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# CHINA DAILY

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NATIONAL VISION, LOCAL ACTION

## Xinjiang's efforts to advance opening-up bear fruit

By CUI JIA in Beijing and MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region has made "unprecedented" efforts in expanding multilevel practical cooperation with Central Asian countries in recent years, as part of China's efforts to boost high-level opening-up, the chairman of the region said.

Under the framework of jointly building the Belt and Road, Xinjiang, as a frontier area of China neighboring Central Asia, has adopted a more proactive opening-up strategy with the countries in that region by developing itself as the core area of the Belt and Road Initiative and the China (Xinjiang) Pilot Free Trade Zone, said Erkin Tuniyaz, chairman of Xinjiang, in an exclusive interview with China Daily.



Erkin Tuniyaz

"We have been pushing forward multilevel exchanges and practical cooperation with Central Asian countries with unprecedented efforts," he said, adding that the region will continue to strengthen in-depth cooperation in key areas including economic and trade investment, energy resources and cultural tourism.

By enhancing such cooperation, Xinjiang has committed to building itself into a golden corridor linking Asia and Europe and to serving as a gateway for opening-up efforts in western China, he said.

In particular, the Xinjiang pilot FTZ, established in November 2023, has become a hub for reform and opening-up in the region, which has strengthened top-level design and promoted the high-standard development of the pilot FTZ, Erkin Tuniyaz said.

"By continuously releasing policy dividends, it has effectively promoted the high-quality development of Xinjiang's economy and society," he added.

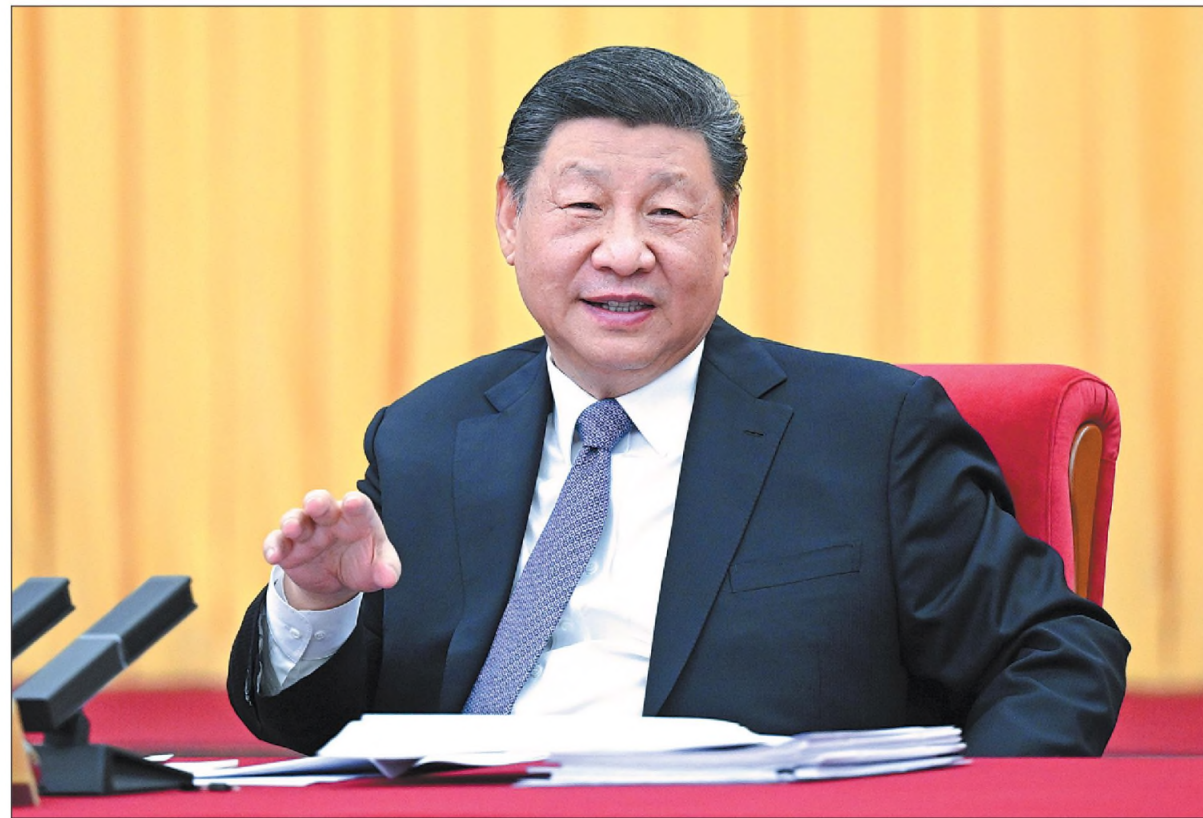
The Xinjiang pilot FTZ encompasses three iconic areas — Urumqi, Kashgar and Horgos — and is the first FTZ in China's northwestern border region. From 2022 to 2024, the annual total import and export volume in Xinjiang reached 246.36 billion yuan (\$34 billion), 357.33 billion yuan and 435.11 billion yuan, respectively.

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President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, attends a joint group meeting during the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing on Thursday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

## Xi: Bolster role of education

Development of high-tech sector and talent highlighted to ensure unlocking of potential

By XU WEI xuwe@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping called on Thursday for strengthening the role of education in supporting China's sci-tech sector and talent development, so that the nation can see its talent flourish, everyone can realize their potential, and every talent is put to the best use.

While taking part in a joint group meeting with national political advisers, he called for a deep understanding of the demand for education, science and technology, and talent during the Chinese modernization process.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, met in Beijing with political advisers from the China Democratic League, the China Association for Promoting Democracy and the education sector, who are attending the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

He spoke after hearing opinions

and suggestions from six political advisers, who contributed insights on issues such as the integrated development of vocational education and regional industries, and optimization of the allocation of basic education resources.

In his remarks, Xi highlighted the importance of adhering to the correct orientation in education to build China into a leading country in education, science and technology, and talent.

The goal is to nurture a new generation of capable young people with sound moral grounding, intellectual ability, physical vigor, aesthetic sensibility and work skills, who will fully develop socialism and carry forward the socialist cause, he said.

He pointed out that it is important to forge inner strength and inspire the younger generation with the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

Xi emphasized the need to integrate moral education throughout intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor education.

He then pointed out that building

a high-quality education system and delivering education that meets public expectations require the deepening of comprehensive reform in the education sector.

He underscored the importance of establishing a scientific evaluation system to serve as a guiding framework, improving school governance, granting institutions greater autonomy, and enhancing the rule of law and the level of management.

In alignment with the nation's modernization drive and shifts in demographic structure, China must coordinate primary, higher and vocational education, and optimize both public and private investment to enable a more reasonable and efficient distribution of education resources, Xi said.

The president called for the education sector to play a pioneering and foundational role in achieving a virtuous cycle between technological innovation and homegrown talent development.

The nation must work toward breakthroughs in fundamental and interdisciplinary research through targeted initiatives, build innovation platforms between universities, enterprises and local governments, and improve the efficiency of translating scientific

breakthroughs into practical applications, he said.

He emphasized the need to refine talent development mechanisms to better align with economic and social demand, enhancing the quality of domestically trained professionals.

Xi also highlighted the need to carry out a national education digitalization strategy and build a life-long learning society.

According to a draft budget report submitted to the third session of the 14th National People's Congress, which opened on Wednesday, the central government plans to increase its educational spending by 5 percent this year to 174.44 billion yuan (\$24 billion).

Meanwhile, funding of 80.95 billion yuan, up 11.5 percent year-on-year, will go to scholarships and student aid programs for university and high school students, the report said.

In his remarks, Xi also extended festive greetings to women of all ethnic groups and from all walks of life ahead of International Women's Day, which falls on Saturday.

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### In session



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, answers a question at a news conference on China's diplomacy and foreign affairs during the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on Friday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## Fresh measures set to help create new growth drivers

By OUYANG SHIJIA and ZHOULANXU

China is prioritizing fostering of new quality productive forces and boosting technological innovation in its economic agenda for the year, as policymakers announced on Thursday the rollout of a raft of supportive measures aimed at creating new growth drivers for the world's second-largest economy.

"In the near future, we will establish a national venture capital guidance fund, with the goal of enhancing, strengthening and expanding innovative enterprises," said Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission. He made the remark at a news conference in Beijing during the ongoing third session of the 14th National

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People's Congress, the country's top legislature.

The fund is expected to attract nearly 1 trillion yuan (\$138 billion) in capital from local governments and the private sector, Zheng said, adding that the goal is to focus on hard technology, maintain a long-term perspective, and enhance risk tolerance while channeling investment into tech companies through market-oriented approaches.

Experts said China's more pro-innovation stance will significantly boost confidence among investors

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WORLD WATCH By Imran Khalid

## A meeting that signals pragmatic approach

China's annual two sessions, the centerpiece of its political calendar, is once again offering a unique insight into how the world's second-largest economy is charting its course with efficient and democratic decision-making. Consisting 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, the largest gathering of policymakers, business leaders, and social representatives serve as both a legislative forum and a policy barometer.

What makes this year's two sessions particularly significant is the country's efforts to stabilize the world's key driver of growth against the backdrop of a shifting global economic order. With trade dynamics evolving and external uncertainties looming, the importance of clear and decisive policymaking cannot be overstated.

The positive signals emerging from the two sessions point to China's commitment to sustainable growth, innovation-driven quality development, the continued expansion of domestic demand, and persistence in multilateral cooperation.

One of the key themes that dominates discussions is China's gross domestic product growth target. China has set the target at around 5 percent for this year, reinforcing confidence in the country's economic trajectory. The emphasis this year can rest on stability and resilience. Despite global headwinds, policymakers remain committed to ensuring a robust economic recovery through fiscal and monetary measures.

According to the Government Work Report released on Wednesday, China will adopt a "more proactive" fiscal policy — with an increased deficit ratio target and expanded local government bond issuance — and a "moderately loose" monetary policy. This approach underscores the government's recognition of the need to support infrastructure projects, technology investment and social welfare programs.

A "moderately loose" monetary policy will provide further stimulus to the economy, with interest rate cuts and adjustments to reserve requirements.

A key aspect of China's economic policy this year is the push to stimulate domestic demand. With rising trade protectionism and shifting global supply chains, China is focusing on strengthening its internal market. This means greater emphasis on consumer spending, industrial upgrades and technological innovation. Policies aimed at supporting household consumption and private-sector confidence will likely take center stage.

Another critical element of the two sessions is the focus on technological advancement and innovation. China has long recognized that its economic future depends on its ability to lead in key technological fields, from artificial intelligence and semiconductors to green energy.

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## TWO SESSIONS

By FANG AIQING, ZHU XINGXIN and ZHAO RUIXUE

Hidden within a village community in Gaoping city, North China's Shanxi province, the Tiefu Temple kept its exquisite 500-year-old painted sculptures low-profile for so long. It wasn't until August that its 72-square-meter main hall was opened to the public.

This move came shortly after the release of the blockbuster AAA video game, *Black Myth: Wukong*, which brought the ancient architecture that inspired 36 scenes in the game into the limelight. The Tiefu Temple is one of them.

Since August, an unprecedented number of tourists have flooded to Gaoping. During holidays and on the weekends, visitor flow at the temple always reaches its daily cap of 3,000 people. On regular days, there are still 400 to 500 travelers, according to Shen Fei, secretary of the leading Party members group for Gaoping's culture and tourism bureau.

Visitors need to book online in advance and queue for a chance to glimpse the fragile sculptures from a safe distance. Sometimes, they wait in line for hours just to observe the sculptures for a few minutes.

Yet, Shen said, no negative feedback has been received from visitors. "They understand that the safety of the artifacts is the priority. The painted sculptures are so overwhelming that they don't mind waiting."

In recent years, China's cultural tourism boom has driven heritage preservation organizations to continuously reflect on the balance between protection and utilization. Just like the Tiefu Temple, wider public access to cultural heritage sites and museums has been taken into consideration.

During this year's two sessions, the annual gatherings of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Hang Kan, a deputy to the 14th NPC and director of the Yungang Research Institute, which is in charge of the protection, research and administration of the Yungang Grottoes in Datong, Shanxi, suggested the implementation of a classification and evaluation system of cultural heritage sites.

He said that this aims to examine factors such as preservation conditions, the surrounding environment and tourist capacities, and to assess whether a certain heritage site can be opened as a tourist destination on the premise of protection, determining the reasonable range of public access and identifying necessary adjustments to meet the requirements for opening.

In the case of the Tiefu Temple, public access — based on continuous monitoring to guarantee the safety of the relics — has also benefited the local community of Mixi village, where the temple is located.

The temple was originally built no later than the 12th century and rebuilt during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The main hall, though sitting obscure in a courtyard dwelling, is home to 28 large statues of vividly depicted deities.

Each of these sculptures, supported and shaped using iron wire, conveys bold and exaggerated body language and facial expressions, complemented by delicately draped clothing and detailed armor and weapons.

Shen said discussions and preparations for the temple's opening to the public actually started at the beginning of last year. They have preserved the original nature of the community that the temple nestled in for centuries and avoided major demolitions and reconstructions.

Usually, visitors enter the main hall in a group of a dozen people and can linger in an area of only about 6 sq m.

# Cultural tourism inspired by commercial hits

Scenes depicted in *Black Myth: Wukong*, *Ne Zha 2* reignite passion for history



Tourists ride camels at the Mingsha Mountain and Crescent Spring Scenic Area in Dunhuang, Gansu province, last month. The tourist city is renowned for desert landscape as well as Buddhist murals and grottoes. ZHANG XIAOLIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Clockwise from left: Lion dancers perform on poles during the Spring Festival holiday in Luoyang, Henan province, on Feb 2. HUANG ZHENGWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY Spanish tourists taste fruit tea in Shanghai in December. CHEN HAOMING / FOR CHINA DAILY Tourists flock to the Tiefu Temple in Gaoping, Shanxi province, in September. Buddhist statues from the temple are featured in the popular video game *Black Myth: Wukong*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The entire courtyard can accommodate a maximum of around 50 people.

For those waiting in line, villagers provide them with chairs, parasols, drinks and sometimes performances to kill time, while interpreting the historical and artistic value of the temple.

The villagers are also engaged in tourist services such as guided tours, dining, accommodation and selling cultural products and local specialties. So far, cultural product sales have reached 1.65 million yuan (\$228,000), earning more than 150,000 yuan for the village community, Shen said.

Meanwhile, a growing number of visitors are being attracted to

Gaoping's other precious but lesser-known cultural heritage sites, significantly boosting the local tourism industry, Shen added.

Lu Yi, director of the Shanxi Academy of Ancient Building, Painted Sculpture and Fresco Preservation, said, "It's thanks to the protection by generations of villagers that the Tiefu Temple has survived."

For example, the family of 78-year-old Wang Gaiping alone has been living in the courtyard dwelling, guarding the temple and keeping it clean for three generations.

"While ensuring the safety of the artifacts, the approach taken by the



Tiefu Temple has bestowed dignity upon the artifacts, the visitors, protectors of the artifacts, as well as the local people living in the surrounding areas," Lu said.

### Greater access

To expand the availability of cultural offerings, it's meaningful to vitalize existing resources.

Yang Chaoming, a deputy to the 14th NPC and a professor at the Advanced Institute for Confucian Studies at Shandong University, called for more free and open access to university museums.

He mentioned that the majority of

the universities directly under the Ministry of Education have set up museums or art galleries. Many of these universities, especially those with archaeology or museology departments, have quality collections of cultural relics, solid study into the art and history of the relics, as well as stories brought from archaeological sites.

These museums have the potential in hosting themed exhibitions and bridging exchanges and collaborations between universities, while broadening students' horizons and enhancing the social influence of these universities, he said.

Yang suggested that more public

financial support be given to the operation of university museums, the restoration and digitization of their relic collections, and free access. Additionally, he advocated for the involvement of private capital and resources.

Clarence Ling Chun-kit, a member of the 14th National Committee of the CPPCC and founding chairman of Hong Kong's Chinese Young Entrepreneurs Association, said that the popularity of the scenes depicted in the hit movie *Ne Zha 2* and the game *Black Myth: Wukong* has increased interest among young people from Hong Kong to explore the Chinese mainland.

"For the young generation of Hong Kong, their engagement and interactions are key for them to deepen their understanding of Chinese culture and their connection with the mainland.

"Therefore, it's of great significance to integrate cultural resources and design for them themed routes that blend humanities, nature and technology — such as the explorations of the Silk Road, the relics of ancient civilizations, winter tours and high-tech hubs," Ling said.

### Enhanced understanding

For more than 1,500 years, the Yungang Grottoes have stood as a Buddhist art treasure trove with 59,000 sculptures, and are a testament to East-West cultural exchanges in the 5th century.

Last year, the UNESCO World Heritage Site welcomed 4.5 million tourists. The number of visits was 3.03 million in 2023. Hang said a gratifying change is that the low season is no longer slack — the site is often crowded with young, returning tourists in pursuit of a better visiting experience and a more comprehensive knowledge of the heritage.

Hang noted that this is partly attributed to more convenient transportation, and that Shanxi will continue to improve its road network to better serve the development of cultural tourism.

Apart from improving infrastructure, experts have stressed the importance of research, interpretation and promotion of the historical and artistic value of the cultural heritage.

Hang said that studies for some cultural heritage items are far from sufficient, resulting in tourists, enthusiasts of ancient buildings and cultural relics, as well as social media influencers, sometimes posting inaccurate information and misconceptions online, which may mislead a wider audience.

He said that cultural heritage preservation units need to establish an effective interpretation system and convey these professional explanations to the general public.

Shanxi boasts more than 28,000 ancient buildings and is home to more than 80 percent of China's surviving timber-framed structures from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and earlier, according to the province's cultural heritage administration.

Lu said that many of these destinations are worth visiting more than once. As a professional with 20 years of experience in the cultural heritage preservation sector, he still makes fresh discoveries and finds new angles for interpretation and curation each time he visits places like the Foguang Temple on Mount Wutai.

He added that in the future, the interpretation and utilization of cultural heritage will have to be customized for people with different needs — such as those in the preservation sector, the academic community and the general public — and a mechanism that allows public wisdom to contribute to innovative content and ideas for cultural products is expected to be established.

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## Experts call for swell in promotion of cruise industry

By FANG AIQING, ZHAO RUIXUE and ZHU XINGXIN

Against the backdrop of mist-shrouded skyscrapers and the modern port facilities of downtown Qingdao in East China's Shandong province, the cruise ship *Europa 2* glided gracefully through turquoise waters before docking at the Qingdao Cruise Home Port on Saturday afternoon.

Onboard were about 460 foreign travelers, mainly from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, who embarked on their cruise journey from Shanghai a week earlier and had previously berthed at Tianjin.

According to Qingdao's culture and tourism bureau, the ship run by the Hamburg-headquartered Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, carried the largest

inbound European tour group that Shandong has received since 2020. It is also the first international cruise ship to dock in the province this year.

Last year, China implemented 18 major measures to facilitate inbound foreign trips, including the current 240-hour visa-free transit eligible for foreigners from 54 countries, and 15-day visa-free group tours for cruise travel.

So far, the country has implemented full visa exemptions with 26 countries and unilateral visa exemptions with 38 countries. All these preferable policies have resulted in an inbound trip boom.

According to the National Immigration Administration, 64.88 million entries and exits were made by foreigners in 2024, marking a year-on-year growth of 82.9 percent.

Among them were more than 20 million visa-free trips, which increased by 112.3 percent year-on-year.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that foreign travelers spent \$94.2 billion in China last year, increasing by 77.8 percent year-on-year, while statistics from the Ministry of Natural Resources demonstrate that the marine tourism industry achieved an added value of 1.6 trillion yuan (\$221 billion), a year-on-year increase of 9.2 percent.

During this year's two sessions, Dai Bin, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and president of the China Tourism Academy, called for more efforts to promote marine tourism, including measures to enhance specialized research and top-level design, and

build Hainan into a demonstration province for marine tourism and Sansha city into an international marine tourism demonstration zone.

He expressed hope that the transportation, culture and tourism departments will jointly promote and regulate the development of cruise tourism. "Not every city is suitable for developing a cruise home port. Top-level design should be carried out based on the characteristics and development needs of each city to avoid homogenized competition and redundant construction," he said.

