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# CHINA DAILY

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## Xi, advisers focus on better education

President says solving new issues, making further progress require sustained efforts

By MO JINGXI  
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The concept that education determines the future of a nation is a widely acknowledged consensus globally.

That could be the reason education was at the forefront of the discussion on Thursday when President Xi Jinping joined the group meeting in Beijing of the country's national political advisers from the China Democratic League, the China Association for Promoting Democracy and the education sector.

"In every household, education is now a focal point of attention, with numerous hot topics in this field," Xi told the political advisers, who were attending the third session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. "This not only indicates a strong educational atmosphere, but also reflects a certain gap between our education system and the expectations of the people."

Cai Guangjie, deputy director of the Education Department of Sichuan province, presented her research findings to Xi, revealing a significant demographic shift in the country — the decrease in the school-age population.

To address these emerging challenges, Cai gave her advice on optimizing resource allocation, including controlling the construction of new schools and facilitating the transfer of students from under-resourced rural schools to better-equipped schools in towns.

Cai's remarks evoked Xi's memories of the early days of China's reform and opening-up. At the time, the country provided many children with the opportunity to receive education through initiatives such as raising funds from various sources to establish and operate schools, and through Project Hope, which was launched in 1989 with the goal of ensuring that students in impoverished areas were given greater access to education.

"Back then, I was quite happy to have raised funds to build a primary school in Liangjiahe village. But the school was later closed," Xi recalled. Liangjiahe was an impoverished village in northwestern China's Shaanxi province.

However, the school's closure was actually a positive development, Xi said, because students were relocated to a school in the township area to receive a higher-quality education.

Xi also said that new issues have been brought about "by changes occurring amid progress. The pro-

cess of solving these problems is also a process of development and advancement."

China's preschool education is an example. With the increase in the number of people living in urban areas in recent years, many kindergartens have been left unused in some areas, while the number of quality kindergartens is still short of demand.

Xi said this situation cannot be changed immediately, as solving these issues requires adjustment of the educational structure.

"The adjustment might be realized only after the implementation of one or two five-year plans," he said. "There are many factors to consider in the process. But if we don't start planning now, it will be too late by then."

### Urgent priority

Xi said that although education requires sustained efforts over time, it is also an urgent priority.

He cited the development of education in the country since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, saying that tremendous changes have taken place since then.

At that time, the country was still very poor, and literacy classes were organized to combat widespread illiteracy. "The matter of importance back then was whether people would have enough to eat. Since the entire nation was experiencing a period of economic hardship, spending on education was very limited," he said.

Nowadays, school-age children's access to basic education in China has been significantly expanded, and the conditions and resources necessary for running a school have also greatly improved.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, the country's education spending has exceeded 4 percent of GDP for 12 consecutive years.

"This fully demonstrates the great importance attached to modern education by the Party," Xi said.

However, the challenges keep showing up.

Xu Kun, president of Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, told Xi that he considers artificial intelligence as a key variable in building China into a leading country in education, given both the opportunities and the challenges that it brings.

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Children read books at a bookstore in Anshun, Guizhou province, on April 21. CHEN XI / XINHUA

## Deadly toll



Relatives and neighbors take part in the funeral procession for four security force personnel killed in clashes with loyalists of former president Bashar al-Assad in Syria's Idlib Province, on Saturday. The clashes, which erupted on Thursday, have left more than 1,000 people dead, among them 745 civilians, 125 government security force members and 148 militants from armed groups affiliated with Assad. OMAR ALBAM / AP

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## China countering trade protectionism

By ZHONG NAN  
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Canada's imposition of additional tariffs on Chinese goods has strained bilateral trade relations, and China reserves the right to respond decisively to any foreign tariff measures it perceives as discriminatory, experts and business associations said on Sunday.

On Saturday, the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council, China's Cabinet, announced that starting on March 20, China will levy additional tariffs ranging from 25 percent to 100 percent on selected imports from Canada.

An additional 100 percent tariff will be levied on Canadian rapeseed oil, oilseed meal and peas, and a 25 percent tariff will target aquatic products and pork from Canada, a commission said.

The decisions follow the North American country's move in October to impose additional tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, steel and aluminum products.

The Ministry of Commerce said on Saturday that this is the first time China has initiated an anti-discrimination investigation and implemented corresponding measures under its Foreign Trade Law.

According to the law, if any country or region enacts prohibitive, restrictive or otherwise discriminatory trade measures against China, then China may, depending on the

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situation, retaliate against the country or region involved.

Shi Xiaoli, a professor of international trade law at China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing, said that China's anti-discrimination investigation is a robust response to violations of the World Trade Organization's "nondiscrimination principle."

"This innovative institutional approach demonstrates China's capability and determination to defend its legitimate interests, she said.

Canada is facing its current predicament of being caught between conflicting pressures because it blindly follows the United States, which makes it solely responsible for the consequences, she added.

The US is currently imposing tariffs on several countries, including China, Canada and Mexico, and some countries are attempting to use the imposition of additional tariffs on China as a bargaining chip to gain tariff relief from the US.

The Commerce Ministry has clearly stated that China will use anti-discrimination tools to counter such actions.

Yao Weiqun, a professor of international trade at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, said that for Canada, this will result in reduced market access and significant economic losses.

Highlighting that trade protectionism acts as a double-edged sword, Yao said that tariff policies should be grounded in the genuine needs of domestic industries and should not mimic the moves of other nations.

"The ongoing trade dispute between China and Canada exemplifies the escalating trend of global trade protectionism," Yao said, noting that under the influence of the US, countries are vigorously competing for their own benefits, therefore further complicating trade relationships.

In a statement issued on Saturday, a spokesperson for the Commerce Ministry said that China urges Canada to immediately correct its wrongful actions, revoke the restrictive measures and eliminate their adverse impacts.

Following China's announcements, six major Chinese industry associations and business chambers, including the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, the China Iron and Steel Association and the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products, expressed their support for the government's anti-discrimination investigation into Canada's restrictive trade practices.

In separate statements, these associations called on Canada to halt its discriminatory actions and adhere to the principles of fair trade.

### WORLD WATCH

By William Jones

## US should open doors to Chinese investors

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The world has been taken aback by the speed at which the geopolitical situation has changed

over the last few weeks. On Feb 12, President of the United States Donald Trump placed a call to Russian President Vladimir Putin, effectively breaking the isolation Western leaders have tried to place Putin in over the last three years. Then, a week later, high-level US and Russian representatives sat down together at a meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to discuss working out a program for normalizing US-Russia relations.

On Feb 24, Trump himself sat down at the White House with French President Emmanuel Macron, the first European leader he met after his groundbreaking phone call with Putin. On Feb 27, he met in the White House with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Both leaders expressed support for Trump's peace initiative, a change from their previous positions.

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## More judicial efforts protect business rights

By CUI JIA  
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The work reports of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate have sent strong signals that more judicial efforts will be made to equally protect the legitimate rights and interests of all types of businesses and to foster a healthier business environment, in order to further support high-quality development, deputies to China's top legislature said.

Both the SPC and the SPP highlighted in their reports the importance of equally protecting the legitimate rights and interests of various business entities. The reports were delivered by SPC President Zhang Jun and Procurator-General Ying Yong, respectively, on Saturday at the second plenary meeting of the third session of the



Zhang Jun

14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, for the national lawmakers to deliberate. In 2024, the use of criminal means to intervene in economic disputes, as well as unauthorized cross-regional law enforcement and profit-driven law enforcement were targeted in particular, according to the reports.

A total of 46 cases involving property rights disputes were reexamined, with the wrongful convictions of 72 individuals overturned and 13 people acquitted, the SPC said.

Meanwhile, by using the power of the rule of law to stabilize expectations, boost confidence and promote development, 137,000



Ying Yong

individuals were prosecuted for crimes that disrupted the socialist market economy order, marking a 13 percent increase year-on-year, the SPP said.

Xue Jiping, a deputy from Jiangsu province and chairman of Jiangsu Zhongtian Technology Co said, "The reports have shown judicial authorities' determination to safeguard the high-quality development of different enterprises and optimize the law-based business environment."

He said he hoped that the rule of law will become the core foundation for building a healthy business environment in China.

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## TWO SESSIONS

# Guardrails needed for AI growth

Lawmakers, political advisers call for more high-tech protections to be enshrined in law

By CAO YIN  
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While embracing the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, deputies to the 14th National People's Congress and members of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference last week warned of the need for greater regulation to ensure that the technology is not abused.

With AI such as ChatGPT and China's own DeepSeek rapidly spreading across the globe, its application and regulation were a hot topic at China's largest annual political gathering, with many national lawmakers and political advisers expressing their keen interest in the integration of AI into various industries.

Zhang Yi, a CPPCC National Committee member from Shanghai, said the integration of AI with industries will greatly boost the development of new quality productive forces, and may change the underlying business logic in various traditional areas.

In the film industry, AI-generated images and videos can be used to partially replace traditional filming, and in the retail industry, AI could be linked to back-end systems to achieve unmanned operations, he said.

"We embrace AI. It can enhance the market competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, provide a platform for innovators to practice and create job opportunities," said Zhang, who is also a partner at law firm King & Wood Mallesons.

"However, we've seen some problems caused by the rapid development of AI, such as discriminatory algorithmic decision-making, privacy violations and weak data security," he said, emphasizing that this uncertainty around the technology and associated risks will be a constant challenge for governance.

"It is essential that applications of AI are well-regulated through legislation, as we need to find a balance between high-quality development and high-level security, thereby promoting the healthy growth of the technology," he added.

Lu Lin, a deputy to the 14th NPC who is also a doctor from Shandong province, suggested the continued, cautious integration of AI into healthcare services, adding that regulation on big models should be used to guarantee data security, according to a quote from China News Service.

## Wider application

Since its release in January, DeepSeek's AI reasoning model has already been integrated into various sectors in China, including education, healthcare and justice.

On March 4, Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the third session of the 14th NPC, said at a news conference that technological breakthroughs made by Chinese companies such as DeepSeek demonstrate that an innovative, open and sharing approach to improving people's livelihoods is the right choice.

Following DeepSeek's decision to make its latest AI model open source, Lou said it has facilitated the wider application of AI technologies worldwide and contributed China's wisdom to global development.

Zhou Hongyi, a CPPCC National Committee member and founder of Chinese cybersecurity company 360 Security Group, said that 2025 would bring about a huge variety of AI applications, saying their use will make industries more efficient and reduce costs.

Doctor Lu agreed, highlighting AI's use in the healthcare sector. "Large models like DeepSeek, through extensive learning from medical literature and case data, can assist medical staff in making diagnostic and treatment decisions. They can quickly



Top: DeepSeek's open-source artificial intelligence system has become popular worldwide since its release in January. Above: Kimi, an artificial intelligence system by AI startup Moonshot, is displayed at the Apsara Conference in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in September. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

access information across various fields, improving the efficiency and accuracy of medical services," he said.

## Rising concerns

Zhang, the lawyer, praised AI for being the core driving force for the latest round of technological and industrial revolution, but said that data security and emerging disputes brought by the technology have raised concerns.

"If AI systems are hacked or infected with viruses, they could endanger personal information, public order and even national security," he said, noting that the construction of an AI security framework should be made a priority.

Zhong Zheng, a deputy to the 14th NPC and vice-president of Chinese home appliance maker Midea Group, told Guangzhou Daily that her concerns focus on the risk of those who use AI to create fake videos that mimic the appearance and voices of celebrities or experts.

"This AI-generated content can mislead and defraud consumers, especially the elderly, causing significant financial losses," the paper quoted her as saying.

In October, Lei Jun, founder and CEO of Chinese tech company Xiaomi, was troubled by a series of videos that used AI to imitate his voice. "I don't think using AI in this way is a good thing," said Lei, who is also an NPC deputy, commenting on the issue.

He wrote on social media that the use of AI for face swapping and voice syntheses will trigger violations of portrait rights and personal information, and even lead to fraud.

The improper use or abuse of AI can cause irreparable damage to the reputation and image of individuals or enterprises, and pose risks to social governance, he added.

## Dispute handling

Chinese courts have seen a rising number of lawsuits related to AI as its application spreads.

In April, the Beijing Internet Court heard a case in which a voice-over artist claimed that her voice had been used without her consent in audiobooks circulating online. The voice had been processed by AI.

The plaintiff took five companies to court, including a cultural media enterprise that had provided recordings of her voice for unauthorized use, an AI software developer and a voice-dubbing app operator.

The court found that the cultural media company sent the plaintiff's recordings to the software developer without her permission, and the developer used AI to mimic her voice to create AI-generated products.

Because the AI-powered voice mimicked the plaintiff's vocal characteristics, intonation and pronunciation style to a high degree, it was eventually identified as her voice, the court said, ruling that the behaviors of the cultural media company and the AI software developer infringed upon the woman's voice rights under China's Civil Code.

Earlier, the court concluded China's first case on the copyright of an image generated using AI, identifying the AI-generated picture as an artwork under protection because of the originality and intellectual input of its human creator.

In February, a court in Wuhan, Hubei province, also ruled in favor of a netizen whose AI-powered art was used in an advertisement without her permission.

Wu Yiqin, a CPPCC National Committee member, said that strengthening copyright protection has become a crucial issue in the development of AI.

He likened AI to a double-edged sword, underscoring that it involves not only the rights and interests of a broad range of literary, artistic and technological creators, as well as the standardized and healthy development of the copyright industry, but also the high-quality growth of China's digital economy.

## Regulation needed

In response to the increasingly challenging landscape of copyright protection, Wu, who is also deputy head of the China Writers Association, emphasized the necessity of building a forward-looking intellectual property legal framework.

It is urgent to accelerate the research and refinement of copyright protection standards in the field of AI and formulate regulatory legal documents, Wu said.

Zhong, from Midea, called for further improvements to laws and regulations to fundamentally curb fake content generated by AI, saying that current laws and rules regarding AI-generated videos are inadequate, especially in terms of copyright ownership and privacy protection, Guangzhou Daily reported.

To address the issue, she suggested the country amend laws such as the Copyright Law to clarify the liabilities for infringement of AI-generated content, the report added.

Considering the long-term coexistence of humans and AI, Zhang, the lawyer, said that it is a must to seek a balance between the regulation and development of the technology, promoting technological and industrial development in a healthy manner with legislation.

He called for adopting a flexible and prudent legislative strategy in the process of achieving this balance. "For example, it will be suitable to interpret some current laws, or ask regulatory authorities to issue guidance to address some prominent or urgent problems caused by AI," he said.

"When it comes to specific scenarios, pilot programs and regulatory sandboxes can be used to explore solutions. Alternatively, local legislation or departmental rules can also be introduced."

While providing legal support for AI innovators, he noted that corresponding obligations should be imposed on the technological service and product providers through legislation.

AI risk prevention and accountability need to be clarified in legislation, he said, suggesting AI applications be classified based on their risk levels and then subject to categorized regulation.

Zhang emphasized that AI-related legislation should be forward-looking and have an international perspective, as AI is a dynamically evolving technology that has become a key area of international competition.

"Legislative work needs to counter foreign containment, and also establish China's own principles, so as to facilitate the international development of China's AI industry and its participation in the formulation of international rules for AI governance in the future," he added.

Lou, the spokesman for the third session of the 14th NPC, said that the Chinese government has attached great importance to the development of AI and its risk prevention, saying that China has proposed the Global AI Governance Initiative to help bridge the technological divide and prevent sci-tech innovation from becoming only for rich countries and the wealthy.

"China stands ready to work with all countries to promote the healthy development of AI, boost world economic growth and increase the well-being of people all over the world," Lou said.

## Action planned

The work report of the NPC Standing Committee, which was submitted to the session on Saturday, said Chinese lawmakers will intensify research on legislation in emerging sectors such as AI, the digital economy and big data.

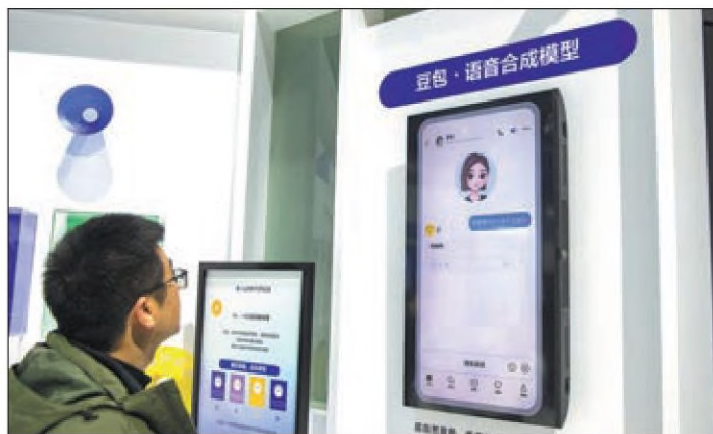
Ma Yide, a deputy to the NPC, said China must act fast as the world is changing fast with the development of AI. "Digital technologies are reshaping modes of production, lifestyle and governance, and are accelerating the reconfiguration of global resource allocation and the global competitive landscape," he said.

"Therefore, it's inevitable to strengthen the legal framework to support the development of the digital economy," said Ma, who is also a professor at the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

He praised multiple pieces of legislation that have been introduced over the past few years, such as the Personal Information Protection Law and the Data Security Law, but pointed out that the legislation is not systematic enough.

"Issues in the digital domain, including data, personal information and AI, are interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation," he stressed, suggesting the country conduct a thorough study in this regard and formulate a special digital legislative work plan.

Systematic legislation will provide comprehensive solutions for problems such as personal data protection, copyright protection, data ownership, AI and the release of public data, he added.



Left: A visitor asks a question to Doubao, an AI model affiliated with Chinese tech giant ByteDance, during the 2024 Volcano Engine Force Conference in Shanghai in December. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Right: Students learn about AI applications at a free course provided by the government in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, last month. YI FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY





# TWO SESSIONS

## Nation's efforts helping drive greener future

Political advisory body strives to promote opening-up and whole-process democracy

By ZHANG YUNBI

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While blasting narratives that accuse China of "overcapacity" in green energy sectors, Liu Jieyi, a seasoned diplomat and senior official of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said that "many countries are exporting what they produce best, and you cannot call that 'overcapacity'."



Liu Jieyi

Liu, a member of the Standing Committee and vice-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, made the remarks in an exclusive interview with China Daily that covered a wide range of topics, including high-level opening-up, new quality productive forces and China's whole-process people's democracy.

The recent hostile narratives on China's so-called "overcapacity" have targeted the country's clean energy products, such as solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles and lithium batteries.

"If you measure the future needs of the world for green energy — at least according to the International Energy Agency's projection — we are still falling short of the need to cope with climate change for green energy," Liu said.

"Therefore, it's not a matter of 'overcapacity'. It's a matter of more extensive use of green energy," he added.

If one puts the label of "overproduction" and "overcapacity" on a country that is exporting to meet the needs of other countries, "then we have many such countries," he said. "You cannot treat China differently simply because China is providing something that the world needs."

He noted that many other countries welcome such a contribution from China with open arms, and "it is not right to confuse such competitiveness with 'overproduction'."

"The best thing would be to rise above narrow national interests and political considerations behind this trade protectionism and to work together with China ... for the sake of a cleaner future for future generations," he said.

Regarding high-level opening-up, Liu said the CPPCC National Committee has done a lot by holding seminars and consultations to look at ways that China can "achieve a greater degree of integration of the Chinese economy and global economic growth", and it has contributed to policy recommendations and formulation.

"We look at what improvements we can make to pilot free trade zones, to different areas where we can open up and provide more and better market access," he said when referring to the removal of restrictions on foreign direct investment in the manufacturing

sector and giving greater market access to the service trade.

"Also, we are cutting short the negative lists," he said. "We have provided great certainty in this very uncertain international environment."

In response to growing global attention on China's cutting-edge sectors and its pursuit of new quality productive forces, Liu cited the unique strength of the CPPCC National Committee in pooling talent and wisdom.

"It has members coming from different fields and professions — from academia, enterprises and people with background in government," he said, noting that many members from scientific and technological sectors are leading experts in new quality productive forces including big data, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and quantum technology.

The members carry out consultations on the basis of investigations and research, including visits to factories, research labs and universities, Liu said.

"They try to find ways to further develop such productivity and, in the process, to make sure that younger generations are brought on board," he added.

Noting that the CPPCC is a special consultative body, Liu said it is an important part of the country's whole-process people's democracy in terms of consultations and supervision.

He cited as an example a consultation held by the CPPCC on farming, with a live video feed from a sugarcane farm to the meeting venue in Beijing. "The participants, members and government officials in the consultations — some of them were ministers — could talk directly with the producers and farmers in the field."

"In this way, what happens at the grassroots is fed into the consultation process, is fed into either the implementation or the formulation of policy," he said.

The CPPCC has exchanged frequent visits with other nations and international organizations, and Liu noted that the foreign guests coming to Beijing have often asked "what Chinese modernization is", "why China has been successful in maintaining decades of robust economic development and social stability", and "what the secret behind such success is".

"The exchanges would look at these facts and the underlying logic of the success achieved by China," he said, adding that the CPPCC will expand exchanges with counterparts in the international community.

