

Leap forward

Syrian govt to integrate Kurdish forces through landmark deal

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Sports for solidarity

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Touting Tesla



US President Donald Trump and Tesla CEO Elon Musk speak to the media as they sit in a Tesla vehicle at the South Portico of the White House on Tuesday in Washington DC. MANDEL NGAN / AFP See story, page 8

HONG KONG ARTISTES REVIVE MAGICAL PAST

Illusionists transform street scenes into enchanting shows

By OASIS HU
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John Chung Lai-ho wielded a pair of kitchen tongs in the air, and suddenly a fish ball appeared to materialize out of nowhere. He brandished the tongs once again, and the fish ball seemed to vanish into thin air.

The art of making objects appear and disappear is a classic magic trick, but the 24-year-old Hong Kong magician chose a curry fish ball — a beloved street food in his hometown — as the object for his sleight of hand.

In-depth

It was just one of the Hong Kong cultural elements that Chung integrated into his performance at the inaugural Greater Bay Area Golden Bauhinia Magic Championship, held in Hong Kong in January.

During his seven-minute show, the stage was designed to mirror a street view of the city, featuring neon signs against a backdrop. The act's soundtrack reverberated with spoken Cantonese, interspersed with the familiar ticking sound of Hong Kong's traffic lights.

Chung took center stage in front of a mobile food stall, which doubled as his magic table. Wearing an apron, he looked like a real curry fish ball vendor. Chung first made a bottle of condiments appear from a towel, then transformed the fish into a fish ball. He then multiplied a single fish egg into dozens of them. Using a series of magic effects, he replicated the process of making a curry fish ball.

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Rural soccer league going international

By CHEN MEILING and YANG JUN

The first "World Cup" of the Village Super League is expected to kick off in Guizhou province in 2028, welcoming grassroots soccer teams from around the world to enjoy the charm and joy of the sport, said Tang Yueqiang, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

The Village Super League, or Cun Chao, which has gained massive popularity since its debut in May 2023 in Rongjiang county of the Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture of Guizhou, has not only sparked a domestic frenzy, but also attracted widespread international attention.

"Unlike commercialized professional leagues, the Cun Chao 'World Cup' will be open to amateur teams across the world, aiming to foster a global platform for sports and cultural exchanges," said Tang, who is also director of the standing committee of the prefecture's people's congress.

As the "World Cup" will be a non-profit event organized by villagers, admission will be free, as it has been in the past two years for Cun Chao matches, according to Tang.

"The role of the government is to maintain safety and offer services," he said.

About 1,160 foreign soccer players from 28 teams have visited Rongjiang for friendly matches, representing more than 50 countries, including France, the United States, Brazil and Argentina, according to local authorities. Soccer stars such as Brazilian legend Kaka have also visited the county.

Cun Chao continues to expand its

... the Cun Chao 'World Cup' will be open to amateur teams across the world, aiming to foster a global platform for sports and cultural exchanges."

Tang Yueqiang, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress

international partnerships. For instance, its collaboration with the English Premier League through the grassroots coaches' training program has been successfully implemented, Tang said.

Future plans include deepening cooperation in event operations and youth training and holding a community soccer friendly match this year to further promote cultural exchanges between China and the United Kingdom, he said.

In February, Cun Chao signed a cooperation agreement with the Incheon Sports Council in South Korea. It is also establishing regular exchange mechanisms with soccer powerhouses such as Brazil and France.

"We don't need to know the languages of each other, as soccer itself is a language. We can communicate via movements and gestures," he said, adding that soccer can be used to increase friendship among people from different countries.

Other measures to globalize Cun Chao include agreements with overseas grassroots sports organizations, building more platforms such as the Belt and Road Cun Chao alliance, and organizing nonprofit soccer challenges with international soccer stars.

To maintain its uniqueness, Cun Chao will merge Chinese intangible cultural heritage and ethnic elements to allow participants to experience diverse Chinese rural culture, he said.

"Cun Chao comes from the people and is rooted in the people. Players' skills are certainly not on a par with professionals, as they can only practice at night or in their spare time," he said. "Nonetheless, what matters is not how well they play, but how much joy the game brings them."

In addition, the participation of international teams helps drive the local economy. "For example, villagers sell local snacks at Cun Chao events, and some of them can earn more than 10,000 yuan (\$1,380) per day," he said.

The events can also attract more tourists to other areas of the province and raise Guizhou's prestige in building a world-class tourism destination, he added.

In 2024, Rongjiang received about 9.46 million tourist visits, up 24.36 percent year-on-year. Tourism revenue reached about 10.8 billion yuan, up 28.64 percent year-on-year, data from local authorities showed.

With over 95 billion views online, Cun Chao has even been listed by the United Nations Development Programme as an example of global poverty reduction.

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NPC deputies build broad consensus

Legislators urged to advance building of a strong country and national rejuvenation

By CAO YIN and JIANG CHENGLONG

Taking a people-centered approach, national lawmakers were urged to implement whole-process people's democracy and to strive unremittingly to advance the building of a strong nation and the great rejuvenation of China.

Li Hongzhong, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress, called for uniting the wisdom and strength of the broad masses of the people, adhering to the principle of "everything for the people and everything relying on the people" and continuously meeting the people's aspirations for a better life, as the country's top legislative body wrapped up its annual session on Tuesday.

Entrusted by the presidium of the third session of the 14th NPC, Li presided over the closing meeting and made the remarks.

President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, and other leaders attended the meeting, which was held at the Great Hall of the People.