Dai also advocated for more convenient cruise travel within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

As "China Travel" becomes a new trend among foreign visitors, domestic tourist destinations are improv-

ing services catering to their needs.

Hang Kan, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and director of the Yungang Research Institute, which oversees the Yungang Grottoes in Datong, Shanxi, has observed an influx of foreign visitors to the grottoes in recent years.

With more than 59,000 Buddhist statues, the 1,500-year-old grottoes, which were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001, bear witness to the local adaptation and secularization of Buddhist art in ancient China.

Hang explained that while sculptures form a universal language, Westerners are particularly drawn to large, three-dimensional statues. Compared to China's many other grottoes, they exhibit more exotic influences resulting from East-West cultural exchanges. The historical connections make it easier for international tourists to understand its culture.

He said that last year they recruit-

ed foreign language guides in the hope of establishing a stable, professional team to better serve foreign tourists and promote the culture.

In January, they also conducted an English training program to ensure that tour guides, security staff, cleaners and ticket sellers are capable of basic conversations regarding dining, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping and entertaining.

This year, more than 40 cruise ships are expected to dock at the Qingdao Cruise Home Port, doubling the number from 2024.

To facilitate international cruise travelers, Qingdao has established a one-stop service center at its cruise home port, where foreign tourists can withdraw cash using major international credit cards, obtain SIM cards and access specialized boutique itineraries, said Pan Feng, director of the city's culture and tourism bureau.



# TWO SESSIONS

## Jiangsu aspires to take lead in tech innovation

Deputies vow to heed Xi's call for advancing high-quality development

By CUI JIA  
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Deputies to the 14th National People's Congress from Jiangsu province vowed to make solid efforts to ensure the province takes the lead in the integration of technological and industrial innovation in the country, as called for by President Xi Jinping on Wednesday.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, took part in a deliberation in Beijing with fellow deputies of the Jiangsu delegation at the third session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

Zhao Jianjun, the mayor of Wuxi, Jiangsu, said he could tell from Xi's interactions with fellow deputies on Wednesday that the president knows Jiangsu's development situation very well and has very high hopes for the province, which is an economic powerhouse.

Zhao noted that it is the third consecutive year that Xi has taken part in deliberating with deputies from Jiangsu, and that Xi always points out the clear direction for the future development of Jiangsu and the country.

"He has emphasized the importance of the integration of technological and industrial innovation as well as advancing in-depth reform and high-standard opening-up. He has also made it clear ... that Jiangsu should take the lead in those areas in the country," Zhao said, adding that the development of Wuxi and Jiangsu as a whole reflects the overall high-quality development of China.

Xu Guanghui, director of the

Jiangsu Provincial Department of Science and Technology, said a detailed action plan for the province to take the lead in the integration of technological and industrial innovation will be drafted.

"We will focus on introducing strategies to make core technological breakthroughs and support applied basic research, and we will also build industrial technology innovation centers with global influence," Xu said.

During the deliberation session, Xu said the Jiangsu government's investment in technological innovation increased from 67.8 billion yuan (\$9.35 billion) in 2022 to 78.8 billion yuan last year, representing a growth of 16.2 percent. Furthermore, efforts have been made to strengthen the construction of innovation platforms, with three basic science centers established at provincial level in physics, applied mathematics and synthetic biology.

Zhang Junjie, vice-president of Nanjing First Hospital in Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu, is a cardiologist who has been committed to the interventional diagnosis and treatment of coronary heart disease, valvular heart disease and hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy.

Zhang said that Xi's call for better integrating technological and industrial innovation has made him more determined as a doctor to diligently study advanced medical technologies and treat patients with an even higher level of medical skills.

"I will continue to build bridges for the transformation of medical science and technology achievements. I will make more medical innovations and make sure they can better benefit the people," he added.

## Measures: Bigger role seen for private firms, experts say

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and entrepreneurs, stimulate market vitality and guide more investment to future industries and next-generation technologies.

According to the Government Work Report delivered on Wednesday at the opening meeting of the third session of the 14th NPC, China will strive to develop new quality productive forces in light of local conditions and accelerate the development of a modernized industrial system. This will require the fostering of emerging industries and industries of the future, such as biomanufacturing, quantum technology, embodied artificial intelligence and 6G technology.

"Developing new quality productive forces will be key to boosting China's long-term economic growth potential, with artificial intelligence — in which the United States and China are seeking to gain a competitive edge — set for intensified development," said Li Chao, chief economist at Zhesang Securities. "Future industries could be a particular focus, and we anticipate new industrial plans to outline their growth trajectories."

Li said China will ramp up efforts to strengthen research in critical and revolutionary technologies and

accelerate major tech projects.

"In this push, private enterprises — recognized as key drivers of innovation with high efficiency — are expected to play a greater role, particularly in application-driven breakthroughs, complementing the nation's investments in fundamental research," he added.

At the news conference on Thursday, Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said China will launch a science and technology board in the bond market this year, as the country increases its commitment to providing financial support for technological innovation.

Ming Ming, chief economist at CITIC Securities, said: "The launch of a science and technology board in the bond market is not just an innovation in financing tools, but a key breakthrough in the system of financial support for technological innovation."

In addition, the central bank will optimize its lending program for technological innovation and technical transformation, increasing the program's size from 500 billion yuan to between 800 billion and 1 trillion yuan.

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Senior officials attend a news conference focused on the economy for the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on Thursday. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

## Meeting the media



Deputies from Guizhou province receive interviews in Beijing on Thursday after a group meeting of the Guizhou delegation at the third session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

KUANG LINHUA / CHINA DAILY

## Senior leaders pool wisdom from advisers

By CAO DESHENG  
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Senior Chinese leaders joined national political advisers on Thursday in Beijing for different group discussions during the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the nation's top political advisory body.

The leaders who attended the meetings were Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi, all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

While participating in a joint group meeting with national political advisers from the economic and agricultural sectors, Li Qiang, who is also Chinese premier, said that the nation's development still faces many difficulties and challenges.

To achieve the development goals set for this year, it is necessary to enhance forward-looking, targeted and effective macroeconomic regulation, he said.

A more proactive fiscal policy should be implemented, with focus on the combined effects of the scale, emphasis and pace of expenditure, Li said, adding that a moderately loose monetary policy should be adopted to ensure more abundant financing support for the real economy.

He underlined the need to expand and strengthen the dynamics of the domestic market, stimulate consumption, boost economic vitality by deepening reform, and unleash economic potential

through technological innovation.

On Thursday, Li also participated in a deliberation on the Government Work Report with deputies to the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, from Hebei province. He urged Hebei to take active steps to promote coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and advance the construction of Xiong'an New Area with high standards and high quality.

Speaking at a joint group meeting attended by national political advisers from the China Zhi Gong Dang, the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese and the sector of friendship with foreign countries, Zhao Leji, who is also chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, emphasized the need to broadly unite people, build consensus, pool wisdom and consolidate strength in promoting Chinese modernization.

Zhao called for leveraging the advantage of the overseas Chinese community, and uniting their hearts and pooling their strengths to contribute to deepening reform and promoting high-quality development.

During a group discussion with national political advisers from religious bodies, Wang Huning, who is also chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, said it is important to comprehensively implement the basic principles of the Party for religious work and actively guide the religions practiced in China to adapt to a socialist society.

Wang underlined the need to enhance the rule of law in the governance of religious affairs to ensure

that religious activities are conducted in a safe and orderly manner.

Speaking at a joint group meeting attended by national political advisers from the social sciences and press and publication sectors, Cai Qi, who is also a member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, said it is essential to strengthen cultural confidence and establish an independent knowledge system in Chinese philosophy and social sciences.

Efforts should be made to consolidate and strengthen the mainstream public opinion in the new era, focus on boosting confidence and promoting stability, create more high-quality works, and make the Chinese story better heard in the world, he said.

During a joint group discussion with national political advisers from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, Ding Xuexiang, who is also a vice-premier, emphasized the importance of shouldering the significant mission of practicing the "one country, two systems" policy in the new era and safeguarding national security.

Speaking at a joint group meeting attended by national political advisers from the Communist Youth League of China, the All-China Youth Federation, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the All-China Women's Federation, Li Xi, who is also secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, called on them to provide suggestions on deepening reform and promoting high-quality development.

## Xinjiang: Region 'filled with changes, vitality'

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with changes and vitality," said Erkin Tuniyaz.

In particular, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, efforts have been made to vigorously promote high-quality development, expand high-level opening-up, create a high-quality life for the people, adopt efficient governance, ensure high-level security, and drive historic changes in all undertakings in Xinjiang, he said.

He added that the region, which this year is celebrating the 70th anniversary of its establishment, enjoys a good situation of social stability and people living and working in peace and contentment, while China's modernization has made solid new strides in Xinjiang.

The region's GDP has increased from 930.69 billion yuan in 2015 to 2.05 trillion yuan in 2024, with an average annual growth rate of 6.1 percent. The average annual per capita disposable income of residents increased from 16,859 yuan to 30,899 yuan in that same period, with an average annual growth rate of 7 percent.

Meanwhile, the construction of transportation infrastructure in the region has been comprehensively accelerated, with the total operating mileage of railways reaching 9,092 kilometers and the total mileage of first-class expressways reaching 12,400 km. The region also has 27 civil airports.

The improved transportation network has made traveling to and within Xinjiang easier and faster than ever, Erkin Tuniyaz said.

Furthermore, the region has continuously increased investment in people's livelihoods, with over 77 percent of the regional government's financial expenditure being used for that purpose, he said.

He added that developing new quality productive forces has become an important focus for promoting high-quality development, and the region has made plans to further develop in areas such as new and clean energy as well as computing power.

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## Meeting: Governance model key to consensus building

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The meetings are expected to reinforce the country's commitment to research and development, talent cultivation, and high-tech manufacturing. A renewed emphasis on industrial modernization will ensure that China remains competitive in the face of external challenges and shifting global supply chains, while achieving environmental sustainability and climate goals of peak carbon emissions before 2030.

Beyond economic policy, the two sessions highlight China's evolving approach to governance and representation. The NPC, with nearly 3,000 deputies, reflects a broad cross-section of Chinese society, including ethnic minorities, farmers, workers, and technical professionals, among others. The CPPCC National Committee, a consultative body, brings together political advisers from diverse fields to offer professional policy recommendations. This broad participation ensures that truly democratic and national decision-making considers a wide range of perspectives and societal needs.

In an era of heightened global turbulence, Beijing's approach to trade, regional stability and multilateral cooperation will be of critical importance. The two sessions provide an opportunity for China to signal its willingness to engage in constructive diplomacy while safeguarding its national interests. As global tensions persist, maintaining open channels of communication and fostering economic partnerships will be key to sustaining stability in the international arena.

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of the two sessions is the efficiency and discipline with which deliberations are conducted. Unlike the often gridlocked political systems seen elsewhere, China's model of governance ensures that decisions are made swiftly and effectively through extensive democratic consultation and consensus building. The emphasis on long-term planning and policy continuity provides a level of stability that many other nations struggle to achieve. While the Chinese system is distinct from Western models, its ability to execute strategic plans and adapt to global changes remains a point of interest for policymakers worldwide.

Among the key takeaways is the country's unwavering commitment to regional stability, global peace, and progress for a community of shared future. The positive expectations surrounding the two sessions reflect not just confidence in China's leadership and its political and economic systems, but also an acknowledgment that its continued stability and development are vital to the broader global economy. With a clear road map for the future, China is poised to contribute more to manage the complexities of an evolving world order.

One thing is certain: The two sessions remain a defining moment in China's annual political and economic calendar, providing not only close-ups of China's modern governance but also a reminder that different political systems can yield effective results. At a time when much of the world is grappling with volatility, the steady and pragmatic approach of China's leadership offers a striking counterpoint for new thinking.

The author is an international affairs commentator and freelancer based in Karachi, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

# TWO SESSIONS

PERSPECTIVE

## Sessions focus on sustainable development

China's clean energy industry drives economic growth and progress

By ZHENG WANYIN in London  
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Belinda Schaepe

At COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, China announced that it has voluntarily provided 177 billion yuan in project funding since 2016 to support developing countries in tackling climate change.

The rhetoric of "overcapacity", which accuses China's clean energy sector of benefiting from so-called unfair subsidies, has been circulating for a while, stemming the flow of the competitively priced low-carbon products.

While there is government support, "China's clean energy leadership is the result of a combination of factors that are often overlooked", Schaepe said.

Over the past two decades, long-term policy guidance at both the national and provincial levels has driven the emergence of a pool of globally strong companies, she said, noting that China's strategic investment in research and development and its domestic supply chain resilience are accountable.

Meanwhile, the vast home market and fierce competition among Chinese companies have further accelerated efficiency gains and cost reductions, she said. "Success requires a holistic approach that includes infrastructure development, supply chain coordination, large-scale deployment policies, and competition-driven innovation," she said.

As 2025 emerges as a crucial juncture for China, the nation is setting the stage for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) and revising its National Determined Contributions, essential climate action strategies within the 2015 Paris Agreement. Schaepe expressed optimism for sustained progress in clean energy development, supported by a more ambitious target for domestic deployment rates.

"If China continues its current clean energy deployment trends, it could achieve the emissions reductions needed to align with the Paris Agreement's targets by 2035. At the current rate, renewable energy capacity could reach around 5,000 gigawatts by then, cutting power sector emissions by a third," she said. "The challenge ahead is ensuring this growth is sustainable," she added.

An ambitious emission reduction target, including a clear, strong trajectory on phasing down coal consumption, is also essential, Schaepe said.

China's successful mass deployment of clean energy can play a pivotal role in the global green transition by serving as a reference model and providing cost-effective products accessible to all, said Belinda Schaepe, a China policy analyst at the Helsinki-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. Green development and ecological conservation are the focus of lawmakers and advisers who gather in Beijing for the annual sessions of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Schaepe noted that the clean energy industry is now a key factor not only in China's climate efforts but also in its broader economic and industrial policies. A February analysis by experts at the CREA published on Carbon Brief, a United Kingdom-based climate website, said clean energy sectors drove a quarter of China's GDP growth last year, with sales and investments worth 13.6 trillion yuan (\$1.9 trillion). China's investment in clean energy was close to the total global amount put into fossil fuels last year, and it was similar to the overall size of Saudi Arabia's economy, the analysis also highlighted.

"This demonstrates that large-scale clean energy deployment can drive economic growth rather than hinder it, challenging outdated narratives that decarbonization is a drag on GDP," Schaepe said. "As China's green development accelerates, this creates opportunities for all to share the growing pie in returns from the production and deployment of clean energy."

China has made clean products affordable for all countries, as the domestic scale-up of manufacturing has driven down costs dramatically, Schaepe said. Together with international partners, China can also collaborate to promote green financing, especially for emerging economies.

"Many emerging countries need large-scale clean energy infrastructure and want to develop the underlying industries but face financing constraints," she said. "China, along with multilateral institutions and Western partners, could work together to enhance green financing mechanisms and technology transfer to build up production capacity for clean technologies and enable a faster uptake in renewables with those countries."

## Sharing ideas



Members from the social science group talk with each others before a panel discussion at the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing, on Thursday. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## Liaoning leads fusion of tradition, innovation

By YAN DONGJIE in Beijing and WUYONG in Shenyang

The Chinese government and the Communist Party of China recognize and support those who work diligently, regardless of their origins or party membership."



Xu Guangwen, member of CPPCC National Committee and president of Shenyang University of Chemical Technology

As the president of a long-established university in Liaoning province, Xu Guangwen often contemplates how to preserve the distinctive strengths of traditional disciplines while adapting to contemporary trends. His goal is to deeply integrate the cultivation of high-quality innovative talents with Liaoning's industrial transformation and upgrading.

During an exclusive interview with China Daily, Xu, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, emphasized that talent development and technological innovation stand as our core missions, essential for translating research achievements into tangible productivity.

In the 1980s, Xu's Shenyang University of Chemical Technology established the country's first university student social practice team.

The university collected numerous technical challenges from enterprises and publicly posted them on campus. Faculty provided technical guidance while students enthusiastically participated in tackling these challenges and engaged in the front line of scientific research and innovation.

"Many students who explored the chemical plants in Shenyang 40 years ago are now key figures in overcoming critical technological challenges and revitalizing Liaoning's traditional industries," Xu said.

Ranging from Professor Zhao Mingyu's award-winning "Acetal

Method for Producing Phenolic Resin" to Professor Tang Lifu's widely used tripod centrifuge in industrial production, the university has witnessed the rise of the nation's chemical industry, as one of the earliest chemical engineering universities in Northeast China. "One of our latest developments, a million-metric-ton ethylene compressor, is breaking the monopoly of foreign technology. Additionally, nearly 10 listed companies founded by our alumni are creating new industrial legends in fields such as semiconductor electronic chemicals," Xu said.

In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, a school supported by SUCT will soon allow local youth to learn about Liaoning's smart industrial technolo-

gies online. "This initiative aims to train local employees for Chinese enterprises abroad and create opportunities for local youth to study in China," Xu said. The university is actively building international innovation cooperation bases.

"Besides our neighboring countries like South Korea and Japan, we are also collaborating with developed countries such as Canada and the UK in areas like energy, chemical engineering, and resource conversion, contributing to Liaoning's role as a hub for open cooperation in Northeast Asia," he added.

This stems from the university's tradition of international education, which began in the 1950s. Today, students from 66 countries study chemical engineering-related majors here, with a high proportion from countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

As a CPPCC National Committee member, Xu's proposals at this year's two sessions focus on two main topics. First, he suggests including more universities with industry-specific strengths in the national Double First-Class initiative.

"Liaoning originally had nearly 20 ministry-owned industry-affiliated national universities, but they all became provincially managed, limiting their development due to resource and channel constraints," Xu said.

He hopes the State will consider incorporating more former industry-affiliated universities into the Double First-Class initiative to leverage their advantages in serving related industries.

Second, he advocates establish-

ing an innovation base for new chemical material productivity. He recommends that the state set up special funds and policies to support the construction of a new productivity innovation park in the Shenyang Chemical Industry Park. "Upgrading the industrial park to a scientific innovation park will create a central platform for new quality productive forces research and development, serving the chemical industry's advantageous development in Northeast China," Xu said.

"Last year, I proposed the establishment of industry research communities, which received responses from the Ministry of Science and Technology and other departments. This year, the Government Work Report emphasized the deep integration of scientific and industrial innovation, which gratified me," he said.

"The Chinese government and the Communist Party of China recognize and support those who work diligently, regardless of their origins or party membership," said the scientist, who returned to China after more than a decade of working abroad.

To Chinese students and expatriates studying and working abroad, Xu said, "The doors of your homeland are always open to you. We welcome you to return and participate in the construction of the country, utilize your skills, and realize your life values."

Liu Shicheng and Wang Siyuan contributed to this story.

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## Chinese diplomacy 'deep seeking' collaborations

While China-based AI engine newcomer DeepSeek captured attention and garnered support from app users and stock market traders, "deep" and "seek" coincidentally resonate with the country's longstanding commitments and endeavors across various domains, including foreign policy.

Exactly, China has been going quite deep, seeking peace and development with like-minded countries including the vast number of Global South nations, and even those who have publicly tried to coerce China.

Some seasoned Chinese diplomats also serve as the country's political advisers, that is, members of the National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The word "deep" also stands out among some of their recent public comments.

Take one of the diplomats — Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng — as an example.

When addressing Duke University students and faculty at the Duke-UNC China Leadership Summit on Feb 28, Xie mentioned "deep/deep-



Zhang Yunbi Reporter's log

ly" three times in his video speech.

"Bridges one after another have connected China and the United States across the Pacific, leaving us deeply interwoven," he said, outlining how the two countries have been linked tightly in the economy over the past decades.

He is right. Around 73,000 American companies are investing in China, and bilateral trade last year exceeded \$680 billion.

As Xie had left the US and is now in Beijing attending the annual two sessions, he explained to the audience in the video that he could not join them in person and was glad to see "so many young friends continue to care for China-US relations."

Calling to join hands in the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, Xie said, "What we need is not a technological blockade, but 'deep seeking' for human progress."

What a remarkable echo to the viral name "DeepSeek"?

The major visions pursued by China in recent decades, such as the 12-year-old Belt and Road Initiative, also serve as a convincing reminder of how and why the country has been going deep and seeking mutual benefits with partners.

