flow — since the digital economy thrives on data, restricting its development will stifle innovation and global collaboration.

There has been a rise in the number of "unicorns" and high-growth companies, but more is needed to ensure China remains a leader in the digital sector. By providing subsidies, tax breaks and funding for high-tech startups, China can create a thriving ecosystem of innovation that will drive the digital economy forward.

The existing global digital trade regime is dominated by a handful of developed countries, but their dominance is increasingly being challenged. China has the opportunity to break that monopoly and

play a pivotal role in establishing fairer, more inclusive rules for digital trade. The digital economy is global in nature, and to remain a dominant player in it, China must ensure that its voice is heard at the global table.

Looking ahead, China's digital trade future will depend on how well it meets these complex challenges. The opportunities are immense but so too are the risks. The world is entering an era where digital trade will define the global economy, and China has an opportunity to play a pivotal role in this transformation.

The author is a professor of the School of Economics at Xiamen University and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Scientists reveal new quantum computer prototype

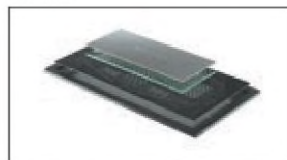
HEFEI — Chinese scientists have unveiled a superconducting quantum computer prototype called Zuchongzhi 3.0, marking a major breakthrough in the country's quantum computing research.

Developed by a team of Chinese quantum physicists that includes Pan Jianwei, Zhu Xiaobo and Peng Chengzhi, Zuchongzhi 3.0 features 105 readable qubits and 182 couplers.

It can process quantum random circuit sampling tasks at speeds a quadrillion times faster than the world's most powerful supercomputer, and 1 million times faster than results achieved by Google that were published in the journal *Nature* in October 2024, according to the team.

The achievement also set a record in quantum computational advantage within superconducting systems. Quantum computational advantage, also known as quantum supremacy, refers to the point at which quantum computers outperform the most advanced classic supercomputers in specific tasks.

The milestone validates the feasibility of quantum computing and reflects China's research strength in the field.



A schematic diagram of the chip used in the superconducting quantum computer prototype Zuchongzhi 3.0. XINHUA

China and the United States are the two leading countries in quantum computing research, with each achieving groundbreaking advancements.

In 2019, Google's Sycamore quantum processor became the first to demonstrate quantum supremacy. In 2020, Chinese researchers developed Jiuzhang, achieving a similar milestone using a different quantum technology.

In 2021, China introduced Zuchongzhi 2.1, a 66-qubit programmable superconducting quantum system, making it the first country to demonstrate quantum computational advantage in two mainstream technical approaches.

According to the research team, Zuchongzhi 3.0 significantly improves on its predecessor in key performance metrics, achieving what they call a globally leading level of quantum computational power.

The study was published in the journal *Physical Review Letters*. Peer reviewers described the research as "benchmarking a new superconducting quantum computer, which shows state-of-the-art performance" and "a significant upgrade from the previous 66-qubit device".

The global scientific community has outlined a three-step roadmap for developing experimental quantum computing.

The first step is achieving quantum supremacy. The second involves developing quantum simulators with hundreds of controllable qubits to tackle real-world problems beyond the reach of supercomputers. And the third focuses on improving qubit control precision, integration scale and error correction to create programmable, general-purpose quantum computers.

The researchers behind Zuchongzhi 3.0 are exploring various related fields, including quantum error correction, quantum entanglement, quantum simulation and quantum chemistry.

Zhu said the team is currently conducting surface code error correction research with a code distance of seven. After further progress, they plan to extend it to nine and 11, laying the groundwork for large-scale qubit integration and control.

XINHUA

Nature art



Children use paintbrushes to portray spring in a blooming rapeseed flower field in Suining, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. The event aimed to help children get closer to nature amid a sea of blossoms in spring. LIU CHANGSONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

US returns 41 illegally exported cultural relics

Collection has significant historical and artistic value, administration says

By WANG KAIHAO

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China's National Cultural Heritage Administration is set to bring home 41 cultural relics and artworks that were illegally exported to the United States, following their handover by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in New York on Monday local time.

The administration said in a statement on Tuesday that it will arrange for the relics' return in due course and coordinate their display in China. The collection includes jade artifacts, pottery, porcelain, bronze wares, architectural components, wooden sculptures, stone carvings and statues.

"These relics feature a rich variety, diverse materials, a broad historical span, and significant historical and artistic value," the administration said.

Detailed information on the artifacts has yet to be released, as further appraisals are still underway. However, footage from State broadcaster China Central Television and images provided by the administration show items such as the components of a bronze tree, a pottery cooking vessel that first appeared during the Neolithic period known as *li*, a disc-shaped jade ritual item called *bi*, a pottery figurine of a storyteller and colored

glaze with a dragon motif.

The relics and artworks were seized by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in November. The National Cultural Heritage Administration worked with the Chinese Consulate General in New York and US authorities to verify the artifacts and facilitate their return.

In 2009, China and the US signed a memorandum of understanding that aims to prevent illegal imports into the US of "archaeological materials ... representing China's cultural heritage from the Paleolithic period (c. 75,000 BC) through the end of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), and monumental sculpture and wall art at least 250 years old". The memorandum has been renewed three times, most recently in January 2024.

"It is a just act to safeguard cultural heritage by preventing and combating the illegal trafficking of cultural relics and facilitating the return of lost items to their rightful countries," Luo Wenli, deputy director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, said at the transfer ceremony.

He added that the administration seeks to enhance Sino-US relations through "friendship, mutual trust and cooperation".

Chen Li, China's consul general

in New York, praised the repatriation as an example of mutual respect and assistance between different cultures, saying it sets a global precedent for international cooperation.

"With extensive common interests and vast space for cooperation, China and the United States can become partners and friends, mutually benefiting and prospering together," Chen said.

Matthew Bogdanos, chief of the Antiquities Trafficking Unit at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, likened the joint effort for a shared goal to the Olympic Games.

Since 2009, the US has returned 594 sets or pieces of Chinese cultural relics on 20 occasions, with the National Cultural Heritage Administration and the Manhattan office jointly repatriating 93 sets or pieces.

China has signed intergovernmental agreements with 27 countries to combat the theft and illicit trade of cultural property.

A newly revised edition of China's Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics, which took effect on Saturday, includes Article 81, which calls for enhanced international cooperation in seeking the repatriation of stolen and illegally exported cultural relics — the first time cross-border repatriation of cultural relics has been codified in Chinese law. The law also urges reciprocal efforts for the return of foreign artifacts that were illegally brought into China.

Deal helps end Dazhou's water scarcity

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing

Residents of Dachuan district in Sichuan province's Dazhou city are now receiving water from Liangping district in neighboring Chongqing municipality, about 100 kilometers away, marking China's first cross-provincial water rights trading agreement.

The deal addresses Dachuan's growing water scarcity, driven by economic development and increased industrial demand.

"The overall water consumption control indicator in Dachuan has been nearing its maximum limit for several consecutive years," said Zhou Jiyang, head of the water resources division at the Dachuan water affairs bureau. He cited expanded production at a local water plant and coal preparation plant as further straining the supply.

Under the agreement, reached on Dec 24, Liangping will deliver 1 million cubic meters of water to Dachuan over the next two years. The transaction is valued at 150,000 yuan (\$20,583), with a price of 0.15 yuan per cubic meter.

Experts say this deal demonstrates the potential of market-based mechanisms in national water resource management.

"The successful practice demon-

strates the potential of market-based mechanisms in national water resource management, and sets a valuable example for guiding water reforms and management in the country," said Qing Yun, a professor at Chongqing Water Resources and Electric Engineering College, according to Chongqing Daily.

In China, water resources are State-owned, and water rights primarily focus on usage. These rights typically fall into four categories: cross-region water usage rights, rights to access water from the natural environment, irrigation water rights and public water supply network usage rights.

China is pushing to establish a unified national water rights trading market.

The Ministry of Water Resources, the National Development and Reform Commission, and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued guidelines in August 2022 aiming to create a complete water rights distribution system by 2025 and a comprehensive water rights system by 2035.

The Sichuan-Chongqing deal reflects a broader effort to optimize water resource distribution.

"Water rights trading refers to the process in which individuals holding surplus water rights transfer a portion of their rights to other

water users in need, facilitated through market mechanisms," said Wang Xiaorong, deputy director of the water resources division of the Chongqing Water Resources Bureau.

Liangping has improved water efficiency in recent years, while Dachuan faces rising demand. The interconnected water systems of local reservoirs facilitated the cross-provincial transaction.

"Cross-provincial water rights transactions represent a specific advancement within the contemporary water resource management model of 'rigid constraints, market incentives and technological empowerment', playing a demonstrative role in fostering the efficient and intensive utilization of water resources," said Long Xunjian, an associate professor of hydrology and water resources at Southwest University.

Chongqing has seen a surge in water rights transactions. Last year, 62 transactions were completed, including a 1.05 million yuan deal involving 21 million cubic meters of groundwater between Nan'an and Changshou districts, the country's largest cross-regional groundwater rights transaction.

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Beijing to host world's first human-robot half-marathon in April

By DU JUAN

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China is set to welcome global "athletes" for a groundbreaking event in April, as it hosts the world's first marathon featuring both human and humanoid robot runners, the event organizer, Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, announced on Tuesday.

The event will take place on April 13, with humanoid robots participating in a half-marathon alongside approximately 12,000 human runners. The robots, representing dozens of companies, will race in a separate lane for safety reasons.

Li Quan, deputy head of the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, said at a news conference that the competition will set a cutoff time of around three and a half hours for the robots. The top three finishers, whether human or robot, will receive prizes.

Robots will be awarded for categories such as race completion, best endurance and most popular robot.

"During the race, robots are allowed to change batteries," Li explained. "Robot teams from a company can also participate in relay form by swapping robots. Performance will be evaluated based on finishing time and the number of robot changes during the race. Each robot change will incur a 10-minute penalty."

Participating robots must have a humanoid appearance and mechanical structures that allow them to walk or run on two legs, excluding wheeled robots. Both remote-controlled and fully autonomous robots are eligible.

"We hope that this event will not only showcase achievements in the humanoid robotics industry, but also spark discussions and deepen the public's understanding of robot capabilities, which will help accelerate industry development," Li said.

Companies, research institutions, robot clubs and universities from around the world are invited to participate in the marathon. Registration will be open from Wednesday to March 11.

"Beijing's technological innovation is accelerating in fields such as large-scale artificial intelligence

models, multi-source information perception and human-machine natural interaction," said Liu Weiliang, deputy head of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Economy and Information Technology. "Robots are evolving rapidly, with innovative humanoid products constantly emerging, demonstrating an unprecedented pace of both physical and intellectual advancement."

The Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, which is in the process of developing into an artificial intelligence hub, also announced plans last week to hire up to 10,000 robots from robotics companies over the next two years, with more than 1,000 positions specifically for humanoid robots.

"The area's government has built a bridge for technology implementation through scenarios, policies and services, supporting efficient communication between enterprises and schools," said Cai Chen, executive director of Beijing-based AI and humanoid robotics company UBTECH Robotics.

At a news conference on Friday, the humanoid robot "Tiangong" appeared, unveiling a unique "job advertisement" inviting global robotics companies to participate in practical training and hire out their robots for work in the area.

The jobs cover nine sectors: advanced manufacturing, education, landscaping, industrial parks, commercial services, healthcare, power inspection, municipal management and community property management. The robots will be deployed across industrial enterprises, hospitals, schools and public spaces within the area.

In the manufacturing sector, pilot projects with companies such as JD, Xiaomi Automotive and Bayer will focus on using robots for material handling, quality inspection and packaging. Robots and humanoid robots will be integrated into production lines by the end of next year, with over 5,000 units expected to be deployed.

Additionally, the area plans to deploy humanoid robots in factories, mines, power plants and other hazardous environments, alleviating industrial workers from problematic conditions such as high temperatures, pressure and dust.

Free care



A doctor from Zhongda Hospital of Southeast University conducts a free ear check-up for a woman in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Monday, China's annual Ear Care Day. SU YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

180 million tons of oil reserves discovered

Sinopec, China's largest oil refiner, on Monday announced the discovery of two major shale oil fields in the east of the country with combined proven reserves of 180 million metric tons. The confirmation of the Xinxing and Qintong oil fields, which was approved by China's Ministry of Natural Resources, is a strategic move to exploit and identify shale oil reserves in the country's continental rift basins. Shale oil mainly refers to liquid hydrocarbons trapped in formations of shale rock that can be extracted for refining. The two oil fields show promise for high initial yields due to favorable fracturability and formation pressure, with test results indicating the likelihood of stable outputs over extended periods.

New all-cargo air route links Urumqi, Pakistan

A new air cargo route linking Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, and Islamabad, capital of Pakistan, was launched on Tuesday, announced SF Airlines. The Urumqi-Islamabad route was the first all-cargo route launched by SF Airlines in Xinjiang to Pakistan. It will transport e-commerce goods and other products between the cities, the carrier said. Two round-trip flights are scheduled to shuttle between Urumqi and Islamabad every week. With the launch of the Urumqi-Islamabad route, SF Airlines' air cargo services now reach three destinations in Pakistan, serving China-Pakistan economic and trade exchanges by enhancing logistics convenience, the airline said.

XINHUA

Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Legacy of service lives on

International students in China embrace Lei Feng's legacy through acts of service, cultural exchanges, and shared values of kindness and dedication.