"We must unwaveringly follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, focusing intently on our own tasks, implementing strategic decisions step by step, and turning our work plans into reality," Li said, calling on NPC deputies to further promote Chinese modernization.

At the closing meeting, deputies voted to approve resolutions on the Government Work Report as well as the national economic and social development plan for 2025 and the central budget for 2025.

They also adopted resolutions on the work reports of the NPC Stand-

ing Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and a decision to amend the Law on Deputies to the National People's Congress and to the Local People's Congresses at Various Levels.

Zhao Zhao, an NPC deputy from Henan province, praised the amended law, saying that "the amendment was necessary and timely".

"The revised law standardizes our behavior and protects our rights as deputies. It will greatly help us fulfill our duties," said Zhao, an entrepreneur in Nanzhao county.

Li Dexiang, an NPC deputy from Guizhou province, regarded the amended law as his legal safeguard, noting that it provided clear guidelines on how to better serve the people.

He said that the streamlining of the process of handling deputies' suggestions in the revised law would improve the quality and efficiency of their work, enabling them to perform their duties more effectively.

By Saturday noon, the third session's secretariat had received 269 motions and more than 8,000 suggestions from NPC deputies.

The suggestions mainly focused on legislation in key, emerging and foreign-related sectors, while the suggestions primarily addressed boosting consumption and investment, driving the integrated development of technological and industrial innovation, and promoting high-quality growth through artificial intelligence.

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A foreign reporter takes a selfie with deputies to the 14th National People's Congress after the closing meeting of the third session of the 14th NPC outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

China rises in global soft power index

WORLD WATCH
By David Haigh

China is now the second-most influential country in the world in terms of soft power, second only to the United States, according to the 2025 Global Soft Power Index by Brand Finance.

In the past year, the Chinese nation as a brand has experienced notable growth across six of eight Soft Power pillars and in two-thirds of measured attributes. This growth highlights how improved perceptions across various economic, cultural and social metrics have driven China's soft power in the index rankings, while its "reputation" has also climbed to 27th place, up from 56th in 2021.

Brand Finance research highlights that business and trade attributes are key indicators of a nation's influence, reflecting economic strength, innovation, and integration into the worldwide market. China has held the top spot globally for "ease of doing business" since 2020, reflecting its sustained efforts to enhance its economic attractiveness and attract foreign investment.

In the 2025 Index, China ranks eighth for its "strong and stable economy", reflecting its growing economic influence. China has also ranked first for its "future

growth potential" since 2022.

Positive perceptions of China's economic growth potential can be attributed mainly to initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, which has played a pivotal role in creating new markets for Chinese companies and strengthening economic ties with participating countries, reflected in a 24-rank jump for its "good relations with other countries".

In terms of soft power, a nation's ability to engage in trade, attract investment, and contribute to global economic development is instrumental in shaping perceptions and

enhancing its standing on the world stage.

Further, China's strategic investments in brand building have significantly enhanced the recognition and influence of its brands globally.

In 2025, China ranks fifth globally for its "products and brands the world loves". Its rise in this attribute is largely due to the growing recognition and performance of Chinese brands domestically and globally.

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PAGE TWO

Below: A participant performs at the first Greater Bay Area Golden Bauhinia Magic Championship in Hong Kong in January.
Middle and right: John Chung Lai-ho uses a curry fish ball in his magic performance.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



MAGIC:

From page 1

As the performance neared the end, mock sirens blared through the venue, accompanied by a commanding voice shouting, "Stop, don't move!" Pretending to be scared, Chung rushed from the stage leaving his stall behind.

The audience clapped. They understood the story Chung told through his magic, even though they might not have heard of the Cantonese phrase *jau gwai*. The term refers to the sudden abandonment of stalls by illegal street vendors when law enforcement officers approach. For over a century, such scenes have been part of the city's street-hawker culture.

Chung took third place in the competition. However, what pleased him most was showcasing Hong Kong-themed magic to an audience, demonstrating the art form can not only entertain, but also promote culture.

"Magic has a marginalized position in the city," Chung said. "I want to change that situation."

Former golden age

Ernest Pui Chun-hin is the founder of the Hong Kong Schools Magic Association, a local nonprofit organization that has dedicated more than a decade to the study of magic.

The niche art form once experienced a golden era in the city, Pui said. Hong Kong's association with magic performances goes back more than 70 years, with its origins credited to Chu Wang-yu, the city's first magician.

Chu came from the Chinese mainland and relocated to Hong Kong. He became proficient in English, and read foreign magazines where he came across articles on magic that ignited his interest in the art of illusion. Subsequently, he immersed himself in books to master the craft.

In 1939, Chu established WY Chu Magic Studio, the first magic emporium in Hong Kong, specializing in magicians' apparatus.

Chu's props stood out for their ingenious mechanisms. Stylistically, he blended Eastern and Western aesthetics and embellished large props with intricate Eastern motifs such as dragons and phoenixes. His creations swiftly captivated magic lovers around the world.

"That marked the onset of a golden period," Pui said.

"Many magic enthusiasts from Australia, Britain, the United States, India, and beyond, flocked to Hong Kong to buy Chu's props. As Chu sold props exclusively to his students, he converted many customers into his students."

Due to Chu's influence, Hong Kong fostered a community of magic enthusiasts. By 1956, these aficionados organized the city's first industry association, the Guild of Oriental Magicians, with Chu as president.

Many renowned lawyers, high-ranking officials, and businessmen were guild members. Alexander Grantham, the then-

governor of Hong Kong, was the guild's honorary adviser.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Hong Kong witnessed a period of economic prosperity and cultural advancement, and the art of magic also gained in popularity.