Liao Liqiang, the Chinese ambassador to Egypt and a member of the 14th National Committee of the CPPCC, noted in a recent article that China and Egypt have made a leap forward in their ties over the past "Golden Decade" and have seen "a deep synergy between the BRI and Egypt's Vision 2030".

Pakistan, a partner with China in rolling out the BRI and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, is considering sending a Pakistani astronaut to the Chinese space station. This has made headlines before the opening of this year's two sessions.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif witnessed the signing of a cooperation agreement on potential spaceflight on Feb 28 in Islamabad.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian was also asked about this news for comment at the daily news con-

ference on Monday. Lin said, "We focus on sharing with all humanity the results of China's development and offer opportunities for cooperation in China's space station."

After the news conference, Muhammad Asghar, a correspondent for the Associated Press of Pakistan in China, told me, "China is doing a big thing to take along other countries, neighboring countries, giving them a chance."

Regarding the rapidly changing global and regional landscapes, going deep and harnessing long-term, win-win results sounds unrealistic for some people. Many scholars and readers asked me how China would approach the overarching goal it set for its major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics — building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Now the answer could not be even more evident. China will achieve this goal of "seeking deep" alongside various nations.

As an ancient Chinese idiom goes, "Still water runs deep."

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## What NPC deputies and CPPCC National Committee members say



**Zhu Huarong, NPC deputy, chairman of Changan Automobile**  
Repeated investments by individual companies in researching international markets lead to significant resource waste. A unified platform would enhance collective efficiency and risk resilience. I suggest China build a shared database covering international policies, regulations, climate patterns, infrastructure and cultural practices.



**Qi Xiumin, NPC deputy, director of Hebei Qixin Law Firm**  
Stricter regulations of college application consultancies, many of which spread misleading information and exploit the anxiety of high school graduates, are needed. Through investigation, I found wide price variations and potential risks of misguidance.



**Jiang Shengnan, CPPCC National Committee member, writer**  
The Chinese mainland has been wholeheartedly promoting Chinese culture and is fully prepared for the release of *Ne Zha 2* in Taiwan. Good work is appreciated worldwide. Even though the Taiwan authorities may block the screening of *Ne Zha 2* on the island, they cannot prevent Taiwan people from traveling to the Chinese mainland or the Hong Kong SAR to watch the movie.



**Peng Shou, NPC deputy, academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering**  
As public demand for key building functions such as sound insulation and power generation continues to rise, along with the country's substantial demand for rigid and improved housing, accelerating the research, development, and application of new building materials has become key to ensuring that suitable materials support the construction of good houses. To achieve this, it is recommended to expedite the establishment of a national-level innovation center for building material applications.

TANG YINGZI, JIANG CHENGLONG AND LI SHANGYI



# TWO SESSIONS

## Jieyang to hasten development of green industries

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou  
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Jieyang, a coastal city in Guangdong province, is accelerating the development of its green petrochemical and marine economy industries while prioritizing five additional key sectors to achieve high-quality growth, the city's top official said.

Zeng Fengbao, the city's Communist Party secretary and deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, emphasized Jieyang's commitment to environmentally friendly development as it builds its petrochemical industry.



Zeng Fengbao

A cornerstone of this effort is China National Petroleum Corp's Guangdong petrochemical project, which has adopted advanced environmental protection technologies to achieve ultra-low emissions, a wastewater reuse rate exceeding 70 percent and full compliance in solid waste treatment.

According to Zeng, the 70.2 billion yuan (\$9.7 billion) project is the company's largest single investment. The company has linked the project to efforts to promote supply-side structural reform and accelerate the transformation and upgrading of China's refining and chemical industries.

The Guangdong plant has the capacity to process more than 20 million metric tons of crude oil annually, along with 2.6 million tons of aromatic hydrocarbon and 1.2 million tons of ethylene. It also produces more than 20 types of oil products and 200 types of chemical products, playing a pivotal role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area's development.

These products are used in high-end industries, including aerospace, railway and maritime transportation, agriculture, healthcare, construction and electronics. Since commencing full operations in 2023, the project has processed more than 36 million tons of crude oil, generating over 200 billion yuan in output value and 30 billion yuan in tax revenue, Zeng said.

Jieyang's green petrochemical industry aims to grow to more than 200 billion yuan in scale within the next two to three years.

Meanwhile, the city government plans to vigorously develop its marine economy, focusing on offshore wind power, hydrogen energy storage, ocean ranching and offshore equipment manufacturing. These efforts aim to strengthen and expand Jieyang's industrial advantages.

Zeng announced plans to build an industrial cluster worth more than 800 billion yuan within three years.

To support these goals, he urged city departments to adopt an "everything for the enterprise" approach, treating business affairs as their own.

"With further policy and measure support, we will wholeheartedly assist and empower enterprises," he said.

"We will spare no effort to create an efficient and clean government, a fair and competitive market and a transparent legal environment for investors and entrepreneurs worldwide."

Infrastructure development is also a priority. The city government plans to invest 20 billion yuan this year in major transportation infrastructure and urban highway networks to strengthen connectivity between Jieyang and other cities.

Jieyang's goals are within reach, in part due to its 300,000-ton-capacity deep-water port, which has 20 port berths either operational or under construction. It is also home to China's first wind power "home port".

Last year, Jieyang's port cargo throughput reached 70.85 million tons, an 18.9 percent increase from the previous year. The city's GDP grew 3.9 percent during the same period, ranking sixth in Guangdong in terms of growth rate.



Deputies of the Xizang delegation convene a panel discussion during the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on Thursday, discussing regional development and national policies. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## Xizang leader rejects Dalai's interference

By CUI JIA  
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The Xizang autonomous region will continue promoting national, civic and rule of law education despite repeated criticism and interference from the 14th Dalai Lama and his followers, the region's chairman said.

The importance of such education is widely recognized in both Eastern and Western countries, as well as across China, Xizang Chairman Gama Cedain said during a panel discussion with the Xizang delegation at the ongoing annual session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing.

"This work aligns with the interests of the people and is welcomed by the public, including monks and nuns," Gama Cedain said. "But it has been smeared by the 14th Dalai Lama and his followers."

He accused Western anti-China forces of supporting the Dalai

Lama and attempting to undermine these efforts.

"But we won't be swayed," he said.

Under the leadership of the central government and with nationwide support, Xizang has maintained stability and continued development, the chairman said.

"This ensures a stronger sense of security, greater satisfaction and a better quality of life for our people."

Gama Cedain also highlighted the region's economic and cultural progress, noting that as the autonomous region marks its 60th anniversary this year, it has seen no major violent incidents for 17 consecutive years.

He also expressed gratitude for support from various provinces and sectors after a 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck Dingri county in Shigatse city in January, killing 126 people.

Improved infrastructure in the

high-altitude region has helped accelerate disaster response, he said.

"Thanks to the airport in Dingri, which began operations at the end of 2022, relief forces reached the epicenter just 30 minutes after the quake," the chairman said. "Such a rapid response would have been unimaginable in the past."

Wang Fanghong, a deputy to the Xizang delegation and mayor of Shigatse, said reconstruction began on Wednesday, demonstrating the advantages of China's socialist system.

Classes also resumed on Wednesday for all 47,000 students from 243 schools damaged in the quake, he said.

"We will ensure new homes meet residents' expectations and incorporate traditional designs," Wang said. "The planning and design work is nearly complete, and all those who lost homes in the quake will move into new housing by the end of October."

## China denies leveraging EU-US divide

Nation 'does not need to' exploit frayed ties between them, says special envoy

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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With some media and observers alleging that China is using the widening US-European Union divergence to draw Europe to its side, Lu Shaye, special representative of the Chinese government on European affairs, said that China "does not need to do so," and China's foreign policy is to make friends with all.

Lu, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and former Chinese ambassador to France, made the comments in an interview on the sidelines of the annual two sessions.

Talking about the countermeasures the Chinese government took this week against Washington's tariff levy policy of "pressuring, coercion and even blackmail" against China, he said, "I am very much supportive" of the countermeasures.

The seasoned diplomat observed that the US is adopting assertive and bullying policies toward Europe, and urged them to have an understanding of the Chinese government's foreign policy.

He said, "Given the way (the US) is treating its allies, I would feel a little bit disappointed and betrayed, if I were in their shoes."

He urged friends in Europe to find the difference between the policies of Washington and the Chinese government toward them. "Then there will be a sharp contrast that highlights peace, friendship, goodwill and a win-win situation of China's foreign policy," which is "more visionary, more just and more reasonable," he added.

The independent, peaceful and mutually beneficial foreign policy that China is practicing "has enabled us to make more and more friends on the international stage," he said. "China has always been right there, hasn't it?"

Some people have said that the way Washington has been treating the EU recently represents "an opportunity for China-Europe relations". According to Lu, such statements sound "as if China is trying to take advantage of others' misfortunes or something."

"With or without such a current US policy toward Europe, China's Europe policy is to advocate peace, friendship, cooperation and a win-win situation," he said, adding that China is not going to alienate other countries.

"I hope that our friends in Europe can be somewhat inspired



Lu Shaye

by the current situation and can reflect on some of their past policies toward China, or at least can adopt a more positive policy toward China."

When asked whether it is possible for Beijing and Brussels to carry forward good policies such as resuming the EU's frozen ratification of China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, Lu said Europe should reflect on whether its past policies toward China were reasonable, correct and feasible, and on this basis, "all issues between China and Europe can be discussed."

"It's better to talk than not to talk, and there is always a chance to solve problems when you talk. But if you don't talk, you don't have a chance to solve them."

He said Europe should break away from "value-oriented diplomacy" and return to pragmatic cooperation, as China-Europe cooperation will do more good to Europe, which is facing economic difficulties.

The two sides can strengthen economic and trade cooperation and expand cooperation space in emerging areas, such as green economy and digital economy, he said.

Referring to China's easing of visa policies last year for foreign visitors to China, Lu noted that the number of French visitors arriving in China has doubled.

"This allows foreigners to learn about China more, and this exposes Chinese people to more foreigners, which is also an important step for our country to further expand its opening-up."

"We will do whatever is conducive to expanding opening-up. So we ask our foreign friends to rest assured that China's door will open wider and wider."

When asked about the Ukraine crisis, the envoy said the Chinese government has consistently advocated for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Regarding some countries' proposal of sending peacekeeping troops to Ukraine, Lu said, "Peacekeeping operations should be decided by the United Nations, not by a backroom deal settled by certain countries."

"We should respect the status of the UN, and China upholds the idea that we should firmly safeguard the international system with the UN at its core, and we should not kick the UN out of the way."

## Washington urged to show right approach, readiness for dialogue

By ZHONG NAN  
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China is open to dialogue with the United States on an equal footing to address mutual concerns but will firmly defend its interests if Washington continues its tariff hikes and protectionist policies, the country's top commerce official said on Thursday.

Speaking at an economy-themed news conference during the ongoing annual legislative meetings, Commerce Minister Wang Wentao said the US tariff escalations and other protectionist measures have disrupted normal economic and trade relations between the two nations, while destabilizing global supply chains and hindering economic growth.

The US government doubled the additional tariff on all Chinese imports to 20 percent earlier this week, reinforcing its tariff strategy.

"These moves will inevitably harm US businesses and serve as a typical example of irrational decision-making," Wang said.

The commerce minister stressed

that there are no winners in a trade war and that the US' unilateral actions contradict global economic trends, triggering widespread concern and opposition from the international community.

"If the US truly seeks solutions, it should act with the responsibility of a major power and adopt the right approach to engagement," Wang said, adding that the two sides could meet at an appropriate time and that their teams should engage in communication as soon as possible.

Amid geopolitical tensions and rising protectionism, Wang said China will focus on policy reinforcement and expanding trade in services to stabilize foreign trade this year.

To overcome challenges and advance high-quality trade development, he said new support policies will be swiftly assessed, formulated and implemented as needed.

Highlighting trade in services as a key growth point for foreign trade, Wang said the government will promote openness, establish supportive platforms, fully implement the negative list for cross-border trade in



Commerce Minister Wang Wentao (center), China Securities Regulatory Commission Chairman Wu Qing (left) and National Development and Reform Commission Director Zheng Shanjie attend a news conference during the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on Thursday. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

services and launch pilot zones for innovative service trade development.

Unlike goods trade, trade in services refers to the sales and delivery of intangible services such as transportation, tourism, telecommunica-

tions, advertising, education, computing and accounting.

Reflecting on China's trade resilience in recent years, Wang reaffirmed the government's confidence in stabilizing foreign trade and strengthening the country's position

as a leading trading nation.

China's trade partnerships have become more diverse, with the country now a major trading partner for more than 150 nations. Trade between China and economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative accounted for more than half of its total foreign trade for the first time last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

To mitigate risks caused by the US tariff hikes, Ningbo Xingye Shengtai Group Co, a copper alloy strip manufacturer in Zhejiang province, has shifted its market focus toward emerging economies such as Vietnam and Brazil.

"Previously, the US was our primary export destination. However, with growing uncertainties, we are now looking to explore more new markets such as Southeast Asian countries," said Yu Zhongting, head of the company's foreign trade unit.

The company's export value surpassed 20 million yuan (\$2.76 million) in the first two months of this year, with orders already secured through the end of the year, according to Ningbo Customs.



# TWO SESSIONS

Tao Jian

## More stability essential for Sino-US ties

Despite US President Donald Trump saying the United States and China can "together solve all of the problems of the world", the US president signed an order on Tuesday increasing previously imposed 10 percent tariffs on Chinese goods to 20 percent.

China immediately retaliated by announcing 15 percent tariffs on chicken, wheat, corn and cotton imports from the US, and 10 percent tariffs on "sorghum, soybeans, pork, beef, aquatic products, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products". Also, China's Ministry of Commerce said it had added 15 US companies, including drone-maker Skydio, to its export control list, meaning Chinese companies will be barred from exporting dual-use equipment to those companies.

The US administration made fentanyl an excuse to impose new rounds of tariffs on Chinese goods, and has been continuously playing the "Taiwan card", approving new rounds of arms sale to the Chinese island. For example, the US State Department has deleted a statement on its website which said Washington does not support "Taiwan independence", challenging the one-China principle. Also, during his visit to five Central American countries in February, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington will reduce Beijing's influence in the Western hemisphere, especially on issues such as the Panama Canal and 5G technology.

All these moves can date back to the National Security Strategy in 2018 dur-

**It is to be hoped that the two countries, on the basis of mutual respect and equality, will hold talks to keep bilateral ties on the right track.**

ing Trump's first presidency, which the Joe Biden administration intensified in order to outcompete China. And by appointing China hawks in his cabinet, especially in his security team, the US president has made clear his goal of winning the competition with China.

China has no intention of replacing the US as the global leader. But it should firmly defend its right to development in the face of the US' persistent containment policy.

The fierce trade conflict during Trump's first presidency failed to contain China's rise, it is unlikely that the US administration this time will succeed in getting concessions from China. In 2024, the US' total trade deficit hit a new high, up about 50 percent from 2017 when Trump launched the tariff war, while its trade deficit with China decreased by about 20 percent during the same period. In contrast, China's foreign trade hit a new high, up about 50 percent from 2017.

With various favorable factors converging, 2025 has become a pivotal year for global investment, and to reassess China's global competitiveness. China's continuous rise shows tariff and trade

conflicts cannot solve the US' problems, nor check China's development march, because despite Sino-US trade accounting for a declining share of China's overall trade, the trend of growing bilateral trade has not substantially changed, indicating Sino-US trade is resilient to non-market intervention.

China has drawn lessons from its interactions with Trump's first presidency, and has become more adept at handling frictions. An apt example is the way in which China has been dealing with the US: it has become more resilient to the US administration's dirty tricks, including punitive tariffs, while leaving room for negotiations.

However, China is not the lone target of the US administration, as it has launched tariff wars against pretty much all major trade partners, which could significantly disrupt the global economy, even dismantle the multilateral trading system.

Many European countries have realized the danger their transatlantic ally poses, and adopted a pragmatic approach toward China. An Indian scholar even said that it is necessary to offset the risks posed by the US' trade policy by deepening trade ties with China. The US administration's "America First" strategy has turned the US into a major source of risks and uncertainties. As a result, more and more countries are choosing to strengthen cooperation with China to reduce the economic and political risks.

Moreover, the US president started withdrawing the US again from international treaties and organizations, which could severely undermine global

efforts to deal with common issues such as climate change and artificial intelligence global governance. As a matter of fact, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has warned that the "absence of rules must not become the guiding principle of a new world order". Against this background, the leadership of and the constructive role played by China, which advocates for equitable multipolarity, has become indispensable for fostering inclusive global development.

Sino-US relations are the most important bilateral relations in the world. Sino-US cooperation can help address a lot of global issues. But the point is: Is Washington willing to cooperate with Beijing? Given the present situation, many may consider persuading Washington to do so as a mission impossible. But the two countries should at least maintain strategic stability and prevent bilateral relations from deteriorating.

It is to be hoped that the two countries, on the basis of mutual respect and equality, will hold talks to keep bilateral ties on the right track. China is responding with certainty to the US' uncertainty and taking firm countermeasures against the US' unilateral, selfish moves. But it remains committed to promoting win-win cooperation.

*The author is a member of 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and a professor at University of International Relations.*

*The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Liu Xianfa

## Macao a tale of opportunities and new achievements

The Government Work Report on Wednesday reiterates that we must fully and accurately implement the principle of "one country, two systems" and support Hong Kong and Macao in promoting economic development, improving living standards, enhancing international exchanges and cooperation, better integrating into the overall national development and maintaining long-term prosperity and stability.

The year 2024 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Since then China has grown from a poverty-stricken agricultural society to the world's second-largest economy; from a country with inadequate supply of food and clothing to a moderately well-off society in all respects. Today, the advancement of Chinese modernization is unfolding a brighter future, guiding the Chinese nation toward realizing rejuvenation.

The year 2024 also marked the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland. To mark the occasion, multiple celebratory events were held in the city. In particular, President Xi Jinping's inspection tour to the Macao Special Administrative Region to attend the celebrations, and his speeches affirmed the remarkable development achievements Macao has made in the 25 years.

President Xi proposed "three expectations" and "four hopes" for Macao, encouraging the city to leverage its unique advantages to improve internal and external connectivity, adopt a more open and inclusive approach to development, enhance its global influence, and further contribute to national development and national rejuvenation. His care for and expectations from Macao have encouraged all sectors of the SAR to contribute more to regional and national development, and boosted the international community's confidence in the advantages and prospects of "one country, two systems".

**Entering a new era as an important bridgehead for the country's high-level opening-up, Macao is looking forward to a brighter future.**

President Xi said that Macao has played an important role in and made unique contributions to national development during different periods. On the other hand, the central government has reinforced its support for the development of Macao's "one center, one platform, and one base", and has been encouraging it to help advance the Belt and Road Initiative.

With the number of its "sister cities" and "circles of friends" growing, Macao has been earning new monikers including the "city of gastronomy", "city of culture" and "city of events". Thanks to the increasing exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries, Macao's global status and influence have greatly improved. In fact, Macao has developed into a global hub connecting China and the rest of the world, and an important bridgehead for the country's high-level opening-up.

This year is the final year of the country's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and the first year of the new Macao SAR government. Currently, all sectors of the SAR are diligently studying and implementing the proposals President Xi made in his speeches during his inspection tour to Macao.

Entering a new era as an important bridgehead for the country's high-level opening-up, Macao is looking forward to a brighter future. As the only region in the world where Chinese and Portuguese are official languages, Macao is a model of harmonious coexistence and integration of different civilizations. The city has been endeavoring to build "one center, one platform, and one base", while playing a key role in promoting economic and trade cooperation, and cultural exchanges between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

We believe Macao will be able to further leverage its unique advantages to improve internal and external connectivity, and synergize diversified sectors including high-tech, tourism, traditional Chinese medicine and finance through more exchanges and interactions with external parties, and develop a world-class business environment.

The SAR will also be able to improve its external cooperation mechanisms, and combine the strength of all its sectors, including expatriates, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and other cities, as well as Portuguese-speaking and Southeast Asian countries, to attract more foreign investments, boost and diversify its economic development, and transform itself into an international hub to pursue an even brighter future.

The Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Macao will adhere to Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy as its guide, help implement the proposals of President Xi, better safeguard national security, support the SAR's chief executive in governing according to the law, help the region expand its external exchanges and cooperation, and facilitate the development of the Guangdong-Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin so it attracts more foreign investment.