Editor's note: Liaoning is where Lei Feng (1940-1962), a soldier and national icon, lived and served. The province has preserved his spirit through memorials, educational sites, and annual "Learning from Lei Feng" activities at universities on March 5, Lei Feng Day, to honor his legacy. This special report explores how young people continue to uphold and share his ideals across cultures.



By WU YONG in Shenyang
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In the week leading up to Lei Feng Day, Liaodong College in Dandong, Liaoning, was quieter than usual, as more than 3,000 students had set out to volunteer in communities, schools, and public spaces, offering their help in various ways.

In the library, dozens of volunteers were hard at work — some sorting through recently returned books, while others wiped dust from the shelves.

"These books are covered in dust and some pages are even stuck together," said Li Ziming, a freshman. "When I think about the students who will read them in the future, I feel like I'm passing on a baton of knowledge."

Meanwhile, a group of students carrying toolboxes went door to door in the community, fixing appliances for residents. Liu Lei, the group leader and a junior majoring in mechanical engineering, explained that their professional courses focused on large machinery, so they had to teach themselves how to repair small household appliances. But for them, the effort was well worth it.

"Seeing the smiles on residents' faces when they get their 'revived' appliances back is more satisfying than winning a scholarship," he said.

Students majoring in humanities and education visited Dandong Chunyang School, an elementary school, where they played games with the children and shared stories about Lei Feng.

When one child asked why Lei Feng gave his food to others, Wang Tianbo, an education

major, explained, "Lei Feng had a loving heart — he wanted everyone to be happy."

Medical students volunteered at Dongyao community, measuring blood pressure and offering health advice to residents.

"Many elderly people didn't know how to use smartphones to make doctor's appointments, so we taught them step by step," said Chen Jian, a junior.

"One grandmother was so excited after learning how to do it that she said, 'Finally, I don't have to queue at the hospital at 4 am anymore.' That moment gave me a real sense of accomplishment," she added.

As night fell and most volunteers returned to campus after their day of service, students from the School of Arts were just beginning their work. At the campus radio station, they were recording a special program, *Revisiting Lei Feng's Diary*.

"Today, I helped an old woman push her cart," read Lin Wenyang, a broadcasting major, presenting Lei Feng's words to a modern audience.

"Learning from Lei Feng isn't just a tradition for March — it should be part of our daily lives," said Zhou Yuyang, a sophomore biotechnology major.

After finishing her community work, Zhou immediately signed up for the school's E-Civilization Guardians project to become an online civility monitor.

"If Lei Feng were alive today, he'd definitely be dedicated to promoting civility in cyberspace," she said. "Being an 'online Lei Feng' is pretty cool too."

Snowy service

Liaoning experienced an unusually heavy snowfall on March 4, the day before Lei Feng Day.

At 6:30 am, while most students at Liaoning University in Shenyang were still tucked warmly in bed, more than 10 international students had already gathered on the main campus paths, shovels and brooms in hand, working alongside Chinese students to clear the snow.

One of them was Slavka Pocahontas Menke, a student from Nauru.

"The snow is so beautiful, but the paths are really slippery," said Menke, who had stepped out of her dormitory excited to see snow for the first time in her life.

As a journalism and mass communication major, Menke took photos of the cleared paths and the tired but smiling faces of the students and posted them on social media with the caption: "Today I personally experienced China's Lei Feng spirit — it's -10 C outside but feels like 40 C warmth inside."

The post received hundreds of likes within hours and was even reposted by the Nauru Embassy in China.

"But seeing more and more students walking on the paths we had cleared — it's an indescribable feeling of accomplishment," she added.

For Assane Djiba, a master's student from Senegal majoring in finance, it was also his first experience with snow.

"In my country, the temperature never drops to freezing," he said. "Clearing the snow was tiring, but I think that was the true spirit of Lei Feng — helping others without expecting anything in return."

Two hours of labor left these students from tropical countries sweating despite the cold. "In Nauru, we struggle daily with rising sea levels," Menke said. "This small act of clearing snow reminds me that if everyone does a little bit more for the environment, the world would be a better place."

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"If it snows again tomorrow, I'll definitely be back," Djiba said.

Timeless legacy

Nearly 300 Lei Feng-themed collectibles were displayed at Shenyang Institute of Engineering just before this year's Lei Feng Day.

These items, many of which had never been publicly displayed before, included stamps, postcards, *lianhuanhua* (palm-sized comic books), and replicas of objects used by Lei Feng.

The most eye-catching piece in the collection was a replica of a mirror once owned by Lei Feng.

"Legend has it that Lei Feng would look in the mirror every morning and ask himself, 'What will you do for the people today?'" said Wang Qiang, a mechanical engineering major.

"What a great habit. I plan to adopt it myself to stay motivated."

The exhibition also featured Lei Feng-themed creative products from different eras, spanning over half a century. From vintage commemorative pins to modern, anime-style phone cases, the collection offered a glimpse of the many ways Lei Feng's image has evolved over time.

"I never thought Lei Feng could be so trendy," said freshman Liu Xiaolu, taking several photos of the products and posting them to social media.

Zhou Tao, a graduate student in computer science, agreed. "Our generation's understanding of Lei Feng mostly comes from textbooks and the internet, which is very fragmented," he said. "Seeing so many physical materials today does make Lei Feng feel closer to us — no longer just a distant symbol from history books."

Zhang Xiaoyu, an electrical engineering major, mentioned a set of 1980s *lianhuanhua* depicting Lei Feng washing clothes for his comrades, saving every penny to help those in need, and working tirelessly despite harsh conditions.

"The style is really retro, but the message is still relevant today," he said.

In one of the old photos, Lei Feng was shown not in his usual military uniform, but in a stylish leather jacket, with a bright smile that made him look just like any contemporary young person.

"I thought Lei Feng was a stereotypical role model, but I never expected his image to be so multifaceted," Zhang added.

After the visit, students wrote their thoughts on a message board.

"Lei Feng wasn't a god, but he taught us how to become better people," wrote Zhao Peng, a civil engineering major.

Universal spirit

"When the scene in the movie showed Lei Feng delivering clothes to his comrades in a thunderstorm, I was deeply moved. This selfless dedication is a virtue that transcends national boundaries," said Phitchapha Prakopjinda, a Thai student at Shenyang University of Chemical Technology.

On March 4, around 40 international students from more than 20 countries, including Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Russia, and Mongolia, gathered in a classroom to watch a film about this well-known Chinese role model.

Mahammed Shire Sudi, a doctoral student from Kenya, was particularly moved when he saw Lei Feng helping an elderly woman push her cart.

"At first, I thought Lei Feng was a Chinese war hero, but I was surprised to learn that he was known for doing ordinary things," he said. "In Kenya, we have the 'Harambee' spirit, which means 'pulling together,' where people collectively solve community problems. But Lei Feng's story showed me the power of individual persistence."

Sudi also reflected on the term "screw" that Lei Feng used to describe himself. "This metaphor is so precise — a small screw may seem ordinary, but it keeps the entire machine running smoothly," he said. "I want to bring this spirit back to Kenya and practice it in our daily lives. It is invaluable for promoting social development."

Omichina Anna, a Russian student studying international economics and trade, was especially impressed by Lei Feng's frugality. "He used every penny where it was needed. This kind of optimal resource allocation is also very important in economics," she said.

Prakopjinda explained that in Thailand, people also value the spirit of helping others. "We call it 'Namja', meaning 'generous heart.' Lei Feng's story truly illustrates this spirit," she said. "After watching the movie, I messaged my parents in Thailand to tell them about this inspiring figure."

At the end of the activity, Carlos Rodriguez, a Mexican student, made an unexpected suggestion: "Could we form an 'International Lei Feng Team' to do volunteer work on campus regularly?"

The proposal was met with immediate enthusiasm.

"This is exactly the purpose of our activity — to let the Lei Feng spirit take root among young people from different cultural backgrounds," said Professor Wang Zhong from the School of International Education.

After the event, the students didn't rush to leave. Instead, they gathered in small groups to continue discussing Lei Feng's story and the tradition of Chinese volunteer service.

Aida Bakanova, an environmental engineering student from Kyrgyzstan, resonated with Lei Feng's actions in saving food and cherishing resources.

"This aligns perfectly with modern environmental protection concepts," she said. "Whether in China or Central Asia, protecting the environment requires everyone to start with small actions, just like Lei Feng."

Anna agreed. "Lei Feng is like a bridge connecting young people from different countries," she said. "He shows us that, regardless of our nationality, we can all make the world warmer through our actions."

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Liu Shicheng contributed to this story.



From left to right: Students at Liaodong College offer free medical check-ups to local communities. Student volunteers from Liaoning University clear snow on campus. Students at Shenyang Institute of Engineering take part in a Lei Feng-themed exhibition. International students at Shenyang University of Chemical Technology engage in a Lei Feng-themed paper-cutting activity. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

WORLD

Europe to step up as Kyiv aid discontinued

EU mulls more defense spending amid uncertainty over Washington's support

By EARLE GALE in London
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Europe will step up to fill the void left by the United States' decision to pause military aid to Ukraine, senior politicians say.

In the aftermath of a White House official telling CBS News that Washington is "pausing and reviewing our aid to ensure that it is contributing to a solution", European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said, "Europe is ready to step up."

She told reporters at a hastily convened news conference on Tuesday that she plans to mobilize 800 billion euros (\$841 billion) to ensure "a safe and resilient Europe".

Noting that the continent is entering "an era of rearmament", von der Leyen, who leads the European Union's executive arm, said she wants the bloc to change its rules so the 27 member nations can increase military spending without triggering mechanisms that prohibit budget deficits.

She also said the bloc will make 150 billion euros in loans available for EU members wanting to increase military spending.

And countries will be allowed to use EU funds previously earmarked for other things to buy and build weapons.

The proposed changes are aimed at ensuring Europe can stand on its own two feet, and that it can offer assistance to Ukraine in the continuing Russia-Ukraine conflict, she said.

European leaders will discuss the ideas at a summit on Thursday. "We need a massive surge in defense, without any question," von der Leyen said. "We want lasting peace, but lasting peace can only be built on strength, and strength begins with strengthening ourselves."

With many in Europe seeing the pause in US military aid as a bargaining ploy to heap pressure on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to agree to a future peace deal with Russia, and with US Vice-President JD Vance saying the door remains open if Ukraine

"is willing to seriously talk peace", Washington's suspension of aid may only be temporary.

However, many European leaders seem to now be seeing the US as an unreliable partner, and believe Europe must sever its reliance on Washington.

Petr Fiala, prime minister of the Czech Republic, said the US decision "highlights the urgent need for a fundamental shift in Europe's current policy".

Own security

Europe must now "strengthen our economic and military capabilities and take full responsibility for our own security", Fiala wrote on X.

"The era of relying on others to address fundamental international challenges on our behalf is over," he added.

"Now is the time for Europe to move decisively from words to action."

Europe's plan to ramp up its military spending comes in the wake of the continent increasing defense expenditure by 11.7 percent last year, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. However, its expenditure was still only around half of the US' \$968 billion, the institute added.

The Kiel Institute, a German think tank, said the US spent about \$69 billion on Ukraine alone between the beginning of 2022 and the end of 2024. The next largest contributor was Germany, with a distant \$13.6 billion.

Observers said it is clear that Europe, even after ramping up its spending, will struggle to fully replace the money the US was sending to Ukraine. And some countries are likely to be reluctant to increase military spending at all, suggesting Thursday's summit may be far from smooth sailing.

While Europe has taken the US decision to pause aid to Ukraine as a call to ramp up military spending, Russia has welcomed it as a possible catalyst for peace.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the BBC, "This is a decision which could really push the Kyiv regime to a peace process."



Hanging by a rope

Residents evacuate while fighting strong currents amid severe flooding in Jatinegara district, East Jakarta, Indonesia, on Tuesday. Thousands of people left their flooded neighborhoods around Jakarta as torrential rains pounded the capital and its surrounding satellite cities, causing several rivers to overflow. There were no immediate reports of casualties after the latest deluge.

BAGUS SARAGIH / AFP

UN rights chief rues change in tack by US

GENEVA — The United Nations human rights chief has expressed concern about a "fundamental shift in direction" taking place in the United States, warning that divisive rhetoric is being used to deceive and polarize people.

"I am now deeply worried by the fundamental shift in direction that is taking place domestically and internationally," Volker Turk, UN high commissioner for human rights, said in a speech on Monday. "Divisive rhetoric is being used to distort, deceive and polarize. This is generating fear and anxiety among many."

Alluding to the US, he lamented how policies aimed at protecting people from discrimination "are now labeled as discriminatory", and said intimidation and threats "notably against journalists and public officials" risk undermining the work of institutions and independent media.

Turk's speech to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva were his strongest remarks so far on the effect of policies by the new US administration of President Donald Trump.

He did not specifically refer to the administration, which announced pulling the United States out of the 47-member council in January.

Since taking office on Jan 20, Trump has issued a series of executive orders aimed at dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion programs across the federal government and the private sector.

Programs of the United States Agency for International Development were also paused for 90 days, while his administration reviewed if they align with its "America First" policy.

"Sweeping cuts to domestic social safety nets, climate finance and foreign aid signal a massive setback for human rights protection, for conflict prevention, and for global stability", Turk said.