A wave of local magicians emerged, and many overseas artists came to the city to perform.

In 1989, a cohort of magicians established the Magicians' Association of Hong Kong, the city's first such organization to receive international recognition.

Television also helped popularize magic shows in the city.

In 2011, Television Broadcasts Limited launched the city's first magic-themed reality show, *The Magic Ring*, and two years later, the broadcaster aired another magic show, *Street Sorcerers*. These programs uncovered many talented local magicians, and helped generate greater interest in the art form.

Disappearing acts

In recent years, however, the development of magic in Hong Kong has stagnated, said Albert Tam Wing-chuen, honorary president of the Magicians' Association of Hong Kong.

Tam began performing magic in the 1980s, and has seen firsthand its trajectory over four decades.

In the 1980s, nightclubs were popular and featured magic shows almost every night, and in the 1990s magicians were often invited to entertain at banquets and pubs. In the 21st century, magicians were popular performers at shopping malls, corporate events, private parties, and other events.

However, today magicians struggle to book shows. Due to the social unrest in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic, the city's economic situation has also deteriorated, posing economic challenges for the entire entertainment industry. Magic, a niche art form, has been particularly hard hit.

As a ripple effect of the economic downturn, some shopping malls and companies have stopped organizing banquets, while organizers of these events now prioritize music performances over magic shows.

"Twenty years ago, I was able to conduct five shows a night around Christmas, however, in recent years I haven't received a single invitation," Tam said.

Mainstream art forms like film and music have been given government support to survive the economic downturn,

but magicians have not received similar backing, Tam said.

The Hong Kong Arts Development Council, responsible for fostering arts in the special administrative region, focuses on 10 art forms but excludes magic.

Similarly, the HKADC's Project Grant system omits magic. The Project Grant's mission statement points out that the HKADC will not accept applications for magic, martial arts, gymnastics, cooking or gardening projects.

"I believe Hong Kong has underval-

ued niche art forms for many years. However, many regions nearby have recognized their worth and actively make use of their value, he said.

On the mainland, magic and acrobatics are closely related and both are overseen by the China Acrobats Association. The association coordinates magic competitions, performances, forums, and other activities. One university — Beijing Polytechnic — has introduced a program focused on magic design and performance, the first university in the world to offer such a program.

More than a decade ago, South Korea integrated cultural industries, including magic, into its core development sectors. Today, South Korea boasts numerous companies associated with the magic industry and has trained many magicians who have won international competitions.

Master's apprentice

Hong Kong's magicians and magic enthusiasts have dedicated their own finances, resources, and time to foster the growth of the art form in the city.

The Magicians' Association of Hong Kong boasts more than 200 members and has orchestrated numerous events, including the first Greater Bay Area Golden Bauhinia Magic Competition. Pui's Hong Kong Schools Magic Association has also organized 10 magic competitions over the past decade.

Bond Lee, president of the Hong Kong Magic School, which was established about 13 years ago, believes that nurturing talent is crucial to the development of the industry.

John Chung Lai-ho was one of Lee's students.

Chung discovered his love for magic in primary school while playing with magic props brought by his classmates.

After discovering a nearby magic shop, he asked his parents to buy him some magic props. His parents did so after he fulfilled a commitment to do well in his school studies.

Realizing the child's dedication to pre-teritidation, his family enrolled him in a magic course at a community center.

"Throughout my childhood, I delved into myriad activities like playing the piano, boxing and other activities, but none could hold my interest for more than three months — only magic maintained a constant allure for me," Chung said.

After two years of studying magic,

Chung won his first magic competition. The first prize was a chance to take one of Bond Lee's master classes, and Chung eventually became Lee's apprentice.

Under Lee's mentorship for a decade, Chung learned tricks, honed his craft, did performances, and entered competitions to test his skills. In his junior year at Hong Kong Baptist University, he made a bold decision — to forgo his studies and commit to a career as a full-time magician.

"I didn't want to waste any more time. The call to immerse myself in magic was undeniable at that time," Chung said.

However, shortly after making his career decision, COVID-19 swept through Hong Kong, halting all performances.

Eventually, in search of fresh opportunities, Chung went to the mainland. Through a series of trials, he teamed up with like-minded friends and opened a comedy and magic theater in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

Greater opportunities

Chung found that being a magician on the mainland was more economically feasible than in Hong Kong. Rents were lower, and the government was willing to support magic events, unlike in Hong Kong.

To elevate the profile of Hong Kong magic, Chung has embarked on a mission to infuse his performances with the city's culture.

He spent a year and a half developing the fish-ball seller performance for the Greater Bay Area Golden Bauhinia Magic Competition. Chung said the idea for the performance came from his father, who was a fish-ball vendor for a year.

In his quest for authenticity, Chung sought out a fish-ball vendor in Mongkok and offered him HK\$2,000 (\$257) for the opportunity to follow him and sell fish balls for a week.

"The job is boring, but it provided me with invaluable insights into the entire fish ball-making process and the interactions between the vendor and passersby," Chung said.

"The vendor utilized a range of tactics to draw in customers, such as enhancing the aroma and generating smoke to waft the fragrance over a distance — I incorporated all these details into my performances."

After Chung performed his show at a magic competition in Thailand, the president of a renowned international magic association praised it as "very special." This gave Chung the confidence to believe that his magic act could be understood by people around the world.

Before he turns 30, Chung hopes to represent Hong Kong at the FISM World Championships, present his performance on the global stage, and win an international magic competition.

Chung said he wants to demonstrate that magic shows emanating from Hong Kong can be a powerful way to disseminate the city's culture as well as glimpses of its cultural heritage.