"When they know more about whole-process people's democracy and how to incorporate it in the people's wisdom and strengths, they see that indeed there is a very good way for developing countries to move forward in today's world," Liu said. "They also see things in China's success that are inspirational in their consideration of their way forward."



Chinese officials take questions from journalists at a news conference held in Beijing on Sunday for the third session of the 14th National People's Congress. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## Full, fair job opportunities pledged

By CHENG SI

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China's robust economic recovery is stimulating domestic employment growth, and intensive resources and investment will be channeled into areas such as vocational skills training and social insurance to promote sufficient and high-quality employment with sound protection of working rights, a senior official said on Sunday.

Speaking at a news conference in Beijing on the sidelines of the annual session of the national legislature, Minister of Human Resources and Social Security Wang Xiaoping said, "Employment is a top priority for securing people's livelihoods, which is also important for advancing the nation's development."

The economic uptrend, thriving innovations and new technologies have consolidated the foundation for employment growth, she said.

According to Wang, the nation is shouldering the great responsibility for stabilizing employment and expanding employment opportunities due to the increasing population of new college graduates — around 12.22 million this year — as well as a large rural workforce and complex global landscapes.

"The Government Work Report has highlighted several employment targets for this year, such as keeping the urban surveyed unemployment rate at around 5.5 percent and creating over 12 million new jobs in cities, demonstrating the nation's stronger resolve to expand employment," she said.

More supportive policies, financial subsidies and improved public services will be made available to employers and entrepreneurs, especially young people and migrant workers who wish to start a business, Wang said.

The ministry will also organize more large-scale vocational skills

training programs to improve people's ability to get jobs or run start-ups, and to ease labor shortages in the manufacturing and services industries, she said. The latest wave of technological revolution, highlighted by artificial intelligence tools, has had an extensive and long-term impact on the domestic job market, she added.

Wang said that as China makes progress in developing new quality productive forces and building up a modernized industrial system, there is an urgent need for skilled workers, especially highly skilled personnel and digital talent. The nation will form a more scientific payment mechanism for skilled workers based on their abilities, she added.



Online  
Other highlights  
from the news  
conference

## Proposal: AI is 'key variable' in building China into leading country in education

From page 1

Xi noted that with the emergence of AI and the internet of things, the tools and methods for education will change, as will the abilities that students need to obtain.

"Reforms in such areas must be made in a timely manner," he said.

Meanwhile, he stressed that efforts regarding the intellectual, emotional and spiritual development of students, as well as the cultivation of their basic cognitive and problem-solving abilities,

must not be neglected.

"A solid foundation is essential," Xi said.

He also highlighted the importance of reading.

"In the digital age, with the fast pace of society, it is not easy to sit down, calm your mind and patiently read a book," Xi said.

He affirmed the proposal by Zheng Jiajian, president of Fujian Normal University, on creating a social environment in which people love to read.

Xi said that children should

develop the good habit of reading from a young age. "We can combine digital reading with traditional reading to preserve our core values and literacy," he said.

He added that as long as young people establish firm ideals and strengthen beliefs and confidence from childhood, they will become reliable successors in carrying forward socialism with Chinese characteristics.

"Chinese modernization and national rejuvenation will depend on the next generations," Xi said.



## The focus of attention

Tian Xuan, head of Tsinghua University's National Institute of Financial Research, interacts with reporters on Saturday before the second plenary meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

## Tariff: Infra investment vital to rebuilding US economy

From page 1

The failure of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Feb 28 to sign an economic agreement with the US, demanding a clear security commitment from Trump, set things back, and the fighting will no doubt continue. Yet it's clear that the determination of the Trump administration to move toward peace in Ukraine will nevertheless mean that continued military action will only be conducted without US support.

And it is questionable under these circumstances how long the Ukrainians can continue.

On Feb 24, the US proposed a draft resolution in the United

Nations Security Council, which called for peace in Ukraine. Five countries — the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Greece and Slovenia — abstained, allowing the resolution, which is binding, to pass. The five countries wanted to include a condemnation of Russia, which they hold solely responsible for the conflict.

The US-Russia discussions are ongoing and the diplomatic relationship between the two countries will now be re-established to their full extent. Many have questioned the motives of Trump in this matter, but his purpose seems to be clear: He has continually warned that the prolonged conflict in Ukraine could lead to World War III, and he was com-

mitted to preventing that. This was a key plank of his presidential bid. His attempt to sign a deal on Ukraine's raw materials, however, perhaps made him appear more of a "deal-maker" than a "peacemaker", although he himself indicated that a subsequent heavy US industrial presence in Ukraine would itself serve as something of a security guarantee.

There are also certain suspicions that there may be a "hidden agenda" in Trump's peace policy toward Russia aimed at creating a fissure in the close Russia-China relationship. Recent statements by his Secretary of State seem to imply that, it is doubtful, however, that the US could accomplish such a task, as

both China and Russia have a similar view of the world order, which is quite different from that expressed by the Trump administration.

While there has been great relief in Russia over the moves by the US President toward a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis, there is still some trepidation with regard to where Trump hopes to go with his policy.

Some of the rhetoric coming out of the Trump administration with regard to China has been hard-edged, as have been the further restrictions placed on export of high-tech products to China and the increased tariffs. And Trump's rather unusual comments about how he would welcome more Chi-

nese investment in the US are in stark contrast to the restrictions on such investment imposed by his Commerce Department.

It remains to be seen what effect the blanket tariff policy will have on the US economy itself. It is clear that the immediate effect will be to drive up prices, and as fighting inflation was one of the major planks of Trump's electoral victory, he will have to begin showing results on this front if he is to retain his strong support from the US voters. It may very well be the case that prolonged inflation fueled by the higher prices will force him to pull back on tariff restrictions in order to assure a greater supply of goods from abroad to hold inflation in check.

Rebuilding the US economy will also require infrastructure invest-

## Judicial: Authorities urged to step up crackdown

From page 1

Yao Kuizhang, a deputy from Hebei province and chairman of Hebei Yangyuan Zhihui Beverage, said the reports both repeatedly emphasized the importance of serving the construction of a unified national market, supporting the development of new quality productive forces, and building a rule-of-law business environment, in response to the concerns of entrepreneurs.

"The work reports have sent a strong signal of protecting the legitimate rights and interests of enterprises and entrepreneurs in accordance with the law," said Yao, who last year suggested drafting laws to support the development of private enterprises.

Dong Mingzhu, a deputy from Guangdong province and chairwoman of Gree Electric Appliances, urged judicial authorities to strengthen the comprehensive system to tackle online rumors and cyber violence targeting businesses, and to explicitly include penalty clauses for online rumors and cyber violence in relevant laws.

The work reports have sent a strong signal of protecting the legitimate rights and interests of enterprises and entrepreneurs in accordance with the law."

Yao Kuizhang, a deputy from Hebei province and chairman of Hebei Yangyuan Zhihui Beverage

She said there is a need to "severely punish behavior such as organizations employing 'internet water armies', spreading false information, and maliciously attacking competitors."

The term "internet water army" refers to a group of posters or individual posters hired to manipulate online discussions, reviews or comments in favor of a particular agenda or viewpoint.

Last year, the SPC enforced efforts to severely punish crimes such as spreading rumors about and defaming enterprises, as well as extortion, it said in its report. In one case, an offender surnamed Huang, together with others, posted negative information related to enterprises online, extorting a total of 556,000 yuan (\$76,860) from 21 companies for the removal of posts. Huang was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

According to a white paper on criminal prosecution work released by the SPP on Sunday, prosecutorial authorities, in an effort to optimize the online business environment, attached great importance last year to combating crimes that disrupt the business environment via the internet.

The author is the former Washington bureau chief for Executive Intelligence Review. He's also a nonresident fellow at Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.



# TWO SESSIONS

PERSPECTIVE

## China tries hard to sustain supply chain

Economist urges global cooperation to safeguard distribution network

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo  
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A Japanese economist said China's efforts to sustain the global supply chain contribute and drive global economic growth. He emphasized that ensuring stability in the supply chain from China to the rest of the world is crucial for the smooth functioning of the worldwide economy.

During the first Trump administration, high punitive tariffs on China led Chinese companies to invest directly in Vietnam and Mexico, where they established local factories. This resulted in creating a new supply chain, routing goods from China through Vietnam and Mexico before reaching the United States, according to Hidetoshi Tashiro, chief economist at Infinity LLC, a Japanese consulting firm advising stock trading and real estate management.

This shift has significantly accelerated the industrialization of Vietnam and Mexico, driving economic growth and increasing national income.

"The United States, under the pretext of national security, has arbitrarily imposed restrictions and bans on exports and investments in China. Meanwhile, countries like Japan have followed suit by adopting the newly coined term 'economic security'. These actions are destructive to the global supply chain," Tashiro said.

While a new supply chain route to the US through Vietnam and Mexico is taking shape, the second Trump administration has announced that it will double its 10 percent additional tariff on Chinese imports and implement a 25 percent additional tariff on imports from Mexico.

Moreover, the administration has stated that it will take into account value-added taxes and non-tariff barriers when imposing "reciprocal tariffs," further intensifying cost pressures on the global supply chain to the US.

"In response, China may accelerate the signing of free trade agreements with countries outside the US, expand and strengthen the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and pursue membership in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership as part of a strategy to sustain a free trade system beyond the US," Tashiro said.

In the Government Work Report delivered on Wednesday at the annual session of the National People's Con-



Hidetoshi Tashiro

gress, Chinese Premier Li Qiang stated that China will work for the signing of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol and speed up the process of joining the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Li also reaffirmed China's commitment to safeguarding the WTO-centered multilateral trading system, broadening converging interests with other countries, and promoting shared development.

The annual two sessions, a key event in China's political calendar, began on March 4. Discussions during the two sessions cover China's strategies for maintaining and advancing the free trade system, said Tashiro.

He believes that strategies to boost China's exports and outbound investment are also discussed alongside plans to attract more foreign exports and investment into China.

"To promote exports and investment from China to foreign countries, it is essential to create an environment in which private enterprises — the main drivers of economic activity in China — can increase their capital investment," he said.

Similarly, to encourage more foreign exports and investment into China, the country must create a more favorable business environment for foreign enterprises operating within its borders, said Tashiro.

He suggested that China allow foreign companies to invest in equity using funds obtained through domestic financing, making it easier for them to expand their business there.

Additionally, broadening market access for foreign capital in free trade zones would facilitate the integration of high-quality foreign services into China, ultimately driving high-quality economic growth, he said.

"Substantially easing regulations not only on foreign enterprises but also on private enterprises in China would significantly contribute to maintaining and expanding the global supply chain centered on China. We hope such decisions will be made during this year's two sessions," Tashiro said.

## Building consensus



Deputies from the Taiwan delegation hold a group meeting at the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on Sunday. CHEN YEHUA / XINHUA

## AI pioneer proposes enhanced data security measures

By DU JUAN  
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As a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference for three years, Qi Xiangdong, chairman of cybersecurity company Qi-Anxin Technology Group, has shown his shift from a business leader to a public policy adviser with his specialties.

He said that he never made any suggestions without visiting and investigating the front lines. During the 2025 two sessions, he made proposals on artificial intelligence security and software industry development. "AI is a key technology in this new technological revolution, making our lives more productive and convenient. Yet, it also brings security risks like data breaches and fraud," he said.

For instance, during this Spring Festival, the introduction of the domestic large-scale model DeepSeek has sparked broad discussions. At the same time, Qi-Anxin has detected many network attacks targeting DeepSeek.

"In the future, AI-focused technologies will lead to a new industrial

revolution, creating a fully connected digital society. This makes network and data security even more crucial," he added.

As AI advances, Qi highlighted the growing security challenges with large models. To tackle these issues, he suggested improving security through technology, policies and more applications to ensure its health growth.

"AI is a precise and innovative field driven by entrepreneurs. Thus, local governments should continue supporting private scientific and technological companies, to meet their needs for sustainable development," he said.

Born in 1964 in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Qi received his bachelor's degree at Changchun Institute of Posts and Telecommunications in 1986 and his MBA at the University of Science and Technology Beijing. He founded Qihoo 360 Technology Co and became its chief executive in 2005. In 2014, he founded Qi-Anxin, which focuses on network safety.

As a member of the CPPCC National Committee, he spends significant time each year visiting companies, universities, and

"I have been integrating my specialty, AI and software technology into my service, which helps me give better political suggestions and proposals."



Qi Xiangdong, member of the CPPCC National Committee and chairman of Qi-Anxin Technology Group

grassroots organizations to learn more about society and industries and give better political suggestions.

He has traveled to various places with the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, listening to private companies' concerns during their development.

"Some of the suggestions I made have received positive feedback from relevant governmental departments, which is truly motivating," he said.

Last year, Qi consulted on speeding up the creation of a secure and efficient financial infrastructure system and participated in a themed study by the CPPCC National Committee to enhance business stability. During that time, he shared his view on improving the business environment and expediting the establishment of a reliable financial infrastructure system.

Looking back on his three years of service, Qi said the CPPCC is a very special platform and being a member of it requires particular competency. "On this aspect, I have been continuously learning from other veteran members," he said. "More importantly, I have been integrating my specialty, AI and software technology into my service, which helps me give better political suggestions and proposals."

He said with his more profound understanding and enriched experience, he will contribute more while fulfilling his advisory role in the future.

## What NPC deputies say



**Sheng Hong**, Party chief of a residential community in Hongqiao sub-district of Shanghai's Changning district

Residents from over 50 countries and regions live and work in Hongqiao. Last year, we received 510 visiting delegations, including 55 from overseas. When hosting a high-level think tank delegation from Latin American countries, one visitor saw my picture on the wall and recognized me as an NPC deputy. He was so amazed to learn that an NPC deputy from China works in the grassroots community, so he took out his phone for a photo with me. As an NPC deputy, I take great pride in showcasing China's democracy.



**Yang Baoling**, Party chief of Huzhangzhuang village in Dongli district, Tianjin

Today, Huzhangzhuang village has achieved its goals of providing rewards for students admitted to university, ensuring social security for elder people, and offering care for those in need. The village is now developing an integrated agriculture and tourism project. I was born and raised in the village and have dedicated over 40 years to working at the grassroots level. My love for this land runs deep.



**Cai Qiang**, deputy director of the office of the Hainan Free Trade Port Working Committee

The Hainan Free Trade Port will begin independent customs operations this year and upgrade its preferential tax policies further. The tax system tailored to the trade port is taking shape. The trade port has enhanced its offshore duty-free services by introducing options for direct purchase and pick-up and credit-guaranteed pick-up methods. Products eligible for these methods can now be bought and collected directly from duty-free stores. Visitors can use these products during their stay in Hainan, a change from the previous policy, where goods were only available for pick-up upon leaving the island.



**He Xiaopeng**, CEO of XPeng Motors

XPeng Motors plans to mass-produce flying cars by 2026, as China's low-altitude economy gains momentum with more supportive policies. If the project stays on schedule, XPeng will become the first company globally to mass-produce flying cars. We are integrating vehicle control with AI to develop a new flight control system into such flying cars, making it safer and more user-friendly.

## Exchange key to NPC's diplomatic agenda

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to China, Majintha Joseph Priye Jayasinghe, who attended the ongoing two sessions as an observer, has expressed his admiration for China's democratic practices.

The diplomat said on Wednesday after listening to the 2025 Government Work Report in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing that China's democracy starts from the townships to the major cities where interaction is done at all levels, and where people are engaged.

"You can see the representation in every angle, from the grass root to the top. In every single field, people are interacting," he added.

Over the decade, I have been covering the two sessions, and I have seen foreign faces every year, including diplomatic envoys and journalists. We nodded at each other sometimes as we passed, while sometimes we exchanged ideas on topics of mutual interest.

The two sessions, the annual meetings of China's top legislative and political advisory bodies, are not only crucial for the Chinese people, but also a critical window for the outside world to observe and understand China.

In addition to attending the sessions, many foreign diplomats have also been invited by the National People's Congress, China's



Cao Yin  
Reporter's log

top legislature, and its standing committee to visit Chinese enterprises and participate in seminars.

During the activities, they witnessed China's development firsthand and gained an understanding of how China's democracy works.

In April, for example, ambassadors and diplomats from 36 countries visited a legislative outreach office in Beijing's Chaoyang district. There, they observed a fundamental step in lawmaking and discussed it with deputies to the people's congresses at various levels.

Anne Lafortune, the ambassador of the Seychelles to China, regarded the visit as a good platform to learn from the source about China's legislation process, saying it shows the commitment of the Chinese government to meet the needs and aspirations of the people.

Michael Campbell, Nicaragua's ambassador to China, said that the communication with Chinese lawmakers made him see China's whole-process people's democracy at the grassroots level.

He told me that he was impressed by the diversity of participants in legislation, such as women and young people, adding "the greater participation of each sector makes decisions more creative in policies, regulations and norms".

In late 2023, 21 parliamentary representatives from Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tonga took part in a seminar organized by the NPC Standing Committee in Beijing, with exchanges of ideas on how to better serve people and promote development in a democratic way.

Joseph Yopyopy, a parliamentarian from Papua New Guinea, said the seminar helped him learn more about how the Chinese government listens to people's opinions and encourages wide participation both online and offline.

Besides, China's top legislature also held symposiums on other issues, such as sustainable growth and poverty reduction.

As China welcomes foreign diplomats and lawmakers to visit and see the country for themselves, the NPC has also been going global to share the true story of China.

Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the third session of the 14th NPC, said on March 4 that the NPC's international exchanges are an essential

part of China's overall diplomacy and the work of the NPC.

He revealed that the NPC has maintained interactions with parliaments of 190 countries, set up 26 international exchange mechanisms and 143 bilateral friendship groups, and is also a member and observer of more than 20 multilateral parliament organizations.

Emphasizing the unique advantages of the legislative body in international exchanges to serve the national diplomatic agenda, he added that the pace will continue.

Amid the increasingly complex and evolving international situation, the NPC has placed more importance on foreign-related affairs over the past 10 years, which is also reflected in its legislative items.

In 2023, for instance, China formulated laws on foreign state immunity and foreign relations, revising the Counter-Espionage Law and the foreign-related chapter in the Civil Procedure Law.

Going forward, I believe the NPC will maintain the fast pace of its external exchanges and legislative steps involving foreign matters to serve high-level opening-up and advance Chinese modernization.

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# TWO SESSIONS

## Nation to tackle green trade barriers

Government Work Report outlines measures to achieve carbon neutrality

By HOU LIQIANG  
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China will take effective steps to address green trade barriers as it moves toward carbon neutrality, according to the Government Work Report delivered at the opening of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress on Wednesday.

Green trade barriers typically involve measures that impose restrictions or requirements on imported products to ensure compliance with specific environmental standards.

The country will actively and prudently work toward its climate targets of peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, the report stated, listing concrete measures to advance those goals.

China will steadily expand the second batch of trials for peaking carbon dioxide emissions and establish zero-carbon industrial parks and factories, according to the report. It also plans to accelerate the establishment of a framework for controlling the total amount and intensity of carbon emissions and expand the national carbon trading market to cover more industrial sectors.

The nation will speed up the construction of new energy bases in deserts and other arid regions, develop offshore wind farms, and promote both the integration of renewable energy into local grids and the construction of transmission routes, the report said.

The report also highlighted measures China will roll out in response to green trade barriers. The country will launch carbon emissions statistics and accounting initiatives, develop systems for carbon footprint management, and establish carbon labeling and certification systems.

Ma Jun, director of the Beijing-based Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, said green trade

barriers differ from other types of trade barriers in that they include measures that align with global efforts to combat climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

"From this perspective, green trade barriers do have some valid components. Therefore, we must respond to them effectively," he said.

Several major emerging green trade barriers are intricately linked to managing products' carbon footprints across their life cycles, he noted. While some countries and regions have decades of experience in this area, China significantly lags behind.

"But China is vigorously advancing the work, with various government departments actively engaged," he said, citing a plan jointly unveiled by 15 national government bodies, including the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, in June 2024 as an example.

By 2027, China aims to develop national guidelines for calculating product carbon footprints in line with international standards and will establish calculation rules and standards for approximately 100 key products, according to the plan.

Ma said China's initiatives to address green trade barriers can not only facilitate the upgrading of domestic industries but also propel their transition toward sustainability.

Positive progress was made last year in achieving the country's climate targets, according to a report on the implementation of the 2024 plan for national socioeconomic development and on the 2025 draft plan, which was also reviewed by national lawmakers on Wednesday.

Approximately 360 million kilowatts, or more than 82 percent, of China's newly installed power capacity across the country last year came from wind and solar power.

With its total installed capacity of wind and solar power exceeding 1.4 billion kilowatts last year, China met its proposed target six years ahead of schedule.



Comparison of an open-pit mine in Hulunbuir, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, before (top) and after (above) a five-year ecological restoration project. XINHUA

## Firm a model for desertification control

By YANG RAN and YUAN HUI

Driven by technological innovation, China's desertification control practices have become replicable and could significantly contribute to global ecological governance, said Wang Zhaoming, a deputy to the National People's Congress.