We firmly believe that with the guidance of President Xi, the backing of the central government and the joint efforts of the SAR government and all sectors of its society, Macao will be able to seize the new opportunities created by the country's high-quality development and high-level opening-up, open up new horizons and make new achievements.

*The author is the commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, and a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.*  
*The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



Ajaikebaier Aisa

## Xinjiang a front-runner in BRI medical cooperation

The Belt and Road Initiative has significantly improved infrastructure connectivity, promoted win-win cooperation and yielded mutual benefit for Belt and Road countries. Being closely related to people's livelihoods and well-being, the healthcare sector has made remarkable achievements under the Belt and Road framework.

As an advocate and promoter of the Belt and Road Initiative, China continues to explore ways to channel its high-quality medical resources to its western regions, enabling people in neighboring countries, particularly those in Central Asia, to share the fruits of the country's development and jointly build a global health community.

The international medical service center in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which forms the core of the Silk Road Economic Belt, holds extraordinary significance and is advancing the profound mission of promoting better healthcare in neighboring regions. Xinjiang also plays a pivotal role in enhancing the influence of China-Central Asia cooperation.

The Chinese government emphasizes the importance of strengthening healthcare cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road, making quality medical services easily accessible to people in those countries and promoting global health development.

The Xinjiang Medical University has been playing a pioneering role in this endeavor. Adhering to national policies

and Xinjiang's strategic goals, the university has been organizing extensive exchanges with health departments, medical institutions and universities across Central Asia. In fact, it has signed a series of cooperation agreements to outline the collaborative goals of medical talent training, research and innovation, and the sharing of medical services.

The university has established a regular exchange and cooperation mechanism with Samarkand State Medical University in Uzbekistan, jointly undertaking medical research projects which have injected new vitality into medical education and research in both institutions.

Moreover, the affiliated hospitals of the Xinjiang Medical University, using advanced medical expertise and equipment, provide high-quality diagnostic and medical treatment for patients from Central Asia. For instance, the First Affiliated Hospital of Xinjiang Medical University has treated a significant number of patients with complex and rare diseases from various Central Asian countries in recent years. The hospital has also jointly established an international telemedicine consultation center and a telemedicine platform with hospitals in several Central Asian countries, enabling patients there to avail of high-quality diagnosis and medical treatment services provided by Chinese specialists.

Also, the hospitals affiliated with the university have established one-to-one or many-to-one counterpart coopera-

tion mechanisms with Central Asian countries for telemedicine consultation for serious cases, further promoting the construction of cross-border medical platforms and an international medical service center in the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

The Xinjiang Medical University has closely collaborated with research institutions across Central Asia, focusing on joint research on high-incidence and difficult-to-treat diseases. For example, the university has partnered with research teams in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and other countries to conduct clinical research on drug-resistant tuberculosis. These efforts have led to the development of new diagnostic reagents and therapeutic drugs, significantly raising the cure rate for tuberculosis. The university is committed to launching global research initiatives with Belt and Road nations, sharing resources with them and helping enhance their innovative capabilities.

Since talented scientists and doctors drive the medical industry's development, the Xinjiang Medical University has established bilingual courses for students from Central Asian countries. A large number of medical professionals from these countries have benefited from the course.

The university has also forged partnerships with about 20 universities and research institutions in Central Asia for academic exchanges and resource sharing, and hosted more than 360 medical experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmeni-

stan as part of short-term exchanges and long-term studies at the university and its affiliated hospitals. And from 2023 to 2024, the Xinjiang Medical University dispatched 185 top medical specialists to the five Central Asian countries to provide diagnosis and medical services for complex and critical diseases in local hospitals and communities, conduct health education programs and disseminate medical knowledge to help elevate local medical standards.

Xinjiang boasts of unique natural landscapes and an advanced medical sector, creating opportunities for cross-border medical tourism cooperation. The Xinjiang regional government departments can collaborate with the tourism authorities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries to devise tours that integrate medical services. This innovative cooperation model will not only address the health and wellness needs of people in Central Asia but also boost Xinjiang's tourism economy.

The Xinjiang Medical University will continue to boost its comprehensive capabilities by deepening cross-border cooperation, advancing scientific research, optimizing its talent training program and providing even better medical services for Belt and Road countries and regions.

*The author is president of the Xinjiang Medical University and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress.*  
*The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## CHINA

# Cultural heritage weaves global success for Chinese fashion

Domestic brands make major inroads into international markets, highlighting traditions, textiles



Pronounce's contemporary Zhongshan suit was added to the Victoria and Albert Museum collection in London.

By HE QI in Shanghai  
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Chinese designers have been making their mark on the global stage in recent years with high-quality products and innovative designs, often drawing on the country's rich cultural traditions and textiles to add splashes of flair.

Juzui, a Shanghai brand that appeared on the official schedule of the New York Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2025 collection, gained widespread praise for its "Winter Blooms Whispering" collection at The Glasshouse venue in New York City on Feb 7.

Septuagenarian supermodel Maye Musk, the mother of billionaire Elon Musk, graced the runway for Juzui, and closed the show with elegance.

Creative director Wang Tao skillfully integrated Chinese flower elements such as plum blossoms and peonies into modern designs, and combined them with an Oriental color palette inspired by the hit historical drama *Royal Feast*.

Wang has twice brought Juzui to participate successfully in New York Fashion Week.

"When many overseas media described Juzui as a 'Chinese luxury brand,' I fully understood the significance of the brand's global expansion and the country's increased cultural promotion," Wang said.

Pronounce, established in 2016, has been active in international fashion weeks, including London and Milan, since 2017. In January, it released its 2025 Autumn/Winter collection "Romantic Sharpness" at Milan Fashion Week.

Co-founders Li Yushan and Zhou Jun are post-80s designers, and studying and working overseas has enabled them to interpret Chinese culture from a different perspective.

"Chinese designers' works naturally carry Chinese elements, just in various forms," Li said. "Expressing the viewpoints of Chinese creators is

a manifestation of self-confidence and something to be proud of."

Their designs often draw inspiration from Chinese culture and philosophy.

Through innovative tailoring and skillful fabric selection, they perfectly combine the charm of the East with modern fashion. Their contemporary Zhongshan (Chinese tunic) suit design was added to the Victoria and Albert Museum collection in London.

Fashion critic Godfrey Deeny commented, "Finally a really rocking edgy Chinese street tailoring brand that looks set to have a major future. It is called Pronounce."

Li said while this might be somewhat exaggerated, the comment is inspiring. "It actually serves as a guiding light, effectively encouraging us to persist not only in building a brand or a career, but also in promoting the dissemination of Eastern culture and facilitating cross-cultural dialogue between the East and the West," Li said.

## Material wealth

Sandriver is a high-end cashmere brand that combines intangible cultural heritage items such as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region's hand-felt and Tibet's *pulu* (a kind of woolen fabric) with modern designs. Since its establishment in Shanghai's Jinshan district in 2012, it has gone global and achieved remarkable success.

With multiple appearances at Paris Fashion Week, and it becoming the first Chinese brand featured at Le Bon Marche festival in Paris, Sandriver recently wrapped up its participation in the 2025 Maison & Objet trade show in the French capital.

"During the exhibition, we received a lot of praise," said Guo Xiuling, the founder of Sandriver. "I brought Gesang Zhuoma, a Tibetan woman who had never been abroad before, to Paris. She sat on the floor at the booth, skillfully hand spinning yarn and demonstrating the *pulu*-making process. The scene was always surrounded by a large crowd."

"The global reputation of Chinese traditional handicrafts and art is earned by our courage to showcase them," she added.

Guo said Sandriver has a series of

Sandriver's designs showcase the technique of making traditional Tibetan woolen fabric called *pulu*.  
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



upcoming major shows planned worldwide.

In April, the company is scheduled to present its brand story and explain the allure of intangible cultural heritage at Harvard University's auditorium.

"I take great pride in showcasing Chinese traditional culture and the skills of intangible cultural heritage to a global audience, helping the world appreciate the allure of Chinese brands," she said.

## Breaking down barriers

Li Jun, dean of Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation at Donghua University, said China has long been a global leader in the textile and clothing industries.

"The trend of going global has been on the rise since two years ago, with many industries starting to expand overseas in large numbers," said Li, adding this shift has been driven by changing market demands and international dynamics, which marks a departure from

traditional passive expansion.

Despite remarkable achievements in recent years, Chinese designers still face numerous challenges in their global expansion efforts.

Li said the international fashion market values innovation and operates in cyclical cultural trends. Chinese culture encounters challenges in connecting with Western markets, while Chinese designers often lack in-depth knowledge of local markets and cultures.

"For instance, the Southeast Asian market presents distinct body shape variations compared with China," Li said.

"Additionally, successful global expansion requires more than just finished products. It needs thorough exploration of overseas markets and established infrastructure support to ensure high-quality and low-risk expansion."

He said local designers need a global mindset, adding many are lacking in this area. "Innovation is paramount and should be univer-

sally applicable and appealing, driving industry advancement," he said.

Li Yushan from Pronounce, said Chinese designers need to create sophisticated products that resonate with Eastern tastes. "We must understand the importance of consistency, rather than relying on gimmicks," he said.

"By producing quality products and promoting cultural values, we can influence more young designers and inspire a greater number of young individuals."

Intellectual property protection also poses a significant challenge to designers. Guo said Sandriver faced a trademark dispute lawsuit filed by another brand in multiple countries.

"We had to persist and implement intellectual property protection measures, ultimately prevailing in the lawsuit in the United States," she said.

Guo also highlighted the challenges of establishing a brand. "As a new brand, limited capital hinders your ability to compete with established global luxury brands, who have the resources to engage in prolonged legal battles."

Despite the challenges of global expansion, Guo remains confident that the fashion world will continue to embrace Chinese brands.

"While there are claims that the fashion world looks down on, or rejects products made in China, I have never encountered this. By offering exceptional products, overseas markets actually present mature consumer bases," she said.

## Working together

The Shanghai International College of Fashion and Innovation promotes cultural innovation. Its "equality, diversity, inclusivity" philosophy aims to cultivate students' cross-cultural understanding and design capabilities.

"As a Sino-foreign cooperative educational institution, we prioritize cultural innovation and study local cultures, such as Shanghai-style and Jiangnan culture. Simultaneously, we need to have a global perspective to meet the needs of global customers," said Li Jun, the college dean.

Established in 2014, the school was jointly established by Donghua University and Scotland's



Pronounce's design.

Edinburgh University with the aim of creating first-class creative fashion disciplines, and cultivating industry talent for China and overseas.

Li highlighted the importance of close collaboration between enterprises and educational institutions. For instance, the partnership between Donghua University and Ningbo Cixing Co resulted in the launch of a knitting innovation course, enabling engineers and designers to look at new production methods in machinery and materials. The course greatly improved the speed and efficiency of production and manufacturing.

"It presents a breakthrough in engineering and technical advancements," Li said, noting that China is the global leader in customized production.

"Global customers can choose suitable clothing patterns according to body-type databases and quickly customize personalized requirements," he explained.

Various platforms in the fashion industry are actively supporting brands in their global expansion efforts.

Chinese fashion platform Labelhood and London-based luxury department store Harrods have collaborated to host Chinese New Year pop-up stores, showcasing the works of Chinese designers and facilitating their entry into the international market.

This year's pop-up store featured a selection of New Year-themed pieces and handcrafted artifacts from over 20 emerging Chinese artists and brands.

Looking ahead, the prospects for Chinese designers' global expansion are promising, said Li, the college dean.

"In the next five to 10 years, China's fashion industry will, like the electric vehicle industry, take technology as its core competitiveness, achieve rapid commercial transformation, and benefit the world," he said.



Top: Guo Xiuling, the founder of the Chinese cashmere brand Sandriver. Above left: Gesang Zhuoma at the Maison & Objet exhibition in January in Paris. Above right: Works of Chinese designers for sale at a luxury store in London. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Visionary proudly revives ancient crafts for future prosperity

By HE QI in Shanghai

During the Maison & Objet exhibition — a prestigious home decor expo that took place in January in Paris — industry professionals and fashion enthusiasts from around the world were eager to see the latest fashion trends.

One stall constantly attracted a gaggle of curious onlookers. Inside, Gesang Zhuoma, dressed in traditional Tibetan attire, deftly manipulated wool with her fingers, weaving rare fabrics on a handloom. She had never traveled far from her home, but confidently showcased the intangible cultural heritage technique of spinning Tibetan *pulu* (a type of woolen fabric) on behalf of Chinese brand Sandriver.

The brand's success can be attributed to the determination of its founder Guo Xiuling, who has over 30 years' experience in the cashmere industry.

Born in 1971 in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Guo initially worked for an original equipment manufacturer serving international luxury brands. During this time, she observed premium Chinese cashmere being transformed into luxury products sold worldwide by foreign brands.

"Despite China supplying 75 percent of the world's cashmere raw materials, there was no Chinese cashmere brand leading the international market," Guo said.

Determined to utilize her industry experience, she jettisoned her

high-profile former business partners. In 2012, Guo established Sandriver in Shanghai, which from the outset set its sights on the international market.

In August of the same year, the company hosted its inaugural fashion show at the Roppongi Hills Mori Tower in Tokyo.

"The pressure was immense, but I always believed that as long as we adhered to our philosophy and dedicated ourselves to product making, we would gain global recognition," Guo said.

After that, Sandriver participated in Paris Fashion Week for nine consecutive years and showcased its products at various international exhibitions. With its unique designs and exceptional quality, it secured a

place at Le Bon Marche in Paris, becoming the first Chinese brand to feature at the prestigious department store under the LVMH Group.

Guo said competing on the global stage alongside Western luxury brands, many of which were once her clients, presented both challenges and growth opportunities. "This journey not only accelerated our brand's evolution and increased its impact, but also underscored the importance of infusing traditional Chinese culture, intangible heritage, and our distinct expertise into the global market," she said.

Specializing in cashmere, Sandriver incorporates heritage techniques into its products.

"I was deeply immersed in textile technology research in Germany,

but I chose to leave that behind. Returning to my origins, I refocused on our intangible cultural heritage and Chinese legacy. It troubled me to witness these cultural treasures being overlooked," Guo said.

The Sandriver team has made great efforts in this area. For example, it took nine years to revive the Inner Mongolia's hand-felt technology.

"My childhood memories of Mongolian hand-felt were vivid. When I saw Japanese designers cherishing it, I felt compelled to revive and pass on this technique," Guo said. Since being launched, the cashmere hand-felt and silk-integrated products have been highly sought after in international markets.

Sandriver is also actively nurturing a new generation of craftsmen.

Guo has traveled to Xizang autonomous region numerous times to teach local women textile techniques and pattern designs.

"I brought approximately 300 Tibetan women to Shanghai, taught them textile skills, and guided them on museum visits to grasp market dynamics," said Guo.

Today, Sandriver operates over 30 overseas partner stores in countries including Germany, France, and Japan, and has more than 10 outlets in China.



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# GLOBAL LENS



From left: An attendee walks past a headset stand at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on Monday. ZHAO DINGZHE / XINHUA Attendees take part in a demonstration by Swedish company Ericsson on augmented reality devices used while commuting, at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on Tuesday. MANAURE QUINTERO / AFP

## Tech titans

### Chinese innovations shine at Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona

The 2025 Mobile World Congress, or MWC, concludes on Thursday in Barcelona, Spain, bringing together industry leaders, policy-makers, and technology innovators to explore advancements in 5G, artificial intelligence, and advanced connectivity.

The four-day event, hosted by the Global System for Mobile Communications Association, or GSMA, at the Fira Barcelona Gran Via convention center, is themed "Converge, Connect, Create", emphasizing the fusion of mobile and AI-driven technologies.

MWC 2025 has drawn more than 2,800 exhibitors and 1,200 speakers, with organizers expecting over 100,000 attendees.

More than 300 Chinese firms, including China Mobile, China Unicom, China Telecom, Huawei, ZTE, Lenovo, and Xiaomi, showcased their latest innovations.

Mats Granryd, director general of the GSMA, highlighted the rapid global adoption of 5G, noting that connections have reached 2 billion, making it the fastest-growing mobile generation to date.

"Now it's time to stamp out the barriers and press the accelerator for growth," he said.

The GSMA also released its Mobile Economy 2025 report, which revealed that mobile technologies and services contributed 5.8 percent of global GDP in 2024, amounting to \$6.5 trillion. That figure is projected to reach \$11 trillion, or 8.4 percent of global GDP, by 2030, driven by the expansion of 5G, IoT, and AI.

XINHUA



Attendees interact with Chinese company Honor's robots at the Mobile World Congress at Spain's Fira Barcelona Gran Via convention center on Monday. ALEJANDRO GARCIA / EPA



From left: A dog-shaped robot of China Mobile stands next to the company's booth at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on Monday. EMILIO MORENATTI / AP A first responder drone is displayed at the German company Deutsche Telekom's booth during the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on Monday. JOSEF LAGO / AFP



From left: Attendees interact with Chinese company Honor's multidimensional tactile dexterous hands at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on Monday. ZHAO DINGZHE / XINHUA Attendees look at the Chinese company Realme's smartphones displayed underwater at the company's booth during the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on Monday. BRUNA CASAS / REUTERS

## WORLD

# Growth target hailed as sign of confidence

Experts praise China's commitment to opening-up, creating opportunities

By XIN XIN in Sydney, CUI HAIPEI in Dubai, UAE, and XING YI in London

China's 5 percent growth target for this year "signals strong confidence" in its economic prospects as the country prioritizes sustainable development despite external challenges, said global experts.

They also praised China's continued commitment to opening-up, noting that it creates opportunities for other countries that seek to modernize their economies.

The main targets for development this year include GDP growth of around 5 percent, CPI increase of around 2 percent and a drop of around 3 percent in energy consumption per unit of GDP, said Chinese Premier Li Qiang, who delivered the Government Work Report at the opening meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on Wednesday.

Andrew Wilford, researcher at the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre of the Victoria University of Wellington, said China's growth target of around 5 percent for this year "signals strong confidence" in the country's economic prospects.

This goal indicates that the Chinese leadership sees significant new avenues for expansion — building on last year's robust foreign trade growth — and is committed to sustaining the economic momentum, he said.

The nation's total goods imports and exports reached 43.85 trillion yuan (\$6.1 trillion) in 2024, up 5 percent year-on-year, according to China's General Administration of Customs in January.

Wilford said the work report is a "welcome announcement" as proposed policies align well with efforts to improve living standards while strengthening the economy against external challenges.

China is working toward a more balanced mix of services and manufacturing, he said, adding that the goal to creating more than 12 million new urban jobs is an "important step toward stimulating growth and mitigating some of the headwinds in the international economic environment".

Rasha Al Joundy, a senior researcher at the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre, said the 5 percent target reflects China's strategic policy toward economic progress while focusing on sustainable development despite challenges on the global stage.

In spite of global economic headwinds, China showed adaptability and resilience to achieve 5 percent growth in 2024, she said.

Regarding China's continued commitment to opening-up, Joundy said it is expected to bolster the country's global economic standing amid rising US-led protectionism.

By further expanding investments in key sectors including

renewable energy, technology, logistics and finance, she said China's infrastructure manufacturing capabilities offer a great opportunity for Middle Eastern countries that seek to modernize their economies, as well as rebuild and expand projects.

According to the report, China will adopt a more proactive fiscal policy and a moderately loose monetary policy.

China's fiscal and monetary policy is modestly expansionary, continuing the incremental loosening of system liquidity that became evident in the latter part of 2024, said Warwick Powell, adjunct professor at Queensland University of Technology and former policy adviser to former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd.

"We see an emphasis on structural change that aims to continue China's transition to a high-technology-driven industrial economy, with a burgeoning services sector," Powell said.

## Expansion in technology

Rates of credit expansion in technology and manufacturing are expected to be pivotal in driving structural change and growth, he added.

Jack Perry, chairman of the 48 Group and CEO of London Export Corporation, said he sees the "welcoming spirit that China has when it comes to business", referring to the report, which says that Beijing will keep working to foster a first-rate business environment, thus enabling foreign-funded enterprises to achieve greater success in China.

"It's like the Chinese government is saying: Here are the opportunities, and we are encouraging an exploratory spirit in China," he said, referring to the further opening-up of the service sector.

"China is like a high mountain with an amazing view," he said. "If the mountain is closed, one can just dream about what's there. But China has said: 'Come, explore, walk up the mountain and we will be there with you to support you.'"