Performers add allure to city's culture, traditions

“Magic has a marginalized position in the city. I want to change that situation.”

John Chung Lai-ho, magician



Winners pose for a photo at the first Greater Bay Area Golden Bauhinia Magic Championship. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Albert Tam Wing-chuen, honorary president of the Magicians' Association of Hong Kong, performs magic. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



TWO SESSIONS

Policy moves renew 'sense of confidence'

Focus on expanding fiscal spending, boosting domestic consumption hailed

By ZHENG WANYIN in London
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China's new policy push outlined in the 2025 Government Work Report for boosting domestic consumption, expanding fiscal spending and advancing opening-up has highlighted its economic prospects and more opportunities for foreign businesses, according to foreign experts.

Jelena Grubor Stefanovic, director of the representative office of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China, said the report, delivered by Premier Li Qiang on March 5 at the opening of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, offered a "candid assessment" of where the country currently stands, and sent an "encouraging" sign for China-based foreign businesses.

"The focus on expanding fiscal spending and boosting domestic consumption is a clear sign that China is committed to stabilizing the economy and fostering sustainable growth," she said. "This provides a positive environment for foreign businesses indeed, as it could translate into more opportunities in sectors directly benefiting from increased government spending, such as consumer goods, technology, green energy and infrastructure."

According to the report, China has set its deficit-to-GDP ratio at around 4 percent for 2025, an increase of one percentage point from last year, and a total of 1.3 trillion yuan (\$179 billion) of ultra-long-term special treasury bonds will be issued, 300 billion yuan more than last year.

Stefanovic added that the premier's remarks on China's pledge to further open up reassured foreign investors.

Despite global uncertainties, China's focus on expanding foreign investment and creating new development opportunities signals that it is "determined to maintain its role as a key player in the global economy and global supply chains. This commitment is reassuring for foreign businesses, especially those looking for a stable and transparent environment in which to scale and innovate," she said.

Stefanovic said she has noted a "renewed sense of confidence" on the ground with the fresh policy rollout, while foreign businesses are also closely monitoring the situation and expecting effective policy implementation, particularly in terms of regulatory clarity and



This commitment is reassuring for foreign businesses, especially those looking for a stable and transparent environment in which to scale and innovate."

Jelena Grubor Stefanovic, director of the representative office of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China

market access, and whether fiscal spending can effectively stimulate consumption demand.

Jostein Hauge, assistant professor at the University of Cambridge's Centre of Development Studies, said that while prioritizing domestic consumption — an area that still accounts for a relatively low share of China's GDP — is seen as a reasonable move to further drive the country's economy, the shift does not necessarily mean that past growth, led by investment and exports, is problematic, nor does China's manufacturing capability constitute a so-called "overcapacity."

"Embarking on a path of creating trade surpluses is a strategy that one should want to embark on, especially from the perspective of national economic development," he said. "In that sense, China has simply done what you want all developing countries to do."

"At some point, you'd expect China to start consuming more. Of course, given some of the domestic challenges, sectors would all benefit from stronger consumption" and the measures that aim to try to strengthen the domestic economy, Hauge said. "What does it really mean to have 'overcapacity'? Does it simply mean producing more than you domestically consume? This is what we call export-led development or what we used to call export-led development in a lot of sectors."

Hauge also noted that the rhetoric about "overcapacity" was somewhat hyped up only when China began exporting competitive advanced manufacturing products, such as those in the "new three" sectors of photovoltaics, lithium batteries and electric vehicles.

Session concludes



Deputies leave the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday after the closing meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Chongqing evolving as world travel hub

By TAN YINGZI in Chongqing
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Boasting a futuristic skyline, a vibrant nightlife and a distinctive culinary scene, Chongqing is establishing itself as an international tourism hub and accelerating its transformation into a world-renowned culture-related tourism destination, according to Vice-Mayor Dan Yanzheng.

"Culture-related tourism has played a crucial role in attracting visitors and business opportunities to Chongqing," said Dan, who is also a member of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

"In 2024, China eased its visa policies to enhance openness and foster people-to-people exchanges, allowing more foreign tourists and business travelers to enter the country visa-free."

Dan credits these policies for a surge in Chongqing's inbound tourism market, which experienced remarkable growth last year. The city welcomed 1.27 million inbound tourist visits, a year-on-year increase of 183.6 percent, and ranked among the top Chinese travel destinations on TikTok.

"Most travelers come from Southeast Asian countries," he noted.

Last year, Chongqing's cultural industry generated added value of 145.27 billion yuan (\$20 billion), marking a 5.6 percent increase from the previous year. The tourism sector contributed added value of 140.13 billion yuan, reflecting 7.4 percent year-on-year growth.

As a gateway to China's vast inland regions and a major manu-



Dan Yanzheng

facturing hub, Chongqing was designated as the country's fourth municipality in 1997, following Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin. Covering an area comparable to

Austria and five times the size of Beijing, the city is home to more than 32 million people.

With its advanced transportation systems, striking architecture and unique urban landscape, Chongqing has rapidly evolved into a modern cosmopolitan center. The city seamlessly integrates a futuristic skyline with 3,000 years of preserved history, offering something for every type of traveler.

"In recent years, the local government has prioritized culture-related tourism development, aiming to position Chongqing as a world-class destination and a national leader in high-quality tourism growth," Dan said.

These efforts include strengthening collaboration with neighboring Sichuan province to develop the Bashu Cultural Tourism Corridor, introducing signature tourism products showcasing the city's mountain and river landscapes — the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River and the Wuling Mountain region — and fostering innovative tourism brands such as the large-scale musical *Chongqing 1949* and the local food promotion campaign "360 Bowls of Chongqing Flavor."