Use of technology

The rights chief also issued a stark warning about the threat from unchecked use and development of technology. He mentioned the power of "a handful of unelected tech oligarchs" and insisted it is time to adapt quickly to the threat of rising oppression and autocratic rule.

"Individuals and corporations have never had so much control and influence over our lives," Turk said. "A handful of unelected tech oligarchs have our data: They know where we live, what we do, our genes and our health conditions, our thoughts, our habits, our desires and our fears. They know us better than we know ourselves."

In his global review of the state of human rights, Turk warned that the core of an international order he said had brought unprecedented stability risked crumbling, as 120 conflicts rage around the world.

He also expressed alarm about the use of military weapons against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and called for Israel to stop its annexation threats.

China, Japan boost exchange via tourism

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
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Tourism industry professionals in Japan have emphasized the need for Japan and China to once again recognize the significance of tourism and cultural exchanges in revitalizing bilateral relations.

During an event held in Tokyo on Monday, Japanese travel agencies said they plan to significantly promote travel to China this year. Since Nov 30, China has implemented a visa-free policy for ordinary Japanese passport holders, allowing stays of up to 30 days for business, tourism, family visits, exchange programs and transit purposes.

Haruo Toizawa, manager of the East Japan Overseas Travel Center at Tobu Top Tours, noted that since the introduction of the visa exemption policy, inquiries and quote requests for general group travel to China — particularly for leisure trips — have surged. The company aims to expand this segment significantly and work toward restoring traveler numbers to the 2019 levels.

Mitsuhiko Keimatsu, manager of overseas travel division at the travel agency HIS, reported that in the first three months of this year, the number of travelers booking package tours to China through HIS recovered to 20 percent of 2019 levels, representing a

15-fold increase from the previous year. He attributed this surge to the lifting of visa restrictions.

With the COVID-19 pandemic behind us, Shanghai — home to a Disneyland park — remains the most popular destination in China for HIS customers. However, the company has been working to diversify its offerings since last year, introducing panda tours, which take visitors to West China. It is also focusing on seasonal destinations such as Zhangjiajie in Hunan province and Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan province.

Visa exemption

Taking a cue from China reinstating its visa exemption policy for short-term stays for Japanese passport holders, Tokyo introduced relaxed visa measures for Chinese tourists in December. These measures include extending the duration of stay for group tour visas and introducing a new multiple-entry tourist visa valid for 10 years.

Nobuaki Iida, director of the inbound tourism promotion division at the Japan Tourism Agency, expressed hope that these policies, along with initiatives by both Japan and China, will further expand travel between the two countries. That would help stimulate economic activity and deepen mutual understanding between the two peoples.

Tourism plays a crucial role in promoting international understanding and strengthening ties between nations. Both the Chinese and Japanese governments fully recognize the significance of tourism exchanges, said Chen Zheng, minister-counselor at the Chinese embassy in Japan.

Following the second meeting of the China-Japan High-Level Consultation Mechanism on People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges, held in Beijing on Dec 25, a 10-point consensus was released. It included commitments to supporting tourism cooperation, introducing more facilitation measures, and promoting mutual visits between travelers from both countries.

Beyond the visa exemption policy, China has implemented various measures to enhance travel convenience, such as improvements in mobile payments and ticket reservations, Chen said.

For the long-term growth of the tourism industries in both nations, expanding mutual exchanges is essential, said Ouyang An, director of the China National Tourism Office in Tokyo.

"We must once again recognize the importance of exchanges across various fields, starting with tourism and cultural interactions, in revitalizing relations between our two nations," he said.

Briefly

GERMANY
2 dead as car hits crowd in Mannheim

A car drove into a crowd in the western German city of Mannheim on Monday, killing at least two people and injuring 11 others. Police detained the driver, who appeared to have plowed intentionally into the crowd given the speed at which he was driving, prosecutors said. Prosecutors have initiated investigation proceedings against the suspect, a 40-year-old German man from the neighboring state of Rhineland-Palatinate.

UNITED STATES
SpaceX postpones Starship test flight

SpaceX on Monday called off its eighth Starship test flight from Texas over an unspecified issue with the rocket system's core, delaying for at least 24 hours the company's attempt to deploy mock Starlink satellites in space for the first time. The test mission would have been the first Starship launch since a January mission ended eight minutes into the flight when Starship, atop a rocket booster, exploded over the Caribbean, prompting a federal probe.

AUSTRALIA
Residents prepare for rare tropical cyclone

Communities across southeast Queensland and northeast New South Wales are preparing for the first tropical cyclone to make direct landfall — forecast to be on Thursday — since two other similar rare cyclones hit the region in 1974. Tropical Cyclone Alfred is expected to bring severe consequences, including powerful winds, extensive flooding and hazardous ocean conditions.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



A woman walks with a trolley near the damaged House of Culture, a community cultural institution, in Bilytske, Donetsk, on Monday. TETIANA DZHAFAROVA / AFP

Obesity rates soaring globally, says study

LONDON — Rates of obesity and overweight are spiraling because of a "monumental societal failure" to tackle the problem, with more than half of adults and almost one-third of children and young people set to be affected by 2050, a new study says.

That represents more than 3.8 billion adults and 746 million children and adolescents, research published in The Lancet said on Tuesday.

Obesity is associated with an increased risk of serious health problems such as diabetes, some cancers, and heart disease.

"The unprecedented global epidemic of overweight and obesity is a profound tragedy and a monumental social failure," said lead author

Emmanuela Gakidou from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington.

The team, part of the Global Burden of Disease Study BMI Collaborators, used data from 204 countries and territories to come up with their estimates and project what could happen in the future without action.

Rates of overweight and obesity have already more than doubled over the past three decades, with more than 2.1 billion adults and 493 million young people aged 5 to 24 years old affected as of 2021, they said.

While the reasons for obesity are complex, governments should use the estimates to focus on how to help populations most at risk, researchers

said, particularly around improving access to healthy diets.

The study, funded by the Gates Foundation, had limitations, including data gaps and the use of body mass index as a marker. It also did not take into account the potential effects of obesity drugs, which have seen huge demand in richer countries where they are available, the researchers said.

The picture varies globally, but the researchers said an accelerated rise in obesity among young people and the rise in low- and middle-income countries, where health systems cannot cope with the coming disease burden, were particularly worrying. This includes a projected 250

percent increase in rates of overweight and obesity in sub-Saharan Africa. The rise, to 522 million adults and 200 million children and young people, is driven partly by population growth.

A separate study published on Monday, the World Obesity Atlas from the World Obesity Federation, also raised this issue. "The most affected regions are developing countries," said Simon Barquera, president of the federation.

The Obesity Atlas suggested that 79 percent of adults and 88 percent of children with obesity and overweight will be living in low- and middle-income countries by 2035, and only 7 percent of all countries have adequate health systems in place to deal with this.

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WORLD

US official says China will 'eat' latest tariffs

Data from first trade war tells different story as Treasury secretary says China needs exports

By ZHAO HUANXIN
in Washington
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The Trump administration went ahead with its tariff war on Tuesday, imposing 25 percent import duties on Canada and Mexico and doubling its 10 percent charges on Chinese goods.



What we found was that the prices charged by Chinese exporters did not go down in response to the imposition of tariffs."

Pablo Fajgelbaum, UCLA economics professor

The move and its consequences were not a surprise to the business community and policy watchers in the United States, but Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's comments that increased taxes will force cost pass-through onto producers outside the US were quite unexpected to many.

"China will pay for the tariffs because their business model is exporting their way out of this inflation," Bessent said in an interview on Sunday. "They will eat any tariffs that go on."

The remarks, made in response to possible extra costs to US households following the proposed tariffs, reflect a common political narrative, but hardly align with the economic reality as observed from the 2018-19 trade war and beyond, which tells a more nuanced story.

Many businesses and market forecasters say that Trump's import levies could lead to consumer price increases.

"Tariff-induced disruptions risk exacerbating inflation, increasing the cost of essential goods, and placing financial strain on businesses and consumers alike," the National Association of Wholesale Distributors, a trade group, said in a statement on Tuesday.

The American Apparel & Footwear Association also noted each code of the tariffs "snowballs into a growing — and potentially crushing — burden" on American businesses and families.

"Uncertainty and instability are corrosive, undermining the vitality of our consumer-driven economy, and the 3.5 million American jobs created by our industry," said Steve Lamar, the trade association's president and CEO.

Bessent implied that Chinese producers, reliant on high export volumes, might be forced to cut prices to maintain market share, but most studies from that period showed a different picture.

In "The Economic Impacts of the US-China Trade War", a 2021 National Bureau of Economic Research

working paper, economist Pablo Fajgelbaum and colleagues found that "US consumers of imported goods have borne the brunt of the tariffs through higher prices."

They concluded that empirical work shows "complete passthrough of tariffs" to tariff-inclusive import prices, where tariff-inclusive import prices rise with tariff changes.

"What we found was that the prices charged by Chinese exporters did not go down in response to the imposition of tariffs," Fajgelbaum, a professor of economics at the University of California, Los Angeles, recalled of the paper, according to an article published on The New Yorker on Feb 24.

Another study, "Tariff Passthrough at the Border and at the Store: Evidence from US Trade Policy" that focused on tariffs on China imports, also found that the tariffs were "almost fully" passed through to total prices paid by importers, suggesting the tariffs' incidence has fallen largely on the US.

"US tariff passthrough into US import prices was nearly 95 percent after one year, whereas foreign tariff passthrough into foreign import prices was perhaps as low as 50 percent," noted the International Monetary Fund working paper released in October 2019.

A recent Moody's analysis noted that nearly all of a 10 percent additional tariff on game consoles imported from China would be passed through to consumers, raising the price of a \$500 machine to \$548, The Wall Street Journal reported in "How Much Do Tariffs Raise Prices?", published on Sunday.

Echoing the findings, "Trump Tariffs: Tracking the Economic Impact of the Trump Trade War," a study by the nonpartisan Tax Foundation that was updated on Monday, estimated that the proposed additional tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China would reduce the after-tax purchasing power of American households by approximately 0.8 percent in 2025.

Erica York, vice-president of federal tax policy with the Tax Foundation's Center for Federal Tax Policy, called the reduction "the largest tax increase since 1993".

The Tax Foundation's analysis further projected that the proposed tariffs would decrease US economic output by 0.4 percent and increase taxes by \$1.1 trillion, equating to an average tax increase of more than \$800 per US household in 2025.

It was not the first time that Bessent has suggested that "the companies on the other side, the exporters, are going to eat a lot of the cost". He made the claim, specifically mentioning China, in an interview aired on Feb 18.

But the reality on the ground, as well as historical evidence, indicates that American consumers and businesses often bear the majority of the costs through higher prices.



US President Donald Trump addresses a joint session of Congress at the US Capitol on Tuesday in Washington DC. ANDREW HARNIK / GETTY IMAGES / AFP

Trump delivers blunt speech to joint session of Congress

By HENG WEILI in New York
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US President Donald Trump used his address to a boisterous joint session of Congress on Tuesday to tout the accomplishments of the first 43 days of his second term while excoriating his Democratic opponents and announcing that he would implement across-the-board reciprocal tariffs on April 2.

Trump delivered his speech on a day when he placed 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico and doubled the 10 percent tariff on China. The US stock market saw heavy selling on Tuesday in response.

"Other countries have used tariffs against us for decades, and now it's our turn to start using them against those other countries," he said.

Trump said that as of April 2, reciprocal tariffs will be imposed for most of the country's trading partners. "That's reciprocal, back and forth. Whatever they tax us, we will tax that," he said.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, however, said the United States would likely meet Canada and Mexico "in the middle," with an announcement coming as soon as Wednesday.

Trump also announced that Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whom he clashed with at the White House on Friday, was ready to sign a peace and minerals deal. Trump said "we've had serious discussions with Russia and have received strong signals that they are ready for peace".

On the Panama Canal, Trump said: "We didn't give it to China, we gave it to Panama. We're taking it back."

Trump also said he welcomed Greenland to join the US for "international world security".

"I think we're going to get it. One way or another, we're going to get it," he said of Greenland.

Trump also criticized the previous administration of former president Joe Biden on issues ranging from inflation, border security, energy, and males competing in female sports.

"America is back," were the first words in Trump's speech. "The

American dream is surging bigger and better than ever before," he said, adding that the US is "on the verge of a comeback like the likes of which the world has never witnessed".

Chants of "USA! USA!" resonated as Trump recounted details of the November presidential election, which elicited some boos from Democrats.

Representative Al Green, a Texas Democrat, was ordered removed by House Speaker Mike Johnson after repeatedly interrupting Trump. Green has filed impeachment articles against Trump in the past.

Green later told reporters that his protest was "worth it to let people know that there are some people who are going to stand up" to the president.

Trump spoke about repelling the "invasion" of the southern border and said illegal entries were the lowest ever after increased enforcement efforts.

"They chose not to come," Trump said of migrants.

Trump said that Democrats repeatedly said that new legislation was needed to address illegal migration, which he said reached 21 million people crossing illegally.

"It turned out all we really needed was a new president," Trump said.

Trump also said it was time for the US "to wage war" on drug cartels in Mexico.

Democrats shouted "January 6" at Trump as he spoke about law and order and protecting the police.

Trump also called Biden "the worst president in American history, and of Democrats said, "There is nothing I can say to make them happy."

"For just this one night, why not join us?" Trump asked Democrats.

"I terminated the ridiculous green new scam," he said disparagingly of Democrats' "Green New Deal" environmental efforts.