Desertification is a major ecological challenge impacting human survival and development. China — among the countries severely affected by desertification — launched the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program in 1978 to combat the issue. The appropriate combination of germplasm resources, including seeds of trees, shrubs and grasses, plays a crucial role in the ecological restoration process.

"Grass seeds are the 'chips' of ecological restoration," said Wang, who is also the founder of Inner Mongolia M-Grass Ecology and Environment Group.

Born into a herding family in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Wang attended Inner Mongolia Agricultural University after passing the national college entrance exam. He began his career selling flowers and running a flower shop before establishing a landscaping company. While working on urban greening projects, Wang noticed that exotic plants often failed to thrive in northern climates due to their lack of cold and drought resistance.

Inspired by the resilient wildflowers and grasses of his hometown, Wang shifted his focus to cultivating native plant species.

"As the only listed company in China specializing in grass seed technology, M-Grass has dedicated itself to cultivating native plant species and applying them in suitable locations over the past three decades," he said.

M-Grass has cultivated 295 native plant species and holds 105 proprietary varieties, including highly resilient, drought-tolerant and cold-resistant eco-lawn grasses and high-quality forage grasses. These provide a solid germ plasm foundation for restoring 2.2 million hectares of arid and semiarid land.

The company is also exploring desertification control technologies, including intelligent machinery. Advancements in equipment have improved the efficiency of traditional manual sand control by 60 percent, making it a key tool in managing the sandy lands of Inner Mongolia, Wang said.

"By deeply engaging in domestic desertification control, we have integrated our seed resources, relevant technologies and desertification control solutions into a comprehensive product package, hoping to provide solutions for global desertification prevention and control," he said.

In December last year, M-Grass

signed an ecological restoration cooperation memorandum with Ulaanbaatar, capital of Mongolia, marking the globalization of China's ecological restoration model. The collaboration focuses on desertification control around Ulaanbaatar, river ecological restoration and native plant cultivation, supporting Mongolia's "One Billion Trees" campaign.

"By integrating technologies into a product package, we have transformed complex ecological issues into quantifiable and plausible solutions, shifting desertification control from 'high investment, long cycles' to 'high efficiency, high sustainability,'" Wang said.

"Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, we believe that by relying on our experience in desertification prevention and control in sandy lands in Inner Mongolia, M-Grass can promote drought-resistant, cold-resistant and wind-resistant grass species, mechanical sand-fixing systems and customized restoration solutions along the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor," he said.

"The wisdom of 'small grass' can help more regions achieve a deep integration of ecological conservation and economic development, demonstrating the applicability of the 'Chinese solution.'"

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Workers install solar panels over a fishery pond for green energy development in Yuyao, Zhejiang province. ZHANG HUI / XINHUA

## Jiangxi offers new insight into managing soil erosion

By YAN DONGJIE  
and ZHAO RUINAN

China has gained valuable experience in combating soil erosion and improving ecological environments, with Jiangxi province serving as a noteworthy example that offers important insights for the world, an expert in soil conservation said.

"The state of soil conservation is a crucial indicator of ecosystem quality and stability," said Zheng Haijin, director of the Soil and Water Conservation Research Institute at the Jiangxi Academy of Water Science and Engineering.

"In recent years, Jiangxi has seen a significant enhancement in ecosystem quality, driven by soil erosion control efforts that involve scientific planning and systematic governance. This provides a reference model for the governance of red soil regions globally," she said.

The latest official data indicates that the area affected by soil erosion in Jiangxi has decreased by 14 percent since 2013, with a soil conservation rate exceeding 86.5 percent.

The soil conservation rate measures the ratio of non-eroded land to

total land in a region.

Zheng, a delegate to the 14th National People's Congress who has dedicated 20 years to soil conservation, has witnessed how technological innovation is reshaping the ecological landscape of this red soil region.

"The 'Research plus Transformation' approach is the unique formula for Jiangxi province," Zheng said.

After years of exploration, experts have developed a comprehensive technical system for identifying, diagnosing and systematically managing soil erosion in red soil areas.

"Soil erosion causes reduced land productivity, ecosystem destruction, water scarcity and increased non-point source pollution, presenting significant challenges to ecological civilization," Zheng said.

Effective governance begins with monitoring.

Zheng's team has developed an integrated monitoring technology combining satellite remote sensing, drones and ground sensors. This technology has become a vital tool for Jiangxi in addressing the complex issue of soil erosion in red soil regions.

"Now, with advanced monitoring

systems, we can identify soil erosion as small as one-tenth of a hectare anywhere," she said.

Taking Ganzhou city as an example, influenced by various factors including natural geography, the region was once one of the most severely eroded areas in southern China.

The soil conservation efforts in Ganzhou began in 1951 and, after decades of continuous and scientific governance, the once "desert" now adorns a green attire, showcasing lush mountains and clear waters everywhere.

"This transformation highlights the significant achievements of watershed management, creating a stunning emblem of ecological governance known as the Gannan Model," Zheng said.

Data from the National Red Soil Improvement Engineering Research Center indicates that red soil covers about 22.7 percent of China's total land area, with 36 percent of cultivated land found in these regions. Jiangxi has the highest proportion of red soil of all provincial-level regions, at 70.7 percent.

In addition to Jiangxi, many

regions in China have also achieved great success in soil erosion control. Last year, China achieved major advancements in soil conservation, adding 64,000 sq km of erosion control areas and raising the conservation rate to 72.83 percent, official data said.

Changting county in Fujian province was once one of the most severely eroded areas in China, with sparse mountain vegetation and coverage ranging from 5 percent to 40 percent, earning it the nickname Flame Mountain.

Since 2012, Changting has significantly enhanced its governance efforts by implementing a series of key ecological construction projects, including the comprehensive treatment of small watersheds and the improvement of terraced land.

The soil erosion rate in Changting has dropped from 31.5 percent to 6.78 percent. Through the development of eco-tourism and green industries, such as the understorey economy, the per capita disposable income of rural residents has grown from 2,431 yuan in 2000 to 18,149 yuan (\$2,508) in 2020.

The "Changting experience" is

now promoted nationwide.

Like Jiangxi, Changting employs advanced technologies, including drone aerial surveying, to enhance soil conservation standards and monitoring systems.

An Lizhe, former president of Beijing Forestry University and an expert in ecology, said Changting's practices are vital for effective soil erosion management and ecological civilization development both in China and globally.

They present a new model for transitioning from ecological poverty alleviation to ecological revitalization, providing insights for regions facing soil erosion while balancing greenness and prosperity, An said.

During this year's two sessions, Zheng proposed enhancing research on "soil conservation and desertification prevention" to better promote environmental and ecological protection.

The expert expressed confidence in the future of ecological protection. "When the province's soil conservation rate target is raised to 86.57 percent by the end of this year, it means we will uphold a more solid ecological barrier for the Yangtze River Economic Belt."

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## China's defense spending reasonable, restrained

By ZHAO LEI  
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China's defense expenditure is reasonable and restrained, primarily aimed at addressing security risks, fulfilling international responsibilities and contributing to global security, a military spokesman said on Sunday.

"The world is far from peaceful, and China's territorial reunification remains unresolved," said Senior Colonel Wu Qian, spokesman for the delegation of the People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police Force to the third session of the 14th National People's Congress.

"Our nation is one of the countries confronted with complex security situations, while the Chinese military has been facing grave challenges in safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Wu said China's limited defense spending is both a response to these risks and a prerequisite for fulfilling its responsibilities as a global power, enabling the PLA to provide more public security mechanisms to the world and support the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

He emphasized that China's defense budget adheres to the country's legal frameworks, including the National Defense Law and Budget Law, with annual allocations subject to review and approval by the National People's Congress.

China also participates in the United Nations' military expenditure transparency system, demonstrating full openness regarding the scale, structure and basic uses of its defense budget, Wu said.

He added that China follows a coordinated approach between national defense and economic development, maintaining what he called "reasonable and stable growth" in military spending to safeguard sovereignty, security and development interests.

"Compared to major military powers like the United States, China's defense spending remains relatively low in terms of GDP share, fiscal expenditure proportion, per capita allocation and spending per service member," Wu said.

China's central government has proposed defense spending of 1.78 trillion yuan (\$246 billion) for fiscal 2025, a 7.2 percent increase from last year, according to a draft budget report submitted to the national legislature on Wednesday.

If approved by lawmakers, the proposed expenditure will mark the 10th consecutive year of single-digit growth, with the percentage increase identical to those of the previous two fiscal years.

Wu said the additional funds will primarily support four key tasks such as accelerating the development of new-domain combat forces while upgrading traditional capabilities; enhancing early warning and reconnaissance, joint strike operations, battlefield support and logistics systems; strengthening realistic combat training and modernizing the military education system; and deepening reforms in defense policies and human resources management, as well as improving troops' living and training conditions.

While shouldering these tasks, the military will spare no effort to reach the goals set for the centenary of the PLA in 2027, Wu added.

Reaching the PLA centenary goals and speeding up the building of world-class armed forces are "strategic imperatives" in China's efforts to build a modern country in all respects, Wu said.

"We must dedicate our efforts to ensuring that we achieve our goals with strong performance on schedule," Wu said.

He said deputies from the armed forces pledged to intensify troop training and enhance combat preparedness across the board, accelerate the transformation and upgrading of military training, strengthen new-domain forces with new combat capabilities, boost military preparedness in various aspects and enhance the ability to win informatized and intelligent warfare.



# TWO SESSIONS

## New policy measures to boost Quanzhou's private enterprises

By MO JINGXI and HU MEIDONG

Quanzhou will introduce a series of policy measures, including incentives for scientific and technological innovation, to support private enterprises as the city targets about 5.5 percent GDP growth this year, Mayor Cai Zhan-sheng said in an interview with China Daily.

An economic powerhouse in Fujian province, Quanzhou's total economic output surpassed 1.3 trillion yuan (\$179 billion) last year, growing 6.5 percent from the previous year.



Cai Zhan-sheng

Private enterprises, which make up 90 percent of all businesses in the city, contributed 70 percent of tax revenue, 80 percent of GDP, 90 percent of technological innovation achievements and 90 percent of urban employment.

"Over the past year, we have focused on the primary tasks of high-quality development, effectively pursuing economic growth while appropriately increasing economic output," said Cai, who is also a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress.

This year, the municipal government will drive the development of new quality productive forces through technological innovation, promoting the deep integration of innovation, industries, capital and talent, Cai said.

According to the mayor, Quanzhou has improved the application of scientific and technological research results by nurturing nearly 100 industrial design centers and establishing 28 pilot incubation bases.

During an inspection tour of Fujian in October, President Xi Jinping urged the province to strengthen the real economy, consolidate the strengths of traditional industries and promote industrial transformation and upgrading.

Quanzhou, which has nine manufacturing clusters each exceeding 100 billion yuan in output, including footwear, food, and textiles and

clothing, has taken solid steps in promoting the digital transformation of its real economy in recent years, Cai said.

Last year, the city issued a three-year action plan and supporting measures for artificial intelligence development. A total of 130 AI application projects in industry, government affairs and health care have been launched.

"In the future, we will work to nurture innovative enterprises in AI, electronic information, new energy and new materials, enabling more companies to seek growth in new areas and new industries," Cai said.

As a key gateway in southeastern China, Quanzhou remains committed to reform and opening-up and supports its enterprises in expanding markets in countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, BRICS nations and other emerging markets.

The city is exploring a model centered on brand internationalization, market diversification and supply chain globalization to help businesses "go global", Cai said.

For instance, since 2009, Anta Group has acquired 43 international brands, including FILA and the parent company of Archaeopteryx, surpassing international sportswear giants in revenue.

Cai also cited stone company Yingliang Group's global industrial chain layout. By establishing branches in Turkey and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the company now sources 40 percent of its raw materials from countries along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, with 20 percent of its products sold locally.

Quanzhou, a major maritime trade hub during the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties, was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2021 with the designation "Quanzhou: Emporium of the World in Song-Yuan China".

The city will continue to promote its cultural heritage and strengthen the integration of culture and tourism, aiming to become a global model for cultural heritage protection, Cai said.

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## CPPCC meeting



Liu Lingling (right), a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, speaks during a group meeting at the third session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee in Beijing on Sunday. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## Dalian rolls out plans for high-quality development

With its impressive coastline, city in Liaoning aims to accelerate growth

By ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning  
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Dalian, Liaoning province, is evolving into a modern marine city and an international comprehensive transportation hub, according to an approved plan released by the State Council in November, Mayor Chen Shaowang said.

"Planning leads development, and the blueprint charts the future," said Chen, who is also a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and deputy Party chief of Dalian. He highlighted the city's new mission and opportunities for high-quality development under the Overall Land and Space Plan of Dalian (2021-2035).

"Dalian will continuously enhance its strength as a major coastal central city and further strengthen its role as a regional economic driver," he said.

Located on the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula, Dalian benefits from being a strategic geographical location and a strong industrial base, as well as having abundant scientific and technological resources. Since August 2013, the city has been working to develop itself into an international shipping, logistics and regional finance hub in Northeast Asia.

Last year, Dalian achieved a breakthrough in economic development, with regional GDP reaching 951.69 billion yuan (\$131 billion). Research and development investment increased 3.21 percent, while the actual utilization of foreign investment surged 90 percent.

Chen said the city is committed to developing a modern industrial system supported by a robust real

"Dalian will continuously enhance its strength as a major coastal central city and further strengthen its role as a regional economic driver."



Chen Shaowang, deputy to the 14th NPC and mayor of Dalian

economy. Advanced manufacturing sectors, including petrochemicals and equipment manufacturing, are being upgraded with high-end, intelligent and environmentally sustainable practices. Meanwhile, strategic emerging industries such as software, information technology services and new energy are being fostered, along with key projects in artificial intelligence and new energy storage.

Dalian is also working to establish a regional science and technology innovation hub with national influence. Additionally, the city is integrating and enhancing its free trade zone, aligning with high-standard international trade regulations and conducting innovative, comprehensive explorations.

"We will further integrate with the Belt and Road Initiative and accelerate the construction of a high-level gateway to facilitate smooth domestic connections and international linkages," Chen said.

Dalian has the longest coastline in China and the largest comprehensive seaport in Northeast China. It operates 106 container shipping routes connecting more than 300 ports in over 160 countries and regions. Dalian International Airport serves 18 international destinations, while the China-Europe Railway Express links the city with more than 50 cities in 10 countries.

Chen said Dalian is expediting construction of Jinzhouwan International Airport, which will be China's first airport built on an artificial island, to enhance aviation services for surrounding cities. This year, the city's airport passenger throughput is expected to reach 20.1 million, while sea port cargo throughput is projected at 320 million metric tons, with container throughput exceeding 5.5 million standard containers.

"Dalian will persist in thriving through the sea and accelerating the development of a modern marine city integrating land and sea," Chen said.

The city leads China in marine industries such as shipbuilding, marine equipment manufacturing and marine fisheries, with the largest number and scale of national-level marine ranches.

"The marine economy has become a vital engine driving economic growth," he said.

Chen emphasized efforts to enhance the competitiveness of the shipbuilding and marine equipment sectors, expand the petrochemical and marine new materials industries, and transform marine fisheries. Dalian also aims to establish distinct brands for its marine tourism sector and foster new quality productive forces.

"This year, we will strive to increase the city's total marine output value to 480 billion yuan," he said.

## Huaihua emerges as major trade hub

By HE CHUN in Changsha and ZOU SHUO in Beijing

Deep in the mountainous hinterland of central China, the city of Huaihua has transformed itself into Hunan province's gateway to global trade through the development of its international land port.

Mayor Li Chunqiu, also a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, attributed this shift to a strategic alignment of favorable policies, geographic advantages and collaborative efforts.

"Opening up to the outside world is a distinct characteristic of Chinese modernization and is ingrained in the DNA of Huaihua people," Li told China Daily.

Huaihua was included in China's New Western Land-Sea Corridor plan in 2019, a move that has allowed the city to capitalize on its regional advantages and China's dual circulation policy. Its position at the convergence of major transportation arteries linking Chongqing to the Beibu Gulf has made it a crucial hub for trade between central and western China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

By 2024, Huaihua International Land Port operated 155 domestic and international routes, serving 50 countries and regions and 138 ports. The city, located at the junction of five provincial borders, has expanded its infrastructure, now featuring four conventional railways, three high-speed rail lines, eight expressways and multimodal connections via water and air networks.



Li Chunqiu

Li highlighted the development of cross-border rail services to Laos and Vietnam, positioning Huaihua as central China's leader in ASEAN connectivity. Last year, Huaihua operated 1,009 China-Laos and China-Vietnam express trains, with their number growing by 180 percent year-on-year for three consecutive years.

Agreements with major ports such as Yangpu in Hainan province and Nansha in Guangdong province, along with seven warehouses in Southeast Asia, have strengthened its international logistics network.

From having no presence in luggage manufacturing, Huaihua now hosts 129 enterprises in the sector, exporting to 26 countries and regions, Li said.

The simultaneous development of cold chain logistics, agricultural product processing and cross-border e-commerce further showcases Huaihua's economic diversification. Alibaba International's local operations have helped drive a 61.8 percent growth in digital trade. Major projects, including a 2.2-billion-yuan (\$303 million) agricultural industrial park with China Co-op Group, are boosting investor confidence, he added.

Looking ahead, Li said Huaihua aims to increase annual freight train operations to 1,200 and achieve 100 billion yuan in port-related output. The city also plans to integrate with the Digital Land-Sea Corridor and customs innovation initiatives to improve operational efficiency while expanding cooperation with central provinces and Southeast Asian ports.

Huaihua also seeks to leverage its cultural assets to drive urban prosperity. The city will host the fifth Hunan Tourism Development Conference in September, which Li described as a key opportunity to accelerate development.

"High-quality cultural tourism development requires systematic planning," he said.

By capitalizing on its historical, ecological and tourism resources, the city is introducing cross-regional routes, national festivals and diverse cultural tourism products to establish itself as a favored travel destination, he said.

Zhu Youfang in Changsha contributed to this story.

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## Rebuilding update



He Dong, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and governor of the Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture, Gansu province, shares the latest progress in the post-earthquake reconstruction efforts in Jishishan county during a group meeting at the third session of the 14th NPC in Beijing on Friday. KUANG LINHUA / CHINA DAILY

## Adviser calls for reforms in higher education sector

By ZHAO YIMENG and LIU KUN

Higher education institutions in China should further integrate education, research and talent development by promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration and deepening engagement with industry leaders, a national political adviser said.

Xin Sijin, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Party secretary of the Wuhan University of Technology in Hubei province, said universities face challenges in technology transfer, including insufficient high-quality research, weak industry-academia collaboration and underdeveloped service platforms.

The Wuhan University of Technology has positioned itself as a leader in transforming scientific research into real-world applications through measures such as reforming evaluation systems, strengthening industry ties and securing funding, Xin said in an interview with China Daily.

As a national intellectual property demonstration university and technology transfer base, the university's patent industrialization rate exceeds 15 percent, nearly four times the national average for universities, according to Xin.

Leveraging big data, the university has connected nearly 100 enterprises with more than 100 research teams to improve tech transfer efficiency. It revised policies to include



Xin Sijin

reforms such as pre-use licensing and increased profit-sharing for researchers, Xin said.

One of its most notable partnerships is with Dongfeng Motor Corporation, a leading Chinese automaker, which integrates industry needs into education and cultivates talent with expertise in both research and real-world applications.

Last year, the Wuhan University of Technology established a graduate school for elite engineers, focusing on artificial intelligence and new energy intelligent connected

vehicles. The school launched a training program with Dongfeng that admitted 40 students specializing in automotive engineering, mechanical engineering and artificial intelligence.

The program moves away from traditional talent development models, aiming to cultivate innovators who meet the future needs of the AI and automotive industries, Xin said.

To further integrate education, research and talent development, the university plans to establish a cross-disciplinary research fund and incorporate industry-academia collaboration metrics into faculty evaluations.

It will also expand cooperation with industry leaders, including a

joint laboratory with Shaanxi Yangchang Petroleum Group, to address key challenges in resource utilization and new energy materials, Xin said.

The political adviser called for improvements in university evaluation systems, suggesting that greater weight be given to tech transfer outcomes in assessments of "Double First-Class" universities — those selected to cultivate world-class institutions and disciplines — and stronger incentives for industry-academia collaboration.

To enhance global competitiveness, the university will adopt international best practices by strengthening cross-border research collaborations and building a professional tech transfer workforce, Xin said.

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# TWO SESSIONS

Jin Li

## Adapting higher education to tech revolution

This year's Government Work Report has set clear requirements for deepening comprehensive reforms in higher education, making reforms in universities essential for advancing Chinese modernization.

Chinese universities have developed at a rapid pace by leveraging the benefits of reform and opening-up. But today, when they face the dual challenge of keeping ahead of the global changes and coping with slowing economic growth, they need to deepen reforms to maintain their global status and help advance Chinese modernization.

If universities view reforms as a way to extend their academic reach or compete for resources, they could become less efficient. Therefore, they should focus on structural reforms to improve their quality and performance, and foster sustainable innovation.