"Through a series of strategic marketing campaigns and refined tourism management measures, Chongqing has built a strong reputation as a travel hot spot. Many media outlets have recognized it as

'China's Most Hospitable City,'" Dan said.

During recent peak travel seasons, local authorities temporarily converted a major bridge over the Jialing River into a pedestrian-only walkway to enhance the visitor experience, allowing tourists to better enjoy the scenic river views. In addition, Chongqing residents received text alerts from authorities advising them to avoid popular tourist attractions to alleviate congestion and accommodate travelers.

To attract more international visitors, Chongqing is rolling out an inbound tourism promotion plan to enhance travel accessibility and service quality.

The initiative includes expanding direct international flight connections to major cities in Europe and the Americas, ensuring one-day travel accessibility, and upgrading language services and payment systems.

"We extend a warm invitation to the world and aspire to make Chongqing a premier destination for global travelers exploring China," Dan said.

This year, Chongqing is also vying to become the headquarters of the Lancang-Mekong Tourist Cities Cooperation Alliance to further elevate its international influence.

The Greater Mekong Subregion holds strategic geographical significance, lying at the crossroads of Southeast Asia, South Asia and China's southwestern region. Rich in water, biological and mineral resources, the region boasts vast economic potential and promising development prospects.

"As a city of mountains and rivers, Chongqing is poised to take its place at the heart of the global tourism map," the vice-mayor said.

Brand: Ranking reflects shift to global leadership

From page 1

Over the past 17 years, the number of Chinese brands in the Brand Finance Global 500 has surged from 13 to 68, and their total brand value has increased by more than 23-fold to \$1.4 trillion.

This jump in brand value reflects a shift from domestic dominance to global brand leadership, exemplified by the worldwide impact of Chinese brands such as TikTok. With over 1 billion monthly users, TikTok has transformed the global media landscape. Its global influence has likely contributed to China's improved performance in the media and communication pillar, climbing 20 ranks for being perceived as "easy to communicate with", and 13 ranks for having "trustworthy media".

Chinese brands are also at the forefront of global innovation. China has maintained its position as second in the world for being "advanced in technology and innovation" over the past three years.

This progress is powered by the rise of tech giants such as Huawei, a leader in global telecommunications, and new-energy vehicle maker BYD, which is driving the rapid global shift toward electric vehicles.

Another example is the State Grid Corporation of China, which has emerged as a global leader through its pivotal role in the BRI. SGCC has strengthened China's overseas energy programs and bolstered its brand as a leader in energy innovation and sustainable development by developing and operating critical energy infrastructure projects across participating countries.

China has also made advancements in the people and values pillar; recording rank increases across several attributes. For example, China has risen 27 ranks for being perceived as "generous", 25 ranks for being "friendly", 15 ranks for being "fun", and 12 ranks for being "trustworthy", highlighting China's growing influence in this domain.

China has also risen six ranks for being considered a "great place to visit" and seven ranks for its "appealing lifestyle". These gains have helped China rise to seventh place in the culture and heritage pillar. They are closely aligned with the nation's broader soft power initiatives to present its cultural attractiveness and influence, and best present China's national brand to the world media. Such initiatives are expected to further enhance China's soft power in the coming years.

The author is chairman of Brand Finance, a London-based brand valuation consultancy. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Culture, tourism industries to accelerate modernization

By CHENG SI
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China's burgeoning culture and tourism industries enjoy a very promising future, which can greatly boost domestic consumption and promote the nation's high-quality development, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Minister of Culture and Tourism Sun Yeli said that based on the market's encouraging and robust growth last year, he is confident of the steady development of China's culture and tourism industries.

"In 2024, cultural companies with an annual turnover of over 20 million yuan (\$2.8 million) saw a total revenue of 14 trillion yuan, up 6 percent year-on-year," Sun said in an interview after the conclusion of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing.

"While domestic tourism consumption reached about 5.7 trillion yuan last year, up 17 percent year-on-year, the inbound tourism market also performed well, with about 132 million visits contributing nearly \$100 billion in revenue," Sun added.

Globally, the culture and tour-

ism industries play a significant role in a nation's modernization, he noted.

"In some developed countries, the culture and tourism industries make up a high proportion of their GDP — usually 20 percent or above. The added value of each of China's culture and tourism industries makes up about 5 percent of its GDP, so we have a good foundation and ample room for development," he said.

Sun added that it is important to turn culture and tourism into China's pillar industries, as they can attract different groups of consumers, thus expanding domestic consumption.

The minister emphasized the need to include culture and tourism in the State-level socioeconomic development plan and support the two industries' development with stronger and precise policies.

"Improving infrastructure matters, and that requires huge financial investment and fiscal support," he said, adding that related authorities should have a more inclusive outlook when it comes to emerging tourism trends such as low-altitude



Sun Yeli, minister of culture and tourism, attends an interview after the closing meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday.

KUANG LINHUA / CHINA DAILY

sightseeing and ocean tourism.

Relevant authorities should also encourage culture and tourism companies to use state-of-the-art technologies to diversify their products and services, in order to speed up the development of the two industries.

Sun highlighted some challenges, such as "forced shopping", which he said have harmed tourist experience, infringed on consumer rights

and undermined the local business environment.

"We will take stringent measures this year to crack down on such cases and improve laws and regulations to streamline market management. We will also promote ethics and the culture of integrity to prevent vicious competition," he added.