"Also withdrew from the corrupt World Health Organization. Ended the last administration's insane electric-vehicle mandate," he continued.

I renamed the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America... We ended the tyranny of so-called diversity, equity

and inclusion policies" across the federal government, private enterprise and the military.

"Our country will be woke no more," he said. "You should be hired based on merit, and the Supreme Court in a very brave and powerful decision has allowed us to do so.

"There are only two genders, male and female," Trump said. "I also signed an executive order to ban men from playing in women's sports.

"Common sense has become a common theme which is now sweeping the world," he said.

Trump said he "inherited an inflation nightmare... drove the necessities of life out of reach for million of millions of Americans. Suffered the worst inflation in 48 years."

Trump said he wanted to "make America affordable again" and that Biden "let egg prices get out of control".

Eggs have soared in price due to an outbreak of bird flu that led to a culling of chickens.

Trump went on to list the use of taxpayer money for various projects uncovered by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), headed by billionaire Elon Musk. Many of the items, which have been previously mentioned, drew laughs from the gallery.

"The days of being ruled by unelected bureaucrats are over," Trump said.

Trump pledged that he would "balance the federal budget" and talked about how his \$5 million "gold card" program for foreigners to obtain US citizenship would help.

Trump said farmers need to "bear with me again" as he imposes tariffs. But retaliatory action from other countries could hurt farmers' bottom lines by billions of dollars collectively if they remain in place long term, and consumers could see that result in higher prices of produce and ground beef.

"Farmers are very concerned," said Steve Kuiper, a director at the Iowa Corn Growers Association.

"I love the farmers," Trump said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Chinese TV shows welcomed in Africa

By EDITH MUTETHYA
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Sixteen confident women stand in a circle, each with her own distinct charm, while in the middle of the stage, a bachelor nervously prepares for his moment in the spotlight. The mood shifts when one of the women invites him to join her for a dance, sparking cheers and laughter from the audience, while the hosts keep the atmosphere buzzing with playful banter and suspense.

This is an iconic scene from *Hello Mr Right*, a Kenyan version of the popular Chinese dating show *If You Are the One*. Since its debut in 2023, it has captivated audiences of all ages. "For Kenya, *Hello Mr Right* is the first dating reality show of this type," said Christine Gati, an avid fan of the show.

Produced by StarTimes, a Chinese pay-TV firm, the show has achieved immense popularity. Official YouTube clips from the series have amassed over 16.35 million views.

Brian Lian, a content officer at StarTimes, attributes the success to the contestants' engaging personalities. "Kenyan people are naturally dramatic and expressive, and the ladies don't hold back — they just say what's on their minds," he said. This authenticity has resonated deeply with viewers, extending audience engagement beyond the screen.

Like *Hello Mr Right*, TV shows co-produced by China and African countries or introduced from China have been increasing in recent years, gaining popularity, especially among the younger generation. As of September, 50 television channels in Africa were broadcasting Chinese content in 11 languages, including Swahili and Hausa, with 16 channels operated by Chinese companies.

Offering platforms

These programs not only entertain but also inspire, offering platforms for self-expression, career growth, and cultural exchange, and contribute to the evolving landscape of local entertainment.

Love Without Limits, a first-ever TV drama co-produced by a Chinese TV company and Kenyan partners, is scheduled to begin filming in the third quarter of this year. With the Chinese company providing technical expertise and equipment and the Kenyan side contributing local talent, the production is expected to offer Kenyan actors and crew a glimpse into the lives of ordinary people in China.

This drama tells the story of two unlikely partners navigating challenges to establish a coffee trade between Kenya and China.

Ge Haiyan, the drama's producer working at the Chinese company Qixin Century Film Jiangsu Co Ltd, highlighted their efforts to ensure authenticity. "Our team conducted three field research trips to Kenya and Tanzania to gain a deep understanding of the local culture," she said. Original Chinese dramas like *Feather Flies to the Sky* and *Nothing But Thirty* have also struck a chord. The latter emphasizes that it's never too late to pursue one's dreams — a message that inspires many viewers. Gati, a Kenyan fan, remarked on the uniqueness of Chinese dramas. "The emotions take time to develop, making them more impactful," she said.

Speaking further, Gati shared how Chinese dramas and reality shows have influenced her understanding of Chinese culture and people. "I've learned that Chinese people are incredibly welcoming," she said. Chinese-inspired TV programs have also profoundly transformed the lives of young talents. Maggie Kasmall, a former *Hello Mr Right* contestant, gained significant fame after the show. With 367,000 TikTok followers, she's a testament to the impact of these platforms.

Zhang Xi in Nairobi contributed to this story.

BRI projects bolster China-Peru ties

By JIMENA ESTEBAN
in Buenos Aires
For China Daily

China's contributions to Peru's infrastructure are bringing the two countries closer as the South American country embraces rail networks and regional logistics services, analysts say.

The mountainous country is expected to upgrade its rail links through Chinese financial and construction assistance, including a 323-kilometer rail link between the capital Lima and Ica, dubbed the "Bullet Train Mega Project".

"The more China's role in Peru deepens, the more we see (the country's) infrastructure capabilities, construction speed and commitment to developing infrastructure projects," said Jhon Valdiglesias Oviedo, a researcher at the Center for Asian Studies at the National University of San Marcos.

The Lima-Ica project, scheduled to break ground in late 2025, is expected to be completed within five years. It includes 47 kilometers of viaducts and 32 km of tunnels. Upon completion, the electric trains will operate at speeds of up to 200 km per hour for passengers and 100 km per hour for cargo.

It will have 15 stations at strategic points with a daily capacity of 45,000 passengers.

The rail link is expected to bring major economic benefits to Peru and create direct and indirect employment during construction while reducing traffic congestion and pollution. It aims to boost regional tourism and commerce between key economic zones, including Villa El Salvador and Paracas.

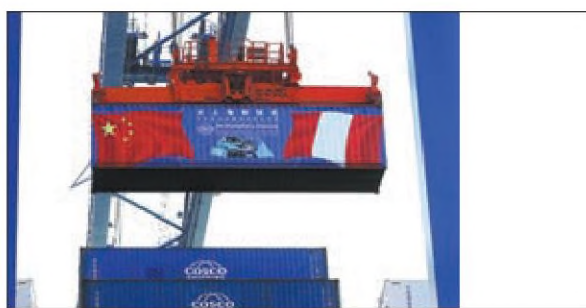
The project will deepen Sino-Peruvian economic ties while expanding China's Belt and Road Initiative in Latin America, said Oviedo. When countries like Peru can fast-

track agreements with China, it offers an advantage. And Peru is expected to expand its other rail links as well in the coming years.

"Peru chose to partner with China because they're our largest trading partner. The relationship brings immediate benefits to Peru through foreign exchange, job creation and economic growth," Oviedo said. "While these are the most direct advantages, we are also seeing a strong push in our exports."

Peru plans to integrate the train by connecting the Andean region with the Port of Chancay through a "Bi-Oceanic Rail Corridor", one that links the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The Chancay Tunnel, completed by Chinese builders from the China Railway Group in early October, has facilitated logistics from the coastline to the mountains.

The \$3.5 billion Chancay port project, built by COSCO Shipping among others and inaugurated late



A container is lifted at the Port of Chancay, Peru, on Nov 14. LI MENGXIN / XINHUA

last year, has reduced shipping time to Shanghai by up to 20 days, to just 23 days now.

"The Port of Chancay is becoming a cornerstone for future Chinese investments in Peru's infrastructure development," said Oviedo.

Peru's economic ties with China will extend beyond traditional mineral exports, which accounted for 79 percent of Peru's total exports to China in 2023, according to Lima's statistics. The shift is particularly evident

in agriculture and manufacturing.

"Peru is well-positioned to expand its presence in China's growing market for fruits and vegetables, where we're already competitive," said Omar Narrea, a researcher at the Center for China and Asia-Pacific Studies of Universidad del Pacifico, a tertiary institution based in Lima.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials

The two sessions reflect the strength of whole-process people's democracy

The two sessions stand as a cornerstone of China's political calendar. The meetings of the National People's Congress, China's highest legislative body, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, far from being ceremonial are a dynamic platform for the setting of national priorities, addressing key issues, and showcasing China's political system and governance.

The sessions are a key occasion for deputies to the NPC and members of the CPPCC National Committee to review and air their views on what the country has achieved in the past year, as well as put forward proposals or motions on economic development, social policies, legislative changes, and national strategies. These proposals are not abstract ideas but are rooted in the realities of Chinese society, reflecting the voices and concerns of people from all walks of life.

As a country ruled by the Communist Party of China with the support of multiple non-Communist political parties, the NPC and the CPPCC play a pivotal role in the country's whole-process people's democracy, which emphasizes democratic principles and practices throughout all stages of governance, decision-making, and public participation. Unlike traditional models of democracy that focus primarily on periodic elections as the main mechanism for citizen participation, China's whole-process people's democracy seeks to embed democratic values in every aspect of governance, from policy formulation to implementation and evaluation.

The deputies to the NPC and members of the CPPCC National Committee play important roles in this distinctive political advancement that guarantees people have extensive rights to be informed, to participate, to express and to supervise. They are entrusted with the duty of delving deep into what ordinary people think of a particular policy the central authorities have implemented and shoulder the responsibility of collecting public opinions about how a local government has implemented the policies of the central government. To this end, the CPPCC organizes various types of fact-finding missions, during which members will visit particular enterprises or local regions or even a particular project to find out how things are going and what problems need to be addressed.

Deputies to the NPC are representatives of various sectors of Chinese society. That migrant workers were elected as deputies to the NPC in 2018 speaks volumes about what the NPC has done to make the congress a platform in which all strata of society can voice their concerns.

The strength of this participatory, responsive and inclusive form of governance finds expression in the resilience of the Chinese economy, the growth of which stood at 5 percent in 2024 despite the sluggishness of global economic development, as well as the uncertainties of the international situation.

The proposals and motions from both the NPC deputies and members of the CPPCC National Committee provide the CPC Central Committee with enough reference to target and fine tune the decisions they make. The centralized and unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee make it possible for decisions to be made as soon as possible without hesitance or any foot-dragging owing to the lack of consensus.

Both the supervision within the Party and oversight by the NPC and the CPPCC National Committee provide a guarantee for targeted economic policies that can make a difference to the growth of the economy.

The trade-in policy is a typical example. It is designed to stimulate domestic consumption. During the Spring Festival period in early February, the sales revenue of motor vehicles, home appliances, and digital products such as mobile phones reached 31 billion yuan (\$4.26 billion) within eight days, thanks to the trade-in policy.

China's total GDP surpassed 134 trillion yuan in 2024, which would not have been achieved without the timely adjustment of policies, which is an inherent strength of the country's political system.

In a world grappling with uncertainty, China's whole-process people's democracy offers a compelling example of how participatory, responsive, and inclusive governance can deliver stability and growth. The two sessions are a vivid demonstration of this system in action, ensuring that the voices of the people are heard and that their aspirations are translated into reality.

'Snuffing out candles' makes it darker for all

Beijing rolled out countermeasures on Tuesday in response to the additional 10 percent tariff the United States arbitrarily imposed on Chinese goods that day.

Apart from putting some US companies on its unreliable entity list, citing national sovereignty, security and development concerns, Beijing has taken aim at a variety of US agricultural produce this time. Its previous retaliatory tariffs were mainly restricted to certain US industrial products. Starting from Monday next week, China will impose an additional 15 percent tariff on chicken, wheat, corn and cotton originating from the US; and another 10 percent tariff on US sorghum, soybeans, pork, beef, aquatic products, fruits, vegetables and dairy products. It has also launched an anti-circumvention investigation into imported fiber optic products originating from the US.

China is also suing the US for its latest tariff increase under the World Trade Organization dispute settlement mechanism, as the unilateral tariff measures are not only unjust but seriously violate WTO rules and undermine the basis for bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

Although agricultural produce is only one of the major US exports to China, the number of jobs it supports in the US is even more than those supported by its industrial and energy exports to China combined.

China is the largest market for US agricultural exports, accounting for about 20 percent of the total, followed by Mexico and Canada. In contrast, thanks to its diversification strategy in recent years, China has promoted robust agricultural trade relations with other major agricultural exporters including Brazil, the European Union, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Russia and Ukraine. The US now accounts for about 15 percent of China's agricultural imports.

The Trump administration should be spurred by Beijing's latest move to reflect on the fact that what it has done with regard to China-related economic and trade issues over the past month or so has already prompted the Chinese side to doubt its good faith in saying Sino-US relations stand at a new beginning.

The US administration has claimed that the double tariff hike is because China has not taken adequate steps to alleviate the illicit drug crisis through cooperative enforcement actions.

But as the US itself has acknowledged, China has demonstrated a strong commitment to joint counternarcotics efforts, in policy formulation and implementation, and the collaboration between China and the US in combating narcotics has produced significant results. That is also detailed in a white paper on the issue Beijing released on Tuesday. The recent decision by the US to impose tariffs on Chinese exports under the pretext of the fentanyl issue represents a step backward, undermining the spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit that has characterized the bilateral counternarcotics efforts.

By targeting US agricultural imports, Beijing intends to awaken the Trump administration to the historically proven truth there are no winners in trade wars. The countermeasures both Canada and Mexico have taken in response to the US' tariff attacks on them are also expected to serve to drive home that message to the administration.