For example, Fudan University has adjusted the structure of academic disciplines, with interdisciplinary majors accounting for 20 percent of its undergraduate admissions. In the next phase, it plans to focus new undergraduate enroll-

ments on interdisciplinary fields, in order to promote innovation.

The university is enrolling more students in fields critical to national strategies and societal needs. It is focusing on pioneering future industries by consolidating its resources and establishing six innovation-oriented schools in fields such as integrated circuits, computing and intelligence, biomedical engineering, intelligent robotics and advanced manufacturing, intelligent materials and future energies, electronics and information and future space. This initiative is aimed at reshaping its engineering disciplines.

To boost its faculties' development, the university is focusing on talent development, especially nurturing young talents, ensuring teachers fulfill their responsibilities, reforming the evaluation and incentive systems, facilitating the orderly mobility of teachers, and enhancing support for basic research.

Furthermore, higher education reforms should be people-centric, creating a virtuous cycle of education, technology and talents. As universities cultivate talents to advance the cause of the

nation, university reforms should be focused on the people.

To begin with, it is essential to cultivate individuals who think big, because thinking big is not the exclusive domain of geniuses and authorities. Young students acquiring knowledge and skills should set goals: to promote human progress, explore the unknown, and contribute to the nation and its people.

Studies carried out by Fudan University's Institute of Higher Education and other universities in the country show that some students, even highly talented ones, are losing their interest in research and innovation, partly because the pressure of exams stifles their curiosity and creativity. That's why Fudan University advises both teachers and students to learn from their mistakes, fostering a robust system of innovation — and aims to cultivate more young talents who dream of finding solutions to the problems facing the country and the world.

There is also a need to cultivate individuals who are multitiered or have a broad perspective, because such individuals can independently build their knowledge framework and become inno-

vators in interdisciplinary fields. In fact, Fudan University is advancing "AI plus" reforms by including AI instruction in all its programs to cultivate versatile talents and innovators.

Recognizing that excessive dependence on AI may impede a student's creativity, the university provides guidance on mastering and transforming AI tools, with a focus on curbing the potential misuse of AI technologies.

Moreover, Fudan University offers students a course called the "path to national rejuvenation", which integrates various courses, and combines values with acquisition of knowledge and skills. This approach aims to strengthen students' resilience and boost their confidence.

With 2025 marking the 120th anniversary of its establishment, Fudan University pledges to continue deepening reforms, fostering innovation, and contributing more to the advancement of Chinese modernization.

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

Tu Haiming

## HK should fast-track integration of Greater Bay Area

The "Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" was released six years ago, but the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has been relatively slow in advancing the project. Now, Hong Kong needs to take more proactive measures to contribute to the GBA's development.

The development of Hong Kong and Macao SARs is intrinsically linked to the national goal of building a stronger Chinese nation. It is crucial for more Hong Kong residents to realize that the GBA is not just a strategic project for national development; it gives Hong Kong a golden opportunity to boost its growth. Only by leveraging opportunities within the Greater Bay Area and connecting the mainland market, can Hong Kong transform into a "super value creator" and sustain growth.

Since the GBA is a shared home for Guangdong province, and the Hong Kong and Macao SARs, every member of Hong Kong society should see itself as a contributor to the GBA's growth.

The visit of Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, to Hong Kong after the Spring Festival holiday set a good example for Hong Kong. As the progress of the GBA's development has been slow, there is a need to urgently take measures to push the initiative forward. Xia's visit to the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation Zone underscored the sharp contrast in progress between the two sides, as evidenced by the many skyscrapers in Shenzhen's zone juxtaposed against the undeveloped areas in its Hong Kong counterpart.

There was a time when Shenzhen used to learn from Hong Kong. Today, it has left Hong Kong far behind when it comes to fast-paced and efficient development. Looking at the tremendous changes across the mainland, the difference between the two cities becomes even more striking.

Hong Kong should urgently catch up with the mainland's reform and development pace, and address each issue head-on to move forward.

Xia has urged Hong Kong to promote innovation to remove the hurdles to development, and engage with development zones such as Hengqin, Qianhai and Hetao, seize the opportunities created by the new round of industrial and technological revolution, and explore new development paths to boost development and strengthen connectivity with the mainland.

For example, it should align its rules with those of the mainland and integrate with the GBA. But, as some say, won't the "one country, two systems" principle be undermined if Hong Kong were to align its rules and social and economic systems with those of the mainland? This is a misinterpretation of the SAR's relationship with the motherland.

As capitalism has evolved over time, Hong Kong's system needs to keep pace with the evolution. More important, the GBA's reform is aimed at boosting development, not undermining "one country, two systems". The principle should be to pursue the best solutions to problems no matter where they come from.

The GBA's success depends on enhanced cooperation, especially between Guangdong and Hong Kong. Under the central government's leadership, Hengqin, a 106-square-kilometer island near Macao poised to become a free trade zone, is the innovation platform of Macao, while Qianhai, an area in Shenzhen with very high growth potential, and Hetao, a cooperation zone between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, can help boost Hong Kong's development.

Since cooperation is a multi-directional process, Hong Kong, with the strong support of the central government and Guangdong, has to play a bigger role in the development of the Greater Bay Area.

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Yu Miaojie

## New opportunities for Liaoning to revitalize industrial base

The central authorities have intensified their efforts in recent years to revitalize Northeast China, which usually refers to Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces, as well as the eastern part of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Local governments in the northeastern region, too, have intensified their efforts to boost the local economies, with Liaoning serving as a prime example. Liaoning has vowed to establish an opening-up cooperation hub in Northeast Asia, aimed at not only boosting the province's own development but also helping deepen regional economic cooperation in order to develop new quality productive forces to facilitate the province's high-quality development. Liaoning is transforming its geographical advantages, industrial foundation and opening-up potential into a powerful driving force for the region's revitalization and innovation-driven development.

Liaoning occupies an irreplaceable strategic position in Northeast Asia's economic landscape. Geographically, it sits at the intersection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and plays a key role in promoting trade cooperation among China, Japan, South Korea and enhancing China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor.

In recent years, Liaoning University has proactively responded to the national policy of promoting high-level opening-up and global cooperation, organizing seven academic exchange programs with Russian universities, and co-establishing a "2 plus 2" scientific research mechanism and a "1 plus 1" talent training program to promote education collaboration globally.

The central government has designated Shenyang, Liaoning's capital, as a key international city in Northeast Asia, requiring it to advance high-level institutional opening-up. The initiative is not only about consolidating the city's global standing but also about building a platform for the cross-border flow of production factors.

To achieve this, the province needs to expeditiously improve its rules in fields such as cross-border data flow, mutual recognition of professional qualifications



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

and coordinated intellectual property rights protection, establishing a production factor allocation center for Northeast Asia.

It also needs to deepen the reform of market-oriented allocation of production factors. For example, since the Shenyang National Research Center for Materials Science is promoting cross-regional collaborative innovation in talent, capital and technology, the province should establish an open competition mechanism to select the best candidates for key research projects.

Additionally, the authorities should focus on achieving innovative technological breakthroughs, especially because Liaoning is forming an innovation-oriented ecosystem centered on "artificial intelligence plus" and "robots plus", so as to leverage AI to promote new industrialization. For instance, Benxi Steel Group Corporation Limited has transformed its entire production process using digital twin technology, reducing per unit energy consumption by 18 percent.

Besides, Liaoning province is pursuing industrial transformation by reshaping

the industrial system through the integration of innovation, industry and capital chains. It is building a "complete machine-plus-parts" ecosystem in the equipment manufacturing sector, extending high-end material chains such as carbon fiber in the petrochemical industry, and cultivating cutting-edge industrial clusters like cell therapy in biomedicine.

At the ongoing session of the National People's Congress, I have put forward a series of proposals, including one on establishing a "China-Japan-South Korea plus X" market mechanism to improve connectivity between port clusters in Liaoning and the port alliance in the Far East. Also, a Northeast Asia Digital Trade Port could be established at home to study the integration model of "market procurement plus cross-border e-commerce".

Furthermore, for upgrading consumption, it is necessary to implement a "smart business districts plan" to support traditional business districts, such as Zhongjie Street in Shenyang, to create augmented reality shopping experiences and unlock consumption potential by implementing favorable tax policies.

In particular, I recommend that a talent circulation mechanism be established in Northeast Asia to pilot the joint issuance of "employment permits, work visas and residence permits" for foreign talents, and a "Northeast Asia joint research institute" be set up in a Shenyang-based university.

Liaoning will continue to deepen the "think tank plus industry" service model and promote the synergy between the academia and regional revitalization. With its strong industrial base and vibrant potential, Liaoning is poised to write a new chapter in Northeast China's development and regional cooperation.

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

Tong Anrong

## Traditional Chinese medicine can improve eldercare with fresh impetus

Since traditional Chinese medicine treats not only the secondary manifestations (*biao*) but also the primary causes (*ben*) of several chronic and acute conditions, it can provide health protection for elderly people.

TCM has many advantages in terms of methods, characteristics and applications, and they can be integrated in the medical services for the elderly. Given its holistic concept, TCM takes into consideration the physical, psychological and social environment of elderly people before formulating a comprehensive treatment plan, and doesn't focus only on a single disease while ignoring the overall health of the person receiving treatment.

TCM believes in "preventing dis-

ease before it occurs", preventing deterioration after a disease is diagnosed and preventing its recurrence after recovery. Its emphasis on prevention first is consistent with the need to focus on maintaining the health of elderly people and keeping them free of disease. TCM can also help the elderly improve their physical health, slow down their aging process and improve their quality of life.

TCM practitioners use diverse treatment methods to prescribe medicines for the elderly based on their physical health. As part of its holistic approach, TCM recommends that elderly people adjust their daily routine or lifestyle based on their circadian rhythm, live in a healthy environment and take enough rest. Many traditional exer-

cises, according to TCM, can help regulate breathing, enhance the functions of organs, improve body flexibility, and reduce the mental stress of elderly people.

But despite the popularity of TCM and cultivation of young practitioners, many grassroots-level TCM hospitals face daunting challenges like shortage of finance and talented practitioners. The main reason why many grassroots-level hospitals, especially in western China, cannot attract or retain talents is the uneven development of the eastern and the western regions, and urban and rural areas.

True, the rural vitalization policy has increased economic growth and job opportunities in less-developed areas. But rural vitalization

alone cannot improve grassroots-level hospitals, because primary medical institutions still receive limited funding from local governments.

Most of the TCM doctors working at the grassroots level are general practitioners who treat general diseases. They have fewer opportunities to improve their careers or conduct medical researches than their counterparts in large hospitals in big cities. As a result, the gap between them and their counterparts in city-based large hospitals widens with the passage of time.

Since many grassroots-level medical workers have to work in relatively harsh environments, they want their children to receive better education and lead a better life, perhaps in cities. Worse, some

patients say grassroots-level medical practitioners are not knowledgeable or experienced enough to treat certain diseases, and tend to visit large hospitals in cities to get "proper" treatment, leading to a decline in the number of outpatient clinics at the grassroots level, and fewer opportunities for TCM practitioners to enhance their knowledge and gain experience, which affects their sense of achievement.

Therefore, efforts should be made to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas, as well as the eastern and western regions, and provide more funds for grassroots-level medical institutions and subsidies for TCM practitioners in rural areas. The salary structure, too, should be reformed and char-

gers for TCM services raised.

There is also a need to set up special funds for grassroots-level TCM practitioners to enable them to continue their medical education and acquire higher degrees, and organize skills training and online learning programs so they can gain more knowledge, transform from general practitioners into specialists, and contribute to eldercare.

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## CHINA

Fried dishes and desserts made of lotus roots are in great demand nowadays. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



# 'Demon child' film serves up fresh feasts

Success of *Ne Zha 2* boosts popularity of movie-related dishes, ingredients

By LI YINGXUE  
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From lotus root dishes to fiery hotpot, the animated blockbuster *Ne Zha 2* has ignited nationwide culinary trends, turning meals inspired by the film into social media sensations.

The feature has surpassed *Avengers: Infinity War* to become the sixth highest-grossing movie of all time worldwide, according to the Lighthouse Professional Edition, a box office data provider owned by Alibaba.

In the movie, the body of Ne Zha, a mythical demon child, is reborn from lotus root starch. Off-screen, sales of lotus root starch, lotus root soup and other dishes featuring the plant have surged, with restaurants embracing the ingredient in new and inventive ways.

Meanwhile, a scene featuring the Octopus General — who speaks in a Tianjin dialect — being roasted in the furnace has turned the local specialty of stir-fried squid tentacles into a viral hit.

Across the country, restaurants are rolling out Ne Zha-themed drinks, dishes and set meals, blending cinematic fantasy with real-world flavors.

One of the most memorable aspects of *Ne Zha 2* is Taiyi Zhenren's distinctive Sichuan-accented Mandarin. This linguistic touch has unexpectedly turned hotpot — a Sichuan province culinary staple — into a marketing success, with restaurants seizing the opportunity to attract customers.

In Sichuan's Yibin, Zha Hotpot eatery — already designed with Ne Zha-themed decor — has become a hot spot for fans eager to snap photos with installations inspired by the character's iconic *huntianling* (red armillary sash) and *fenghuo lun* (wind-fire wheels).

The restaurant has also introduced a Ne Zha-inspired menu featuring meatballs, lotus root starch and seafood, all of which have quickly become favorites.

In Sichuan's Chengdu, Feng Xiao Zhang Hotpot launched a promotional campaign where diners who posted a video wishing the restaurant success on social media could win a *Ne Zha 2* movie ticket if their post received over 30 likes.

"I love a good hotpot, but when it's both delicious and fun, that's even better," said Zhang Xuan, a tourist from Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

Meanwhile, the hotpot chain Banu marked *Ne Zha 2* surpassing 10 billion yuan (\$1.38 billion) at the box office by introducing the Honghu lotus root dish across its locations nationwide.

The dish was an instant success, with strong sales from the moment it launched, according to staff.

In Sanya, Hainan province, Cinker Pictures Mega has taken the trend a step further by offering a hotpot-and-movie experience, allowing guests to enjoy a meal while watching *Ne Zha 2* in a special screening room.

"The hotpot wasn't particularly outstanding, but the ingredients were fresh," wrote a Dianping user, Yuxiaoman. "I cried just as much during my second watch — such a great film! Finally got to experience eating hotpot while watching a movie — absolutely amazing!"

Coffee shops and dessert cafes are also

embracing the Ne Zha phenomenon. In Dalian, Liaoning province, JY & Sweettime has launched Ne Zha-themed cakes and coffee, featuring an illustration of the character and the motto, "My fate is determined by me, not by the heavens."

"The Oreo cream filling was decent, but the design was incredible — super fitting for the theme!" wrote a Dianping user named "Woconglaimiheguoshui".

Meanwhile, Cotti Coffee has announced an official collaboration with *Ne Zha 2*, rolling out a new product series on March 17, complete with themed packaging and limited-edition merchandise.

## Pop culture boost

As *Ne Zha 2* continues to attract large audiences, its impact on the food and beverage industry highlights how pop culture is reshaping consumer trends — one meal at a time.

"The film has not only gone viral but has also driven the growth of the entire lotus root supply chain," said Zhao Jinqiao, a 42-year-old restaurant industry researcher.

Zhao said it is not the first time film and television have driven food trends. In recent years, popular productions have frequently sparked demand for regional delicacies.

The 2019 TV drama *The Longest Day in Chang'an* boosted interest in fire crystal persimmons and water basin lamb from China's northwest. In 2022, the hit series *A Dream of Splendor* brought Song Dynasty (960-1279) tea culture into the spotlight, leading tea brands to introduce themed drinks that became consumer favorites. Similarly, animated films and TV shows have increasingly collaborated with tea and coffee brands to launch limited-edition beverages.

Behind this phenomenon, Zhao sees two key forces at play.

First, restaurants are becoming more adept at leveraging pop culture to attract consumers and convert online buzz into sales. "With fierce competition in the industry, businesses are focusing on product innovation rather than price wars. They are enhancing their offerings with cultural, experiential, and emotional value," Zhao said.

"Over the past few years, restaurant operators have learned how to integrate entertainment and youth culture into their strategies to draw traffic," he added.

Second, consumer expectations for dining experiences have evolved. "People no longer just eat to satisfy



Image of the "demon child" in *Ne Zha 2*.

hunger or pursue healthy choices. They now seek emotional connections through their dining experiences," Zhao said.

While *Ne Zha 2* has sparked a wave of themed offerings, Zhao believes the trend is also rooted in the character's deep cultural significance.

However, he cautioned businesses to be mindful of intellectual property concerns when using Ne Zha's image for promotions, warning of potential legal risks. He also noted that Ne Zha, as a traditional Chinese figure, has multiple representations beyond the one depicted in *Ne Zha 2*.

For restaurant owners looking to capitalize on the trend, Zhao stressed the importance of both speed and long-term vision. "To seize *Ne Zha 2*'s momentum, businesses must react quickly.

But beyond short-term gains, they should

also consider how to retain customers. The goal is not just to draw diners in with a trendy product, but to build lasting consumer habits," he said.

## Root cause of frenzy

Lotus root has emerged as one of the biggest winners in the food industry boom sparked by *Ne Zha 2*.

The humble ingredient, central to the film's storyline, has seen a surge in demand, driving remarkable growth across the food and e-commerce sectors.

According to data from the short video-sharing platform Douyin, searches for "lotus root starch" have surged by over 200 percent year-on-year since the film's release on Jan 29, with interest continuing to climb.

Online delivery platform Eleme has reported a 330 percent spike in related searches.

China Post's Hubei branch reported that between Jan 29 and Feb 11, approximately 170,000 packages of lotus root starch and lotus root stems were shipped from the province — 1.7 fold more than the same period last year.

The impact is even more pronounced in Honghu, a major lotus root production hub in Hubei province.

Zhang Xianzhong, head of the Honghu Lotus Root Industry Development Center, said from Jan 29 to Feb 23, the industry's total sales revenue surpassed 582 million yuan, marking a 51 percent year-on-year increase.

Fresh lotus root sales alone reached 18,700 metric tons, while processed products like lotus root starch, lotus root stems, and lotus root soup also saw significant gains.

"Fresh lotus root is selling out daily, over 200 tons of lotus root starch have already been snapped up, and e-commerce orders have risen 1.5 fold compared with last year," Zhang said.

At the Orsun century city mall branch in Wuhan, Hubei, of Laoxiangji fast food chain, takeout orders have surged during dinner hours with staff packing containers after container of lotus root chicken soup.

"Since the Spring Festival, sales of our lotus root chicken soup have risen about 30 percent compared with pre-holiday levels," said store manager Yuan Fangfang.

Laoxiangji's signature old hen soup, made with mineral water and stewed chicken, has long been a customer favorite.

But in Hubei, where lotus root is a staple, diners have frequently asked if the restaurant offers a lotus root version. In response to the demand, Laoxiangji introduced lotus root chicken soup in its Hubei outlets in September 2024.

"The response has been overwhelming — nearly half of our soup orders are now for the lotus root version," Yuan said.

She noted that September and October, when lotus roots are at their softest and most flavorful, is the peak season for the dish. "For us in Hubei, drinking lotus root soup is a tradition. Growing up, the aroma of lotus root soup filled the alleys during autumn and winter. A bowl of it carries a sense of home," Yuan said.

This year, Laoxiangji remained open throughout the Spring Festival holiday period. "I never expected lotus root soup to become such a hit during Spring Festival," Yuan said.

Taking advantage of a rare break, she went to see *Ne Zha 2* with her 15-year-old daughter, a high school student and fan of the film. After the holiday rush, the two returned for a second viewing.

Located inside a shopping mall, Yuan's restaurant often welcomes moviegoers looking for a meal after screenings. "Maybe some of them, after watching *Ne Zha 2*, find themselves craving a bowl of lotus root soup," she said.

## Lotus' elan

Riding the success of *Ne Zha 2*, lotus root has emerged as a culinary sensation beyond its home in Hubei.

On the third day of the Chinese New Year, as the film's box office takings soared, Qingshuiing Hubei cuisine outlets in Beijing introduced a Ne Zha-themed meal set. The two-person set, featuring pork rib lotus root soup, fried stuffed lotus root, and lotus root starch, quickly attracted food lovers. Diners who presented a *Ne Zha 2* ticket stub could also enjoy a 12 percent discount on lotus root soup.

Li Simei, co-founder of Qingshuiing, anticipated lotus root's surge in popularity, given its deep connection to the investiture of the gods scene in the movie, where Ne Zha's body is reborn from lotus root. Since the ingredient has always been a staple at her restaurant, she had planned to introduce themed dishes based on the audience response.

The restaurant's signature lotus root soup is made from Honghu's renowned starchy lotus roots. "October to March is when lotus root reaches peak flavor," Li explained.

"During this period, it stores starch in the mud, creating a rich, glutinous texture."

To appeal to younger diners, Qingshuiing has also re-imagined traditional lotus root starch desserts, offering flavors like green tea and orange, paired with lotus slices and lotus balls. The modern twist transforms the classic street treat into a trendy, Instagram-worthy dessert.

"Our restaurant aims to showcase high-quality Hubei ingredients, including Honghu lotus root, and bring delicious Hubei cuisine to diners in Beijing," Li said.