The nation's modernization process and improved livelihood

opportunities have altered consumption needs, with the people's focus shifting to products and services with high cultural, aesthetic and emotional value, according to the minister.

Turning the culture and tourism industries into the nation's pillar industries will help better meet the people's pursuit for better lives, which will further propel the nation's modernization, he said.

Soccer: New paradigm takes shape

From page 1

Cui Haiyang, vice-president of Guizhou Minzu University and a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the nation's top political advisory body, said globalization of Cun Chao challenges the international community's stereotypes about Chinese villages.

"Through the integration of soccer and intangible cultural heritage, it demonstrates the cultural confidence and governance wisdom of Chinese villages," he said. "Cun Chao also pioneers a new paradigm for people-to-people diplomacy. Its success also addresses the 'urbanization siphon effect', providing an example for developing countries in rural vitalization."

Cui added that "through true stories, vibrant life and co-created wisdom, Cun Chao showcases the charm and vitality of rural China to the world".

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TWO SESSIONS

Cultural resources propel growth in Tianjin

By YAN DONGJIE and ZHAO RUINAN in Beijing and YANG CHENG in Tianjin

Rich historical and cultural resources serve as a cornerstone for urban development, and leveraging these advantages can create unique economic growth points to propel the construction of modern metropolises, deputies to the 14th National People's Congress said on the sidelines of the just concluded third session of the 14th NPC.

"Historic resources, including industrial relics and cultural landmarks, have been preserved and repurposed in Tianjin. Projects along the Haihe River, Nanjing Road and Beijing Street have transformed the city into a living cultural landscape," said Chen Fukuan, deputy secretary of the Tianjin Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Chen made the remarks during a panel discussion by the Tianjin delegation in Beijing on Thursday, adding that Tianjin has made significant progress in cultural development, with strengthened efforts to build a culturally vibrant city.

Other efforts include upgrading public cultural services, launching high-quality events such as the Tianjin Music Festival, Drama Festival and Cross-Talk Spring Festival Gala, and promoting local artistic creations to meet diverse public demands, Chen said.

"By blending culture, tourism and commerce, Tianjin saw a 10.9 percent increase in domestic tourist visits and a 19.2 percent rise in per capita tourism spending last year," Chen added.

Drawing parallels to Ruijin's innovative approaches in Jiangxi province, where "the cradle of the Republic of China" has pioneered the integration of technology and cultural preservation, Tianjin's efforts reflect a nationwide trend of blending heritage with modernity.

In Ruijin, more than 120 revolutionary sites have been revitalized through digitization, including augmented reality-guided tours, a 540-degree immersive 3D experience center and virtual reality interactive projects such as the VR Tour of Ruijin.

Ruijin has leveraged cultural narratives to boost tourism and rural vitalization, said Yin Zhong, secretary of the Ruijin Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Last year, Red tourism — tours to China's revolutionary sites — generated 124 billion yuan (\$17.1 billion) in revenue, attracting 24.74 million visitors, a 10.1 percent year-on-year increase.

NPC deputy Meng Guanglu, a renowned Peking Opera performer and vice-chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Chinese Theatre Association, emphasized the role of culture as "the soul of the Chinese people".

Reflecting on his 25 appearances at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, Meng stressed the importance of "preserving tradition while innovating" in art forms such as Peking Opera.

"We must align with the demands of the times and the preferences of younger generations to create works that resonate socially and visually," he said.

His remarks align with this year's Government Work Report, which prioritized "systematic cultural heritage protection" and enhancing the preservation and utilization of intangible cultural relics.

As Tianjin continues to blend its rich history with modern dynamism, it aims to craft a globally recognizable cultural identity while driving sustainable urban growth.

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In attendance



Lawmakers attend the closing meeting of the third session of the 14th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Dalian fosters vocational training development

Deputy urges cultivating skilled workers through industry-education cooperation

By ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning
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China is working to better integrate vocational and general education as part of a broader effort to cultivate more high-quality technical and skilled workers, with provinces deepening industry-education cooperation in recent years.

"Developing vocational education and cultivating technically skilled workers that match society's production needs is a practical task," said Wang Qiyao, a deputy to the National People's Congress and head of the Standing Committee of the Dalian Municipal People's Congress in Liaoning province.

Wang called for accelerating the integration of vocational and general education, improving the vocational education talent training system and providing students with more diverse pathways for growth and development.

"We need to enhance the top-level



Wang Qiyao

design of this integration, summarize practical experiences nationwide, enrich implementation plans and policies, and formulate specific measures at the local level to effectively promote the integration," Wang said.

He also emphasized the need to explore practical approaches, including fostering collaboration between regular high schools, vocational schools and enterprises, through curriculum cooperation and resource sharing.

Dalian has placed modern vocational education at the forefront of its development agenda, establishing a sound policy system, optimizing vocational education classification and advancing industry-education integration. The northeastern port city has launched eight vocational education groups in sectors such as equipment manufacturing, electronic information, mod-

ern services and smart healthcare to better serve industrial development.

"We should break the development ceiling for vocational school students by supporting vocational colleges in piloting undergraduate vocational education majors or upgrading to vocational undergraduate institutions," Wang said. "We should encourage undergraduate institutions to take on more vocational education responsibilities and vigorously develop graduate-level vocational education."

Dalian is working to integrate vocational and general education resources, linking vocational and technical colleges with open universities. The city has established one national-level demonstration higher vocational college, 10 national-level demonstration secondary vocational schools and 43 national-level vocational education training bases, with two more higher vocational colleges in the pipeline.