The US' coercive and bullying moves should also prompt the two countries to realize that snuffing out others' candles does not bring light to oneself, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. The two countries have previously proposed to the Trump administration that they should target China together with the US in exchange for the US administration showing them tariff lenience.

"The Chinese people never accept bullying. Pressure, coercion and threats are not the right way to deal with China", said Lin. "Exerting extreme pressure on China is the wrong target and the wrong calculation." "If the US really wants to resolve the fentanyl issue, it should consult with China on the basis of equality, respect and mutual benefit to resolve each other's concerns. If the US has other intentions and insists on launching a tariff war, trade war or any other war, China will fight to the end," Lin added.

As before, Beijing announced its retaliatory tariffs about one week before they are due to take effect, leaving a window of opportunity for the two sides to take advantage of multiple dialogue and exchange channels to reach an agreement. The US should view and handle issues in an objective and rational manner and return to the right track of properly resolving differences through equal dialogue as soon as possible, as China's Commerce Ministry has urged.

Weaponizing tariffs or bending rules is not dealmaking, it is extortion and blackmail. Such practices epitomize the bullying that characterizes "America First".

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Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Improving business environment for private enterprises imperative

The authorities in Henan, Liaoning and Anhui provinces and some other places recently held meetings with representatives of private businesses to analyze the situation of the private economy and address the companies' major concerns.

The People's Bank of China and multiple State departments have also met to coordinate measures to improve the financial support mechanisms for the high-quality development of private enterprises, and solve their financing problems.

The focus of the authorities is on creating a better development environment for private companies by helping them resolve their practical difficulties — such as arrears on payments, arbitrary fees and fines, difficult and expensive financing, and barriers to market access — apart from protecting the legitimate rights and interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs in accordance with the law.

Over the years, the central government has repeatedly issued mandates to provide a more legalized and

market-oriented business environment for private enterprises, but implementation of policies varies from region to region and department to department. It is necessary that the policies that are adopted are implemented to the letter in a coordinated way.

China is in the process of transitioning from extensive growth to high-quality development, with economic operation facing the pressure of structural and cyclical adjustment while being affected by the external environment. In the transition to a more market-oriented and law-based governance system, the new institutional framework has not been on a solid footing.

At the same time, some enterprises still rely on traditional scale expansion for profits, while lacking innovation ability. As a result they are faced with problems such as insufficient market demand and intensifying competition, which bring the dual pressure of survival and expectations. Policymakers

need to address these issues in a targeted way.

For the downward economic pressure caused by cyclical and structural factors, the country needs to expand domestic demand with more proactive and moderately loose monetary policies.

As for the market environment, the authorities should not only strengthen law enforcement and supervision, but also form a unified national market as soon as possible in which private enterprises can use production factors equally, participate in market competition fairly, and protect the legitimate rights and interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs effectively.

Private enterprises should also realize that the internal power of development is their top priority, the pressures from the external environment are temporary, and for survival and greater development, they should build and enhance their core competitiveness.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

A benign competition measured in qubits

Zuchongzhi 3.0, or the latest superconducting quantum computer model developed by Chinese scientists, has set a new benchmark for quantum computational advantage.

In 2012, John Preskill, a theoretical physicist at California Institute of Technology, coined the concept of quantum computational advantage, or quantum supremacy, to describe the point where a quantum computer can perform a task that a classical computer cannot realistically accomplish within a reasonable time frame.

Quantum computing's advent marks a paradigm shift from conventional computing in that quantum computers deploy quantum bits (qubits) to store quantum information in values between 0 and 1 while conventional computers process information in the form of digital bits (0s and 1s).

This means the values that quantum computers can make use of far exceed conventional ones. That's why

a key index of a quantum computer is the number of qubits it uses — in 2019, Google was the first to claim quantum supremacy with a 53-qubit Sycamore processor completing in 200 seconds a random circuit sampling task, which the fastest supercomputer at the time would have taken approximately 10,000 years to simulate.

To unify standards, a consensus emerged to use the optimal classical algorithm as the benchmark, following which the world's first strictly proven quantum computational supremacy was achieved in 2020 by a research team from the University of Science and Technology of China on the Jiuzhang photonic quantum computing prototype, while the first strictly proven quantum computational supremacy in a superconducting system was achieved by the same team using the Zuchongzhi 2.0 in 2021.

In October 2024, Google's Sycamore

more, which had a 67-qubit superconducting quantum processor, achieved quantum supremacy surpassing classical supercomputers by nine orders of magnitude, or becoming billion times faster. That tells you how big a step forward Zuchongzhi 3.0 marks with 105 qubits. To quote an academic essay of the team, "Our experiments with an 83-qubit, 32-cycle random circuit sampling on Zuchongzhi 3.0 highlight its superior performance, achieving 1 million samples in just a few hundred seconds."

Many global observers have said that the 105-qubit processor is a competitor to Google's Sycamore. However, such competition is benign because it will benefit whole mankind. China holds an open attitude toward such competition and looks forward to research teams from the United States and elsewhere making greater breakthroughs.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Power play promises to upend old certainties

Commenting on US President Donald Trump's "America First" deal-making-oriented policies and practices, The Economist said that "Donald Trump has begun a mafia-like struggle for global power".

The dramatic meeting between Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart in the White House on Friday, one day after the United Kingdom magazine predicted in that piece that Trump is putting an end to the post-1945 order, has prompted many in the West to realize that is a real challenge for the world to resolve, not only Ukraine.

That meeting offered a vivid demonstration that what the Trump team cared most about was the US people thinking it was doing a good job to protect US interests and dignity.

But many think just the opposite. After the awkward meeting, a

new NPR/PBS News/Marist poll found that a majority of respondents believe the state of the union is not strong, that the country is headed in the wrong direction and President Trump is rushing to make changes without considering their impact.

Although it is too early to say the transatlantic alliance has collapsed, by hyping up the possibility of the United States withdrawing from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at this juncture, the Trump administration is apparently trying to heighten the pressure on Europe in a bid to further widen the divide between European countries.

The joint statement released after the London summit on Sunday clearly indicates Europe is still looking to the US to not only support Ukraine in its fight with Russia but also pro-

tect its own security. Something Trump quickly jumped on. "Europe, in the meeting they had with Zelenskyy, stated flatly that they cannot do the job without the US. Probably not a great statement to have been made in terms of a show of strength against Russia. What are they thinking?" he posted on his social media account.

After the Oval Office showdown, the resolution of the Ukraine crisis and the formation of the European security mechanism are still up in the air. But as with its "art of a deal" on other fronts, namely the Middle East crisis and the US' economic and trade relations with other major parties, the Trump administration is doubling down on its efforts to push the situation in Europe to develop in the direction it desires.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL VIEWS

MAGED REFAAT ABOULMAGD

Voice of the Global South

Motivating factors for the rise of BRICS are being deliberately distorted by the West

The expansion of BRICS at its Kazan summit in Russia in 2024 offered an explanation as to why more countries have applied to join the bloc. Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates are major energy producers, while Egypt and Ethiopia are two of Africa's largest developing countries with huge potential, investing heavily to upgrade their networks of infrastructure, industry, as well as land and maritime trade routes. The expanded partnerships forged among these countries with the founding members of the bloc,



in particular China, during the past decade has resulted in significant milestones being reached on their paths for development and economic growth, offering a model for South-South cooperation. But the different natures and development stages of the BRICS members reflect that most developing countries are also looking beyond economic gains to align themselves with like-minded countries seeking reform of the international governance bodies to make them more balanced and representative.

BRICS has been misperceived in so many ways. Western media and think tanks have occasionally described the political/economic grouping as a counterbalance to the G7, an anti-Western alliance in the making, a core group of countries acting against the post-World War II global and financial order, or even a grouping conspiring to undermine Western influence and policies, and lastly actors intent on undercutting the supremacy of US dollar as the principal reserve currency that is used in some 75 percent of global trade transactions.

It was a Goldman Sachs economist who suggested back in 2003 that the combined economic potential of China, India, Brazil and Russia would become a much larger force in the world economy by 2050. That prediction seems prescient.

The Western views and perceptions of BRICS are overly mistaken and refutable. The bloc is a platform to give voice to the Global South, to formulate common positions — whenever possible — on global issues, working together to boost trade and



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

economic growth, advancing an agenda to reform and strengthen global institutions, and finally promoting a practical approach to achieve better world relations based on the principles of mutual respect, parity and multipolarity and fairer international global governance.

The de-dollarization fears are equally misplaced and run contrary to BRICS' longstanding and solid commitment to globalized trade, and to the objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, the BRICS countries continue to hold significant reserves in US dollars. Limited currency

swaps are meant to ease the debt burden on developing countries. The funding provided by the group's New Development Bank and Contingent Reserve Arrangement are not meant to mimic the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but rather to provide additional

lending sources which can invigorate South-South cooperation, and reduce dependence on the traditional funding institutions. It is worth mentioning that to date, the NDB has approved more than \$32 billion for 96 projects since operations began in 2016.

Similarly, the claim of a BRICS common currency is also exaggerated; such a move would require major political compromises, including a banking union, a fiscal union and general macroeconomic convergence among other prerequisites, which are unlikely and extremely difficult to reach among the BRICS members. Additionally, BRICS does not aim to weaken the post-World War II international and financial order, but rather reform and strengthen them in a way that render them more credible and fair.

The contradictory narrative on BRICS' future and positions deserves an objective analysis. Western researchers and politicians are increasingly realizing that the demands of the Global South for more equitable global governance cannot be answered by offering a "valued-based partnership" and rules-based multilateralism when BRICS is focused on changing those rules in global finance, trade and other standard-setting procedures, and ignoring those demands is counterproductive.

BRICS' visibility and political sway have certainly been on the rise, and the primary driver for that is China's peaceful yet phenomenal rise as a global economic powerhouse. The advancements of China in science, technology, engineering and math, and high-tech industries along with its model for sustainable socioeconomic growth, will further propel the future expansion of the bloc and its dynamism. Above all, the mere fact that BRICS represents the voice and aspirations of some 40 percent of humanity can't be overlooked.

The author is an ambassador member of Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs and a member of Egyptian-Chinese Friendship Association. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WARWICK POWELL

A crucial counterbalance

BRICS is essential for a future in which all nations, and not just those with the loudest voices or the greatest military might, have a seat at the table

The emergence of BRICS as a major geopolitical force highlights the reality that the global order is no longer dominated by a singular power. Despite claims to the contrary, including recent statements from President Donald Trump that BRICS is "dead" due to his administration's threatened tariffs, the evidence suggests otherwise. With the addition of Indonesia as an official member



and Malaysia as a partner country in January 2025, BRICS now represents over 50 percent of the world's population and approximately 45 percent of global GDP in nominal terms. Moreover, Brazil's launch of the BRICS 2025 website and vision statement underlines the group's forward momentum.

BRICS' model of consensus-based decision-making and its alignment with the United Nations and international law stands out in stark contrast to the United States' increasing preference for bilateralism, or, dealing with other nations one-on-one and avoiding multilateral institutions, which enable the US government to pursue a "divide and conquer" approach to achieve its "America First" goal. The BRICS approach, instead, offers a compelling framework for a stable multipolar world that amplifies the voices of smaller and developing nations while resisting the re-establishment of exploitative spheres of influence.

BRICS' expansion and continued institutional development affirm its role as a stabilizing force in the emerging multipolar world. The addition of new members enhances BRICS' geographic and economic diversity, reinforcing its legitimacy as one of the key representative bodies of the Global South. Furthermore, its growing network of "affiliated observer members" suggests an increasing alignment with a broader range of developing nations seeking an alternative to the traditional Western-led economic and political order.

Against an emerging US strategy of bilat-

eralism and the reassertion of great power dominance, which seems to be the preferred model and approach of the new Trump administration and its Secretary of State Marco Rubio, BRICS emphasizes collective decision-making and multilateral governance. This commitment is reflected in initiatives such as BRICS Clear payment system, which aims not only to reduce dependence on Western-dominated financial systems and foster greater financial autonomy among member states, but to create a system that no single actor can capriciously dominate. Such projects underscore BRICS' dedication to reshaping global governance in ways that prioritize sovereignty, equity and cooperation.

At the Munich Security Conference in February, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi articulated a vision of multipolarity that is reflected in BRICS' operating principles. His emphasis on ensuring that "all countries, big or small, would be heard" and his advocacy for the centrality of the United Nations and international law reflect the core tenets of the BRICS diplomacy and international relations.

Interestingly, this vision directly contrasts with the transactional, power-centric model promoted by the Trump administration and its pursuit of great power dominance.

One of the defining characteristics of BRICS governance is its commitment to consensus-based decision-making. This model inherently values the voices of all member states, regardless of their relative size or economic power. In doing so, BRICS provides a platform where smaller and developing countries can contribute to the shaping of the agenda rather than being overshadowed by the ambitions of major powers.

This emphasis on consensus is not merely rhetorical but embedded in BRICS' institutional practices. Key decisions, whether concerning development financing through the New Development Bank or initiatives such as the BRICS Vaccine R&D Center, require agreement among all members. This structure ensures that no single nation

can dominate the agenda, fostering an environment where diverse perspectives and priorities are respected.

For those more accustomed to a top-down approach in which "might is right", this consensus ethos is cumbersome and time-consuming. For those interested in empowerment of all, this bottom-up approach is foundational.