The growing demand for Hubei's lotus root was also evident at a Feb 21 agricultural showcase hosted by the Hubei Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Hubei Government's Beijing Office.

The event brought Beijing restaurateurs face-to-face with Hubei suppliers, with Honghu lotus root emerging as a star ingredient. Li noted that many Beijing restaurants are now incorporating Honghu lotus root into their menus and hopes that more establishments will follow suit in showcasing the region's high-quality produce.



Staff of fast food chain Laoxiangji prepare lotus root chicken soup at one of its outlets in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## WORLD

# Israel to send team to Doha as Hamas seeks phase II talks

Humanitarian aid entry and hostage deal key in focus for both parties

GAZA CITY — Israel on Sunday prepared to send a delegation to Doha for further talks on the Gaza truce, as Hamas called for an immediate start to negotiations on the cease-fire's second phase, which it hopes will lead to a permanent end to the conflict.

Representatives of the Palestinian militant group met with mediators in Cairo over the weekend, stressing the urgent need for humanitarian aid to reenter the besieged territory "without restrictions or conditions," according to a Hamas statement.

"Hamas stresses the urgency of forcing the occupation to immediately begin second-phase negotiations under the agreed parameters," senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Mardawi told AFP, adding this would pave the way for a permanent end to the conflict.

Hamas' key demands for the second phase include a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, an end to the Israeli blockade, the reconstruction of the Palestinian territory and financial support, Mardawi said.

Following talks with mediators, Hamas spokesman Abdel Latif al-Qanouna said indicators were so far "positive".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said it would send delegates to Qatar's capital Doha on Monday, while Israeli media reported that the government's security cabinet would discuss the matter later on Sunday.

Israel says it wants an extension of the truce's first phase until mid-April.

That initial period ended on March 1 after six weeks of relative calm that included the exchange of



Palestinians wait in line to receive bread distributed by a charity in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on Saturday. Israeli restrictions on entry of aid into the enclave have resulted in severe shortages of essential supplies, making it difficult for many families to bake bread. ABED RAHIM KHATIB VIA GETTY IMAGES

25 living hostages and eight bodies for the release of about 1,800 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel.

The truce largely halted more than 15 months of fighting in Gaza, where virtually the entire population was displaced by Israel's relentless military campaign in response to Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attack.

It also enabled the flow of vital food, shelter and medical assistance into Gaza.

## 'Weaponizing starvation'

After Israel cut off that flow again, United Nations rights experts accused the government of "weaponizing starvation".

Displaced Palestinian widow Haneen al-Dura told AFP that she and her children spent weeks living on the street "among dogs and rats" before receiving a tent.

"As the family's provider, it was

distressing and I couldn't sleep at all during the night," she said.

Meanwhile, the administration of US President Donald Trump has confirmed the start of unprecedented direct talks with Hamas, with which Washington had previously refused contact since designating it a terrorist organization in 1997.

Meetings between Hamas leaders and US hostage negotiator Adam Boehler in recent days have focused on the release of an American-Israeli dual national being held by the militant group in Gaza, senior Hamas official Taher al-Nono told Reuters on Sunday.

"Several meetings have already taken place in Doha, focusing on releasing one of the dual-nationality prisoners. We have dealt positively and flexibly, in a way that serves the interests of the Palestinian people," said Nono, political adviser to the leader of Hamas.

He said the two sides also discussed how to see through the implementation of the phased cease-fire agreement.

"We informed the American delegation that we don't oppose the release of the prisoner within the framework of these talks," he said.

On Saturday, families of Israeli hostages held in Gaza, with dozens of freed captives, urged Netanyahu to fully implement the cease-fire deal and prevent a return to conflict.

"The war could resume in a week ... Only an agreement that brings them all at once will ensure their return," said Einar Zangauker, the mother of Matan Zangauker, a hostage still held in Gaza.

"Netanyahu has turned my son Matan and other hostages into pawns in his political game of chess," she added.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Teheran refuses to negotiate with 'bullying' powers

TEHERAN — Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said on Saturday certain "bullying" powers' insistence on holding talks with Iran is not aimed at resolving issues but rather at imposing their own expectations.

Khamenei made the remark during a meeting in Teheran with government officials, responding to calls, notably from United States President Donald Trump, for negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, according to footage released by the leader's office.

"Their negotiation is not for resolving issues, but for dominating and imposing what they want on the other side," Khamenei said.

He warned that if the other side refuses to negotiate, those powers will create an uproar, accusing it of

"distancing itself from and abandoning the negotiating table".

Iran's nuclear issue is not those powers' sole focus, and "they are raising new expectations, which will definitely not be met by Iran," he said.

Separately, the US rescinded a waiver on Saturday that had allowed Iraq to pay Iran for electricity, as part of Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Teheran, a State Department spokesperson said.

The decision to let Iraq's waiver lapse upon its expiration "ensures we do not allow Iran any degree of economic or financial relief," the spokesperson said.

Iraqi government spokesman Bassem al-Awadi said on Saturday that authorities had prepared "for all scenarios" regarding the waiver. The waiver was introduced in

2018, when Washington reimposed sanctions on Teheran after Trump abandoned a nuclear deal with Iran during his first term in office.

Since returning to the White House in January, Trump has reinstated his "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

On Friday, Trump said he had written to Iran's supreme leader, urging new talks on the country's nuclear program but warning of possible military action if it refuses.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran had yet to receive any letter from the US president by Saturday.

## Strong response

During a meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Saturday, Araghchi stressed that Iran will respond very

strongly and in a fully proportionate and balanced manner if it is attacked, Mehr News Agency reported.

Israel is attempting to provoke a war in the region and involve its primary ally, the US, in military conflict with Iran, he said.

Discussing the dangers of a military attack on Iran in an interview with US TV presenter Tucker Carlson on Friday, Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani strongly warned that any attack on Iran's nuclear facilities will have catastrophic consequences for the entire region, The Times of Israel reported.

Mike Gu in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

## Russia claims gains in Kursk against Ukrainian forces

KYIV — Russia said on Saturday its troops had retaken three villages seized by Ukraine in its Kursk border region, in a fresh setback for Kyiv ahead of talks to try to end the conflict.

"In all directions of the Kursk section of the front, all units have launched a large-scale offensive," Major General APT Alaudinov, commander of a Chechen unit in Kursk, said on Telegram. "The enemy is abandoning its positions."

Russia's Defense Ministry announced the recapture of three more villages: Viktorovka, Nikolayevka and Staraya Sorochina.

According to DeepState, an online military tracker linked to the Ukrainian army, the Russian move followed a "breach" in the Ukrainian defense lines near the town of Sudzha, which is under Kyiv's control.

The advance appears to have cut off the logistics route needed by Ukraine to supply its troops, though Kyiv has not confirmed this.

Ukrainian troops stormed into Kursk last summer, taking chunks of territory in an unexpected lightning attack. Russia has taken back more

than two-thirds of the territory Ukraine initially seized in Kursk.

The Ukrainian military General Staff said on Saturday that clashes were continuing amid heavy bombardment with artillery and guided aerial bombs.

Russia's Defense Ministry said on Sunday that its air defense units destroyed 88 Ukrainian drones overnight with no injuries or damage reported.

The ministry said 52 of the drones were destroyed over the border Belgorod region, while 13 were over the Lipetsk region and nine were over the Rostov region, both in Russia's southwest.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday named a high-level delegation, including foreign and defense ministers, to meet United States negotiators in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

"We hope to discuss and agree on the necessary decisions and steps," Zelensky said, stressing that Ukraine was "fully committed to constructive dialogue".

He also urged allies to "increase sanctions against Russia" after



A resident smokes by his apartment window, which was damaged by a Russian missile strike, in the town of Dobropillia, Donetsk region, on Saturday. NADIA KARPOVA / REUTERS

heavy overnight bombardment in the east and northeast.

A Russian barrage hit the center of Dobropillia in the eastern Donetsk region on Friday, killing 11 people, including five children, and wounding 40, emergency services said.

Ukrainian Interior Ministry said on Saturday that three civilians

were killed and seven wounded in a separate drone attack on the Kharkiv region in the northeast.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump threatened new sanctions and tariffs against Russia over its bombardment of Ukraine.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## China-funded steel plant boon to Bolivia's recovery

By JIMENA ESTEBAN  
in Buenos Aires, Argentina  
For China Daily

A mega steel plant in Puerto Suarez, Bolivia, largely financed by the Export-Import Bank of China, is expected to meet half of the Andean country's demand for steel and boost its economic recovery and industrial upgrading.

The \$546 million Mutun plant, inaugurated on Feb 24, will be run by Sinosteel Engineering and Technology, a subsidiary of Chinese state-owned Sinosteel Corporation, in its first year of operations.

It is expected to create around 1,000 jobs for Bolivians, offering cheer at a time when the economy is grappling with low foreign currency reserves, fuel shortages, high inflation, and declining natural gas reserves.

The project will help reduce foreign spending on steel imports and expand Bolivia's steel export market, said Omar Portillo, a professor at the economics and political science departments of the Higher University of San Andres in La Paz, Bolivia.

"The steel exports will be fundamental or strategic because Bolivia can reach northeastern Brazil at competitive prices," Portillo said.

Bolivia's new steel plant will produce 200,000 metric tons of steel annually, mainly composed of rebar and wire mesh worth \$260 million, and process 66,000 tons of raw materials monthly from the Cerro Mutun deposit, one of the world's largest iron ore deposits estimated at 40 billion tons.

The project was mired in five decades of delays after its initial Indian contractor, Jindal Steel Bolivia, an arm of Jindal Steel and Power, ended the contract with Bolivia in 2012.

The construction finally started because of China's investment, and was completed during Bolivia's current administration led by President Luis Arce.

The Jindal Steel dispute "was a big problem because it delayed the iron industry in Bolivia for around 10 years," said Portillo, noting that the project got a new lease of life thanks to the participation of a Chinese company.

In addition, the Bolivian govern-

ment is seeking plans for a second steel plant, which may involve further collaboration with China. The current plant is expected to significantly boost Bolivia's iron and steel exports, which stood at \$23.51 million in 2023.

China is Bolivia's key trading partner in the mining and industrial sectors. In 2023, Bolivia's exports to China reached \$1.21 billion, primarily in precious metals, zinc, and lead ores.

## Greater access

"China's role in Bolivian trade is expected to expand with greater access for Bolivian food products to the Chinese market and the involvement of a major Chinese consortium, a leader in battery and solar panel manufacturing, in Bolivia's lithium industry development," said Juan Jose Bedregal, an economist at the Higher University of San Andres.

"These relations, along with the growing global influence of the BRICS countries, create favorable expectations for Bolivia's economic development," Bedregal said.

"Bolivia shares with China a vision of building a multipolar world within the BRICS framework, a forum of countries that Bolivia joined as an associate country on Jan 1."

Apart from expanding trade, China has been investing in the country's construction sector in the past decade, Portillo said.

"Many Chinese companies have been awarded tenders for the construction of paved roads," he said.

As for the steel plant, Portillo said the venture will help Bolivia's economy, and so will the China-backed Chancay Port in Peru.

Over time, Bolivia needs to diversify its sources of fuel supply, he said. Today, in the Bolivian context, the cost of import logistics has become quite expensive, he added.

Portillo suggested that Bolivia should create an "integration route" with Chancay Port to improve trade.

"To increase exports, Bolivia has to increase its proximity to this port, and the good relationship with the Chinese government can greatly facilitate this operation," he said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



A worker walks at the Mutun steel plant near Puerto Suarez, Bolivia, during its inauguration on Feb 24. AIZAR RALDES / AFP

## Clashes, revenge killings in Syria leave over 1,000 dead

DAMASCUS — The death toll from continuing clashes in Syria's coastal region has surged to 1,018, including 745 civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Saturday.

Allied paramilitary groups with the new administration have been involved in retaliatory killings following a series of attacks by remnants of the ousted Bashar al-Assad government against government troops earlier last week, in which 16 security personnel were killed.

Government officials said the ambushes were premeditated, according to the observatory.

Of the overall toll, 125 were members of government security forces, and 148 were militants with armed groups loyal to the former regime, it said. However, the numbers could not be independently verified.

The war monitor, meanwhile, warned that the absence of legal accountability could fuel further violence and destabilize post-Assad Syria.

"We have to preserve national unity and domestic peace; we can live together," Ahmed al-Sharaa, the interim president, said on Sunday.

Sharaa also said current developments are within "expected challenges", Arab media reported.

On Friday, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned all violence and called for an end to hostilities following the latest escalation in Syria.

Guterres is concerned about the recent clashes in Syria's coastal areas, including reports of extrajudicial killings and civilian casualties, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric told a news briefing.

The UN chief strongly condemns all violence in Syria and calls on the parties to protect civilians and cease hostilities, Dujarric said.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross expressed deep concern over reports of escalating violence and civilian casualties in Syria's coastal region, particularly in Latakia and Tartus.

In a statement, Stephan Sakalian, head of the ICRC mission in Syria, called on all parties to take immediate measures to protect civilians and uphold humanitarian principles.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

## WORLDUS

# Trump won't 'predict' on a recession

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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US President Donald Trump, when asked in an interview that aired Sunday if he was expecting a recession this year, said, "I hate to predict things like that."

In the interview for Fox News' *Sunday Morning Futures* with Maria Bartiromo, which was filmed at the White House on Thursday, Trump said: "There is a period of transition, because what we're doing is very big. We're bringing wealth back to America. ... It takes a little time, but I think it should be great for us."

On March 4, Trump imposed tariffs of 25 percent on Canada and Mexico, and raised duties to 20 percent on China. But on March 6, he paused tariffs on goods covered under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a trade deal that replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement in Trump's first administration.

Trump also heard complaints from CEOs at US automakers, whose auto supply chains are highly interconnected with Canada's and Mexico's. On March 6, he announced a 30-day pause in those tariffs.

The Canadian Department of Finance announced on March 6 that it was moving forward with 25 percent tariffs on \$155 billion worth of imported US goods.

"This was not the outcome Canada hoped for — but we must respond in order to protect our economy and Canadian jobs," the statement said.

National Economic Council director Kevin Hassett said Sunday on ABC News' *This Week*: "What happened was that we launched a drug war, not a trade war, and it was part of the negotiation to get Canada and Mexico to stop shipping fentanyl across our borders, and as we've watched them make progress on the drug war, then we've relaxed some of the tariffs that we put on them because they're making progress."

This week, Trump reportedly plans 25 percent tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports, and on April 2, across-the-board reciprocal tariffs on most trading partners.

"The public companies want to make sure that we have clarity after April 2, when those reciprocal tariffs go in. Are you going to change anything after that?" Bartiromo asked. "Will we have clarity?"

Trump replied: "We may go up with some tariffs. It depends. We may go up. I don't think we'll go down, or we may go up. They have plenty of clarity. They just use that. That's almost a sound bite."

"They always say that 'We want clarity.' Look, our country has been ripped off for many decades, for many, many decades, and we're not

going to be ripped off anymore," Trump said.

The flurry of tariff rollouts and reversals jarred the stock market last week, which had its worst week in six months. The S&P 500 has fallen nearly 4 percent since Jan 20, the day Trump was inaugurated.

Bartiromo said, "I think CEOs want to see predictability."

"What I have to do is build a strong country," Trump said. "You can't really watch the stock market. If you look at China, they have a 100-year perspective. We go by quarters. And you can't go by that. You have to do what's right."

The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta on March 6 projected that US economic output will contract by 2.4 percent in the first quarter.

Gennadiy Goldberg, head of US interest rate strategy at TD Securities, told Bloomberg, "Just a few weeks ago we were fielding questions about whether we think the US economy's re-accelerating — and now all of a sudden the R word (recession) is being brought up repeatedly."

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's, told CNN: "The kinds of changes that are occurring under Trump are arguably unprecedented, and it's making people very nervous."

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, when asked on NBC *Meet the Press* on Sunday about forecasts from major investment banks saying that a recession in the next 12 months is possible, replied, "Absolutely not. ... There's going to be no recession in America."

He said that the administration's efforts to bring down government deficits would lower interest rates, while increased oil production would cut energy costs.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, in a speech to the New York Economic Club on Thursday, said: "Access to cheap goods is not the essence of the American Dream. The American Dream is rooted in the concept that any citizen can achieve prosperity, upward mobility and economic security. For too long, the designers of multilateral trade deals have lost sight of this."

The Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, led by Elon Musk has been combing through federal departments and agencies to root out what DOGE considers excess or unnecessary spending.

"It's important for people to realize we run \$2 trillion deficits, and Donald Trump is going to try to balance the budgets of the United States of America," Lutnick said.

Bessent, in an interview with CNBC last week, said, "We've become addicted to this government spending, and there's going to be a detox period."

## Crash response



First responders work the scene after a plane crashed in the parking lot of a retirement community in Manheim Township, Pennsylvania, on Saturday. AP

## Technology advancements lauded

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong  
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The ongoing two sessions and this year's Government Work Report highlighted China's breakthroughs in core and frontier technologies, which will be a key driver of the nation's continuing quality economic growth, experts said.

Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, executive director of the Islamabad-based Center for South Asia and International Studies, called the report delivered by Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the opening meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing last week, a "good omen".

The report "vividly reflected its strategic priorities, mainly innovation, modernization, qualitative industrialization, and scientific intensification for breakthroughs in core tech in key fields", Khan said.

He singled out research and development advancements in frontier and disruptive technologies alongside the acceleration of forward-looking planning for major science and technology projects.

These would add value in terms of high-quality development and can be a cornerstone of China's further opening-up in the future, he said.

Khan said China's strong emphasis on the strategic emerging sectors — biomanufacturing, quantum technology, and 6G — and service-oriented manufacturing can consolidate its manufacturing capacity, export volumes, and GDP growth this year and beyond.

Moreover, the integration and promotion of artificial intelligence across emerging industries will further unleash the potential of the digital economy, he said.

Noting the two sessions pledged to bolster tech innovation by improving the market ecosystem and increasing support for AI applications, Khan said the policy was innovative, futuristic, and in the right direction.

The Government Work Report reinforces its strategic vision of becoming a global innovation powerhouse, said Moiz Farooq, executive editor of Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group.

A key takeaway from the report is China's growing emphasis on high-tech innovation, said Farooq, noting the country's success in landmark projects, such as the Change-6 lunar mission and expanded domestic chip manufacturing capabilities.

He said such success signifies not only scientific progress but also the determination to overcome technological barriers imposed by Western restrictions.

Farooq said by prioritizing self-reliance, China is solidifying its position as a major player in the global technology race.

Moreover, China's R&D strategy is deeply integrated with its green development and digital transformation goals, he added.

"Critically, while Western

narratives often attempt to frame China's technological rise as a threat, the reality is that China's advancements serve as a force for global progress," Farooq noted.

Plato Yip Kwong-to, founding partner and CEO of Real See International Intelligent Technology, said it is encouraging that the report emphasized achieving technological self-reliance and global leadership in frontier technologies.

"We have also witnessed notable progress in areas such as integrated circuits, artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum technology, and deep-sea and space exploration," the private equity investor from Hong Kong said.

The government's AI Plus initiative and its emphasis on integrating digital technologies with China's manufacturing and market strengths could be another niche for value-driven economic development, he said.

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## New strategies advised for e-tailers

By BELINDA ROBINSON in New York  
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Fast fashion giants will have to devise new strategies to remain competitive in the US market amid changes by Donald Trump's administration that include a review of the de minimis exemption and tariffs on Chinese imports, says an expert.

"If the de minimis exemption is ended permanently, both Temu and Shein would be well advised to change their business model," Z. John Zhang, Tsai-Wan Tsai Professor of Marketing at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, told China Daily.

"The new models could be higher costs and slower response to fashion changes, but they will give the companies a better chance to keep their customers and their momentum."

Shein and Temu, two popular Chinese-owned e-commerce platforms that account for 17 percent of the e-discount market in the US, have utilized the de minimis exemption, which allows retail packages of \$800 or less to be sent to the US from abroad without incurring import taxes or customs inspections.

At least 1.36 billion shipments



Shoppers attend a Shein pop-up shop in Las Vegas on May 25, 2024. DAVID BECKER / GETTY IMAGES

that came into the US in fiscal year 2024 utilized the provision, US Customs and Border Protection found.

However, if the exemption is ended, the companies' merchandise could face higher tariffs and customs fees.

In an effort to stay ahead of any future hurdles, both Shein and Temu appear to be shifting some of their operations and suppliers outside of China to the US and other Asian countries.

Shein, based in Singapore, has reportedly urged some of its suppliers to set up production in Vietnam, offering incentives and higher procurement prices of as much as 30

percent, The Wall Street Journal and Bloomberg reported, although the company denied this move.

At least one-third of US orders of Temu, based in Boston, are now fulfilled by local sellers allowing them to completely avoid use of the de minimis exemption.