To align vocational majors with industry needs, the local government has launched measures to promote school-enterprise cooperation, creating 63 regional industry-education integration practice centers across the city. Six of these have been recognized as national model cases, and Jinpu New Area has been designated as one of China's first national-level city industry-education alliances — the only one in Liaoning province.

Wang urged continued improvements to the management system for industry-education integration, the formulation of national plans for top-tier secondary vocational schools and majors, and better utilization of industry associations to enhance vocational education.

"We should empower new quality productive forces through high-quality vocational education, implement digital transformation in curriculum teaching and comprehensively integrate digital technology into vocational education," he said.



Students learn battery pack repair during a new energy vehicle operations and maintenance course at a vocational school in Yichun, Jiangxi province, on Feb 17. ZHU HAIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Haikou aims to become high-profile international performing arts hub

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
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Haikou, capital of Hainan province, is positioning itself as an international hub for performing arts in efforts to link the world to China's cultural landscape and promote the Hainan Free Trade Port, according to Mayor Ding Hui, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress.

In an interview with China Daily during the annual two sessions, Ding outlined the city's vision to establish itself as a premier destination for high-profile entertainment events and related industries that meet global standards, celebrate Chinese culture and showcase Hainan's distinct character. The initiative aims to make Haikou a sought-after destination for art enthusiasts and tourists alike.

Haikou's effort to integrate per-



Ding Hui

forming arts with tourism was recognized as one of the nation's top 10 innovative urban cultural and tourism branding efforts last year.

Ding noted that in recent years, Haikou has seen a unique trend, with youthful, stylish crowds filling the city's streets, tourist attractions and duty-free shops whenever a major concert is announced.

"Many performances in Haikou, whether it's their debut in China or exclusive shows, often draw about 95 percent of attendees from outside the island, including some from overseas," he said.

Last year, more than 40,000 people attended the international tour listening party for the *Vultures 2* album by United States rapper Ye,

formerly known as Kanye West. During the event, Ye declared, "I love you, Haikou!"

"This heartfelt declaration not only reflected the enthusiasm of his fans, but also served as a tribute to Haikou, a city known for its hospitality and inclusiveness," Ding said.

To ensure the success of each entertainment event, Haikou mobilizes citywide resources, focusing on infrastructure improvements and service guarantees. The city integrates high-quality tourism, culture, sports and exhibition resources while employing marketing strategies to encourage joint development across concert ticketing, tourist attractions, hotels and duty-free shopping.

"Haikou not only aims to help various industries benefit from the economic impact of concerts, but also strives to provide a more diverse and convenient consumer experience for

Heilongjiang vows to ramp up hi-tech farming

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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Heilongjiang province, China's largest agricultural producer, will continue leveraging technology to enhance high-quality agricultural development, provincial deputies to the National People's Congress.

During a group discussion in Beijing on Friday, Heilongjiang Governor Liang Huiling highlighted the province's unique advantages — noting its location in one of the world's three major black soil belts — which makes it a prime area for corn cultivation and livestock farming.

Last year, Heilongjiang's total grain output hit a record 80 billion kilograms, ranking first in China for the 15th consecutive year and accounting for 11.3 percent of the country's total output.

"One out of every nine bowls of rice nationwide comes from Heilongjiang," Liang said.

The province is prioritizing modern agriculture to transform its resource advantages into industrial, economic and developmental benefits, she said.

Technological innovation is central to Heilongjiang's agricultural strategy, Liang said. The province has 78 higher education institutions and 120 independent research institutes, including four national key laboratories focused on agriculture.

"We will tackle core technologies and accelerate the application of research outcomes," she said, adding that agricultural technology contributes 70.8 percent to the province's farming sector.

She also stressed the importance of preserving black soil, calling it the "panda of arable land" due to its high nutrient content. Most of China's black soil is found in the northeast, making the region crucial for national food security.

Last year, Heilongjiang developed 693,333 hectares of high-standard farmland, integrating soil improvement with windbreak forest networks. The province has nearly 1.33

80 billion kilograms total grain output of Heilongjiang province last year

million hectares of such farmland, the most in China. This year, it aims to build nearly 780,000 hectares.

Heilongjiang is home to Beidahuang Group, the world's largest State-owned farm group, known for its extensive arable land, high modernization and strong production capacity.

Yu Jia'ao, Party secretary of Beidahuang's Baoquanling branch, said the group is accelerating informatization, digitalization, intelligence and unmanned farming.

"We have collaborated with the Harbin Institute of Technology and Northeast Agricultural University to establish a national key laboratory for smart agricultural technology and information," she said.

Currently, 40 percent of Beidahuang's agricultural machinery is equipped with automatic driving technology, and more than 90 percent of its farms collect field data through sensors, shifting from weather-dependent farming to data-driven operations.

Yu urged the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to support soybean research in Heilongjiang, including the construction of a soybean seed base and coordination with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences to accelerate the development of a soybean research center.

Agriculture Minister Han Jun, who attended the discussion, responded that the ministry had approved the soybean seed base project and was working with relevant departments to commence construction.

He added that a soybean research center in Heihe city had been included in the ministry's project list, with an engineering consulting firm handling preliminary design and budget reviews.

What NPC deputies say



Zhao Zhao, founder of an agriculture and animal husbandry company in Nanyang, Henan province

In recent years, my experience with rural development has demonstrated that young people are greatly needed in rural areas and the agriculture sector. Young people are provided with vast opportunities in this field. My most fundamental duty as a national legislator is to help make rural areas beautiful homes, agriculture a promising industry and farming an attractive profession.