In the face of recent US efforts to undermine BRICS and drive a wedge between Russia and other members — by offering to do bilateral package deals with Russia — this consensus-based approach acts as a bulwark against external manipulation. By fostering mutual trust and shared objectives, the BRICS members have demonstrated resilience against external pressures and a commitment to maintaining their collective autonomy.

BRICS' commitment to multilateralism and consensus also aligns closely with the principles of other regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Both organizations prioritize non-interference, mutual respect and consensus-driven governance. This alignment creates opportunities for institutional collaboration that can reinforce global stability. BRICS and ASEAN share common interests in areas such as infrastructure development, trade facilitation and digital connectivity, further cementing cross-institutional linkages that support the development of a global fabric of multipolarity. Collaborative initiatives between these bodies could enhance regional economic resilience while reducing dependency on Western financial institutions. Furthermore, such cooperation strengthens the ability of developing nations to navigate global challenges on their own terms rather than being subject to the dictates of great powers.

The shared commitment to peaceful dispute resolution also positions BRICS and ASEAN as critical actors in preventing the emergence of multipolar chaos. Through joint forums and dialogue mechanisms, these organizations can mediate tensions and promote cooperative solutions, reducing the likelihood of conflict driven by



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

great power competition.

The Trump administration's apparent disdain for multilateralism and its efforts to reassert great power dominance carry significant risks for US influence in the Global South. By prioritizing bilateralism and attempting to undermine BRICS, the US risks alienating a growing coalition of nations that view BRICS as a more equitable platform for global governance.

This alienation is already evident in the US' "go it alone" approach to discussions concerning the ongoing Ukraine crisis. Such unilateral approaches not only raise questions about the credibility of US commitments to its allies and its dependability within a multilateral environment, but also strengthen the perception that BRICS offers a more inclusive and balanced alternative.

Moreover, attempts to drive a wedge between Russia and BRICS are unlikely to succeed given the group's shared interest in advancing financial and political sovereignty.

Far from being "dead", BRICS represents a dynamic and evolving model of global governance that challenges the dominance of great power concert and promotes a

more inclusive international order. Its consensus-based decision-making, alignment with international law, and collaboration with organizations such as ASEAN provide a robust framework for managing multipolarity in a peaceful and equitable manner.

As the world continues to move away from unipolar dominance, the BRICS model offers a compelling vision for the future — one where the voices of smaller and developing countries are not only heard but actively shape the global agenda. In resisting the pressures of bilateralism and great power politics, BRICS stands as a crucial counterbalance, ensuring that multipolarity leads to cooperative governance rather than exploitative division. This vision is not only alive and well; it is essential for a future in which all nations have a seat at the table, not just those with the loudest voices or the greatest military might.

The author is an adjunct professor at Queensland University of Technology and a senior fellow at the Taihe Institute. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

BUSINESS

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City officials looking for DeepSeek help

Beijing, Shenzhen among places eyeing streamlining administrative tasks

By MA SI
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As the world is wowed by the meteoric rise of DeepSeek, a Chinese private artificial intelligence startup, cities in China are moving quickly to integrate its large language model into government services, offering a peek into the potential of AI to revolutionize public administration duties and responsibilities.

A batch of DeepSeek-powered "AI civil servants" recently rolled up their virtual sleeves and got to work in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. According to the city's Futian district, the 70 intelligent government "digital employees" are responsible for 11 major tasks, covering 240 government service scenarios, including document processing, emergency management and investment promotion.

Their efficiency is remarkable, document format correction accuracy exceeds 95 percent and review time is reduced by 90 percent, the local government said, adding that the AI assistants can instantly draft initial versions of law enforcement documents.

Shenzhen is not alone. Since the beginning of the year, Beijing and provincial authorities in Guangdong, Jiangsu, Liaoning and Jiangxi have scrambled to embrace DeepSeek.

Wang Lei, chairman of Beijing Wenge Technology Co Ltd, a Chinese AI startup, said: "DeepSeek performs exceptionally well in Chinese language processing, excelling in writing, conducting written dialogues and handling simple administrative tasks. Deploying DeepSeek marks the first step in promoting the wide adoption of AI in government services."

Wang said: "However, the real efficiency gains in government services are not achieved by merely deploying the model. Instead, they require a deeper integration of the model with local policies and measures. This involves creating an intermediate application layer that aligns with specific government needs, followed by extensive testing and feedback mechanisms to ensure high accuracy and reliability."

For example, in Beijing's Zhongguancun high-tech zone, Beijing Wenge Tech has developed such an intermediate application layer that helps the local government create a customized AI assistant named "Guanxin" to streamline administrative tasks. Guanxin primarily helps government staff with community inspections, administrative document drafting and meeting minutes. It also assists citizens and businesses with government-related inquiries and provides service guidelines.

Meanwhile, the integration of DeepSeek into the 12345 public service hotline has brought significant improvements. Previously, citizens often complained about busy lines, slow processing and lack of feedback.

With DeepSeek, the 12345 hotline system in Liaoning province has seen a 20-fold increase in data processing efficiency, automatically generating high-frequency questions and response strategies to improve call handling speed and accuracy, the local government said.

Zhang Shijia, head of the technical department of Liaoning's 12345 Hot-

line Platform, said DeepSeek has significantly enhanced work efficiency.

"For instance, when a citizen raises an issue that spans multiple departments, the first step is to identify which department should take primary responsibility. In the past, this identification process was done manually, with an accuracy rate of only about 85 percent. However, with DeepSeek, the accuracy has improved to over 95 percent based on its analysis of previous data," Zhang said.

But can "AI civil servants" replace human workers? Gao Zeng, deputy head of the government services and data management bureau in Futian district, Shenzhen, said AI cannot make independent decisions and may sometimes produce biased results based on training data. To mitigate ethical risks, each of Futian's 70 digital employees has a "human guardian" to ensure accountability, even if the AI makes a mistake.

So, for grassroots civil servants, AI assistance is like having an "electronic pen" and "electronic assistant", significantly improving work efficiency, experts said.

Wang Peng, associate researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "Futian district's move is a proactive attempt at intelligent government transformation, with significant innovative and practical value. In the future, more government departments and institutions will introduce AI technology to achieve intelligent and automated public services, improving work efficiency and service quality."

Wang from Beijing Wenge Tech said while AI models like DeepSeek offer significant potential, their deployment in government services faces challenges.

For instance, traditional AI models are static knowledge bases, meaning they cannot automatically incorporate new or dynamic data. There is a need to establish data engineering processes to integrate real-time and dynamic data with the model's capabilities.

Meanwhile, deploying AI large language models requires significant computational resources, which can be expensive. For example, deploying models like DeepSeek can cost millions of yuan, making it a high-barrier investment for some local governments or small and medium-sized enterprises.

To solve these problems, Beijing Wenge Tech is working to develop a better application powered by DeepSeek. "Directly deploying DeepSeek is like having a Windows system. We still need applications such as WeChat and Word to connect with friends and to write documents."

A bigger industry challenge is that AI models can sometimes produce inaccurate or misleading results, known as "AI hallucinations". Additionally, opening the AI model to public use raises security concerns, especially when handling sensitive government data, experts said.

Despite these challenges, the integration of DeepSeek into government systems offers a potential for true "human-machine collaboration", bringing public services closer to the needs of the people and ensuring that government responses align with public needs, said Wang, the associate researcher.



Employees at work on Hisense's TV assembly line in Qingdao, Shandong province. LI ZHENG / XINHUA

More consumption incentives needed

By FAN FEIFEI
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Heightened efforts are needed to allow more households in townships and counties to enjoy consumption-friendly subsidies from the consumer goods trade-in program, and reinforce the dominant position of enterprises in technological innovation, said Jia Shaoqian, chairman of Chinese home appliance manufacturer Hisense Group.

"The country's consumer goods trade-in program has not only stimulated the consumer market and bolstered consumption upgrades, but also greatly promoted the popularity of green and energy-saving products while improving people's quality of life," said Jia, who is also a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

In the fourth quarter of last year, sales of Hisense's home appliances surged more than 30 percent year-on-year fueled by the trade-in program, Jia said, adding that high-quality and intelligent products with high energy efficiency are increasingly favored by Chinese shoppers.

More efforts are needed to allow more small and medium-sized businesses in counties and townships to take part in the trade-in program to further unleash the consumption potential of low-tier markets, Jia said, while calling for supporting sales of new products containing innovative technologies.

China's large-scale equipment upgrade and consumer goods trade-in program, which kicked off last March, yielded fruitful results in 2024. Data from the National Development and Reform Commission showed that more than 37 million consumers purchased over 62 million home appliances last year, with total sales reaching 270 billion yuan (\$371 billion). Products with the highest level of energy efficiency accounted for over 90 percent of total sales revenue.

The country announced in January a raft of measures to expand the scope of the consumer goods trade-in program amid a broader drive to boost domestic demand and spur economic growth.

Moreover, Jia said the key to developing new quality productive forces lies in strengthening the dominant position of enterprises in sci-tech innovation, and promoting the deep integration of sci-tech and industrial innovation.

The tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference held in December urged efforts to make sci-tech innovation drive the development of new quality productive forces and better build the nation's modern industrial system.

To boost the country's self-reliance and strength in science and technology, Jia said more emphasis should be placed on original innovation and promoting the industrial application of innovative achievements.

He also suggested supporting

enterprises in leading major national projects and key research and development programs, as well as establishing a differentiated enterprise laboratories' evaluation system, to further stimulate the innovative vitality of enterprises through institutional innovation.

Li Xianjun, an associate researcher at the Institute of Industrial Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said China's efforts in developing new quality productive forces will help make the economy more resilient, improve the resilience of its industrial and supply chains, strengthen the capacity to buffer against external risks and shocks, and build the country into a manufacturing powerhouse.

More efforts should be made to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields, including basic materials and software, precision components, integrated circuits and high-end equipment, to enhance China's independent innovation capacity, Li said.

Pan Helin, a member of the Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, which is part of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, underlined the importance of stepping up support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and further optimizing the business environment, given that enterprises have played a leading part in driving technological innovation.

YG Group's focus on innovation extends beyond factory automation. "We've been actively engaged in research and development since our inception in 2002," said Zhang. "We launch new products every month, ensuring that our sales continue to grow despite the constant obsolescence of older products."

The company is also leveraging AI across departments, from production and management to sales. "From our sales perspective, AI is a game-changer," Zhang said. "Imagine finding new clients — you can input keywords into AI, getting more precise results than traditional search methods."

"And if you need to reach another department, AI can instantly route your request, making everything so much more efficient," she added.

Similarly, Shanghai Silk Group, a key player in the textile industry, is using AI and 3D technology to innovate and maintain its position at the forefront of the market.

"We're using AI to generate new designs, enabling us to show clients multiple options quickly and understand their preferences," said Chen Chuan, CEO of Shanghai Silk Group. "This greatly accelerates our design process and allows us to respond more effectively to evolving customer needs."

While the East China Fair remains a vital platform for international businesses, Chen acknowledges the changing landscape of global trade and the increasing reliance on digital platforms.

"The fair is no longer the only window to the world," he said. "But it remains an important venue for building relationships and attracting potential customers. We are seeing more diverse participants and a growing focus on connecting with domestic brands."

Luo Bin and Xiao Miao contributed to this story.

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.

Shanghai businesses embrace AI solutions

By CHINA DAILY

Technological innovation has become a growing focus among Chinese exporters and international buyers in sectors such as textile and clothing industries, as reflected by the East China Fair, which took place from Saturday to Monday in Shanghai.

Among the businesses showcased at the fair — the largest such event dedicated to these sectors — were industry leaders like the Shanghai Silk Group and YG Group, a leading manufacturer of tapes. Both companies are leveraging artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies to drive efficiency and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global market.

"We've been attending the East China Fair for over a decade," said Zhang Chaoxia, deputy director of overseas marketing at YG Group, a company that has been exporting tapes globally for 20 years. "The fair is a great platform for meeting clients, many of whom visit our factory after initial contact here. This year, with the extended visa-free stay for Japanese visitors, we're seeing a significant increase in factory visits, especially from Japanese clients."

Zhang emphasized the growing interest in factory automation and digital transformation among international buyers. "Clients are particularly interested in our factory's intelligent manufacturing capabilities, which are essential for remaining competitive in the face of rising labor costs," she explained. "They want to see how we're embracing digital transformation and improving our overall management and supply chain efficiency. The ability to implement sustainable practices is also a crucial factor for them."

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"And if you need to reach another department, AI can instantly route your request, making everything so much more efficient," she added.

Similarly, Shanghai Silk Group, a key player in the textile industry, is using AI and 3D technology to innovate and maintain its position at the forefront of the market.

"We're using AI to generate new designs, enabling us to show clients multiple options quickly and understand their preferences," said Chen Chuan, CEO of Shanghai Silk Group. "This greatly accelerates our design process and allows us to respond more effectively to evolving customer needs."

While the East China Fair remains a vital platform for international businesses, Chen acknowledges the changing landscape of global trade and the increasing reliance on digital platforms.

"The fair is no longer the only window to the world," he said. "But it remains an important venue for building relationships and attracting potential customers. We are seeing more diverse participants and a growing focus on connecting with domestic brands."

Luo Bin and Xiao Miao contributed to this story.

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.

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Exports of Chinese matcha on the rise

By YANG JUN in Guiyang
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Altogether 36 metric tons of matcha powder from Jiangkou county in Guizhou province, Southwest China, set off for North America recently as the first overseas order of the year.