"I think that shows an inclusive, ice-breaking spirit," he said.

Jirada Phakwilaikiat, a senior research officer at the Kasikorn Research Center in Bangkok, said the Chinese government is committed to supporting the private sector.

An important effort by the Chinese government has been to use technology-related industries as a key driving force for China's economy, she said, thereby strengthening confidence in the business sector.

Yang Wanli in Bangkok and Shao Xinying in Beijing contributed to this story.

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## Blaze battle



Firefighters try to douse the flames at the central building of a police academy in Santiago, Chile, on Wednesday. The fire affected the third floor of the building as 18 engines and more than 150 volunteer firefighters were dispatched to fight the blaze. JAVIER TORRES / AFP

# Canadians cold to 51st state talk as tariffs paused again

By YANG GAO in Toronto [gaoyang@chinadailyusa.com](mailto:gaoyang@chinadailyusa.com)

US President Donald Trump's suggestion that Canada should become the 51st state of the United States has been met with defiance from some Canadians.

Adam Chapnick, a professor at the Canadian Forces College, a school for military officers, said that Trump's remarks have led to a heightened level of national unity.

"This began as a bit of a joke and then evolved into being more of a troll," Chapnick told China Daily. "While the president might genuinely think that Canada and Canadians would fare better as the 51st state, without a direct US military attack on Canada, there is no likelihood whatsoever of this happening."

A poll in January by the Angus Reid Institute found that 90 percent of Canadians oppose joining the US, and 4 out of 5 Americans say it should be up to Canada.

The poll also found that Americans are twice as likely to oppose (49 percent) Canada joining their nation than supportive (25 percent).

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Wednesday that Trump "feels strongly that it would be very beneficial for the Canadian people to be the 51st state of the United States. They wouldn't be paying for these tariffs. They'd have much lower taxes if they were part of our country."

On Thursday, however, Trump said he would again pause tariffs until April 2 on imports from Canada and Mexico covered by the US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, offering the countries yet another reprieve. Ottawa responded in kind by delaying its own reciprocal tariffs on the US.

Trump, who recently has referred to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as a "governor", spoke via phone with him on Wednesday over the 25 percent tariffs

imposed by the Trump administration this week.

The talk lasted 50 minutes; it was a "colorful call" and also "very substantive", Reuters reported.

Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly has told the BBC that she takes Trump's remarks on making Canada the 51st state "very seriously".

"This is not a joke anymore," Joly told Newsnight. "We're insulted. We're mad. We're angry."

Trudeau accused the US president of planning "a total collapse of the Canadian economy because that will make it easier to annex us".

"That is never going to happen. We will never be the 51st state," he told reporters on Tuesday. "This is a time to hit back hard and to demonstrate that a fight with Canada will have no winners."

Chapnick said that Trudeau's response has been measured and effective.

"I think that most Canadians have been quite pleased with PM Trudeau's response," he said. "He has been clear and firm without escalating, letting Americans know that Canada's goal is to restore the prosperous relationship we have long had, but also explaining that we will not be covered by bullying."

While some younger Canadians have expressed openness to closer ties with the US for economic reasons, Chapnick said he believes it does not represent a shift in public sentiment.

"A small subset of young Canadians said that if the United States offered them a large amount of money in US dollars, they would be amenable to becoming Americans," Chapnick said. "The overwhelming majority of Canadians rejected this idea and continue to do so."

On how Canada should navigate its relationship with the US, Chapnick said: "Generally speaking, the way that we have. Speaking with a single voice (we have

not been perfect on this), making clear that we do not want a trade war but that we will not be bullied."

Trump's comments on Canada are part of a broader pattern, Chapnick said, mentioning the president's musings about acquiring Greenland and retaking control of the Panama Canal.

"For now, cooperation on security and defense continues. I hope that we are able to keep things that way," he said.

Darrell Dorsk, owner of a glassworks store, said he believes Trump's 51st state remarks, while provocative, reflect certain economic realities that Canadians should not ignore.

"I don't think he's serious, but it's a provocative statement. The polls are saying that all the older Canadians are very much against this," Dorsk said.

"But the younger people, many of them say, 'I wouldn't mind if I was living in America. I wouldn't mind if I had US dollars instead of the depreciating Canadian dollar,'" he said.

Dorsk said he doesn't believe that the tariffs, if put into effect, will be in place for long.

"However, he (Trump) has a point," Dorsk said. "Because of the trade imbalance, Canada derives a lot of benefit from being so close to the US."

Dorsk, who grew up in the US but has lived in Canada for 50 years, said he tries to see the issue from both sides: "I think Trump is a businessman, he's a capitalist, not a socialist. He wants fair trade and the balance of trade."

Ray, owner of a phone solutions business who did not give his last name, said that talk of Canada becoming a US state is "ridiculous".

"As a world leader, giving this kind of statement about a neighboring country that has been so good for centuries — this is derogatory, really unacceptable," he said.

# Macron's call for nuclear deterrence raises concern

By EARLE GALE and ZHENG WANYIN in London

French President Emmanuel Macron's call for Europe to rally behind Ukraine in its conflict with Russia, and for it to be prepared to use nuclear weapons to guarantee its freedom, could increase tensions, experts have warned.

Macron talked about nuclear weapons and spending more on defense during a televised speech on Wednesday, in which he said the world was entering a "new era" in which the United States may not protect its allies.

But he said: "Our nuclear deterrent protects us — it's complete, sovereign, French through and through. However, responding to the historic call of the future German chancellor, I have decided to open the strategic debate on the protection of our allies on the European continent through our (nuclear) deterrent."

He made the remarks after Friedrich Merz, the victor in Germany's recent federal election, said he hoped to share France's nuclear weapons. Macron said it was a good idea, and that France was also prepared to put boots on the ground to protect its neighbors.

"We have the most effective army in the whole of Europe, and nuclear capacity," he said.

Macron said he plans to host a meeting of Europe's army chiefs in Paris next week and would take his message to Brussels, Belgium, on Thursday, for a meeting of European Union national leaders.

The meetings come at a tense time for Europe, after US President Donald Trump paused aid to Ukraine and effectively told Europe to protect itself.

The European Union is considering borrowing 150 billion euros (\$162 billion) to fund its 27 member nations' purchase and production of weapons. And European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen hopes to mobilize 800 billion euros for defense in the next few years.

But Russian officials said Macron and the EU are wrong to see Russia as a threat, and that talk of nuclear weapons may drive the world toward war.

## 'Erroneous analysis'

Konstantin Kosachev, a senior Russian senator, told Reuters: "Such an erroneous analysis leads to fatal errors ... Macron maniacally imposes on his citizens, allies, and the entire world a completely false concept of what is happening."

Russia's President Vladimir Putin has said his special military operation in Ukraine was triggered by the expansion of NATO that followed the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, when NATO encroached on what he sees as Moscow's traditional sphere of influence. He has said his country has no intention of conducting similar operations elsewhere.

Martin Jacques, a senior fellow at Tsinghua University and Fudan University, said Macron's speech shows Europe's "tacit acceptance" of the US' political withdrawal from Europe.

"This is a permanent development, as it were, and in that context, Europe needed to step up to the plate on Ukraine," he said. "He also talked about the European countries sharing in France's nuclear umbrella because France and the UK are the only two nuclear powers in Europe. I think he's trying to galvanize support in France, to some extent, to reassure the French that things will be fine."

Michael Dunford, an emeritus professor at the UK's University of Sussex, said: "I fear that Europe is still trying to pull the US into the conflict with Russia. The fact is that Europe's stance is completely at odds with what Russia will accept. A cease-fire without a permanent settlement will be a no. NATO member states' troops in Ukraine will be a no. Remilitarization of Ukraine will be a no."

Dunford said Europe seems to want to see Russia defeated.

"But without the US, it cannot win. So, it wants to pull the US back in, even at the expense of World War III."

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# 15 civilians hurt as bombs dropped by mistake

SEOUL — Fifteen people were injured on Thursday after two South Korean fighter jets mistakenly dropped bombs on a civilian area during live-fire drills.

Two KF-16 fighter jets dropped four air-to-surface bombs by mistake outside a live-fire range in Pocheon, some 40 kilometers north of Seoul, at about 10:04 am, according to the defense ministry.

The misguided bombing resulted from pilot errors as the pilot of one fighter jet entered target coordinates incorrectly.

An investigation was underway for the mistaken bombing by the pilot of the other fighter jet.

The accident destroyed a church, houses and vehicles, leaving 15 people, including two soldiers and two foreigners, wounded, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Two male civilians suffered serious injuries to their face and shoulder, but these injuries were not life-threatening.

Earlier in the day, South Korea and the United States held a combined live-fire exercise in Pocheon, mobilizing more than 160 pieces of military hardware such as tanks, self-propelled howitzers, helicopters and fighter jets. The South Korean military decided to suspend all live-fire drills until the exact cause of the accident was identified.

Pocheon Mayor Baek Young-hyun told reporters at the scene that all military exercises should be stopped, urging the government and the military to take follow-up measures that can relieve anxiety among the people.

The accident came ahead of the scheduled joint military exercise

between South Korea and the United States later this month.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that the combined forces of South Korea and the United States will conduct an annual springtime war game called Freedom Shield from March 10 to March 20.

People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, or PSPD, a South Korean civic group, said in a statement that it would be dangerous and careless to stage large-scale war exercises in inter-Korean border areas.

The PSPD urged South Korea and the United States to immediately call off the scheduled military exercise or reduce the scale of dangerous maneuvering and live-fire drills drastically.

XINHUA

## WORLD

# 'Hell to pay' if hostages not freed: Trump

US holds direct talks with Hamas amid deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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US President Donald Trump on Wednesday warned Hamas of "hell to pay" if all remaining hostages held in Gaza are not released.

The United States meanwhile confirmed unprecedented direct talks with the Palestinian militant group, which it proscribes as a "terrorist" organization, focused on US hostages in Gaza.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt declined to provide details on the substance of talks, but said Trump has authorized his envoys to "talk to anyone."

Trump appealed to Hamas to release all hostages — both dead and alive — calling the group "sick and twisted" for keeping the corpses of some of the hostages.

"This is your last warning! For the leadership, now is the time to leave Gaza while you still have a chance," he wrote on his Truth Social platform after meeting freed hostages.

Trump also warned of repercussions for Gaza as a whole, where virtually the entire population has been displaced by Israel's relentless military campaign in response to Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attack.

"To the people of Gaza: A beautiful future awaits, but not if you hold hostages," he said. "Make a smart decision. Release the hostages now,

or there will be hell to pay later!"

In addition, Trump said he was "sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job" as his administration expedites billions of dollars in weapons.

In response, Hamas said on Thursday that Trump's threats constituted support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to back out of the Gaza cease-fire and intensify the siege of Gazans.

In a text message to Reuters, Hamas spokesman Abdel-Latif Al-Qanouna said, "The best track to release the remaining Israeli prisoners is by the occupation going into the second phase and compelling it to adhere to the agreement signed under the sponsorship of mediators."

The first phase of the cease-fire agreement ended over the weekend after six weeks of relative calm that included exchanges of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

The deal calls for the remaining hostages to be freed in the second phase, during which final plans would be negotiated for an end to the conflict.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's office issued a statement saying Israel has expressed to the US its position regarding direct talks with Hamas, without elaborating.

Rasha Al Joundy, a senior



Palestinian children wait for food at a charity kitchen on Wednesday ahead of the fast-breaking iftar meal during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, at a refugee camp in central Gaza. EYAD BABA / AFP

researcher at the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre in the United Arab Emirates, told China Daily that Trump "has a strong position on what he wants" to end the Gaza crisis.

"This means that all parties will be pressured somehow to cooperate, and this includes Israel because it is the far-right government that is making decisions and everyone else is just trying to contain the implications," she said.

Everyone in the Middle East, including Israel, "is nervous and waiting for the scenario Trump adopts for the next Gaza phase", she added.

"Israel wants to sell (out) the agreement it had with Hamas twice by refusing to engage in the next phase and insisting on prolonging the current phase of the agreement. Freeing the hostages despite stopping the aid to Gaza ... means no peace talks."

For Palestinians, Trump's threats appeared to have been overshadowed by the dire humanitarian crises unfolding.

The Gaza Strip is experiencing

the negative effects of Netanyahu's order to impose a total blockade on all goods entering Gaza until Hamas accepts the US proposal to extend the first phase of the cease-fire deal.

Palestinians say the blockade could lead to starvation among the 2.3 million people living in the enclave's ruins.

## Increasing prices

Nebal Farsakh, spokeswoman for the Palestine Red Crescent Society, told China Daily that the situation in Gaza is deteriorating, severely affecting the market where the prices of essential items are rapidly increasing.

"We are expecting the situation to become even worse if the blocking of aid continues as the situation was dire even before the blocking of aid," Farsakh said.

In a joint statement on Wednesday, the foreign ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom expressed "deep concern" about Israel's decision to halt aid into the Gaza Strip.

"We call on the government of Israel to abide by its international obligations to ensure full, rapid, safe and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance to the population in Gaza," the statement said.

In response, the Israeli Foreign Ministry wrote on X, "Hamas is taking over the aid that enters Gaza and is exploiting it in order to rebuild its war machine."

"The aid trucks have become an economic engine for Hamas. Half of Hamas' budget in Gaza comes from these trucks."

"Aid that goes to Hamas is not humanitarian. Enabling the enemy to resupply itself so it can regroup and attack you again is not humanitarian — it is suicidal and will not be allowed," it added.

Meanwhile, the United Nations food agency, the World Food Programme, said on Wednesday that it has less than two weeks' worth of food supplies in the Gaza Strip as a result of Israeli restrictions.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Briefly

### RUSSIA

#### Putin names new Washington envoy

Russian President Vladimir Putin appointed senior veteran diplomat Alexander Darchiev as ambassador to the United States on Thursday, to lead a rapprochement that has stunned Ukraine and Washington's European allies. The Russian Foreign Ministry said last week that the US had given it the green light at a meeting between Russian and US officials in Türkiye to appoint Darchiev, who now serves as head of the ministry's North America department.

### UNITED STATES

#### Education Department set to be dismantled

US President Donald Trump is expected to issue an executive order aimed at abolishing the Department of Education, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday. The order may come as soon as Thursday, the newspaper said, citing people familiar with the matter whom it did not name. The White House and the department did not immediately respond to requests for comment late on Wednesday. Trump has repeatedly called for eliminating the department, calling it a "big con job". He proposed shuttering it in his first term as president, but Congress did not act.

### JAPAN

#### 1 killed in blast at auto parts plant

An explosion occurred at an auto parts plant in Japan on Thursday, killing one person and injuring two, the company said. A dust collector exploded at the plant operated by Chuo Spring, "partially destroying the building," according to a statement. The incident "killed one employee" and injured two others, with the cause of the accident still under investigation, it said. The fire caused by the blast was already extinguished, it added.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

By HU YUYAN

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The 2025 season opener for the Chinese Football Association Super League kicked off on Feb 22 at the Fenghuang Mountain Sports Park in Chengdu's Jinniu district. Nearly 42,000 spectators turned the iconic venue into a sea of red — the color of the home team, Chengdu Rongcheng.

Jinniu district, a core area of commercial activity and urban renewal in Chengdu, the capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, is driving its economic growth through three main pillars: hosting sporting events, developing cultural and creative offerings, and cementing its position as a commercial hub.

In 2024, Jinniu district achieved a regional GDP of 170.23 billion yuan (\$23.45 billion), up 5.8 percent year-on-year. The value added of the local service sector surpassed 135 billion yuan, and total retail sales of consumer goods exceeded 108 billion yuan.

## Recreation driving growth

Chengdu has a vibrant sports culture, with soccer deeply embedded in its DNA. The high demand for tickets for the opening match of the 2025 CFA Super League prompted the Jinniu district commerce bureau to collaborate with the Chengdu Rongcheng Football Club to set up an additional venue on a local food street for fans who were unable to secure tickets for the highly anticipated event.

The initiative is part of Jinniu district's broader strategy to integrate sports, culture, commerce and tourism into a cohesive economic engine, aiming to turn event-goers into retail consumers.

In 2024, the Fenghuang Mountain Sports Park hosted 72 large-scale events — each involving at least 10,000 spectators. These included concerts, basketball games, performances on ice, and esports activities.

In the same year, Jinniu district as a whole hosted 33 high-profile international sporting events, including the FIBA Women's Basketball League Asia. The events generated over 100 million yuan in ticket revenue and approximately 1.17 billion yuan in spending on food and beverages, accommodation, and tourism.

## Sports, culture, trade pillars key to district's economic development



Clockwise from top: Chengdu Tianfu Art Park in Jinniu district, Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province. YUAN YIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY Fans cheer while watching a soccer match at an additional venue set up for those unable to secure tickets in Jinniu district in February. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Fans wave flags in the packed stadium of the Fenghuang Mountain Sports Park in Jinniu district.

Moreover, Jinniu district organized 70 large-scale performances throughout the year, the highest among Chengdu's districts. The performances generated 477 million yuan in revenue from ticket sales and attracted a combined audience of 1.28 million.

An official from Jinniu district's culture, sports and tourism bureau said, "Jinniu district will continue to explore new avenues for integrating sports with other sectors, leveraging major events such as the

CFA Super League and the World Games 2025 Chengdu."

## A cultural powerhouse

For more than 2,000 years, the ancient Jinniu Road has brought people and commerce to the area, nurturing its rich cultural heritage. Today, local cultural venues such as the Chengdu Open-Air Music Park and the Chengdu Tianfu Art Park are at the forefront of promoting Jinniu district's cultural legacy and creativity.

Many music enthusiasts enjoy soaking up the sun while listening to the tunes at the Chengdu Open-Air Music Park, where a 32,000-square-meter lawn serves as its seating area. Since its opening in May 2019, the park has hosted more than 300 high-profile music events, including the Midi Music Festival and concerts by Chinese singers Xu Wei and Hua Chenyu.

Liao Li, chairman of the company operating the park, noted that since the Chengdu Symphony Orchestra

established residence in the Chengdu Symphony Orchestra Concert Hall at the open-air music park in late 2023, the concert hall has hosted over 70 large-scale symphony concerts, attracting a combined audience of over 60,000 and generating over 3 million yuan in revenue.

On Feb 27, the launch ceremony for the torch of the World Games 2025 Chengdu took place at the Chengdu Tianfu Art Park in Jinniu district. This is Chengdu's first public space that features an extensive

integration of art, culture and commerce. In 2024, the park hosted 89 events, achieving nearly 40 million yuan in revenue.

Jinniu district is also a place that has produced or inspired numerous cultural productions. *The Road to Shu Chorus*, co-created by the Jinniu district government and the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, embarked on a national tour in September 2023. *Musical Banquet in Tang Dynasty* and *Encounter Dongpo in Song Dynasty*, concerts based on Jinniu district's cultural legacy, went on a national tour in 2024.

## 'Buy global, sell global'

As the first national-level pilot area in western China for developing market procurement trade, or trade through procurement in recognized market clusters, Jinniu district has supported made-in-Sichuan products in going global with policies such as simplified customs processes and value-added tax exemptions.

In December 2024, 21 metric tons of fresh lemons, purchased from Anyue county in the Sichuan city of Ziyang and prepared for transportation in Jinniu district, were exported to Russia through Horgos Port in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. This marked the first batch of fruit exported from Sichuan via the market procurement trade model.

"Thanks to the market procurement trade pilot program, we can now take the overseas buyers' orders with us, go to the farmland where the produce is grown, and talk to potential suppliers directly," said Zheng Qing, general manager of Sichuan Zhuoyang Supply Chain Management.

A representative from Jinniu district's market procurement trade service center said that they have built a platform linking trade with production to promote the new business model, which involves multiple districts in Chengdu and other cities in Sichuan. Four product display centers have been set up, attracting the participation of nearly 230 companies.

Jinniu district's export value reached 11.28 billion yuan in 2024, with Sichuan products such as Huji melon seeds and Mianyang rice noodles reaching more than 30 countries via international freight services.

## BUSINESS

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TWO SESSIONS

## Investment in public services high on agenda

By ZHOU LANXU  
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It is an appropriate time to intensify investment in public services while stepping up central government support for real estate enterprises' restructuring as China sharpens its commitment to bolstering domestic demand, said a national political adviser and senior economist.