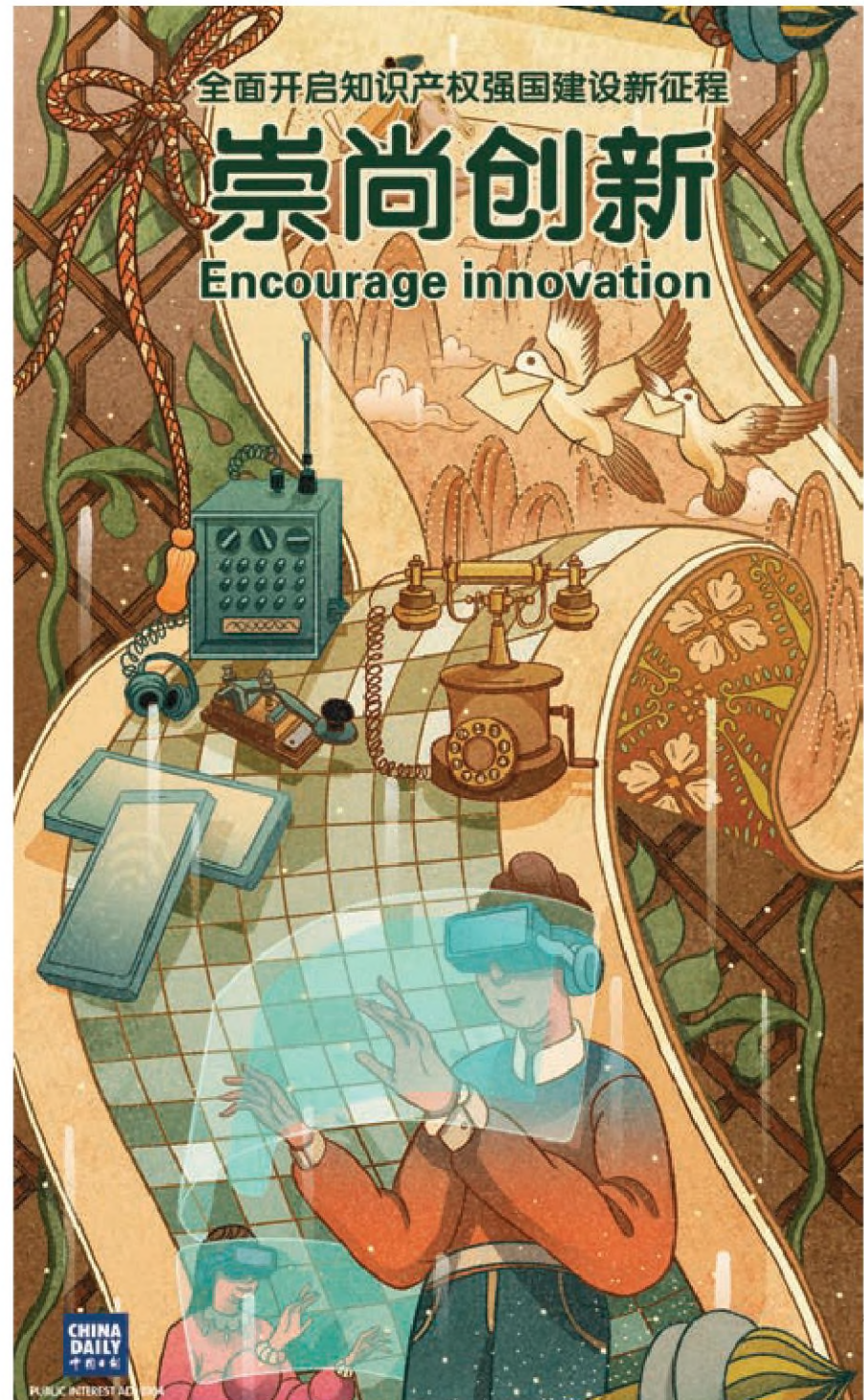
Goldman Sachs analysts predict this program will gain traction in the future.

Some US customers already report receiving faster shipping this year if the goods are sent locally.

"Both companies will face the tough challenge to show whether they are truly more efficient and know the US market better than anyone else," Zhang said.

Trump has made several moves on trade since getting back into office for his second term. He initially signed an executive order to end the de minimis exemption but issued an amendment later which paused the suspension of the provision.

Trump then instructed the US Commerce Department to review the rule. After it is confirmed that "adequate systems are in place" for the US to process inspections and levies on the shipments, the rule may be scrapped altogether.



## BUSINESS

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## Private sector playing key role in growth

China signals strong dedication to fostering high-quality development of nonpublic economy via targeted policy measures

By FAN FEIFEI

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China's unswerving support for the private sector will significantly boost confidence and expectations among entrepreneurs, and revitalize the growth of the world's second-largest economy, while motivating private enterprises to play a bigger role in driving technological innovation and industrial upgrades, said economists, industry experts and company executives on the sideline of the ongoing two sessions.

They noted that the country has sent a strong signal that it is dedicated to fostering the healthy and high-quality development of the private sector by rolling out targeted measures to deal with the difficulties and issues faced by private enterprises, and create a fairer and more dynamic business environment.

Highlighting that private enterprises have become the main force in nurturing new quality productive forces, and promoting the development of strategic emerging industries and future-oriented industries, they called for more efforts to further ease market access restrictions, expand financing channels for private enterprises and reduce financing costs, as well as optimize policies on tax and fee reductions.

Their comments came after President Xi Jinping attended a symposium on private enterprises and delivered an important speech in Beijing last month.

During the symposium, Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, said the new journey in the new era has provided abundant new opportunities and greater space for the development of the private sector, and it is a prime time for private enterprises and entrepreneurs to give full play to their capabilities.

This year's Government Work Report stated that China will take solid steps to implement policies and measures designed to spur the growth of the private sector, effectively protect the lawful rights and interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs in accordance with the law, and encourage private enterprises with appropriate conditions to institute and refine modern corporate systems with distinctive Chinese features.

Lu Zhe, chief economist at Soochow Securities, said the high-level meetings conveyed a positive message that the country encourages and supports the development of the private economy, which is of vital significance in stimulating market vitality and boosting economic growth momentum.

"Accelerating the legislative process for private economy promotion law, strengthening the protection of legitimate rights and interests of private businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as regulating the law enforcement related to enterprises will be a focus on supporting the development of the private sector," Lu said.

Huang Hanquan, head of the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said that China's top leadership has stressed the need to address the difficulties faced by private enterprises in obtaining affordable financing and further open up the competitive areas of infrastructure to various business entities, which will help shore up business confidence, stabilize market expectations and create more devel-



Engineers train a humanoid robot to gather information at a robot factory in Shanghai on Feb 18. TANG YANJUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Left: A woman shakes hands with a humanoid robot from Unitree Robotics during the Global Developer Conference in Shanghai on Feb 21. HECTOR RETAMAL / AFP Right: People use DeepSeek to inquire and transact resident identification card-related matters at a government service hall in Urumchi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Feb 19. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



opment space for private enterprises.

Huang said China has made great strides in comprehensive strength, technological capability and economic prowess, with a continuously improving talent pool and an immense market demand created by its large population. "All of these factors have created golden opportunities for the growth of private enterprises," he noted.

Qi Xiangdong, chairman of cybersecurity company Qj-Anxin Technology Group, who attended the symposium, said the Chinese top leadership's remarks have significantly inspired his enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and boosted the company's confidence in overcoming difficulties, while "giving private enterprises great reassurance and encouraging us to roll up our sleeves and continue to work hard".

Qi said the combination of AI with a wide range of industries will give birth to new application scenarios and new business models.

"As a company in the cybersecurity field, we will focus on our core business through technological innovation, and make greater contributions to the building of China's strength in cyberspace and the development of the digital economy," Qi added.

Emphasizing that private enterprises play a significant part in fostering new quality productive forces, Qi said his company will step up original and pioneering sci-tech innovation,

as well as reinforce fundamental research in AI to drive industrial transformation and upgrading.

Nan Cunhui, chairman of Chint Group, a leading Chinese smart energy solutions provider, said the symposium, which was held at a critical juncture, has far-reaching influence.

It reaffirms the major achievements made by private enterprises and their great contributions to China's economic and social development, underscoring the country's continued efforts to bolster the growth of the private sector, Nan, who had attended the symposium, said.

"Specifically, the meeting has set a direction for the healthy and high-quality development of the private economy now and in the future, and has firmed up the confidence of entrepreneurs to deal with internal and external challenges," he added.

Looking ahead, Nan said, inspired by the top leadership's remarks, his company will make greater efforts to foster new quality productive forces and promote the integration of emerging industries with cutting-edge technologies such as AI, the internet of things and big data.

Chint is ramping up efforts to expand its presence in strategic emerging industries like graphene new materials and hydrogen power, Nan said, adding it will constantly cultivate new industries, new models and new growth drivers that feature green, low-carbon and

sustainable characteristics.

Private companies have become a key driving force behind China's economic ascent over the past decades, and the backbone of the nation's innovation drive. They contribute more than 60 percent of GDP, 70 percent of technological innovation and 80 percent of urban employment, official data show. By the end of September 2024, the country's 55 million registered private enterprises made up over 92 percent of all businesses in China.

Zhang Jun, chief economist at China Galaxy Securities, said the top meetings demonstrate that the country has attached great significance to the private economy, signifying that private enterprises are expected to play a more crucial role in promoting economic transformation and developing new quality productive forces.

"A series of targeted and detailed supportive measures aimed at resolving the practical issues faced by private companies will likely be introduced in the future," Zhang said.

Private enterprises should devote more resources to strategic emerging industries, such as artificial intelligence, new energy, biomedicine and other fields, so as to capitalize on new development opportunities, Zhang added.

A notable feature of the recent high-level symposium was the wide participation of companies from high-tech and strategic emerging

industries. Among the attendees were Huawei's Ren Zhengfei, BYD's Wang Chuanfu, Will Semiconductor's Yu Renrong, and Xiaomi's Lei Jun.

The participants also included Liang Wenfeng, founder of DeepSeek, a Chinese AI startup that has taken the world by storm recently through the release of its cost-efficient AI model, and Wang Xingxing, CEO and founder of Unitree Robotics, whose humanoid robots performed a Chinese folk dance at this year's Spring Festival Gala.

During a similar symposium in 2018, China's top leadership said that the country will unswervingly encourage, support and guide the development of the nonpublic sector and support private enterprises in developing toward a broader stage.

From the symposiums and key meetings that outline plans for the country's reform and development, China's support for the private sector has been evident and continuous.

In July 2023, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a top-level guideline detailing 31 measures to promote the development of the private sector, such as facilitating private enterprises' access to funding, reducing market entry barriers and promoting fair competition.

According to a resolution adopted by the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC, held in July 2024, the country will make great

efforts to improve the long-term mechanism for private enterprises to participate in major national projects, support capable private companies in leading significant national technological and innovation projects, and provide private enterprises with greater access to major national scientific research infrastructure.

The National Development and Reform Commission established a bureau dedicated to serving the development of the private sector in 2023. The NDRC has pledged to expedite the revision of its negative list for market entry and further remove barriers to market access for private enterprises, while encouraging greater private sector participation in major national projects and programs.

Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said: "The private sector has become an important force for promoting Chinese modernization, and plays an increasingly vital role in stabilizing economic growth, creating job opportunities and bolstering technological innovation."

He said that the country's commitment to bolstering the growth of the private sector through concrete measures will be conducive to creating a more stable, transparent and predictable business environment, and propelling private enterprises to strengthen investment in research and development and achieve more technological breakthroughs.

Noting that some private enterprises have been facing mounting pressures, such as rising production costs and financing difficulties, Zhou said: "It is important to encourage financial institutions to step up support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, deepen reform to eliminate barriers that hinder the development of the private sector, and support private enterprises in enhancing innovation capacities."

The country is also pushing forward the legislative process of its first basic law specifically aimed at promoting the development of the private sector. The draft law seeks to tackle these issues by reinforcing fair competition, improving financing conditions, fostering technological innovation and strengthening legal protections.

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the e-commerce research institute of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the country's push to draft a law on promoting the private economy reflects its firm determination to support the private economy, with a specific focus on strengthening protection of private companies' property rights, as well as the rights and interests of entrepreneurs, via legal means.

He added that "the legislative efforts will not only remove systemic barriers and address the pressing concerns of private enterprises, but also invigorate the dynamism of market entities and bolster the development of new quality productive forces".

Noting that the private sector serves as a primary engine for economic growth, Hong called for more efforts to expand financing channels and reduce financing costs for private enterprises, strengthen financial assistance to private investment projects, optimize the market environment for fair competition and reinforce intellectual property protections.

## DeepSeek's success an opportunity for global AI cooperation

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Fan Feifei

Technology has been my beat for more than a decade now — part of my job as a business journalist is to keep a close eye on the latest trends and developments in China's ever-changing high-tech sector.

Chinese artificial intelligence startup DeepSeek recently caused a global sensation with the release of

its latest open-source large language model at significantly lower cost than its foreign counterparts, sending shock waves through the tech industry.

I marveled at the powerful capacities of DeepSeek, a rival of US-based OpenAI's ChatGPT, in terms of logical reasoning and language processing while asking it to create an ancient Chinese poem to celebrate my son's fourth birthday.

The ancient poem written by DeepSeek has precise characters, level and oblique tones, antithesis and rhyming. I asked the AI-powered chatbot to continuously polish previous versions it had created and let

the new editions realize the harmony of sound and rhyme. To my surprise, it could perfectly understand my requirements, think deeply and make changes during the process, and I was finally very satisfied with its creations.

I also tested Baidu's LLM Ernie Bot and ByteDance's Doubao, and found that DeepSeek's works were full of catchy phrases and the beauty of phonology, outperforming those of its competitors. I am astonished by the great technological achievements that DeepSeek has made in such a short time as the Hangzhou, Zhejiang province-based company was founded only in 2023.

Recently, I had the privilege of interviewing many industry insiders in the AI domain. They told me that the emergence of DeepSeek underscores China's growing innovation capacities in cutting-edge technology, challenging the dominance of Silicon Valley in the global AI landscape.

Currently, leading Chinese cloud computing companies, including Alibaba Cloud, Baidu AI Cloud, Tencent Cloud and Huawei Cloud, as well as China's three largest telecom operators, have all integrated DeepSeek's AI models into their platforms. The China-developed model has also attracted attention from US companies including

Amazon, Microsoft and Nvidia.

The success of DeepSeek has proved that it had circumvented traditional limitations and created what could become a new path for collective technological advancement despite facing restrictions in terms of advanced semiconductor technologies.

Experts told me that Washington's technological blockade would not impede China's innovation progress, and instead prompt Chinese enterprises to seek more technological breakthroughs.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said the AI industry's development has long relied on huge amounts of computing capacity and capital input, but

DeepSeek has overthrown the existing paradigm and redefined the global AI industry amid tightened export restrictions on advanced AI chips by the United States.

It seems that DeepSeek's success provides a new opportunity for international AI cooperation and showcases China's innovative strength and open attitude in the AI domain, which is conducive to fostering the sharing of AI technologies around the world, as well as collaboration and innovation.

"Technological breakthroughs can thrive even under restricted conditions, and China has the ability to lead in global AI innovation," said Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at the Central University of Finance and Economics.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Manila should realize the wind is now blowing in a new direction

In the complex geopolitical landscape of the Asia-Pacific, the recent tensions between China and the Philippines, as a consequence of Manila's provocative words and actions in relation to its territorial disputes with China, have ignited concerns of potential conflict between the two countries.

As the region grapples with the long-standing territorial disputes and competing maritime claims in the waters, it is imperative that all stakeholders exercise restraint and prioritize diplomacy and dialogue.

Yet it seems that Manila is determined to play the role of an ill-intentioned troublemaker in the South China Sea, as evidenced by the Philippine defense chief's bragging in an interview about the Philippines being part of a possible coalition against China with the United States and several other Western countries.

In his interview with the Associated Press published on Wednesday, Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro laid bare Manila's intention to escalate tensions and drag the US and its allies and partners into a face-off with China.

Teodoro said the Philippines and its security allies would take measures to counter any attempt by China to impose an air defense zone or restrict freedom of flights over the South China Sea. This remark was clearly based on the false notion that China is considering doing so.

In 2013, China established an air defense identification zone in the East China Sea in accordance with international norms due to the worsened security environment around its Diaoyu Islands. The country has the legitimate right to do the same with regard to its territorial waters in the South China Sea. It is the Philippines, with its repeated provocations over China's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the South China Sea, that is pushing China toward that.

By playing Manila's now customary trick of distorting facts and confusing right and wrong, Teodoro accused China of posing "the greatest threat" to the national security of the Philippines, and doubled down on that false accusation by suggesting that it should also be deemed to be "a global threat".

This is nonsense.

The fact is, it is the Philippines, emboldened by the backing of the previous US administration to act aggressively in the South China Sea, that is posing a serious threat to peace and stability in the waters and the region at large.

The Philippine defense chief's warmongering rhetoric shows that he clearly does not know which way the wind is blowing today. The new US administration under Donald Trump has sent an unmistakable message to allies and partners that they should take security in their own hands, and that US security protection is no longer a free lunch.

With the US wary of being dragged into a conflict by its allies, Manila should recalibrate its approach to its territorial disputes with China. The only viable way forward for the Philippines is to opt for dialogue and negotiations. If it continues with its reckless provoking of China, it will only find itself discarded as proxy by the US, which will rightly view it as a liability.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a news conference held on the sidelines of the ongoing two sessions on Friday that a third reading of the text for the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea has been completed. This should be a wake-up call to Manila that its troublemaking in the waters runs counter to the region's prevailing desire for peace and stability.

No sovereign country would sit idle if an unruly neighbor that coveted its territory started encroaching on it. China is no exception, and it has accordingly stepped up its maritime law enforcement patrols in the South China Sea, and the People's Liberation Army has also enhanced its vigilance and combat preparedness, including conducting training maneuvers and military drills in the waters, so as to be ready to defend the country's maritime interests and rights as necessary.

Manila should strive to play its part in fostering an environment of friendly engagement, so the region is characterized by peace, stability, and mutual prosperity. If it continues to try to set off fireworks in the South China Sea amid the complex dynamics of the Asia-Pacific, it will only be a burnt child that dreads the fire.

## No winners in conflict, no losers in peace

In a social media post on Friday, US President Donald Trump said he is "strongly considering" levying new sanctions and tariffs on Russia.

Considering that he issued the same warning shortly after he took office in January before making public the United States' about-face in its stance on the Ukraine crisis, Trump's repetition of the same old warning should serve to reflect new pressure has been quickly building on his shoulder after his dramatic showdown with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Washington on Feb 28.

After Trump's post, Kevin Hassett, director of the US National Economic Council, told reporters that "President Trump is adamant that we need to get everybody to the table, and we could do that with carrots, and we could do that with sticks".

But Trump's post came after the European Union leaders, the day before, showed their firm commitment to working together to bolster the bloc's defenses and to free up hundreds of billions of euros for security.

It is the US leader's repeated warnings that he would cut them adrift to face the threat of Russia alone and the US' decision to not provide new military and intelligence assistance to Ukraine that has prompted the EU leaders to speak in almost one voice, except the opposition of Hungary, in support of the bloc's self-reliance on security.

That means the EU and Ukraine have dug their heels in instead of succumbing to the US administration's pressure that they have no choice but to accept a deal it struck with Russia to end the conflict in Ukraine.

"It may be easier dealing with Russia, which is surprising, because they have all the cards," Trump said. Thus the US president's warning to Moscow can be seen as a stress reaction of the administration to some extent.

After more than three years of sanctions imposed on Russia by the previous US administration, the Trump administration has few cards to play on that front. Russia's exports of goods to the US were a relatively negligible \$3 billion last year — with fertilizers accounting for nearly half the volume — in contrast with the US' \$3.3 trillion goods imports that year, leaving little space for the US to wield its tariff baton.

To ease the mounting pressure, Trump is sending Secretary of State Marco Rubio, national security adviser Mike Waltz and special envoy Steve Witkoff to Saudi Arabia this week to meet with Ukrainian officials.

The whole crisis over the past more than three years and the detour of the peace process due to Washington being intent on looting a burning house only serve to highlight China's constant stance on the issue. China has advocated dialogue and negotiation and sought a political solution since the first day of the crisis, and has been working for peace and promoting talks ever since.

China welcomes and supports all efforts committed to peace. At the same time, all parties must also see that the root causes of this crisis are complex and intricate, so the peace process can also be long and complicated. As Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a news conference on Friday, "There can be no winners in the conflict, and there will be no losers in the peace".

Relevant parties should therefore put aside their own immediate interest, and advocate and practice a new security concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, as China proposed, so that long-term peace and stability is the hallmark of Eurasia and the world.

China is willing to work with the international community to continue to play a constructive role in defusing the crisis and achieving lasting peace in accordance with the wishes of the parties concerned.

Li Min



Opinion Line

## US biting the hand that feeds its consumers value-for-money goods

Walmart has asked some Chinese suppliers for price cuts of up to 10 percent per round of additional tariffs the Donald Trump administration imposes on Chinese goods.

The US retail giant is doing nothing but trying to shift the burden of the United States' arbitrary tariffs onto Chinese suppliers. So the strong push-back from the latter is fully understandable. They are not only in the position of shouldering the full cost of the US' irrational duties, but also have no space to further reduce their prices.