Sterilized green tea is ground into fine powder by a series of ball mills to produce matcha, which is then added to milk, ice cream and chocolate to lend a light sweetness with a hint of bitterness. At Guizhou Tongren Gui Tea Co Ltd, products such as matcha mooncakes, cakes and noodles are increasingly being prepared for shipment worldwide.

"Guizhou's high altitude, limited sunlight and frequent mist create a unique plateau tea region. With 7 million mu (466,667 hectares) of tea gardens, it is an ideal environment for producing high-quality matcha," said Zhong Jin from the company's general management office.

Matcha, consumed directly unlike traditional tea, demands higher quality standards. According to Zhong, the company's tea plantations are managed under European standards and meet over 500 European Union testing criteria.

The company's flagship product



Employees pack matcha at Guizhou Tongren Gui Tea Co Ltd.

LI HE / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

is simply branded as "EU Standards Matcha".

To ensure unified management of the tea fields, the company employs a model that integrates a leading enterprise with allied enterprises and local farmers. The Gui Tea Alliance spans 61 companies in 22 counties, covering 140,000 mu of EU-standard tea gardens, with 80,000 mu dedicated exclusively to matcha. The alliance standardizes cultivation, agricultural inputs and processing techniques.

The local government noted that this model has engaged 100,000 tea farmers in the matcha industry this year.

In 2024, the company sold over 1,200 tons of matcha, generating an output value of 302 million yuan (\$41.47 million). Nearly 30 percent of its matcha was exported to 44 countries and regions, including the United States, Singapore, Canada, Germany, Saudi Arabia and China's Hong Kong.

"Matcha is one of the most popular tea types among young peo-

ple today, especially as it blends so well into various beverages and foods," Zhong said.

The matcha market is primarily concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region and North America. "With the growing trend in healthy foods, the North American market continues to expand. Our first export shipment of the year was sent there," Zhong added.

Despite Guizhou matcha's emerging presence on the international stage, Zhong said that Japanese matcha still dominates the high-end market. Guizhou's brand promotion is still in its early stages.

The company plans to strengthen its brand and launch more market-driven products. "We have established a matcha research institute to segment the market and develop customized products for various needs, including cultural and creative souvenir gifts that highlight Guizhou's regional characteristics," Zhong said.

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.

Briefly

Tunnel work completed on Jinhua-Jiande Rail

All 22 tunnel projects on the Jinhua-Jiande Railway have been completed as the 6.1-kilometer Chaying Tunnel — the line's longest — was bored through on Tuesday. The 64.5-km railway, with a maximum operating speed of 250 kilometers per hour, will link Jinhua and Jiande, both in Zhejiang province, integrating the region full of major attractions into major rail networks, said China Railway 24th Bureau

Group Corp, a State builder participating in the railway's construction.

Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 6 pips to 7.1739 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

LLM price war may lead to 'catfish effect'

Intensifying AI competition to make cutting-edge tech cheaper, more efficient

By LI JIAYING
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As large language model prices continue to decline, evolving market dynamics and intensified price competition will determine which players thrive in the coming years, said industry experts.

"Low pricing doesn't mean losses. When it comes to LLM profitability, doing more with less is entirely achievable," said Zhang Tong, a senior director analyst at market consultancy Gartner.

Zhang's remarks follow Chinese AI startup DeepSeek's revelation of its daily costs and theoretical revenue on Saturday, which has sparked intense discussion about the profitability of LLMs.

According to DeepSeek's data, during a 24-hour period from Feb 27-28, assuming an H800 GPU rental cost of \$2 per hour, its total daily costs amounted to \$87,072. If all tokens were priced according to its R1 model's rate, theoretical daily revenue would reach a total of \$562,027, leading to a daily net profit of \$474,955 and a cost-profit ratio of 545 percent.

However, several operating issues have led to discrepancies, where the company's actual revenue falls far below the theoretical figure, said Zhang.

For example, the V3 model is priced lower than the R1. With free web and app services, only certain features generate revenue, and off-peak usage, including nighttime discounts, further reduces income, he said.

"Despite the abovementioned factors, the key takeaway is clear — high-quality LLMs coupled with efficient engineering optimizations can tap into sufficient market demand to achieve profitability," Zhang said.

He said the Chinese AI startup's cost advantages could trigger a wave of consolidation in the AI model market, where only the most efficient players could survive.

"For both businesses and individual users, the trend of declining inference costs is indisputable. Models that can't match the capabilities of V3 and R1, while being more expensive, will struggle to stay relevant. This 'catfish effect' will either push competitors to optimize or force them out of the market," said Zhang, who expects other LLM providers could face a tough road ahead due to this round of cost and profitability revelation.

"First, securing funding will become more challenging. Then companies will have no choice but to continuously refine their strategies to drive down costs," the analyst said.

As the price war intensifies, LLM prices are expected to witness continuous drops in the years to come. According to Gartner's prediction, by 2027, the average price of GenAI APIs with specific capabilities is expected to be less than 1 percent of their current average price.

However, Mike Fang, another senior director analyst at Gartner, emphasized that the prediction only refers to a decrease in LLM prices under the same conditions of quality, throughput and latency, and does not necessarily mean the price of the most powerful models will drop.

"As LLMs continue to evolve and upgrade, the most advanced ones will still retain a certain premium," Fang said. "The factors influencing the model prices include not only their operational costs, but also their capabilities, which may greatly impact their pricing power."

Dazzling expo



Foreign visitors are seen capturing photographs of a necklace during the 11th Hong Kong International Diamond, Gem and Pearl Show on Monday. The event, which kicked off in the special administrative region on Sunday and will run until Thursday, stands out as a premier trade gathering in its category on a global scale. In last year's edition, the event drew participation of over 4,000 dealer companies from 137 countries, and attracted more than 81,000 buyers from around the world. ZHU WEI / XINHUA

Strong confidence, policies fuel property market recovery

BEIJING — Driven by a series of pro-housing policies, China's property sector has gained momentum in recent months, with increased transaction activity and renewed development vitality among real estate enterprises, signaling a shift toward a healthier and more sustainable growth trend.

With improving sentiment among homebuyers, transactions for both new and secondhand homes in multiple cities have shown an upward trend since the beginning of this year, fostering a more balanced relationship between supply and demand in the market, according to industry analysts.

New residential home sales in Beijing surged 47.11 percent year-on-year last month, with 2,295 units recorded in online sales contracts. Meanwhile, secondhand home transactions, a key segment of the city's property market, saw a 92.3 percent increase during the same period, according to data from leading real estate website Fang.com.

In Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, a second-tier city and hub for leading sci-tech firms, the number of daily visits to a new residential site in Xihu district, developed by Vanke, surpassed 100 groups during the first weekend after the Spring Festival holiday, double the figure from the previous week.

This trend can be attributed to improving customer sentiment, driven by the city's rising prominence and promising development prospects, according to the project's marketing manager.

The growing turnover volume has helped relieve destocking pressure in the property market. The average destocking period for new residential homes in 100 Chinese cities was

21.3 months in January, a remarkable drop from the previous peak of 26.8 months, data from the E-house China R&D Institute showed.

"The shorter destocking cycle will create more favorable conditions for achieving a balanced supply and demand relationship in the real estate market throughout the year," said Yan Yuejin, deputy director of the institute.

As the property market continues to rebound, leading domestic and foreign real estate developers are accelerating land acquisitions and leveraging expanded financing channels, signaling a broader recovery trend across the industry.

Shanghai's first batch of land auctions for 2025, which began on Feb 20, saw a strong return of property developers eager to acquire land. Gemdale Group made its first land purchase in the city in 21 months, while Singapore-based developers Frasers Property and Kheng Leong

Co joined the bidding, bringing the total transaction value to 15.93 billion yuan (\$2.19 billion).

Poly Developments and Holdings Group recently announced the purchases of six land parcels in cities like Guangzhou and Foshan in Guangdong province, and Sanya in Hainan province, with total investments nearing 10 billion yuan. Meanwhile, Vanke secured four development sites in Tianjin, Hebei province's Tangshan, Guangdong's Guangzhou and Guizhou province's Guiyang, covering a combined land area of 213,000 square meters.

Analysts believe the latest acquisitions by leading developers signal renewed confidence about the sector's prospects and growing optimism in the market's long-term outlook as government support measures gain traction.

Since last year, Chinese policymakers have introduced a series of measures — from financial stimuli to regulatory adjustments — to bolster the property sector. These include mortgage rate cuts, lower down payment requirements, eased purchase restrictions and financing coordination mechanisms to enhance funding support for developers.

According to data from the National Financial Regulatory Administration, the approved loan amount for "white list" projects, designed to support companies with reasonable financing needs, reached 5.6 trillion yuan by Jan 22, surpassing the initial target of 4 trillion yuan.

As China navigates further policy support for the sector, it has vowed to actively promote the use of local government special bonds for efficient management of idle land and disposal of existing commercial housing, while leveraging financial

tools such as loans and bonds to support stable financing for the real estate sector, according to an official in charge of the mechanisms.

Chinese property companies have also experienced positive shifts in financing through more diversified channels, including domestic and overseas bond markets. These developments reflect improved financing capabilities of the enterprises and stronger confidence among foreign institutions in these developers, according to Yan.

In January, bond financing of real estate enterprises reached 50.98 billion yuan in total, with declining interest rates compared to the same period last year, data from the China Index Academy showed.

Last month, Greentown China announced the issuance of \$350 million in dollar-denominated bonds maturing in 2028. This marks the first dollar bond issuance by a private real estate enterprise this year, and industry experts believe it will encourage more real estate enterprises to resume overseas financing.

As market-stabilizing policies take effect, the upward trend across the industry will become increasingly evident, pushing the entire industrial chain in the sector into a positive recovery cycle, said Zhang Yan, an analyst from property research institution CRIC.

Looking ahead, China is expected to see a recovery in both supply and demand in the property sector and month-on-month turnover growth during the peak sales season known as "Golden March and Silver April," with sales surges likely to occur in multiple cities, according to the CRIC.

XINHUA



A government employee works with an online services platform supported by DeepSeek in Beijing on Feb 26. TAO RAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Sweet prospects for nation's blueberry industry

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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China's blueberry cultivation in 2024

The total blueberry output in China — the world's largest blueberry producer — reached about 780,000 metric tons in 2024, a 197 percent increase from 2020, driven by improved planting technology and rising market demand from Chinese consumers, according to industry experts.

Wu Lin, chairman of the small fruit branch of the Chinese Society for Horticultural Science, said in 2024, China's blueberry cultivation area expanded to 1.44 million mu (95,381 hectares), up 44.38 percent from 2020.

Yunnan province, with its diverse altitudes and ample sunshine, emerged as the top-producing region, yielding 182,900 tons, a 510 percent surge from 2020. It contributes about 30 percent of the country's total production.

Other major producing regions include provinces of Guizhou, Liaoning, Sichuan, Anhui, Shandong, Jilin and Jiangsu.

"China has five major production bases spanning from south to north, ensuring a year-round supply of blueberries," said Wu, who is also a professor at Jilin Agricultural University.

By 2025, the blueberry cultivation area in China will expand further to 1.55 million mu, with total output expected to reach 897,400 tons.

The rapid growth has been driven by new varieties and advanced technologies.

"The widespread adoption of evergreen blueberry varieties, which require little to no chilling, has extended fruiting periods, enhanced fruit quality, and expanded market sales," said Wu. He added that substrate cultivation techniques have transformed traditional growing methods and allowed for expansion into new regions.

Wu said the industry has been shifting from a quantity-driven approach — focused on rapid expansion and high yields — to a quality-oriented strategy that prioritizes fruit quality and premium pricing.

China began importing fresh blueberries in 2012, with imports peaking in 2019 before declining after 2023.

The total import value rose from \$184.3 million in 2020 to \$306.7 million in 2022, but declined to \$260.3 million in 2023 as domestic production increased.

Wu attributes the drop in imports to Yunnan's rising blueberry output, which has increasingly filled the winter market gap.

As a result, the number of countries exporting blueberries to China dropped from nine in 2019 to five after 2020, with Peru and Chile dominating the market.

In 2023, Peru accounted for 84.67 percent of China's total blueberry imports, while Chile contributed 15.31 percent.

On exports, China first shipped fresh blueberries abroad in 2020. According to Customs data, by 2024, Chinese blueberries were exported to at least a dozen countries, with total export volume rising from 113 tons in 2020 to 1,012 tons in 2023.

In the first eight months of 2024, export volume reached 2,314 tons. Export value soared from \$352,650 in 2020 to \$21.98 million as of August 2024. The rise in production has been fueled by the growing popularity of blueberries among Chinese consumers.

At Wumart, a Beijing-based supermarket chain, Yunnan blueberries have seen monthly sales growth averaging 20 percent since March, according to the retailer's spokesperson.

On Monday, a batch of 16 tons of Imberry blueberry products from Yunnan province debuted at Beijing Xinfadi wholesale market, one of the country's largest food supply hubs.

Zhang Yuelin, general manager of Xinfadi market, said: "The demand



A farmer harvests blueberries at a plantation in Wenshan Zhuang and Miao autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, in February. XIONG PINGXIANG / XINHUA

for mid-to-high-end blueberries is rising rapidly, driven by growing awareness of health diets and the influence of livestreaming sales from lifestyle social platforms."

Zhang added that Xinfadi plans to expand its fruit market, with a focus on imported and high-end fruits to enhance supply chain efficiency in the sector.