"Without expanding investment, it would be hard to overcome weak demand over the short term," said Zhang Bin, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"The approach of boosting investment, however, will differ from the past. We need to focus more on public infrastructure projects that enhance consumption and improve people's well-being," said Zhang, also deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics and a senior researcher at the China Finance 40 Forum (CF40).

If China were to rely solely on consumption to bridge the output gap, household consumption would need to grow by 15 to 20 percent — a target that is unrealistic over the short term, making the role of investment indispensable, Zhang said. The output gap is the difference between a country's actual economic output and its potential output at full capacity.

"There may be fewer traditional projects like railways, highways and airports, but we should see more investment in renovating old housing, providing housing for migrant workers and developing public facilities such as libraries, hospitals, sports venues and underground infrastructure. Such investments are crucial, as they not only improve livelihoods, but also boost incomes and consumption."

In a recent CF40 research report, Zhang's team estimated that China's investments in the services sector — especially public services like education, culture, sports and underground construc-

tion — remain much lower than the average level in developed economies, pointing to great growth potential.

"I believe now is an opportune time to intensify investment in public services," Zhang said. "First, it will stimulate overall demand. Second, costs are relatively low now. Third, these investments will yield long-term economic and social benefits in the future."

The Government Work Report also said that the country will scale up investment in the services sector, while vowing specific measures to restore stability in the real estate market, including effectively preventing debt defaults by property firms.

Considering the prolonged drag of the real estate sector on aggregate demand, Zhang stressed accelerating the restructuring of property firms to further restore their financing and cash flow, as well as further reducing mortgage interest rates to boost homebuying demand.

"This is an important task," he said, as the cash flow pressure on real estate firms, particularly private ones, has persisted and limited their capability to maintain normal business operations — and impeded stabilization of the real estate market.

To achieve this, Zhang proposed that the central government or State-owned capital can inject resources and facilitate property developers' restructuring, while the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, could provide credit support.

For instance, the Ministry of Finance could issue special bonds, and the central bank could purchase them, Zhang said, adding that direct purchases of real estate company bonds by the central bank might also be an option.

"Central government credit can help restore market confidence with relatively limited financial input," he said. "There would be plenty of money in the market willing to invest in real estate firms once restructuring is completed, and investors could regain confidence that the companies have enhanced debt repayment capabilities."

### Briefly

#### Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 22 pips to 7.1692 against the US dollar on Thursday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

#### Central bank conducts reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 104.5 billion yuan (\$14.58 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.5 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity in the banking system at an adequate level, the central bank said. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY



Export-bound vehicles await shipment at Taicang Port, Jiangsu province. JI HAXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Market diversification helps counter tariffs

More digitalized, higher-end offerings strengthening trade competitiveness

By WANG KEJU  
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China's policymakers vowed during the two sessions to bolster policies for stabilizing foreign trade and support enterprises in securing orders and exploring new markets as escalating tensions with the United States due to Washington's tariff hikes dampen normal trade activity, analysts and executives said.

China's export product mix toward greener, more digitalized and higher-end offerings is strengthening the country's competitiveness and adaptability in the face of evolving trade dynamics. Also, its vast domestic consumer base provides a steadily growing market for quality imports, they said during the ongoing annual meetings of China's top legislative and political advisory bodies.

"Regardless of changes in the external environment, we should remain steadfast in our commitment to opening-up," said Premier Li Qiang on Wednesday while delivering the Government Work Report, detailing the world's second-largest economy's trade policies for the rest of the year.

Within just the first month of his presidency, US President Donald Trump has twice imposed additional 10 percent tariffs on Chinese exports. Each additional 10 percent increase in US tariffs could result in a 2-2.5 percent drop in China's export performance, said Lian Ping, president of the China Chief Economist Forum.

"The impact of the US tariffs is only just beginning to come to the fore," Lian said, cautioning that the external environment facing China in 2025 is poised to become "even more intricate and fraught with uncertainty."

Despite the headwinds, the coun-

try's foreign trade landscape is benefiting from favorable conditions amid the broader global economic recovery, Lian added.

According to the World Trade Organization, global merchandise trade is projected to grow by 3 percent year-on-year in 2025, higher than last year's growth target, providing an enabling climate for China's continued expansion in overseas markets.

The ability to constantly innovate and bring forth technologically advanced, higher value-added and lower carbon emission products is a crucial competitive advantage for China's exports, said Bai Ming, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

China's annual production of new energy vehicles exceeded 10 million units for the first time in 2024, with exports crossing the 2 million mark, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

This will help the country to carve out a position in the global marketplace and remain resilient amid growing protectionism and intensifying geopolitical tensions, Bai said. Meanwhile, China is proactively shielding its global supply chains from external shocks by cultivating a more diverse set of trading partners as well as deepening regional integration.

In 2024, China's exports to other countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative grew 9.6 percent year-on-year, while exports to ASEAN increased 13.4 percent, to Brazil by 23.3 percent, to the United Arab Emirates by 19.2 percent and to Saudi Arabia by 18.2 percent, said the General Administration of Customs.

These figures significantly outpaced the growth rates in China's exports to its traditional markets, such as the European Union and the

US, which stood at 4.3 percent and 6.1 percent year-on-year, respectively, the administration said.

"In the face of the constantly changing global trade landscape, we must continuously explore new emerging markets," said Lu Xiaojie, head of Jiangsu province-based Nantong Winner Sports Goods Co Ltd.

The company, specializing in the production of a wide range of sporting goods, had previously focused on the US market. However, in recent years, the company has proactively adjusted its marketing strategy, placing countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative as key targets for market expansion.

"Currently, our share of the US market has declined from the peak of around 40 percent to about 10 percent, but we have successfully developed new markets in South America, Africa and other emerging regions, effectively offsetting the reduction in our traditional markets. We expect our export volume to increase by around 20 to 30 percent this year," Lu said.

Meanwhile, China places equal emphasis on opening up its markets and scaling up quality imports. China's imports reached a record-breaking 18 trillion yuan (\$2.49 trillion) in 2024, up 2.3 percent year-on-year, cementing the country's position as the world's second-largest import market for the 16th consecutive year, said the Ministry of Commerce.

China's vast market size, diverse consumer demand and immense growth potential remain unchanged. The country's unwavering commitment to implementing effective import policies continues to drive this impressive performance, said He Yadong, a spokesperson for the ministry.

China's transformation of its massive domestic market into a shared global marketplace is injecting new momentum into the development of the world economy, He said.

## Innovation to bolster private enterprises

By LIU YUKUN  
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Highlighting the role of innovation as a catalyst for the advancement of the private economy, national political advisers have suggested that entrepreneurs actively integrate technology to drive cost efficiencies and operational enhancements, while also seeking out new avenues for growth.

Additionally, favorable government policies are emphasized to streamline loan processes, addressing the challenges of costly and difficult financing for small and micro-sized private enterprises, they said on Thursday.

The remarks followed the focal points outlined in the Government Work Report, emphasizing the effective execution of policies and measures to foster the growth of the private sector, better safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs in compliance with the law.

The report also advocates for qualified private enterprises to establish a robust modern corporate framework infused with Chinese characteristics. Furthermore, it advocates dealing with hyper-competition and the enhancement of market access environments in emerging sectors, marking it as a pivotal objective in the government's agenda for 2025.

Shen Danyang, the head of the report drafting group and director of the Research Office of the State Council, elaborated on the government's commitment to bolstering the private sector post-report release, saying, "The government will persist in refining a fair competitive market landscape, reducing burdens, enabling companies to compete unhindered and resolving payments owed to enterprises, with methods including the issuance of special bonds by local governments to settle debts, thereby ensuring sustained financial backing for small and micro-sized private enterprises."

As per data from the State Administration for Market Regulation, by the end of January the number of private enterprises in China had surged to 56.7 million, which is 5.2 times that in 2012.

Ma Jiantang, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, urged for further efforts in addressing the hurdles of arduous and costly financing for private enterprises, emphasizing the need to support private companies in reclaiming debts as failure to do so could impede the cash flow of private enterprises.

"We eagerly anticipate the upcoming law to protect private economy, which will ensure the effective implementation of the array of policies and measures through legal norms, ensuring fair market competition in terms of resource allocation, financial support and legal protection," said Liu Yonghao, a CPPCC National Committee member.

Liu, who also serves as the head of the agricultural and animal husbandry enterprise New Hope Group, added that "industries such as meat, eggs, dairy and clothing have reached saturation levels in China. In this evolving landscape, competition is intense, particularly in traditional industries where the emphasis should be on avoiding hyper-competition that centered on price competition over quality, functionality, and branding."

He called for more efforts on product innovation, design and marketing.

## LLMs using domestic chips need of hour

By MA SI  
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There is an urgent need to encourage research and development of large language models trained on domestic chips, in order to build a robust artificial intelligence ecosystem that will ensure sustainable and high-quality development in the AI era, said Liu Qingfeng, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, the country's top legislature.

Liu, who is also chairman of Chinese AI company iFlytek, suggested efforts be made toward providing special financial support to enterprises that are developing domestic AI chips and those that use domestic chips for large language model training.

He also called for more support to encourage State-owned enterprises in prioritizing the procurement of AI models developed on domestic chips

and promote industry-specific vertical applications based on these AI models.

According to Liu, the domestic computing software ecosystem remains weak, with incomplete supporting tools such as open-source training frameworks, and development platforms. Apart from the company's AI model Spark, all other publicly downloadable large language models are trained on US company Nvidia's chips.

Failing to develop an AI industry ecosystem based on domestic chips is akin to "building a skyscraper on someone else's foundation," Liu cautioned.

He also urged greater efforts to leverage China's extensive AI application scenarios to actively apply large language models in industrial fields, forming a data flywheel that will make the nation the first to reap the benefits from AI in

industrial applications.

After China unveiled a new-generation AI development plan in 2017, Liu said the country has accumulated technical reserves and organized teams in the field of cognitive intelligence, making it an important player in the global AI arena.

However, with the emergence of generative AI technology, global competition has intensified and China lags behind the United States in some aspects, he said. Generative AI refers to computer algorithms that produce new text, images, code, videos and audio in a human-like fashion. It is the key technology behind ChatGPT and Sora.

Goldman Sachs Research has forecast in a report that breakthroughs in generative AI can drive a 7 percent, or almost \$7 trillion, increase in global GDP and raise productivity growth by 1.5 percentage points over a 10-year period.



Shoppers browse AI-related products at an iFlytek store in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Well aware of the opportunities ahead, established tech heavyweights such as Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, ByteDance, iFlytek and Huawei, as well as thousands of startups in China, are scrambling to develop and embrace large language models. Chi Xiannian, a senior engineer at

the China Center for Information Industry Development, a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said finance, manufacturing, governance and transportation were the top industries in China using AI large language models.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Military spending increase necessary to protect national security, core interests and global peace

China has announced that it will increase its national defense budget by 7.2 percent this year. This is the 10th consecutive year of single-digit growth.

The increase is the same as the previous two years, enabling the country's planned defense expenditure to reach about 1.785 trillion yuan (\$249 billion) this year, according to a draft budget report submitted to the national legislature for deliberation.

The country's defense expenditure as a percentage of GDP has been below 1.5 percent for many years, lower than the world average, according to a spokesman for the third session of the 14th National People's Congress.

In comparison, the United States has pledged to spend no less than 3 percent of its GDP on national defense, and its president has recently asked the country's NATO allies to spend 5 percent of their GDP on defense, 3 percentage points more than the current target. Not to mention that China's defense spending in per-capita terms has been far less than those of the US and its allies.

Yet despite this, China hawks in the West have indulged in their customary scaremongering, raising cries of alarm about the size of the increase and what they claim is a lack of transparency. They are not interested in the fact that China's defense budget is less than one-third that of the US, which accounts for around 40 percent of the world's military spending. In fact, China's military modernization goals are there for all to see in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), which serves as a comprehensive blueprint for the modernization and development of the People's Liberation Army.

The scaremongering in the West hypes up the modern weaponry that the PLA is introducing, such as aircraft carriers and stealth fighters, but the aim is to achieve full modernization in terms of technology, equipment, organization, and operational capabilities by 2035. That requires funding for military training, combat readiness, and the development of new combat capabilities, among other things.

A proportion of the US defense budget funds the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which is a strategic framework designed to enhance the US' military presence and capabilities in the "Indo-Pacific" region.

Part of that initiative involves the US and many of its allies, including Australia, Canada, France, Japan, and the United Kingdom engaging in military exercises close to Chinese territories as well as the siting of US military bases and missile systems around China, which the China hawks ignore as a motivating factor for China's military modernization and so-called assertive behavior.

Yet most people faced with an armed and hostile gang provocatively getting in their face with aggressive taunts and provocative acts would likely wish to have the means to deter an attack or protect themselves if necessary.

The aggressive posturing and military activities of the US and its allies in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea also serve as a reminder to China of the need to modernize its military to safeguard its territorial integrity. The other scaremongering claim about China's defense budget is that it is bigger than announced as it doesn't include everything, such as its spending on the armed police and coast guard. Yet this is common practice as these usually come under other budgets.

China's defense budget is in line with its determination to build a strong, innovative, and globally competitive military force that can safeguard its national interests and promote peace on the global stage. It should not be forgotten that China is one of the largest contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions, with over 50,000 peacekeepers having been sent to more than 20 countries and regions worldwide over the past three decades.

Nor that China has not fought a war for more than 40 years, while the US has been involved in more than 100 military interventions in other nations in the post-Cold War era.

Nor that China's fast economic growth over the past several decades has turned the country into the world's second-largest economy and the largest exporter of goods. As China deepens its economic ties with the Global South and expands its Belt and Road Initiative, it needs to ensure that it has the wherewithal to safeguard its development interests.

Those who seek to use its defense budget to hype up a "China threat" are making a mountain out of a molehill.

## Opening-up benefits China and the world

The Government Work Report delivered by Premier Li Qiang at the opening of this year's National People's Congress session underscores China's unwavering commitment to high-level opening-up as a cornerstone of its high-quality development strategy.

Against the backdrop of a complex and volatile global economic landscape, the report outlines a clear road map for expanding institutional opening-up, stabilizing foreign trade and investment, and deepening international cooperation. The measures put forward will not only help reinforce China's role as a stabilizing force in the global economy but also demonstrate its determination to foster shared growth and prosperity through openness and collaboration.

China's leadership has consistently emphasized the importance of openness in driving reform and development. Despite rising protectionism and escalating trade tensions in some parts of the world, China remains steadfast in its commitment to opening-up. The removal of restrictions on foreign investments in manufacturing last year was a bold step forward, signaling China's willingness to create a more inclusive and attractive environment for global investors.

The government's agenda for 2025 builds on this foundation, with plans to steadily expand institutional opening-up and advance unilateral opening-up. By promoting reform and development through greater openness, China aims to unlock new opportunities for both domestic and international stakeholders.

The heads of the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, People's Bank of China, and the China Securities Regulatory Commission held a Q&A session on Thursday on the sidelines of the annual gathering of the 14th NPC, in which they affirmed that despite domestic consumption driving growth, measures to stabilize foreign trade and attract foreign investment are a strategic priority.

The central government will therefore implement policies to strengthen the trade sector by supporting businesses in securing orders and exploring new markets. Relevant departments will continuously optimize financial services such as financing, settlement, and foreign exchange, expand the scale and coverage of export credit insurance, and strengthen support for enterprises to participate in and organize exhibitions overseas.

The government is also actively promoting the development of cross-border e-commerce, making efforts to improve the cross-border express logistics system, and strengthening the construction of overseas warehouses. This year the authorities will work to expand the functions of overseas economic and trade cooperation zones, develop the trade in intermediate products, and promote the construction and cooperation of smart customs to improve the level of customs clearance facilitation.

China remains a major global destination for foreign direct investment. To attract more investment, the government will expand openness in the service sector, particularly in culture, the internet and telecommunications, healthcare, and education through pilot programs. The authorities will also encourage reinvestment and support foreign investors in industry chain collaboration, ensuring equal treatment in areas such as licensing, procurement, and standards.

Support for foreign enterprises is also to be enhanced, with "landmark projects" advanced and the building of the "Invest in China" brand. Concerted efforts are to be made to improve the pilot free trade zones, advance the Hainan Free Trade Port, and upgrade economic development zones and bonded areas. These efforts will focus on creating a market-oriented, law-based, and internationalized business environment to foster the growth of foreign-funded enterprises.

The outlined measures indicate that China is not only addressing its own development needs but also contributing to global economic stability and growth by opening its door wider, stabilizing foreign trade and investment, and deepening international cooperation.

As the world grapples with uncertainty and protectionism, China's commitment to openness and collaboration sends a powerful message of confidence and responsibility. As the nation continues to chart its development trajectory, its efforts to build a more inclusive and interconnected global economy will undoubtedly create new opportunities for shared success and a brighter future for all.

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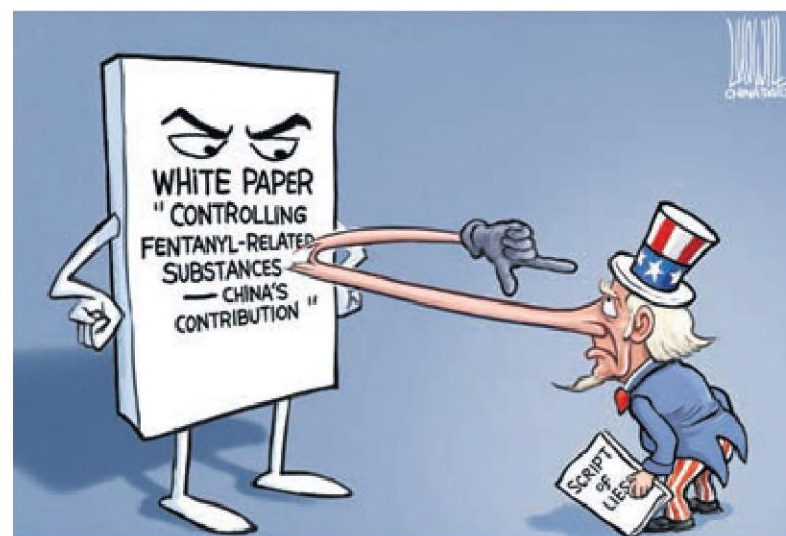
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Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Legislation for favorable business environment key to enterprises

China's second draft of the private economy promotion law has attracted widespread attention at the ongoing two sessions — the annual gatherings of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The draft expands protection against arbitrary fees and fines imposed on private enterprises. Earlier, the draft law was submitted to the Standing Committee of the NPC, China's top legislature, for a second reading. The first reading took place in December 2024.

The second draft follows a high-level symposium on private enterprises held last month, which emphasized the significance of the private sector and signaled the country's commitment to fostering its healthy and high-quality development.

The second draft effectively translates the country's strategic goals of "building a high-level socialist market economic system" and "optimiz-

ing the development environment for the private economy" into actionable legal provisions. This is expected to provide robust protection for China's private economy.

Many NPC deputies and CPPCC National Committee members believe that the economy is in a critical period of transitioning from old to new growth drivers and rebuilding market confidence. The introduction of the private economy promotion law is expected to serve as a boost to the confidence of most private entrepreneurs.

China's private enterprises are not only a significant driving force of Chinese modernization but also a shining emblem of the country's high-quality economic development. On the global stage, they have demonstrated China's speed and strength, marking new heights for the country's economy through their actions.

However, they also face severe and complex external challenges, as well as insufficient domestic demand. Stabi-

lizing market expectations has become a top priority for the government. A survey by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce revealed that 72 percent of private enterprises are most concerned about "policy instability". Legislation is seen as the fundamental solution to this concern.

Legislating the basic principles and policies for the private economy is of far-reaching significance for China's economic development. The policy direction taken will shape the future of more than 57 million private enterprises and entrepreneurs.

Through legislation, China can create a favorable business environment, break down market access barriers by ensuring equal rights, opportunities and rules, and remove institutional obstacles. By leveraging the stability and consistency of policies, the country can optimize the allocation of market resources, paving the way for the private economy to embark on a path of high-quality development.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## Invest in people to boost consumption

The Chinese government listed "vigorously boosting consumption and investment returns and stimulating domestic demand" as a major task for 2025.