Most Chinese suppliers' margins are already "razor-thin" due to Walmart's strategy of procuring goods cheaply in order to maintain its competitive advantage. As reported, for some Chinese suppliers, any price reduction greater than 2 percent would see them make a loss. No wonder those Chinese suppliers that have had their own upstream vendors directly refuse any requests to cut prices by more than 3 percent.

So if other US retailers, as reported, follow suit, the Chinese suppliers, if

they still want to keep their US contracts, will have to lower their requirements for their products' quality, as they will have to consider purchasing some parts from other developing countries where the quality of the parts is generally lower than that of their Chinese counterparts. A move that has raised concerns that the lower prices will come at the expense of product quality. Then US consumers will have to accept the goods they buy at the same price are of a lower quality than before. They need to be reminded that it is the US' punitive tariffs that will have "eaten" into the quality of their purchases.

After decades of cooperation, the US retailers are well aware the cost performance of their Chinese suppliers is the best they can get. That means it will be very difficult for them to find alternatives to their Chinese suppliers, whose competitive advantage is actually based on the huge manufacturing base of China and the high efficiency and stability of the country's industry and supply chains.

In the face of the negotiations the

US retailers are carrying out with them, the Chinese suppliers should have a clear mind that every percentage point of price cut they agree to will mean a loss of their own net profit. More importantly, once they start making that concession, they will be putting themselves in an awkward position of continuously being fleeced by the US retailers in the future as the Trump administration sees its art for a deal works well with the Chinese, until they find they cannot make ends meet in the near future. And if they choose to lower their quality to maintain their own profit, their brand image and credit that they have spent a long time promoting and developing among US consumers will suffer an irremediable loss.

So it is high time relevant industry, business and commerce associations played their due role to coordinate the Chinese enterprises' actions in the process forming a united front in the negotiations to improve their collective bargaining power and better protect their interest.

—IFENG.COM

## Canada putting itself in extremely awkward position

China announced that it will impose additional tariffs on some products imported from Canada based on the results of an anti-discrimination probe on Saturday.

Effective from March 20, an additional 100 percent tariff will be imposed on imported rapeseed oil, oil cakes, and peas originating from Canada, while aquatic products and pork will be subject to an additional 25 percent tariff.

The decision comes after China's anti-discrimination probe determined that Canada's restrictive measures against some Chinese products have disrupted normal trade order and harmed the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises.

Earlier, without any investigation, Canada imposed unilateral restrictions on Chinese-made electric vehicles, and steel, aluminum and other products imported from China. So it

was the Canadian side that seized the initiative to undermine China-Canada economic and trade relations.

Both Ottawa's 100 percent duties on Chinese-made EVs and 25 percent duties on Chinese steel and aluminum started in October last year following the call of the then US administration to form a united front against China. Yet the incumbent Donald Trump administration has discarded its predecessor's Canada policy and started levying punitive tariffs on Canada last week along with China and Mexico. Although it suspended the duties on Canada and Mexico later, it only seeks to maximize the US' gains in future extortion.

China's countermeasures, which unusually came about five months after Canada's irrational moves, show Beijing's restraint and hope that Ottawa will reassess its trade policies

toward China, as the US under the new administration doesn't regard Canada an ally as before, but as another target for extortion.

Most of the Canadian imports Beijing selected this time for its retaliatory tariffs are agricultural produce and seafood that constitute a big part of Canada's exports to China, one of its largest trading partners. So Beijing's move should serve to remind Ottawa of the irrationality of its ongoing attempts to woo the US by suggesting its willingness to continue to hold a "united front" with the US against China.

Notably, Beijing has unveiled its retaliatory measures about 12 days ahead of them coming into effect, clearly indicating its hope that Ottawa will take advantage of the window of opportunity to analyze the situation and correct its wrongdoings.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Two-state solution requisite for Middle East stability

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation adopted an Arab League counter-proposal to US President Donald Trump's plan to take over Gaza and displace its residents calling on the international community to support the regional initiative.

The decision by the 57-member grouping came at an emergency meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Friday, three days after the Arab League ratified the plan at a summit in Cairo. The Egyptian-crafted alternative to Trump's widely-condemned takeover proposes to rebuild the Gaza Strip under the future administration of the Palestinian Authority.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty welcomed the OIC endorsement and said he now hoped to gain support from the wider international community, including the United States. "The next step is for the plan to become an international plan through adoption by the European Union and international parties such as Japan, Russia, China and others," Abdelatty said.

China supports the Gaza peace res-

toration plan jointly initiated by Egypt and Arab countries and supported by the OIC, and welcomes all pro-peace efforts to resolve the Gaza crisis under the framework of the two-state solution.

If major powers really care about the people of Gaza, they should promote a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in Gaza, increase humanitarian assistance, adhere to the principle of "Palestinians governing Palestine", and contribute to the reconstruction of Gaza.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in his meeting with the media in Beijing on Friday, Gaza belongs to the Palestinian people and is an integral part of the Palestinian territory. Any act of forcibly changing the status of Gaza will not bring peace, but will only trigger fresh turmoil.

The Palestinian issue has always been the core of the Middle East crisis. As Wang urged, the focus of the international community's efforts in the next stage should be more focused on the two-state solution and giving more support for the estab-

lishment of an independent Palestinian state. Only in this way can the Palestinians and Israelis coexist peacefully.

To this end, the Palestinian factions must first implement the 2024 Beijing Declaration and achieve unity and self-reliance; all parties in the Middle East must transcend differences and support the establishment of a Palestinian state; the international community must build consensus and provide assistance for the fostering of peace between the Palestinians and Israelis. The newly-proposed Gaza peace restoration plan represents the latest efforts of the international community in that direction.

China is a strategic partner of the Middle East countries and a partner of both the Arab League and the OIC. China will continue to firmly fight for justice, peace and development for the people of the Middle East and support Middle East countries independently grasping their future and destiny following their own development paths.

—GUANCHANG

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

MARISELA CONNELLY

## Successful case study

Mexico may take a green leaf from China's sustainable development book for its modernization drive

In today's world, the pressing problems are the provision of sustainable energy, climate change, the improvement of health systems, and to address the issue of water scarcity. Energy is a key element for sustainable development. The energy system has been based on fossil fuels, which, due to their characteristics, are not sustainable.



A primary role of governments is the promotion of technological advancement with the intention that the benefits reach all sectors of society. Information and communication technologies are instrumental to balancing short- and long-term interests, and thus act according to the solution of mediate problems. The government plays a decisive role in investing in science and technology, regulating the consequences of adverse technologies and setting an example by buying environmentally friendly products.

The case of China is particularly interesting. Its large population has been an asset, but sometimes also a limitation for development. The government has a great responsibility to ensure there is enough food and everything else people need and it has the imperative of launching economic reforms to lead the country toward the development goals set, and to place it in its rightful place on the global stage. The Chinese leaders have understood that only development driven by technological innovation is the means to advance and achieve the desired goals of growth, improvement of the standard of living of the population and care for the environment. In the second decade of the 21st century, technological innovation has driven vertiginous changes in the Chinese economy and society.

The Chinese government recognizes the importance of setting goals and achieving them. Air pollution levels fell by 40 percent from 2013 to 2020, and emphasis was also placed on the protection of natural reserves and the development of efficient and sustainable transportation that includes electric vehicles and clean energy infrastructure. In 2023, China's clean ener-

gy sector was the engine of GDP growth, contributing around one-fifth of China's 5.2 percent GDP growth. Electrically powered cars produced by Chinese companies have been a key factor in eliminating polluting gases in large cities.

In the case of Mexico, in 2012 Congress approved the law on climate change which embodies the commitment to reduce polluting emissions. However, it has not been easy to meet the set goals, for several reasons, among them, the emphasis placed by the Mexican government since 2018 on giving priority to projects that

emphasize the construction of refineries and the production of fossil fuels.

Chinese advances in clean energy development are recognized by Latin American countries, including Mexico. In September



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

2024, the Taiyuan Energy Low Carbon Development Forum was held, attended by representatives from many countries and Mexico was the guest of honor. It was an opportunity to share China's advances in the sector and a boost to programs that aim to promote cooperation with these countries in the development of clean technologies.

China and Mexico signed a memorandum of understanding in 2022 to promote investments in ecological development, and Chinese companies have been investing in renewable energy generation in Mexico. Huawei has offered a "technology for nature" program to protect biodiversity in

an area of 690 square kilometers, in the state of Yucatán, Mexico. In April 2024, Gezhouba Group signed contracts for two solar power plant projects with a Mexican company in Puebla, in the town of Tepeyahualco. Once completed, they will be able to supply electricity to the population.

Chinese EVs have been widely accepted in Mexico. Among the best-known brands are BYD, Jiangling Motor Corporation and Chery. Their popularity is due to their competitive price and quality.

In June 2017, the environment secretariat of the government of Mexico City participated in the International Forum for Metropolitan Clean Air and Climate Actions in Beijing. The main objective was to share strategies and policies most successful in reducing air pollution levels.

China has helped Mexico develop a system and platform that generates real-time and accurate air quality information. In July 2022, Claudia Sheinbaum, then head of the Mexico City government, was at the opening ceremony of Metro Line 1, which went through a modernization process. The Chinese company CRRC Zhuzhou Locomotive was one of the companies involved, supplying 29 trains of the latest technology, along with the training of 150 Mexican technicians to guarantee their proper functioning. Another Chinese company, Yutong, supplies buses to Mexico City, as part of the city's plan to expand its trolleybus network. It placed 61 more buses for the Metrobús line, all electric, as well as another 171 diesel units, of which, 121 are for the high mountain areas in Mexico City.

The Chinese government is attentive to the development of clean energy in other countries and shows its support for initiatives that promote them. Mexico must take advantage of its relationship with China to study the methods used in the country and the policies followed to achieve sustainable development.

The author is a professor and researcher at the Center for Asian and African Studies of the College of Mexico. 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.

MAO KEJI

## Upgraded dividend

China's ascendancy in manufacturing and tech sectors needs to be correctly perceived as bringing benefits to the world as a whole

Recently, in discussions with professors and students at Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School, I found that many still perceive the "China dividend" through the lens of some decades-old assumptions. Such an outdated perspective inevitably fails to accurately grasp the full picture and nuanced details of China today.

So, what does the "China dividend" truly mean today? This is a question worth dissecting, and at least four key dimensions define it.

At the dawn of China's reform and opening-up, the country leveraged a vast "factory worker dividend." Within a short period, it developed the world's largest processing and manufacturing sector, drawing upon a seemingly inexhaustible supply of laborers from the agricultural sector. It was through this export-driven model, that China single-handedly kept global labor costs low for decades.

Unfortunately, many in the West still subscribe to this outdated notion, believing that China is merely exploiting its "human resources" for labor-intensive industries and that if Western capital and technology were to withdraw, China's manufacturing sector would collapse.

But as China's industrial sector has evolved, the country has demonstrated its "technician dividend", forming the world's largest general manufacturing industry. From electromechanical products to heavy chemical goods, countless industrial clusters have created an extensive supply chain network with unparalleled collaboration and responsiveness to market demands. This ability to swiftly adjust production, control costs, and maintain high efficiency forms China's most visible economic moat.

Even as factor costs such as labor wage and land rent rise, China retains its competitive edge in producing computers, smartphones, automobiles and other high-value goods. This is why those who recognize this industrial advantage tend to fall

into two camps: the enthusiastic "China admirers" who are astonished by the depth and resilience of Chinese industry, and the alarmed "China skeptics" who fear that without a "China+1" strategy, Western industries will struggle to remain competitive. The "China+1" strategy refers to a supply chain diversification scenario where companies move parts of their manufacturing operations out of China into additional countries.

Today, China is emerging as the world's leader in "engineer dividends", developing the largest cluster of advanced manufacturing and industrial service sector. The country is rapidly filling all key industrial spaces aligned with the definition of new quality productive forces: renewable energy, electric vehicles, drones, power batteries, robotics — where China's dominance is nearly uncontested. Even in fields traditionally considered "softer industries", such as biotechnology, artificial intelligence, gaming and animation, China is on the brink of major breakthroughs. Additionally, long-standing bottlenecks in industries such as semiconductors and commercial aviation are likely to be overcome in the near future.

The fundamental reason for this unexpected transformation is simple: these industries are inherently "engineering-intensive". Capital alone is not sufficient, labor alone neither. But, even having both capital and labor is not enough. What is essential is a vast industrial base with an equally vast consumer market, where a prototype product may experience painstaking and continuous trial, error and iteration through numerous real-world applications, to achieve desirable industrial progress and technological evolution. Right now, only China possesses these at scale.

Western economies have capital and can attract global talent, but they lack the expansive industrial and commercial scenarios that China provides. This structural disadvantage means that over time, it will become increasingly difficult for Western economies to match China's momentum. Those who recognize this reality in the West have largely embraced a pragmatic

stance: in the foreseeable future, cooperation will be the only viable approach to engage with China's technological and industrial rise.

In the near future, China is set to harness an unprecedented "scientist dividend", fostering entirely new industries, first through incremental innovations, then the breakthroughs. The latest Nature Index rankings maybe already provide a glimpse into China's momentum: among the world's top 10 scientific institutions, in terms of research articles published in high-quality science journals across all sectors and covering all subjects, eight are now based in China. This reflects a convergence of China's vast scientific workforce and its unparalleled commitment to research funding. With tens of millions of researchers backed by trillions of dollars in R&D investment, China is generating a massive output of scientific discoveries — aligning perfectly with the principles of investment and return.

As China's capabilities in fundamental research accelerate, future breakthroughs in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and information sciences are increasingly likely to originate from China. These will go beyond engineering optimizations and enter the realm of true "zero-to-one" scientific innovations — many of which we may not yet even be able to fully conceptualize.

What makes China's development truly remarkable is that these four dividends — the factory worker, technician, engineer, and scientist dividends — are not competing or mutually exclusive forces. Instead, they are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Scientific breakthroughs fuel engineering applications, which in turn drive industrial scalability, ultimately leading to widespread commercial adoption. This creates a seamless ecosystem that connects cutting-edge science with everyday life scenario.

With a population exceeding a billion, a socialist outlook, and the rapid advancement of industrialization and modernization, China is poised to unleash



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

unprecedented levels of productivity — representing the pinnacle of modern civilization's technological and economic development.

At this stage, China's contributions to global prosperity and progress will only expand. And this, perhaps, is the true definition of the "China dividend".

The author is an associate researcher at the International Cooperation Center under the National Development and Reform Commission of China. 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.

# LIFE



**From left:** A fully packed audience watch a heated game during the finals of the King Pro League, the highest *Honor of Kings* league in China, run by Tencent Games, in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in October last year. The character of Sun Wukong or Monkey King in *Black Myth: Wukong* video game. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# China's developers winning the game

Achieving big success in overseas markets, cultural elements and ancient stories gain more popularity on mobile devices, **Yang Yang** reports.

China's first AAA-rated video game developed by Game Science, *Black Myth: Wukong*, based on the 16th-century Chinese classic *Journey to the West*, won the Best Action Game and Players' Voice awards at The Game Awards 2024.

Its global success — 28 million copies sold and \$900 million in revenue, with 25 percent from overseas — marked a milestone for China's gaming industry.

The China branch of IGN, a game review website, said that the game's "outstanding quality meets all the expectations over the years. This is a truly competitive game on the global stage."

This achievement is far from an anomaly. Data from the China Audio-video and Digital Publishing Association, the national game industry research institute, and China gaming database CNG show that revenue from Chinese self-developed games in overseas markets grew from \$3.08 billion in 2014 to \$16.37 billion in 2023, a more than fourfold increase over 10 years.

The 2024 China Game Industry Report shows that China's self-developed games garnered \$18.56 billion overseas last year, a nearly 13.4 percent increase from the previous year.

In the mobile games sector, among the 100 top-grossing titles in the world, 40 are from China, with revenue reaching \$2.11 billion, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the global mobile game revenue.

This success is fueled by a strategic mix of cultural creativity, technological flexibility, and smart market tactics, industry insiders say.

Chinese developers have learned to repackaging ancient narratives and thoughts into globally resonant experiences.

*Black Myth: Wukong*, for example, re-imagines Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, as a brooding anti-hero in a dark fantasy world.

Preserving the core theme of rebellion, the game taps into universal tropes, such as the pursuit of freedom and justice, individual

growth and cultivation, love and brotherhood, the complexity of human nature and the importance of kindness.

While drawing from the rich cultural backdrop of the novel, it also skillfully blends elements like traditional Shaanbei (northern Shaanxi province) storytelling, ancient poetry and ancient architectural designs, offering players a unique glimpse into Chinese culture.

US gaming blogger Legendary Drops, who has more than 270,000 followers on YouTube, said in one of his posts about *Black Myth: Wukong*: "I can't tell you how much I appreciate this game's story, character writing, voice acting, music, and visual production."

"When I started playing, I knew this game would be good, but I never imagined an action game, or a first-time developer like Game Science, to deliver a story experience, rather than just telling you a story."

"You can feel the reverence for *Journey to the West* through *Black Myth: Wukong*. You see it in the art, in the characters, the

voice acting, the writing, the stop-motion, and the hand-drawn cut-scenes," he adds. "You see how much respect they have for the work they were adapting."

To help players better understand the game, some foreign bloggers created videos explaining the story of *Journey to the West*, attracting tens of thousands of viewers.

In a previous interview, Feng Ji, the game's producer, said that *Journey to the West* and Sun Wukong are among the cultural intellectual properties that best represent Chinese culture, adding that he hoped "the game will intrigue players around the world to learn more about Chinese culture."

Similarly, *Genshin Impact*, another popular game developed by Mihoyo, does not confine itself to domestic culture as an original Chinese game.

It blends open-world adventure with anime aesthetics to showcase Chinese elements, including incor-

sightseeing on the same day. The integration of sports and tourism has boosted public enthusiasm in northwestern China, including Gansu, since the Beijing Winter Olympic Games in 2022.

Zhu Jifei, general manager of the training base, says the total number of visitors to the base's ski resort exceeded 200,000 in the winter. "Most visitors to our resort will



**From top:** An outdoor advertisement for *Genshin Impact* in Akihabara, Tokyo's electric town, Japan, in 2023. ZHOU YOU / FOR CHINA DAILY  
People queue up in front of the Chinese Game Science booth for the *Black Myth: Wukong* video game on the opening day of Gamescom at a Cologne trade fair in Germany in 2023. YING TANG / VIA GETTY IMAGES

porating traditional Chinese opera and ethnic instruments into the game's music and character design.

One example is the traditional Chinese opera-inspired character Yun Jin. Her aria *The Divine Damsel of Devastation* amassed over 150 million views globally, sparking curiosity about Peking Opera.

"A 'Chinese story' isn't just about traditional tales from ancient China. Rather, it's a story told by Chinese people, using their perspectives and values," said Feng in an interview on State broadcaster China Central Television last year.

As long as a story is created by Chinese people, it remains a "Chinese story," regardless of its themes, characters, or setting, writes Li Huichuan, a researcher of digital game culture from the Shanghai

Academy of Social Sciences, in a published article, adding that "the essence of national culture lies in the cultural ideas and values conveyed, not just in the story's form or structure."

Despite the design of the game scenes in Mihoyo's other popular game *Honkai: Star Rail* that ranges from the natural environment, architectural style to daily life referring to foreign cultures, the story is still Chinese — using values passed on from ancient times such as "sacrificing minor interests for the greater good" and the principles of benevolent governance, such as "the people are more important than the ruler" and "putting people first."

The key to establishing the concept of Chinese games and stories does not lie in whether the game's

content, style, plot, characters and story originate from China, but rather if they convey Chinese values through the structure and form of the game and story, Li writes.

China's success in mobile gaming — holding 73 percent of its domestic market and 40 percent of the global market — is credited to gaming developers' tactical focus on the mobile market.

By optimizing games for mobile devices, studios like Mihoyo and Tencent Games have successfully captured emerging markets in Southeast Asia and Latin America, where smartphone usage outpaces consoles. At the same time, releasing games across multiple platforms such as Steam, PlayStation, and Epic Games has further expanded their reach.

*Whiteout Survival*, a strategy game released by Century Games in February 2023, has been downloaded over 100 million times globally and consistently ranked among the top-selling games in more than 100 countries and regions. At the same time, the domestic version has ranked first on the WeChat mini-game best-seller list and remained in the top five on the iOS best-seller chart since its launch in April last year.

Chen Qi, chief executive officer of Century Games, says that the main reason this game is so successful both at home and abroad is because it embraced the trend of making strategy games more casual.

The rise of hyper-casual "mini-games" further underscores this agility. In 2024, China's mini-game sector revenue doubled to \$5.58 billion, capitalizing on fragmented play times. *Mushroom Wars*, a casual title developed by Chinese game company 4399, grossed \$378 million overseas. These games become addictive to mobile users — easy to pick up, but difficult to put down.

Success abroad demands more than linguistic tweaks. Tencent Games' *Honor of Kings* retooled characters and lore for Western

audiences, while the mobile version of *Call of Duty* tailored events to regional festivals.