Despite a rapid expansion, China's blueberry industry faces significant challenges, particularly in variety development and market standardization.

Wu said the independent variety innovation should be accelerated, with patenting and licensing expected to become a key trend in the industry.

Q&A WITH CEO

Editor's Note: This year marks a critical milestone as China concludes its 14th Five-Year Plan. To help in assessing the success of the process, we have asked multinational executives to share with our readers their insights about their business achievements in the past few years and further expectations in the years to come.

MNC execs eye business expansion in China



Stephen Ma
Executive officer and chair of
the management committee for China
Nissan Motor Co Ltd



Yin Zheng
Executive vice-president of Schneider
Electric, China & East Asia Operations



Anna An
President of Henkel Greater China



Grace Chen
President of Unilever China

Q1 What are your expectations for the two sessions? Do you expect any specific policy measures for further deepening reforms and expanding high-level opening-up? What more should China do to create a more enabling business environment for foreign investors?

MA: China is one of Nissan's core markets and we are proud to have contributed to the growth of its automotive sector for over five decades.

China's recent steps to optimize the business environment, exemplified by the "2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment", further strengthened our confidence in deepening our presence in China. We are closely following the two sessions, anticipating supportive policies on new energy vehicles and intelligent mobility. These areas, where China excels and Nissan invests heavily, are vital for a sustainable automotive future.

Leveraging global expertise in electrification and autonomous driving, along with local partnerships, we aim to create innovative products, strengthen our local supply chain and create value for the Chinese automotive industry.

YIN: In recent years, China has been steadfast in developing "new quality productive forces" and accelerating high-quality development, which not only prompts various industries to accelerate their transformation toward digitalization and decarbonization, but also creates broader development space for Schneider Electric. At the same time, China's continued efforts to expand high-level opening-up and optimize the environment for foreign investment, as evidenced by the recent release of the "2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment", have further bolstered our confidence in our development in China. Having operated in the Chinese mainland for 38 years, Schneider Electric has been comprehensively strengthening its capabilities and ecosystem under the unwavering "China Hub" strategy, which integrates all forces from R&D to production and sales.

AN: Over the past 50 years, Henkel has witnessed and actively participated in China's economic growth, benefiting from the country's ongoing opening-up and continuous improvements in the business environment.

In February, the "2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment" proposed initiatives to advance a higher-level open economic system and further support foreign enterprises in investing and expanding their presence in China. This has strengthened our confidence in deepening our presence and increasing our investments in the Chinese market.

We believe the trend toward high-level opening-up will continue in the coming years. We also appreciate new initiatives that drive innovation and further enhance the business environment, fostering an improved market system that supports sustainable growth.

CHEN: The two sessions provide China with an opportunity to introduce policy measures that further deepen reforms and expand high-level opening-up. Notably, the State Council recently released its "2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment", which affirmed the government's commitment to higher-standard opening-up and continuous business environment improvements, encouraging both Chinese enterprises and multinational corporations like Unilever. With a century-long presence in China, Unilever has witnessed significant progress in the optimization of China's business environment and remains confident in the market. Looking ahead, we believe China's resilient and dynamic market will inject greater vitality into the fast-moving consumer goods sector, creating new opportunities for growth.

Q2 "New quality productive forces" is widely seen as key to helping China achieve industrial upgrade and "high-quality development". How can your company help cultivate such forces in China?

MA: China is heavily investing in what it dubs "new quality productive forces", with an emphasis on the automotive sector. In particular, we are seeing the integration of new energy and intelligent vehicles emerging as an area of special priority, backed by supportive government policies.

Nissan has accumulated extensive practical experience in cultivating new quality productive forces and we have made electrification and vehicle intelligence a strategic focus, accelerating product innovation through our own technological advancements while strengthening the cooperation with ecosystem partners.

It goes beyond just one individual innovation in technology or products. In China, Nissan has established a full-value-chain business layout, covering cutting-edge technology R&D, vehicle design, manufacturing, sales and services, mobility services (such as Robotaxi), and parts export, etc.

YIN: For Schneider Electric, the concept of new quality productivity forces underscores the development of "digital productivity" and "green productivity". It calls on all industries to expedite technological innovation and application, driving the "dual transformation" toward digitalization and decarbonization. Technological innovation stands as the primary driver of new quality productive forces. To this end, Schneider Electric continues to strengthen its innovation capabilities. Under the "China Hub" strategy, we have been constantly increasing our R&D investment in China with a series of world-class R&D institutions established in recent years to provide innovative technical support for industrial upgrading and energy transition.

AN: China's high-quality development and new quality productive forces have further shaped the country's development blueprint, strengthening our confidence in its long-term growth.

In 2024, Henkel increased investments to capitalize on these opportunities. Our Asia R&D Center for Henkel Consumer Brands, valued at 100 million yuan (\$13.7 million), opened in Shanghai and is designed to drive local product innovation in the consumer goods sector. In the industrial sector, Henkel's 900 million yuan "Kunpeng" plant is progressing and is expected to begin test production in March, enhancing our ability to supply high-end adhesives for industries such as electronics and automotive. Additionally, we are set to launch our new Inspiration Center for Adhesive Technologies this year, further boosting our innovation capabilities for industrial businesses across China and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

CHEN: Unilever fully supports China's drive to cultivate new quality productive forces, recognizing that innovation is key to industrial upgrades and high-quality development. By leveraging ongoing digital transformation, we enhance operational efficiency across our eight production bases and logistics centers in China — three of which have been recognized by the World Economic Forum's Global Lighthouse Network for leadership in smart and sustainable manufacturing.

In parallel, Unilever was among the first multinational companies to establish a global R&D center in China, launching its sixth global R&D center in Shanghai in 2009. Moving forward, we will continue strengthening our local R&D capabilities, driving further innovation and delivering high-quality products tailored to Chinese consumers.

Q3 DeepSeek has been a buzzword and surprised the world starting this year. AI technology has been deeply integrated with various industries around the world. What opportunities do you foresee for your business from AI technology? What's your view on China's ability to sustain innovation in breakthrough technologies in the coming years?

MA: AI technology has a wide range of applications in the automotive industry and vehicle intelligence has always been a key focus of Nissan's strategy.

Nissan has been deeply connected with China for over 50 years and has witnessed and participated in the development of China's automotive industry. In the past, we introduced technologies and products from our global portfolio to the China market. Now, we are shifting toward making technological innovation that begins in China. Our joint venture partner, Dongfeng Nissan, has embraced "China speed" by becoming one of the earliest automakers to integrate AI technology into a real-world vehicle.

Moving forward, we hope that more technological achievements will benefit not only the China market, but also markets worldwide.

YIN: As a leading digital technology, AI is reshaping the industrial landscape. AI will accelerate industrial transformation, not only improving efficiency, but also promoting sustainable development, and will provide a powerful tool for building new quality productive forces.

At Schneider Electric, we believe that AI technology must be deeply integrated with industry scenarios to form professional solutions and create value across various sectors. On the one hand, we are actively exploring the deep integration of AI technology with industry scenarios, actively deploying AI technology in our own production and operations, improving operational efficiency, and promoting sustainable development. On the other hand, Schneider Electric actively empowers upstream and downstream partners with AI technologies and application experience to jointly enhance the AI application capabilities of the industrial chain.

AN: China has firmly established itself as one of the global leaders in cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence. The rapid advancements in AI demonstrate the country's strong commitment to innovation and digital transformation. Looking ahead, China's strong commitment to driving innovation and technological progress will continue to create new opportunities in the coming years. At Henkel, we are confident in the market's potential and remain dedicated to working alongside our customers to drive technological advancements and industry growth. Through close collaboration and continuous investment, we aim to contribute to the sustainable and high-quality development of AI-driven industries.

CHEN: China's AI-driven advancements are transforming industries, injecting momentum into the fast-moving consumer goods sector, and creating new opportunities for growth and efficiency. At Unilever, harnessing AI-driven digital tools to enhance operational efficiency and accelerate business growth is a key pillar of our business strategy under the "Accelerate" framework. For example, we recently pioneered the FTC (Factory-to-Consumer) digital logistics model, optimizing supply chain efficiency and responsiveness to enhance the consumer shopping experience. Additionally, we are ramping up our digital investment in social media, ensuring greater agility and engagement across both established and high-growth platforms.

Q4 Driving domestic consumption is one of the top priorities for China to spur economic growth this year. How do you see China's potential to drive a consumption-led impetus for the economy? How will that affect your company's profitability this year?

MA: We believe the fundamentals of China's long-term economic growth remain unchanged, with its vast market size, continuously upgrading consumer demand and improving industrial ecosystem providing broad development opportunities for foreign enterprises.

As an automaker, "driving innovation to enrich people's lives" is our corporate purpose, with the aim of enhancing our innovation capabilities to provide our customers with more exciting products and experiences. This is why we launched our updated brand proposition "Excitement by NI" in China last year to constantly pay close attention to Chinese consumer needs.

We hope that the products we develop for Chinese consumers will be well received and appreciated, contributing to stronger business growth.

YIN: Under the requirements of high-quality development, the demand for green and intelligent products from Chinese users has surged, driving various industries to transform and upgrade. In response, Schneider Electric leverages its advanced technology and extensive experience to empower industries with the "dual transformation" of digitalization and decarbonization, propelling them toward high-end development. For example, in sectors such as food and beverage, chemical, biomedical and electronic, our comprehensive digital solutions and services, which cover the entire lifecycle of products and assets, are helping enterprises enhance efficiency, save energy, and improve the traceability, intelligence and safety of their products.

AN: China is an important market for Henkel. With stimulating domestic demand set as a top priority for 2025 at the Central Economic Work Conference held in Beijing last December, we remain confident in the long-term growth of China's consumer goods sector.

By deepening our investments — including the 2024 acquisition of the Vidal Sassoon brand in Greater China and the launch of our Asia R&D Center in Shanghai with 100 million yuan of investment — we aim to better serve Chinese consumers with localized innovations tailored to their preferences.

Looking ahead, we will continue to invest in China to meet the evolving needs of this dynamic market.

CHEN: The Chinese market offers enormous opportunities to businesses in various sectors. China's evolving consumer preferences continue to drive growth. In the first three quarters of 2024, China's FMCG market achieved a stable increase of 0.8 percent amid economic uncertainties.

If we look into the beauty segment, China is the world's second-largest high-end beauty market and the largest high-end skincare market. It is also the second-largest global market for hair care products, with the premium segment growing at an impressive 12 percent annually.

Seeing the great potential of these sectors, Unilever remains confident of opportunities emerging in the FMCG industry, also supported by proactive government policies and China's rapidly evolving digital channels. China's fast-growing e-commerce and specialized retail chains present an opportunity for Unilever to adapt and optimize our strategy of "social-first demand creation" — leveraging innovation and channel upgrades to meet evolving consumer needs and enhance our market presence.

Q5 As China continues to pursue high-quality development along a Chinese path to modernization, what opportunities do you anticipate for your business as this process gains more traction? Will you increase investment in China in the coming years? How will you further expand your footprint in China?

MA: Upholding our "In China, For China" philosophy, Nissan remains firmly committed to the China market. We are increasing investment and developing partnerships with local collaborators.

Through our robust partnership with Dongfeng Motor over the past 22 years, we have consistently upheld our commitment to quality, performance, technical capabilities and customer service to meet the diverse needs of Chinese customers. Since 2023, we have emphasized leveraging "China assets, China speed and China standards" to accelerate the shift toward electrification and smart technologies. In 2024, Dongfeng Nissan announced plans to invest over 10 billion yuan in NEV R&D across a three-year period, and expand the technical center to 4,000 employees.

We continue integrating our global resources to accelerate the transition to electrification and intelligence, while offering a balanced product lineup to meet the diverse needs of Chinese consumers.

YIN: China's vast market, robust industrial foundation and abundant innovation resources endow the country with tremendous development potential. Meanwhile, China is continuously expanding its openness, optimizing its business environment and increasing its support for foreign investment. All these factors are empowering us to further develop in China.

The new quality productive forces provide stronger impetus for China's industrial transformation and upgrading. Whether in green energy transformation, new industrialization, or the development of industrial services, the digitalization and green requirements raised by the new quality productive forces offer a broader development space for Schneider Electric.

AN: We recognize China's strong commitment to high-quality development and Henkel has greatly benefited from the rapid growth of key sectors such as automotive, consumer goods and electronics. As a result, we have continuously strengthened our presence in China, increasing investments in innovation, production and supply chain capabilities to enhance our end-to-end operations across both consumer and industrial businesses. In the years ahead, we will further advance our efforts in innovation and sustainability, deepen collaboration with local partners and explore cutting-edge solutions to meet evolving market demands, contributing to long-term, high-quality growth.

CHEN: As China advances high-quality development and modernization, Unilever sees vast opportunities to deepen our commitment. Currently serving nearly 80 percent of urban households, we will further expand our footprint by leveraging China's robust R&D ecosystem to drive innovation and offer high-quality products that enrich daily life.

We will continue advancing digital transformation, green low-carbon innovation and sustainable growth, while refining our portfolio to address evolving consumer demands. Guided by our strategy, we invest in social channels and introduce new offerings backed by science and technology to meet local market needs.

Moving forward, Unilever remains committed to investing, innovating and collaborating with consumers, partners and stakeholders to contribute to China's dynamic and sustainable future.