The key lies in investing in people. Aggregate social demand is the starting point and driving force of economic growth, with consumption being the core, in which aspect China's population of 1.4 billion constitutes a super-large market advantage. It is therefore necessary to enhance supply levels through product and service innovation. Additionally, the consumption capacity of more people is restricted because of income limitations and insufficient social security coverage.

That's why the Government Work Report this year calls on placing greater emphasis on benefiting people's livelihoods, promoting consumption,

and enhancing future potential, while effectively improving the efficiency of fund utilization. It also aims at increasing residents' incomes through multiple channels, promoting income growth and reducing the burden on middle- and low-income groups, and improving the normal wage growth mechanism for workers.

The report proposes developing new quality productive forces and promoting the integrated development of technological innovation and industrial innovation. To develop new quality productive forces and build a modern industrial system, China must invest heavily in human capital, enhance people's quality and skills, and provide a steady stream of talent for scientific research and industrial upgrading.

The report proposes rejuvenation

of the country by adhering to innovation-driven development, and advancing the integrated development of education, technological innovation, and talent cultivation. It makes systematic arrangements for accelerating the construction of a high-quality education system and comprehensively improving the quality of the talent pool.

Consumer demand is the starting point of growth, while human innovation vitality is the driving force of sustained growth. Therefore, it's necessary to invest in people to maintain social fairness and ensure people's livelihoods. Only in this way can the nation effectively reap demographic dividends and talent dividends, achieving sustainable, high-quality, and inclusive development.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## What They Say

## Proactive fiscal policy projects confidence

Apart from setting the annual growth target of this year at around 5 percent, the same as that of the past year, which the country managed to realize, another noticeable point of the Government Work Report submitted to the country's top legislature for deliberation on Wednesday is that the country's Cabinet proposes to set the Chinese government's deficit ratio at around 4 percent this year, 1 percentage point higher than last year.

The deficit ratio is a major weather vane to measure the orientation of fiscal policy. In the past decade, the government deficit ratio of China has fluctuated between 2.3 percent and 3.8 percent.

The proposed increase in the deficit ratio is a strong signal that China will implement a more active fiscal policy this year in the face of the external and internal headwinds. A more proactive fiscal policy, if well implemented, will be conducive to

promoting steady and sustainable growth of the economy.

The raising of the deficit ratio, an important means of macroeconomic regulation and a common practice in countries around the world to strengthen countercyclical regulation of the macroeconomy, is expected to help the government effectively smooth economic fluctuations.

Raising the fiscal deficit ratio can effectively expand the scale of fiscal expenditure, and the expansion of government spending will have a multiplier effect, stimulating demand from all sectors of society and further boosting economic recovery.

This is conducive to stabilizing employment and can better support scientific and technological innovation, and promote the optimization and adjustment of the economic structure.

Despite the immediate effect it can produce, the raising of the deficit ratio is by no means a hasty decision.

The policymakers have done a lot of homework before determining the proposed deficit ratio. In the process, they will have comprehensively considered factors such as the overall needs of national development, the macroeconomic growth potential, macroeconomic regulation arrangements, the fiscal revenue and expenditure situation, and medium- and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Despite this, the country's lawmakers can still carry out further deliberation and analysis on the proposal to determine how the increased government spending should be used to better realize its intended effect.

Notably the Chinese government's debt ratio is lower than that of major economies as well as the emerging market countries. Its debt risks are generally controllable, providing it with enough room and necessary conditions for enhancing the deficit ratio.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## GLOBAL VIEWS



**Editor's note:** The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategic Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

DING XIAOXING

## Fragmented and restructuring

The geopolitical landscape in the Eurasian region continues to evolve against the backdrop of intensified geopolitical competition between Russia and the West

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eurasian states have embarked on divergent developmental paths with different prospects. The outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in February 2022 further accelerated the geopolitical fragmentation and restructuring in the region and fundamentally altered the integrated model centered around



Russia. First, Eurasian states have complicated relations with Russia and there have been persistent forces to keep them from getting too close. While Eurasian countries rely on Russia economically and in terms of security, they remain highly sensitive to sovereignty, territorial integrity and other issues, and fear that closer ties with Russia may compromise their independence and national sovereignty.

Second, major Eurasian economies are predominantly driven by raw material exports and the absence of a cohesive regional industry value chain undermines the foundation for economic integration. Eurasian economies are at the lower end of the global value chain. Without established and complementary industrial cooperation, bilateral trade within the region remains limited. For example, Russia's trade with Eurasian countries has been reduced to a low level these years. In Kazakhstan, among its top 10 trading partners in 2023, only Russia and Uzbekistan were from the Eurasian region.

Third, against the backdrop of intensified geopolitical competition between Russia and the West, Eurasian countries have adopted divergent foreign policy strategies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the West saw Russia as the loser of the Cold War and has consistently sought to squeeze its strategic space and contain its development. Under Western influence, countries such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have increasingly distanced themselves from Russia and leaned toward the West, striving to join the European Union or North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Notably, Ukraine terminated its non-alignment policy in response to the 2014 Crimea crisis, and changed its Constitution in 2019 to include the goal of membership in the EU and NATO.

Across the Eurasian region, only Belarus remains firmly aligned with Russia. Most other countries pursue a multi-vector foreign policy, which seeks to maintain cooperation with Russia while strengthening ties with powers outside the region. Central Asian nations have established various "C5+1" mechanisms and are engaged in deeper cooperation with the United States, the EU, Türkiye, India, Japan and the

Republic of Korea.

Amid unprecedented global changes, the Eurasian region is seeing another round of turbulence and realignment, accelerated by the Ukraine crisis. Continued geopolitical competition between Russia and the West may lead to further instability and a more diversified geopolitical landscape in the region.

First, the region is expected to become increasingly fragmented. Ukraine and Moldova will move further toward the West. Even though NATO membership remains out of reach for now, Ukraine has signed security agreements with multiple European nations to ensure enduring security commitments. Moldova has also signed a security and defence partnership agreement with the EU to deepen military and security cooperation.

Meanwhile, Russia is strengthening its alliance with Belarus by deploying tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus and making it Russia's sole strategic outpost in the West.

The South Caucasus is expected to become a key link for trade across the Eurasian continent. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan are accelerating the development of the Trans-Caspian international transport corridor, with the EU planning to invest 10 billion euros (\$10.5 billion) in the project. Russia and Azerbaijan are also promoting the International North-South Transport Corridor.

Central Asia will also maintain its diversified geopolitical landscape. The region is strategically located at the heart of Eurasia with abundant energy resources. As Western countries and other nations outside the region such as Türkiye have stepped up their engagement with Central Asia, Central Asian countries have followed their multi-vector foreign policies to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation in order to safeguard their sovereignty and security.

Second, "de-Russification" will continue. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states have prioritized sovereignty, territorial integrity, as well as national identity. Many have focused on strengthening the indigenous ethnicities by promoting local history and languages. As a result, the influence of the Russian language is gradually diminishing across the Eurasian region. Russian is now considered an official language in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, a second official language in Belarus, and a language of inter-ethnic communication in Tajikistan. It has no official status in other Central Asian countries. The Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union has also encountered numerous challenges in terms of the free movement of goods, capital and labor due to Western sanctions.

Third, great power rivalry between Russia and the West may escalate ten-

sions in the region and destabilize some countries.

Since the onset of the Ukraine crisis, Moldova's domestic tensions have worsened, pushing the long-standing Transnistria issue to a tipping point. While the South Caucasus has seen signs of reconciliation, domestic unrest persists in Georgia and Armenia, with opposition forces staging multiple rounds of protests. Given the region's strategic significance, external forces are expected to step up their intervention and pose challenges to regional stability.

For China, the Eurasian region is both a key focus of its neighborhood diplomacy and a vital area for advancing the Belt and Road Initiative. Amid the geopolitical restructuring triggered by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, China has leveraged its economic advantages and multilateral cooperation frameworks to strengthen ties with Eurasian nations, acting as a key force for regional stability and prosperity. China and Central Asian nations are now cooperating in a wide range of areas, including energy, infrastructure, industrial investment, agriculture, environmental protection and cultural exchanges. Central Asia has become a pioneering and demonstration region for the BRI.

China established a strategic partnership with Ukraine in 2011 and continues to view Ukraine as an important partner in Eurasia. Regarding the Ukraine crisis, China has maintained an impartial stance and has played a constructive role by standing up for peace, advocating dialogue and negotiations, and proposing a series of peace initiatives to facilitate a political solution to the conflict. In 2023, China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis was released, highlighting 12 key points. It received widespread international recognition.

China calls for the establishment of a balanced, effective, and sustainable security framework in Europe. China has appointed a special envoy to carry out three rounds of shuttle diplomacy and will continue to play a proactive role in seeking a resolution to the Ukraine crisis.

Looking ahead, as the regional landscape continues to evolve, China is expected to maintain its neutrality while further promoting regional economic cooperation and contributing to stability and development across Eurasia.

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HUSSEIN ASKARY

## Weaponized smear

The China "debt-trap" narrative is a falsehood that is a tool of geopolitics

Although it has been debunked thoroughly by international experts, the "China debt-trap" narrative keeps surfacing as a mantra of anti-China campaigns. Most recently, a Swedish member of parliament brought it up in a public debate as part of what he called "China's aggressive neocolonial operations in Africa." While the impact of this narrative has diminished in recent years in the Global South, with more and more nations joining the Belt and Road Initiative, it is being repeated in the West to mobilize forces that consider China's successful and peaceful rise as a geopolitical threat.



The narrative was launched as part of the first Donald Trump administration's tool kit to counter the influence of China. In 2018, according to US media reports at the time, the United States Department of State commissioned two Harvard University students to write a report which was titled "Debtbook Diplomacy: China's Strategic Leveraging of its Newfound Economic Influence and the Consequences for US Foreign Policy".

The Department of State informed the US and international mass media in May 2018 of the report and helped promote it. At the end of 2018, the Department of State even bragged in its financial report to US Congress that "the department continues to message on this subject, delivering additional high-performing materials, including: Harvard study warns of perilous 'debt-trap diplomacy'".

The Department of State requested more financing for such operations. In 2021, the US Congress responded through "the Strategic Competition Act of 2021", allocating \$300 million every year from 2022 to 2026 for this purpose. A major part of the financing will be utilized, according to the text of the Act, to provide "support for local media" stating that "the secretary of state, acting through the assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor and in coordination with the administrator of the US Agency for International Development, shall support and train journalists on investigative techniques necessary to ensure public accountability related to the BRI".

In September 2021, Zimbabwean media revealed that the US embassy in the country was recruiting and financing young

activists and journalists to tarnish the investments made by China in the country as harmful to the nation. This made it clear that the anti-BRI propaganda with the debt-trap narrative as its main tool was going into high-gear throughout the world. A USAID-financed NGO in Serbia made global headlines by claiming that cancer rates had risen in Smederevo, a town where a Chinese steel plant was operating. The health authorities in Smederevo later challenged the information presented to the international media by the NGO.

The USAID's role in financing anti-China and anti-BRI smear campaigns is well documented. It funds NGOs both in the US and abroad to recruit and organize talented "young leaders" and "opinion makers" pumping both finances and disinformation about China's investments in the Global South through the BRI. The William & Mary's Global Research Institute's so-called information lab, AidData, is well known as such a USAID-financed source of disinformation about the BRI. It is not clear how the shutting down of the USAID will impact the channeling of the resources allocated by US Congress to anti-China and anti-BRI operations, but it is a strong blow to such operations according to some Western media.

The irony is that if the US had used these large amounts of money to do good in Africa through public goods projects rather than tarnishing the BRI and China with disinformation, the US would have had greater soft power in its competition with China. For example, with the \$1.5 billion, the US could build 250 hospitals of the same type as the China-built Mahusekwa Hospital for antenatal care in Mashonaland in Zimbabwe, which cost \$6 million. The same amount could be used to build about 500 level-three hospitals such as the Gachororo Health Centre in Juja, Kenya, a 200-bed facility that cost \$3.2 million. However, such win-win thinking does not penetrate the mind of policymakers in Washington who are saturated with the zero-sum game of geopolitics.

There are two ways to deal with the debt-trap narrative: one is to show its fallacies in a systematic and pedagogical way; the other is to develop innovative methods in financing infrastructure along the BRI in addition to the way China has successfully done in the first 10 years. It is a matter of reality that many nations, especially developing countries, are in dire need for infrastructure to release their economic growth potential and sustain it. Nations are tired of aid

programs that have continued for decades without any tangible results in their attempts to eliminate poverty and achieve prosperity.

Regarding the first point, a three-step method of exposing the fallacies of the debt-trap narrative can be adopted so that it can be applied to any country that is alleged to be a victim of a "Chinese debt-trap". The three steps are examinations of the composition of the debt of that country, the quality of the debt incurred by that country, and finally the sources of financial instability in that country. The samples used to develop this method are famous cases singled out by the narrative creators: Sri Lanka, Zambia, Kenya, Pakistan and Montenegro. They show that there is no basis for blaming China for the financial problems of those countries.

As for financing infrastructure in Belt and Road countries, it is imperative to continue the success of the Chinese method of low-interest and long-term loans no matter what the opponents say. But China alone cannot fill the gap of tens of trillions of dollars necessary for developing modern infrastructure in Asia, Africa and South America. Other actors have to step up and resources have to be pooled.

First, nations must develop national financial institutions to mobilize local resources through national "development banks". Regional development banks are also advisable. For example, the Arab countries of the Gulf have more than \$4 trillion in their sovereign wealth funds. The Chinese financial markets can also become a source of credit, as has been proven by the Panda bonds that are becoming increasingly popular in developing countries. In addition, bilateral development funds between creditors and debtors can be created in which a small portion of the natural resources of debtor country can be leveraged to generate credit from financial institutions in the creditor nations. In addition to China's rise, the BRI is one of the great success stories of the 21st century. It must be promoted and defended against ill-intended and geopolitically motivated attacks such as the "debt trap" narrative.

The author is vice-chairman of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden and a distinguished research fellow at the Guangdong Institute of International Strategies. 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.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

## CULTURAL HERITAGE



Just over 3,000 years ago, the newly established Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC) included present-day Beijing area under the rule of a united central kingship for the first time.

After the fierce war that ended the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC), the Zhou king introduced enfeoffment system, under which land was given to the leaders of vassal states in exchange for their loyalty, to pacify people and govern the vast territory. The Yan state, whose leaders were from the same clan as the Zhou kings, rose around Beijing, marking the birth of the city.

Thanks to the Liulihe Site, which covers 5.25 square kilometers in the Fangshan district on the southwestern outskirts of the capital, more is left of that prosperous era than historical documents.

Since it was found in 1945, Liulihe has continued to yield evidence of history. In the 1970s, for example, the milestone discovery of bronze wares inscribed with the name of the Duke of Yan finally confirmed it as the location of the seat of the vassal state. Now, an ongoing round of excavation that began in 2021 has revealed more about this ancient buried city.

As previous excavations located the city walls, some scholars had speculated that they were the boundary of an inner city, and that an outer city should also exist. This theory has been confirmed by the new findings.

According to Wang Jing, the lead archaeologist from the Beijing Institute of Archaeology, recent excavations confirmed the existence of a second layer of city walls and moats.

The outer city wall is located about 350 meters north of the previous northern boundary, and is between 6 and 9 meters in width. The moat is between 3 and 5 meters from the wall, with an average width of 7 to 8 meters. Though many parts of the moat have been eroded by a nearby river, the surviving 1,020-meter section has already amazed archaeologists.

"Based on the position of the outer moat, it is estimated that the city could reach a square kilometer in size," Wang says. "It surpasses our current understanding of the complexity of Western Zhou cities."

New knowledge has also come from the inner city, which it is estimated covers 600,000 square meters. Recent discoveries include large-scale rammed earth building foundations spread across 2,300 sq m, and which is larger than similar findings in China from the time, as well as wells, some of which are over 10 meters deep.

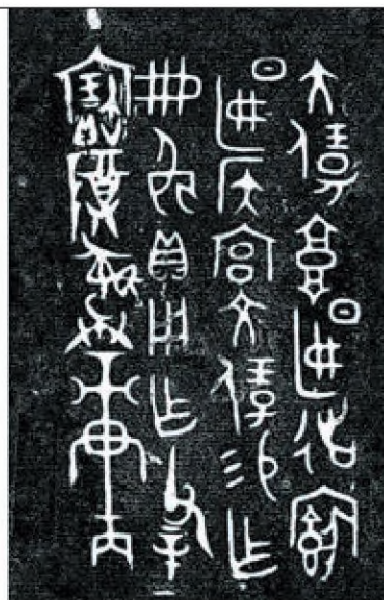
"They may provide clues to the different urban functional zones of the city," Wang explains.

The 82-degree orientation of both the inner and outer cities also turns out to be identical to the newly excavated city ruins of Zhouyuan Site in Shaanxi province, capital of the Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-256 BC).

"They are the only two known city ruins from the Western Zhou period with multiple layers of city walls," Lei Xingshan, an archaeology professor at Beijing Union University, says. "The identical orientation and complicated structure indicate the existence of a rigid ritual system."



From left: An array of ritual bronze ware unearthed from a tomb coded M1902 at the Liulihe Site in Beijing. Inscriptions include the *taibao yong yan* ("Taibao built the city of Yan"). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## Digging into Beijing's birth

New discoveries at Liulihe provide fresh clues about the origin of the city that eventually became China's capital, **Wang Kaihao** reports.



Clockwise from top left: A nobleman's tomb, coded M1902, at the Liulihe Site. Archaeologists clean bronze funerary objects at a tomb in the site. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY A bronze artifact unearthed from the site. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

### Echoing recordings

According to ancient recordings, Lord Shao, a member of Zhou royal family with the official title of Taibao was entrusted with founding the Yan state. In 2021, the discovery at Liulihe of inscribed ritual bronze ware in a nobleman's tomb, coded M1902, vividly brought that history back to life.

The simple phrase *taibao yong*

*yan* ("Taibao built the city of Yan") directly connected this archaeological site to the key chapter of history for the first time. Other inscriptions also mentioned Lord Shao organizing a sacrifice at the palace of the Duke of Yan as a groundbreaking ceremony.

"This monumental finding of these inscriptions also indicates that a palace city could already have existed when Lord Shao came,"

Wang says. "He might have built a new city, probably the outer city we recently excavated."

Some histories are written, while others are hidden in the earth. Following the clues, Wang's team is still working to look for the palace. Their mission is to put together the pieces and work up an overview of the era.

During the current round of excavations, 17 tombs with burial passages, including M1902, indicating

that their inhabitants were either of the ruling dukes' family or aristocrats, were found at Liulihe.

Wang says that DNA analysis has identified four generations of Yan dukes. As there is no mention of Yan lineage after Lord Shao in surviving documents until nine generations later, she says it is a key reference in filling in the gaps of history.

In-depth research of individual samples could also help to reveal a

bigger picture, according to Wang.

Wu Xiaohong, director of the Commission of Archaeological Chronology of the Chinese Society of Archaeology, and her team have been unraveling the puzzles surrounding the man who had long been sleeping in M1902. According to bronze inscriptions, the remains are those of a historian named Huan.

Based on 60 samples collected from 40 spots around the tomb, radiocarbon dating is providing a picture of Huan's life.

"He was 40 to 45 years old when he died, probably some time between 1045 and 1010 BC," Wu says. "It not only unrolls the time of the beginning of Beijing, but also helps solve the chronological issue of the Western Zhou as a whole."

Due to the lack of an accurate timeline, opinion about when the Western Zhou Dynasty was established has varied, with 1046 BC being the most widely accepted answer based on the study of documents, archaeological and astronomical evidence.

"Huan witnessed the groundbreaking ceremony shortly after the Western Zhou Dynasty was founded, and the carbon dating results could provide supporting evidence," Wu adds.

### Decoding lives

History is not only about kings and nobles. The job of archaeologists is also to shed light on the ordinary lives that may be absent in historical records.

A graveyard of 33 small-scale tombs for commoners dating to the middle of the Western Zhou Dynasty was found north of the city. Ning Chao, a researcher at Peking University, and his team are conducting DNA analysis of the bones.

Those buried there belonged to two families related by marriage, and the cemetery contains the remains of at least four generations. Consanguineous marriage between cousins has been proven through the samples.

"We were able to draw a family tree through the studies," Ning says. "It vividly explains how clans were organized at the time."

Lab research has also provided clues to diet and livelihoods. Plant remains found at Liulihe mainly consist of millet and sorghum, supplemented by soybeans and red beans with occasional traces of wheat.