Li Shilin, Tencent's localization expert, says the biggest challenge for Chinese companies going global is truly understanding and integrating into local cultures to solve localization issues. While globalization is a major trend, the success of each game often hinges on how well they handle the specific details and challenges of localization, he adds.

Despite progress, pitfalls loom. Cultural misreadings persist: When overseas players saw *Black Myth: Wukong*'s protagonist don a golden headband, many mistook it for a "coronation" rather than a curse — a stark reminder of context gaps.

Technological gaps also linger. While China's mobile prowess is unmatched, console gaming remains nascent, accounting for just 4.59 percent of domestic revenue.

The \$300 million budget of *Black Myth: Wukong* — a rarity in China — highlights the uphill battle to rival Western AAA titans.

Ao Ran, executive vice-president of the China Audio-video and Digital Publishing Association, highlights that China's gaming industry must shift from merely "going abroad" to achieving high-quality "globalization."

Bao Leiping, a professor and deputy director of the Institute of Sociology with the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, says that in the future, through continuous innovation and cultural integration, domestic games will enrich global players' experiences and showcase Chinese culture's diversity and creativity, promoting international cultural exchanges.

Additionally, they should delve deeper into traditional culture beyond superficial elements to explore profound cultural and spiritual values, she adds.

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## Fusion of sports and tourism booms in Gansu

LANZHOU — After skiing at the national snow sports training base in Jingtai county, Gansu province, 11-year-old Li Sen and his parents from Taiyuan, Shanxi province, also visited the Yellow River stone forest park, a well-known local scenic spot near the ski resort.

It took only a 20-minute car ride from the resort to the park for the family to enjoy both skiing and

sightseeing on the same day.

The integration of sports and tourism has boosted public enthusiasm in northwestern China, including Gansu, since the Beijing Winter Olympic Games in 2022.

Zhu Jifei, general manager of the training base, says the total number of visitors to the base's ski resort exceeded 200,000 in the winter. "Most visitors to our resort will

also make a beeline for the Yellow River stone forest park to enjoy the natural beauty," Zhu says.

Zheng Haixia, the silver medalist of the women's basketball team at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, also took a trip to this county last summer.

"I love the local basketball and sports atmosphere," Zheng says, adding that many visitors come to scenic spots like the stone forest,

and that made her happy as it was good for the local economy.

Meanwhile, in neighboring Qinghai province, the 2024-25 Chinese Curling League kicked off in March in Xining, the capital city of Qinghai.

The special performance for the curling league was held at a theater, showcasing dances, songs and acrobatics with local characteris-

“Across the country, including in the northwestern regions, people's enthusiasm for sports tourism continues to grow.”

He Xiaozu, director of the department of culture and tourism in Gansu province

tics, creating an unforgettable feast for visitors.

In the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, statistics show that the region held over 700 winter sports and tourism events during this Spring Festival vacation.

"Across the country, including in the northwestern regions, people's enthusiasm for sports tourism continues to grow," says He Xiaozu, director of the department of culture and tourism in Gansu province.

XINHUA

# CULTURAL HERITAGE



In the bleak, endless expanse of the Gobi Desert in Shandan county, Zhangye, Gansu province, the ancient remains of two parallel Great Walls extend.

They were built at different times — one dates back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) and the other to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Both run east-west, separated by a distance of between 10 and 80 meters, but they are completely different in look and structure.

The 94-kilometer stretch of the Han Great Wall is composed of trenches, rivers and beacon towers, while the 271-km stretch of the Ming Great Wall consists of rammed earth walls, mounds and barriers.

In 121 BC, Han Dynasty emperor Liu Che sent General Huo Qubing to the western region of the Yellow River to fight Xiongnu nomads in the north. In today's Hexi Corridor, which runs through Wuwei, Zhangye, Jiuquan and Dunhuang, Huo won several battles. To protect the frontier, the emperor ordered a military defense system built.

For millennia, the Hexi Corridor served as a crucial gateway from the Central Plains to the western regions. Shandan county is located in the middle section of the corridor, with the Longshou Mountains to the north connecting to the Juyuan Ancient Road, and the Qilian Mountains to the south intersecting with the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road that ran from Chang'an (today's Xi'an in Shaanxi province) to Lhasa (in today's Xizang autonomous region).

It was a location that had to be passed, both on the Silk Road as well as on today's Eurasian Land Bridge, and was known as the "narrow waist of the corridor" and the "throat of Ganzhou (today's Zhangye) and Liangzhou (today's Wuwei)".

The Shandan Great Wall was created by building a tight defense system of pavilions, trenches, beacon towers and setting up passes, and it became a crucial component of the defense system in the Hexi Corridor. In 111 BC, Shandan county was founded as an important customs fortress along the Silk Road.

During the Ming Dynasty, it was also a crucial part of the defense system of the Ming Great Wall. According to Xu Huijun, researcher at the China Academy of Cultural Heritage, the constant reinforcement and improvement to castles, beacon towers and bastions since 1537 created the best-preserved Great Wall made of rammed earth visible in Shandan today.

The Shandan Great Wall is known for its variety of architecture and complete defense system, including walls, fortresses, moats and beacon towers. Construction materials are



Researchers from the Han and Ming Great Wall conservation and research center of Shandan county, Zhangye, Gansu province, gather data at the site in June last year. WANG JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## From protection to patrimony

Han and Ming Great Wall protection leads to creation of national cultural park in Northwest China, **Yang Yang** and **Ma Jingna** report in Zhangye, Gansu.



Left: Workers of the fourth national cultural relics census examine the Ming Great Wall in Shandan county. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: A worker busy restoring part of the Ming Great Wall in the county in 2019. ZHAI JIZONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Bottom: Windbreaks planted on both sides of the Great Wall in the county. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

diverse, primarily rammed earth, adobe, and brick and stone masonry, with some structures employing a mix of earth and stone, or incorporating reeds.

"The construction methods fully embody the principle of adapting to local conditions and using local materials," Xu says.

The Shandan Great Wall not only embodies the overall architectural characteristics of the Great Wall but also displays distinct local features, and so is representative of the earth-

en defensive walls of Gansu and the rest of the country, she adds.

Spanning loess gullies, mountains, and deserts, the Shandan Great Wall provides valuable physical evidence for studying the history, geography, politics, economy, military affairs and culture of the northwestern region, she says.

In 2006, the Han and Ming walls were designated a national key cultural relic protection unit, and the county was chosen as a pilot area for Great Wall conservation efforts. In

2020, the Shandan section of the Ming Great Wall was included in the initial list of significant Great Wall sections by the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

In recent years, with the advancement of the Great Wall National Cultural Park project, the Shandan Great Wall has received better systematic protection and restoration, and has also been integrated with tourism and cultural heritage to become a cultural scenic area.

Since the launch of the national

project in 2021, the Shandan Great Wall has been incorporated into the park sections within the province. The northwestern province is home to 3,654 km of Great Wall, placing it the second in the country in terms of remains. The Shandan section will be the demonstration section of "the throat of Ganzhou and Liangzhou" scenic route.

"Since the release of national and provincial plans for the Great Wall National Cultural Park, we have

swiftly implemented several key projects. We got 20 million yuan (\$2.76 million) from the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for cultural heritage, and have focused on the area from Xiakou to Xinheyi," says Ge Qin, head of Shandan county's culture, sports, radio, film and tourism bureau.

"We have completed essential infrastructure, including a Great Wall protection and exhibition service center, patrol trails, and guide signage. Additionally, we have worked hard on projects for the Wall's restoration, and digital exhibitions," he says.

Now the Han and Ming Great Wall Museum has been set up as an initial cultural tourism system centered on the Great Wall scenic area, supported by cultural and museum venues.

"With support from national and provincial funding, we have undertaken projects such as the Great Wall cultural corridor and digital preservation," Ge says. "These efforts have strengthened physical protection and promoted the integration of culture and tourism."

Shandan has also introduced several tourist routes that combine the Great Wall with historical villages and equine culture. It has also hosted events to release information about the Wall and promote the development of its tourism industry.

The plan for tourism around the Shandan Great Wall focuses on enhancing restoration and protection efforts.

Meanwhile, the county aims to create new cultural tourism experiences by combining the Wall with other elements, introducing options such as "Great Wall plus outdoor leisure".

"These initiatives are expected to boost tourism and stimulate economic growth," Ge says.

In addition, Great Wall-themed activities like educational tours, folk tourism and art events will be developed to enhance visitor engagement. Projects including the Han and Ming Great Wall scenic areas will integrate cultural and tourism resources, increasing the Shandan Great Wall's regional influence. Infrastructure improvements will enhance the visitor experience.

"We will also use big data and virtual reality to create digital experiences, building an online Great Wall for cultural dissemination," Ge says.

The protection and use of the Shandan Great Wall will not only enrich China's cultural heritage but also provide the world with more opportunities to understand Chinese history, Xu says.

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By **YANG YANG** and **MA JINGNA**  
in Zhangye, Gansu

## Mapping out history of Hexi Corridor for future

In a significant stride toward heritage preservation, Zhangye in Northwest China's Gansu province has embarked on the "Two Lines Mapping" project to safeguard its cultural relics.

Zhangye, historically known as Ganzhou and located in the central part of the Hexi Corridor where the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and Mongolian Plateau meet, was a significant commercial hub and strategic passage on the ancient Silk Road, earning the nicknames "Golden Zhangye" and "Jiangnan north beyond the Great Wall". Jiangnan is south of the Yangtze River's lower reaches and famous for its rich local products.

Boasting a long history and rich heritage, the city was designated by the State Council as a national historical and cultural city.

According to the third national cultural relics census, the city preserves 1,270 immovable relics, including 20 national key relics. Zhangye has 262.9 kilometers of the Great Wall built in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), the second-longest

section in the province, and 550.8 km of the Great Wall built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the longest section in the province.

"The 'Two Lines Mapping' project for cultural relics ensures the relics' authenticity and integrity, playing a pivotal role in safeguarding and restoring their historical appearances," says Wang Xu, director of the cultural relics data information center at the Gansu provincial cultural heritage administration.

The "two lines" refer to the protection boundary line and the construction control zone line of cultural heritage protection units. The protection boundary focuses on safeguarding the relics and their immediate surroundings while the construction control zone restricts building activities outside the protection boundary to preserve the unit's safety, environment and historical appearance.

"By integrating surveying and geographic information technology into cultural relic protection, we can



Using survey tools, workers of the fourth national cultural relics census check and gather data for the immovable cultural relics in Zhangye, Gansu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

accurately incorporate Zhangye's heritage data into the city's land-use planning system," he says. "This provides strong data support for subse-

quent site investigations and building surveys."

Ongoing efforts in site surveys, grotto protection, revolutionary

heritage surveys and historical building assessments will enhance the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

On March 8, 2021, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the National Cultural Heritage Administration jointly issued a guide requiring that "the spatial information of cultural heritage resources be incorporated into the national land spatial basic information platform, implementing strict protection, and establishing data sharing and dynamic maintenance mechanisms".

Based on the instructions, Zhangye developed and implemented its mapping project, which helped in the preservation of the cultural relics in the past four years.

"This project not only raises awareness about cultural relic protection but also legally ensures the preservation of the relics and their surrounding environments," says Bian Yuan, director of the Zhangye cultural heritage bureau.

Since the project's inception, the

Zhangye government has prioritized its implementation.

"In Gaotai, we have a special team with select skilled personnel and are collaborating with surveying departments," says Xun Defei from the Gaotai county bureau of culture, sports, radio, television and tourism.

"We use fundamental data and land survey information, employing drone aerial surveys and Global Navigation Satellite System positioning devices for on-site investigations," he says.

The office work involves overlaying protection boundary data and construction control zone data onto imagery, and creating specialized maps. These outcomes support future site investigations and grotto protection work, he says.

With the concerted efforts of the local cultural heritage and natural resources departments, Zhangye has completed the "Two Lines Mapping" for national and provincial key cultural relics. The data has been integrated into the city's "One Map" system for land-use planning. The city aims to complete the mapping for all ungraded immovable cultural relics by the end of this year, Bian adds.

## LIFE

# Lights, camera, action!

Cinematographer known for giving *wushu* a new role on the silver screen honored with lifetime award in Hollywood, **Rena Li** reports in Los Angeles.



Andrzej Bartkowiak, a Hollywood cinematographer, director and producer, was honored with the American Society of Cinematographers Lifetime Achievement Award during the Society's 39th annual awards ceremony on Feb 23 in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles. RENA LI / CHINA DAILY

Andrzej Bartkowiak, a celebrated Hollywood cinematographer, director and producer, was honored with the American Society of Cinematographers 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award during its 39th annual awards ceremony on Feb 23 in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles.

Known for major Hollywood blockbusters like *Speed* and *Lethal Weapon 4*, Bartkowiak has worked across a range of genres and styles, and has collaborated with some of the most esteemed directors in Hollywood.

Adding to his achievements behind the camera, Bartkowiak has often sat in the director's chair himself and has left a lasting impact on action films, particularly through his use of Chinese martial arts. His directorial debut was 2000's *Romeo Must Die*, an action-thriller starring martial arts superstar Jet Li (Li Lianjie).

The Beijing-born actor had already made a name for himself in classic mar-

tial arts films, including the *Once Upon a Time in China* series. *Romeo Must Die* was Li's first Hollywood role, and introduced the *wushu* (martial arts) champion — already a legend in Hong Kong cinema — to an international audience.

Known for his lightning-fast movements, Li's skill is so extraordinary that filmmakers often ask him to slow down so that the camera can properly capture his movements. His work with Bartkowiak was a turning point in Hollywood martial arts films, and according to American entertainment news website Vulture, its blend of kung fu with urban action and hip-hop aesthetics created the new genre of "hip-hop kung fu".

Following the success of *Romeo Must Die*, Bartkowiak continued to develop his China-meets-America action style, directing *Exit Wounds* (2001), *Cradle 2 the Grave* (2003), and *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun-Li* (2009), bringing martial arts into mainstream Holly-

wood with a modern, stylish twist.

The influence of his action movies on subsequent films and their contribution to the popularization of Chinese martial arts in Hollywood are "undeniable", according to a review on Film-Authority.

Martial arts films have played a crucial role in bridging Chinese and American cultures, as well as introducing global audiences to the dynamic world of kung fu. Legends like Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li have mesmerized generations with their extraordinary skills, inspiring audiences and filmmakers alike. By blending traditional martial arts philosophy with contemporary storytelling, these films have helped redefine the action genre on a global scale, film critics say.

One feature of Bartkowiak's work is his long-standing collaboration with martial arts stars such as Jet Li, Mark Dacascos, as well as recourse to a consistent team of performers led by Hong

Kong's Dion Lam. This continuity in cast and crew has helped establish a distinct cinematic language that fans of kung fu action films have come to recognize and appreciate.

"I love Chinese culture," Bartkowiak tells China Daily. "That's why I've directed a series of films that highlight martial arts."

He has visited China multiple times, exploring different cities and immersing himself in the country's history and culture. He has often expressed admiration for China's hospitality, its deep-rooted traditions and artistic heritage, which continue to inspire his work.

For a long time, Bartkowiak has aspired to bring the story of the Nanjing Massacre to the big screen, adapting the novel *When the Purple Mountain Burns: A Story of the Rape of Nanking* by Shouhua Qi. His vision for the project took a turn in 2019, when he visited the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese

Invaders after receiving the script.

"I was so moved by the visit, it relived the script," Bartkowiak says, highlighting the emotional impact of seeing the historical evidence firsthand. Now, he is seeking coproduction partners and investment to bring the project to life.

He sees the film as an international production, with Chinese actors and potentially a codirector to ensure historical and cultural accuracy. While it will primarily be shot in China, the film will incorporate both English and Chinese dialogue, reflecting the multilingual nature of its characters and the global significance of the story.

"I'd love to produce an international film and collaborate with Chinese filmmakers," he says, citing his interest in strengthening cinematic ties between China and Hollywood.

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## Hot springs gain steam in icy northeastern China

SHENYANG — As the golden hue of dusk washed across the sky, Xu Xin wrapped up her day of skiing at a Changbai Mountain resort in Jilin province, and headed for a bath in an outdoor hot spring.

"The combination of chilly weather and a hot spring is an experience. I immersed my body in steamy water while watching snowflakes fall on a pristine white landscape. Eventually, my fatigue dissolved," says Xu, who is from Shandong province.

Recently, this fusion of "hot and cold" has been gaining popularity on the itineraries of winter tourists flocking to China's northeastern provinces, namely Jilin, Liaoning and Heilongjiang.

### Cultural tourism feast

In the mountainous village of Naitoushan in Jilin's Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture, visitors often unwind in hot springs after hiking snowy trails, or admiring ice sculptures or rime-covered branches, even as temperatures plunge below -20 C.

"Most of our visitors are from southern China, while international travelers primarily come from Malaysia, Singapore and the United States," says Yang Lina, an operator of the village's cultural tourism project. She says that about 31,000 visitors arrived during the eight-day Spring Festival holiday this year.

Dubbed China's "ice city", Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province, recently hosted the 2025 Asian Winter Games, spotlighting its appeal to global winter sports enthusiasts. The city is also home to the Harbin Ice-Snow World, the world's largest



Left: Tourists enjoy a hot spring experience in the ice and snow at the Qinghe Peninsula Hot Spring Resort Hotel in Shenyang, Liaoning province. YANG QING / XINHUA Right: People stroll along Central Street, a pedestrian area in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, during the Spring Festival holiday. Visitors are drawn to the city by its range of winter tourist attractions. WANG JIANWEI / XINHUA

theme park of its kind, known for its grand ice sculptures, slides and entertainment facilities.

"As Harbin has gone viral on social media and attracted tourists, there are also visitor spillovers to our hot springs," says Li Fang, assistant general manager of the Lianhuan Lake International Hot Spring Resort of Heilongjiang, located some 200 kilometers from downtown Harbin.

This winter, the resort introduced a new service: guests can soak in outdoor hot springs while dining on meat and vegetables boiled in sizzling hotpots, with tables and stools set in the pools.

"Our guests can enjoy the warm water and food. It is particularly comfortable after outdoor activities," says Li.

To enhance the experience, the resort also organizes a series of cul-

tural activities including dragon boat sleighing, snowball fights and horse riding.

Some international visitors also praised the integration of traditional Chinese medicine therapies with hot spring experiences.

"This is my first trip to China. We soaked in the hot springs and indulged in the mud baths. The experience is amazing and I feel the soreness in my shoulders and knees has been alleviated," says En Sun, a Russian visitor, who stayed with her family at the Tanggangzi Hot Spring Resort in the city of Anshan in Liaoning for two weeks.

Yang Xiaopeng, the resort's deputy manager, highlights the therapeutic benefits of mineral-rich mud baths, which contain elements including iron and manganese that boost metabolism and immunity.



The resort also produces soaps and facial masks with minerals extracted from its springs.

"By enhancing services and creating new products, we hope to provide our guests with hospitality and an unforgettable travel experience," says Yang.

Wang Xiaoyu, a specially invited expert from the World Tourism Cities Federation, says northeastern China should have confidence in its combination of ice-and-snow activities with hot springs. "Tourists can enjoy not only snow and play with ice, but also deeply experience local culture," he adds.

### Spurring economic vitality

Zhao Kaizeng, 75, spent this winter at Liaoning's Baodi hot springs town in the city of Fuxin, indulging in hot springs and regular physio-

therapy sessions at the town's health center. "The hot spring water here is beneficial to the body, and the medical facilities are great too," he says.

The town also provides free recreational activities to seniors, including calligraphy classes, reading and movie screenings. It had over 100,000 tourist visits last year.

"Along with the changing consumption appetite and lifestyle, more and more seniors seek to make new friends and experience the customs of different places through tourism. Liaoning has the advantage of abundant hot spring resorts to cater to these active 'silver-age' tourists," says Chen Yankui, secretary-general of the Liaoning Ice and Snow Hot Spring Tourism Association.

Liaoning boasts over 1,200 hot

spring tourism companies and nearly 200 hot spring projects with investments exceeding 50 million yuan (\$6.97 million) each. In recent years, the province has been encouraging TCM hospitals and businesses at hot spring resorts, to boost the silver economy, according to Chen.

For international travelers, China's hot springs stand out for their modern amenities and affordability.

"Compared to other hot spring destinations such as Japan's Hokkaido, the service in China is top-notch, while the cost is cheaper," says Kim Ji-yeon, a tourist from the Republic of Korea, who just concluded her trip to Yanbian.

Along with the booming winter tourism, northeastern China has seen satisfying data.

In January, Liaoning received a total of 68.93 million tourist visits, an increase of 25.31 percent year-on-year, generating 69.04 billion yuan in revenue, up 24.66 percent. Harbin Ice-Snow World, which lasted 68 days and officially closed its 26th edition on Feb 26 due to rising temperatures, reported a record-breaking 3.56 million tourist visits, a 31.4 percent swell year-on-year. Jilin's Changbai Mountain ranked among the top 10 winter destinations in China on a series of online travel platforms.

China aims to grow its winter economy into a 1.2 trillion yuan industry by 2027 and 1.5 trillion yuan by 2030, according to guidelines released by the State Council last year.

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