"The agricultural structure reflects the typical dryland farming practices of northern China," Wang says.

According to animal archaeology studies, the diet of ancient inhabitants mainly consisted of meats like pork, beef and lamb, with fish and shellfish also consumed.

"Findings provided valuable information on the dietary differences among different social classes, as well, such as the population of migrants during the early Western Zhou period," Wang says.

After the Shang Dynasty was toppled, its descendants continued to live under their former adversaries. Studies indicate that some even emigrated to settle in the Yan state.

"Research method at the Liulihe Site could set an example for the adoption of new technology in the study of large-scale archaeological sites," Lei says. "It creates a paradigm for future work."

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## Simple mausoleum in Henan belies importance of warrior occupant

By **WANG RU** in Anyang, Henan province wangru@chinadaily.com.cn

The mausoleum in suburban Anyang, Henan province, seemed not to match the fame of its occupant, the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) warlord and poet Cao Cao.

Standing in front of the Cao Cao Mausoleum Museum, I saw a grand building in black and red, noble colors during Cao's time. The museum, which opened in 2023 and is about a 40-minute drive from downtown Anyang, is built on the site of the mausoleum.

I couldn't help feeling that without the presence of such a building, the mausoleum would have gone unnoticed in the farmland around. No wonder it had disappeared from history for 1,800 years.

Western Jin Dynasty (265-316) historian Chen Shou once said of Cao that he was "an extraordinary man and a great talent". In the turbulent era at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, he unified northern China and paved the way for his son to found the Wei Dynasty (220-265), one of the three dynasties that coex-

isted during the Three Kingdoms (220-280) period. Although Cao could not have the last laugh as he died in 220 without seeing the unification of China, he wrote a remarkable page in Chinese history and spawned a number of legends. His writing, especially his poems, also earned him a name in literature.

Before his death, Cao requested a simple burial. He didn't want a large mound above his chamber, stone tablets to mark his mausoleum, or precious gold or silver funerary objects to accompany him in the afterlife.

This goes with his reputation of being frugal, but even so, his decision was unusual, because at the time, people of high social status tended to be buried with many precious funerary objects, which they believed they would continue to enjoy in the afterlife. Cao bucked tradition, and his final words said he chose to be buried like this because the country was not yet stable.

According to legend, Cao had plundered tombs to support his army, and so some say that he knew any precious object would be stolen. That sounds like a reasonable explanation, but even so, his wish for his



From left: The passage leading to the main tomb chamber at the Cao Cao Mausoleum Museum in Anyang, Henan province. Simple, crudely made ceramic artifacts unearthed from the mausoleum. PHOTOS BY WANG KAIHAO AND WANG RU / CHINA DAILY

tomb not to be disturbed failed despite the lack of precious artifacts. In the replica of the burial chamber at the museum, I saw the two big holes through which plunderers entered the burial chamber. One has been inferred as a form of political revenge during the Western Jin era.

When archaeologists finally opened the mausoleum in 2008, they found only a skull and some bone fragments. DNA testing shows they belonged to a male who died in his 60s, probably Cao, whose facial bones

were badly damaged. Two female remains were more or less intact, and probably those of consorts.

It took researchers years to combine scattered evidence, including descriptions in documents, unearthed objects, and comparative DNA analysis of Cao's descendants, to identify the site as his mausoleum, which was historically referred to as Gaoling.

Archaeological studies indicate that the mausoleum once had structures above ground, which were later

deliberately demolished. This complies with records, which say that the warlord's son Emperor Cao Pi, the founder of the Wei Dynasty, initially built the structures as a demonstration of filial piety but later decided to obey his father's wish and ordered their removal, returning the mausoleum to a simple state.

In the museum, I saw funerary objects. Although the mausoleum had been plundered multiple times throughout history, archaeologists still found some. They are mostly

pottery artifacts, not at all exquisite. As a matter of fact, some of the figurines and pottery animals seem crudely made, as if by children.

After seeing the great number of exquisite gold artifacts found in the mausoleum of the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) Marquis of Haihun in Jiangxi province, I know how simple Cao's burial was, and the only gold item I saw was a bead, smaller than a button.

Cao Cao has long been a controversial figure. Some say he was a hero, while others say he was treacherous and cunning. Judging by his mausoleum, I saw a strong-minded, insightful man who faced death in his own way.

Leaving the museum, I looked up at a nearly 18-meter-tall statue of him riding a horse at the entrance. Cao is pulling on the reins and cracking a whip, his cloak swirling in the wind. Facing southeast, his eyes are fixed on the distant horizon, the area he failed to conquer during his lifetime. This is the image of him in my heart, a man who was warrior throughout his life.

Shi Baoyin contributed to the story.

## LIFESHANGHAI

**D**utch musical actress Maya Hakvoort won the Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Award on Feb 27. She is one of a few foreign artists to have won the award at all 33 sessions.

The Magnolia Award is Shanghai's annual celebration of live theater and honors the best stage productions and actors. Hakvoort won the award for her performance in the title role of *Lady M*, a musical production in English by Shanghai Culture Square and Xu Jun Drama and Musical.

Since landing a role in the musical *Chicago* in 1988, Hakvoort has built a prolific career on the German and English-language musical scene, performing in several important productions such as *Elisabeth*, *Mozart!*, and *Evita*, among others.

*Lady M* has an international cast led by Hakvoort and is the first English-language musical production created in China. Written by British playwrights James Beeny and Gina Georgio, it premiered at Shanghai's MIFA 1862 Theater.

"In 2023, director Xu Jun asked me to play the main role in *Lady M*," Hakvoort tells China Daily before receiving the Magnolia Award. The production has three male English actors and the rest of the cast is Chinese. "I was thrilled. The whole show was in English, which was easy for me to learn. It was modern Shakespeare in a modern setting and costumes."

Working with the Chinese production team was also a new experience for Hakvoort. As a performer used to playing powerful female roles, Hakvoort says: "I make very brave choices." Meanwhile, she found the actors in China would "do what the director says and then put a little of their own spin on it."

"We learn from each other," she says. "As a result, we had to melt together. We met each other in the middle."

*Lady M* is a dark story about war, rage and murder, and the title character is unlike the traditional female roles in Chinese theater. "She is not that feminine and thrives on power and strength," Hakvoort says.

Many musical lovers in China got to know Hakvoort in *Elisabeth*, a benchmark musical in German based on the true life story of Austrian Empress Elisabeth, who is also known as Sisi. Hakvoort has performed *Elisabeth* more than 1,000 times since 1994 and was the star in the official DVD edition.

"*Elisabeth* made my career grow," she says about the most important production of her career. "Because you play from ages 14 to almost 61, it is such an intense acting process. I think this is the only role that goes through this many life stages."

After performing *Elisabeth* in a concert in Vienna in 2023, she thought maybe that could be her last time in the role, but a few weeks ago, she received a phone call from Munich asking her to play *Elisabeth* the next day because "everyone was sick".

She drove from Vienna to Munich in four hours, did the rehearsal, put

# STILL SINGING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Veteran Dutch musical actress recalls her favorite memories of important productions and how Chinese audiences surprise her, Zhang Kun reports.



**Clockwise from top:** Maya Hakvoort stuns the Shanghai audience on a concert as she is in town to receive the Shanghai Magnolia Stage Performance Award in February. She is also known for her role in *Lady M*. Hakvoort speaks to China Daily before her solo concert at Shanghai Culture Square. PHOTOS BY LI JUNFENG / CHINA DAILY

the costumes on and played *Elisabeth* one more time.

"I played it when I had no children, then I played it when I had children, and then I played it when I was a bit older. As I age, I play the part better. I can see Elisabeth every time of the day. The music, the voice and the script are in my system. I never say it's my last time."

In 2014, as a guest star during the musical's tour of Shanghai, Hakvoort went on stage at the Shanghai Culture Square for the first time. In 2019, she returned to the theater again with other colleagues for a gala concert. Since then, she has built a solid fan base in China, especially in Shanghai.

In 2023, Shanghai Culture Square invited her for three recitals. To her surprise, the tickets sold out in one and a half days.

"It was amazing. I remember it like it was yesterday. I came on stage and 1,900 people applauded. It was like a shower of appreciation washing over me."

"When you live and work in Europe, you don't realize there is a fan base in China. It is so overwhelming."

Hakvoort gave two more recitals at Shanghai Culture Square on Saturday and Sunday, when she performed English and German songs from important productions from her musical career through the decades.

The show was part of the 2025 Musical Stars Live Concerts, a new series introduced this year by Shanghai Culture Square. Her colleague Mark Seibert, who is familiar to Chinese audiences as *Death in Elisabeth*, performed on Feb 8 and 9, followed by a strong cast including French singer Laurent Ban.

Zhang Yixin, a 27-year-old school teacher, attended the Saturday concert in traditional Chinese clothing and there were also youngsters dressed up as Elisabeth and *Death*.

"I came to her concert the year before, saw *Lady M* last year, and watched many of her other productions on video," Zhang tells China Daily. "I love Maya for her powerful voice and portrayal of powerful female characters."

According to Zhu Guang, a theater critic in Shanghai, part of the reason Hakvoort is widely loved by musical fans in China is that "female audiences project their preference for the power and determination in the roles she plays, especially *Elisabeth*, a show that combines rationality and sensibility, historical narrative and philosophical reflection".

In China, the majority of those attending musicals are female and they identify with characters such as Sisi, and even the murderous *Lady Macbeth*, Zhu says.

Modern urban Chinese women want to "control their fate, have real power, and freely express their emotions as Maya does in the show". Her vocal strength is "second to none among all the female musical actors on tour in China," Zhu adds.

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## New fashion using ancient craftsmanship hits runways



By WANG XIN  
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Jacquard fabrics with traditional Chinese cultural elements and ancient Li brocade crafts caught the eye of global designers at the recently concluded Premiere Vision Paris show.

Joining hands with Shanghai Skytex Fashion Technology Co Ltd, a design innovation team from the College of Textiles at Donghua University, brought new vitality to the ancient craft through a series of jacquard fabrics and handbags at the notable biannual show on Feb 12.

Boasting a history of over 3,000 years, the brocade is a traditional craft of the Li ethnic group in Hainan province, and is listed as a nation-



**Above:** Students from Donghua University learn about Li brocade craftsmanship in Hainan province. **Left and Right:** Jacquard fabrics featuring the ancient Li brocade captivate global visitors at the Premiere Vision Paris show in February. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ally intangible cultural heritage.

The jacquard Li brocade fabrics displayed at the show were described as artworks with Chinese charm. Their exquisite patterns were inspired by the ethnic group's traditional gourd totem, precisely layered snake scale textures to mark the Year of the Snake, and vibrant colors representing rainforests and good fortune.

Showcasing a balanced blend of traditional Chinese culture and modern aesthetics and techniques, the fabrics captivated attendees and

explored new possibilities for this ancient craft.

"These are not only fabrics but also the contemporary cultural expression of millennial Li brocade. Integrating with traditional Chinese culture and modern textile technology, we hope to bring this ancient intangible cultural heritage to the global stage," says Xue Wenliang, leader of the team and a professor at the College of Textiles at Donghua University in Shanghai.

The collaboration between the team and Skytex dates back to July



2022. Last summer, tracking the path of Huang Daopo, a textile pioneer in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) born in today's Shanghai, the team journeyed to Hainan province. Immersing themselves in Li ethnic communities, they learned the culture and techniques behind the traditional craft.

Xue says that compared with other renowned ancient Chinese brocades that use silk as the main material, such as the Yunjin and Songjin brocades from Jiangsu province, Li brocade is less known

and is made of cotton, which China farmed on a large scale until the late Tang Dynasty (618-907). However, the jacquard fabrics at the Paris show were created with the high-end market in mind.

"Compared with other fabric processing techniques, such as printed fabrics, jacquard fabrics take more time and work. In particular, the making of Li brocade involves handmaking in its processing, such as spinning, dyeing, weaving, and embroidering, making the fabric a luxurious and artistic product," says Xue.



He adds that integrating hand-made craftsmanship, traditional culture and modern technology is a big challenge in passing on such intangible cultural heritage, calling on more students, companies and organizations to take part in the process.

Chai Fangjun, chairman of Skytex, values the collaboration with the team, saying: "The living heritage of Li brocade must speak to the world. With 3D jacquard techniques, such as printed Chinese fashion that has evolved using ancient craftsmanship, in Paris.

"This series not only pays tribute to Li culture but also demonstrates our forward-looking and inclusive attitude to global cultural exchanges and fashion innovation."

## LIFE



# Pop star returns to her ethnic Miao roots

A Duo reinvents herself as a promoter of traditional culture in a new stage production a decade in the making, **Chen Nan** reports.

Stardom often leads artists to chase the next big trend, but one female pop singer has embarked on a remarkable journey of reinvention.

Known for her catchy hits and glamorous performances, A Duo has made a deep, unexpected shift from the glitzy world of pop music to becoming a popularizer of Miao ethnic culture, with a new stage production that bridges the ancient and the modern.

Titled *Reborn Beats*, the production premiered on Dec 31 in the seaside community of Aranya in Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, and is about to kick off a national tour on Friday to cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

The 45-year-old singer, who is also the scriptwriter and director, has seamlessly blended her pop background with ancient Miao traditions in a dazzling performance that is both a tribute to her heritage, and a platform for bringing her culture to a contemporary audience — many of whom may have never encountered it before.

*Reborn Beats* is the story of Ye Zi, a young woman from the mountains, who seeks to adapt to life in the city. In doing so, she abandons her ability to communicate with nature and all living things. However, she repeatedly faces setbacks to love, friendship and dreams. On a rooftop one day, she receives a call informing her that her grandmother is critically ill. This prompts her to return home, setting off a colorful and magical adventure.

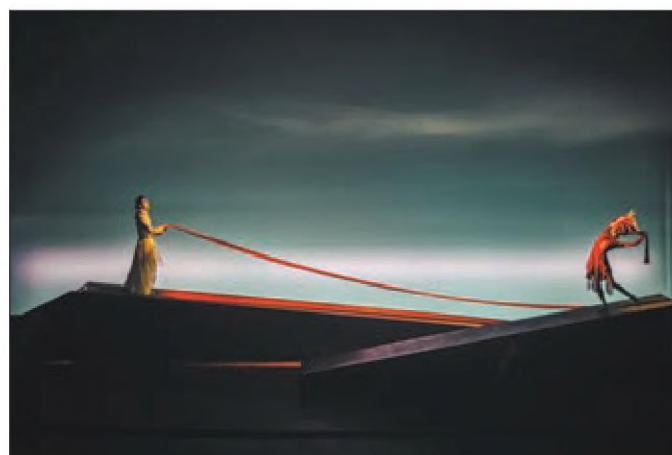
Traditional Miao musical instruments, including the *lusheng* (a reed pipe) and drums, are featured in the production, along with contemporary musical elements.

Once a symbol of modernity, A Duo now dresses in a stunning, richly embroidered Miao-inspired costume as a visual representation of her respect for her cultural heritage. She plays the role of the grandmother, who she describes as a wise, elderly woman with a face full of wrinkles.

"The character reminds me of my own grandmother, who was hardworking, kindhearted, wise, and took care of the family," she says.

A Duo spent about 10 years working on *Reborn Beats*. Her aim is to show that Miao culture is not some static relic of the past but rather a dynamic, evolving force. She also wants to deliver an inspiring message about the transition of women, a theme that mirrors her personal path of evolution.

Born in Hunan province to a Tujia father



**Top:** Pop singer A Duo returns to the limelight with *Reborn Beats*, a new stage production directed and written by herself, which features Miao music and dance elements. **Middle:** A Duo and the cast of *Reborn Beats* rehearse in Beijing. **Above left and right:** The stage production tells the story of a woman's evolution. Miao musical instruments and Miao-inspired costumes are the focus of the show. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and a Miao mother, A Duo gained fame after performing the dance song *Goodbye, Carmen* on the annual China Central Television Spring Festival Gala in 2005. She was signed by a major Chinese record label and released several pop albums.

However, despite the fame and flashing lights, her life was not without struggles. The pain of personal relationships, career exhaustion, and health issues led her to step out of the limelight.

"I thought about what kind of life I

wanted to live, what kind of person I wanted to become, and what I was chasing," she says.

Beneath the glitter of stardom, there was a yearning for a more meaningful form of expression — something rooted in

history, heritage and culture. It was a longing to do more than entertain; she wanted to create something that would resonate beyond the superficiality of pop fame. That's when Miao culture, a tradition she is closely connected to through her ancestry, entered her life with full force.

From 2012 to 2016, she spent her days in remote villages in Hunan, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, where the Miao and Tujia live. During her stay, she recorded folk songs and dance moves. She also learned *miaogu*, a Miao percussion performance, from 89-year-old Hong Fuqiang in Baojing county in the Xiangxi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture in Hunan. It was there that she officially became an inheritor of Miao drum dance, setting the stage for her next artistic chapter.

Living in villages allowed her to embrace a simpler lifestyle and brought back vivid memories. A Duo was raised by her grandmother, and the wooden door of her grandmother's house always creaked. A creak meant someone was leaving, and another creak meant that breakfast was ready. The door was like a clock, and the creak was like its chime. She wanted to preserve these emotionally charged sounds in the production, alongside things like picking cotton, sifting rice, spinning machines, and grinding stones.

"I'm a translator, interpreting what the previous generation of masters has passed down and making it resonate with today's young people," A Duo says.

*Reborn Beats* brings together five inheritors of Miao ethnic folk arts, including singer Long Xian'e and *lusheng* player Yang Shengwen. They share A Duo's vision of music that revives a cultural legacy they believe has the power to inspire future generations.

"As an inheritor of *lusheng*, I always want to present the instrument to a wider audience, and with *Reborn Beats*, we have made this possible," says Yang, who performs with the China Ethnic Song and Dance Ensemble, and has been playing the instrument for decades.

"The *lusheng* is not just treated as an embellishment but prominently featured in the production, especially when it's integrated into contemporary music elements. It allows the audience to see and feel the essence of the instrument, and experience its sound in a fresh and engaging way," Yang notes.

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## When real healing means pushing through the pain

"There are ways, but the way is uncharted." I thought about these words, the first line of the first poem of the *Tao Te Ching*, as I lay facedown on a table carefully covered with fresh sheets, and the visually challenged masseur went to work. He began at the point where my neck meets my shoulders, pressing with his elbow. Pain. I didn't get his name. Before the



**Haydn James Fogel**  
Second Thoughts

appointment began, he asked the usual questions. Where are you from? How long have you been in China? I answered in Mandarin as best I could, and he gave a toothy grin.

He complimented my language skills. I blushed and thanked him, filled with confidence. My friend provided translations anyway, for which I was grateful. She had the truth of it; my Chinese was garbage.

He didn't feel around to map the shape of my body; each connection point was confident, intentional

and forceful. He worked his way up my neck and then down my back, uncovering deeper pain in each new area. At my calves, he unlocked the ninth circle of Hell, and I yelped. "Do you want him to go easier?" My friend asked, but I would not acquiesce. I had signed up for this.

I think my torturer knew this. I squirmed and gasped several times throughout the process, and each time, he stayed in that spot and found new ways to attack. He approached me like a stern mother. His truth was greater than my

misery; my body needed healing. I worried about my friend. She had brought me to this treatment as a gift, and I didn't want her to think I hated it. So I ground my teeth, clenched my fists and submitted to the suffering.

The activity had a name — "blind massage" — but for each of us, the experience was unique. My friend wanted to treat me, the masseur wanted to fix me, and I wanted to escape. Somewhere between these intentions was an unnamed reality.

"There are names, but not

nature in words," the poem continues. We grasp for descriptions of our world, but its truth eludes us and that's the point. "The secret waits for the insight / Of eyes unclouded by longing."

The lights in the massage parlor were hospital-bright. The design was Spartan, essentials only. I didn't have the silk robes or soothing piano music to which I am accustomed. For the masseur, these material things were irrelevant. His senses were unencumbered by light, so he could instead worry about inflammation in my

back, and lactic acid in my calves.

After the massage was finished, my friend commented on a wider, excruciating noises I'd produced. She was generously making space for me to be critical of the experience, which I wouldn't do — couldn't do. I struggled to find the words to describe it. I was grateful and disappointed, tense but somehow relaxed. I still don't know how to explain what happened. It was what it was.

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