Fan Jiuping, Party chief of Qiaozhen village in Yan'an, Shaanxi province

I have been engaged in mediation for 23 years, resolving over 2,000 conflicts and disputes. Through my experience, I have found that confidence, impartiality, patience, attentiveness and staying true to the original aspiration are key to effective conflict resolution. I am committed to integrating mediation into grassroots social governance practices to ensure that disputes are addressed at the earliest stage. My greatest wish is for every household to live in harmony.



Li Donglin, chairman of the CRRC Zhuzhou Institute

Leveraging our technological expertise in rail transit, we have fostered the rapid incubation of emerging strategic industries such as new energy equipment and new energy vehicles, creating a development pattern where the dual clusters of transportation and energy equipment support each other.



Zoya Bahit, curator at the Altay Museum in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region

Preserving and making good use of precious cultural relics is essential to safeguarding the enduring spirit of the Chinese nation. Ensuring that cultural relics are "passed down" and "brought to life" is a key responsibility for cultural heritage professionals in the new era.

CHINA DAILY



TWO SESSIONS

Wang Shuxin

Reshape AI education to boost development

This year's Government Work Report has proposed the continued advancement of the "AI plus" initiative, so as to better integrate digital technology with manufacturing and market advantages. The rapid development of artificial intelligence technology is reshaping the global competitive landscape.

In the era of AI, traditional disciplinary boundaries are rapidly dissolving, making multi- and inter-disciplinary talent cultivation crucial. For example, Massachusetts Institute of Technology's "new engineering education transformation" program and Stanford University's "human-centered AI" initiative focus on restructuring talent development frameworks. China, too, is advancing comprehensive higher education reforms in line with the "AI plus" strategy across various industries to build a uniquely Chinese AI academic system.

Chongqing University has, in recent years, deepened new engineering education reforms, lifting the barriers between disciplines to integrate AI into traditional engineering fields such as mechanical, electrical, civil, materials and energy engineering. It has introduced courses such as "Fundamentals of AI" to strengthen students' mathematical foundation, and incorporated machine-learning

into specialized subjects.

Although China has made significant progress in AI applications, there are still gaps in core areas such as fundamental algorithms and high-end chips. Overcoming these challenges requires activating endogenous innovation through systemic reforms. Hence, a "scenario-driven basic research support mechanism" should be established, turning common challenges facing smart city development, intelligent manufacturing, and smart healthcare into fundamental research problems in order to form a dual-cycle system of "demand-driven research" and "theory-driven application".

To achieve this, universities should collaborate with leading enterprises to conduct organized scientific research to clear "bottlenecks" hindering the development of technologies such as AI chips and autonomous driving algorithms. The model of deep industry-academia-research collaboration will ensure universities, as key drivers of fundamental research, uphold academic integrity and respect research principles.

For example, DeepSeek fosters an open-source ecosystem where global developers collaborate, accelerating technological iterations and lowering R&D barriers. The Chongqing University has introduced a fun-

ly integrated DeepSeek system, focusing on six key management objectives: scale, development, efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and risk control.

The Chongqing University is collaborating with companies such as Changan Auto and Seres to develop smart cockpits and "vehicle-road-cloud" coordination platforms. By thoroughly analyzing manufacturing mechanisms and integrating production data with physical models, the university is providing intelligent solutions that combine generality with industry specificity, accelerating the development and digital transformation of the new energy vehicle industry.

More strategically, the university is spearheading the Jialing River Laboratory, which focuses on "Digital Intelligence plus Equipment" and serves as a high-level research platform for concept verification and R&D testing. By integrating innovation chains, industrial chains, financial chains and talent chains, the lab aims to clear cross-disciplinary innovation bottlenecks, reduce the R&D cycle, and enhance testing capabilities. This holistic approach connects the entire research ecosystem.

To drive the real economy forward, universities should act both as accelerators of industrial upgrading and anchors for fun-

damental research, helping industries climb the global value chain. But the ecosystem development faces challenges, with the biggest being overcoming technological monopolies and industry barriers.

Take NVIDIA's CUDA ecosystem for example. Its strength lies not only in hardware performance but also in the maturity of its software tool chain. To break such barriers, China should accelerate the development of self-sufficient software tool chains and critical datasets in specialized applications, creating a full-stack AI ecosystem encompassing foundational hardware, core algorithms and application data.

Furthermore, Chinese universities should participate in global AI governance with a more inclusive mindset, integrating Eastern wisdom into the development of AI ethics and standards, and contributing Chinese solutions to address global problems. By fostering a diverse and inclusive regulatory framework, China can play a pivotal role in shaping AI's impact on societies.

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

Yuan Liang

Subsidence areas can be turned into farmlands

Since food security plays an important role in China's social stability and development, the government has implemented a strict arable land protection policy, which includes improving land quality, balancing the use and replenishment of arable land, securing grain production, and enforcing accountability for arable land protection.

Transforming land that has subsided due to mining into water-surface farmland will contribute to not only food production but also environmental protection. Mining produces minerals and creates employment and wealth, but it also generates pollution and causes land subsidence.

In China, coal reserves and arable land largely overlap. Land subsidence in coal mining areas is usually deep and wide, and it usually takes a long time for such land to stop sinking and become stable.

By the end of 2024, coal mining-affected subsidence areas in China covered about 2 million hectares primarily in Anhui, Henan, Shandong, Hebei and Jiangsu provinces, with one-third of such areas perennially or seasonally waterlogged. In Huainan, Anhui province, for example, about 455,800 mu (30,387 hectares) suffer from land subsidence, with water accumulation affecting about 200,000 mu. It is estimated that subsidence area in Huainan will increase by about 10,000 mu a year, with an additional 4,000 mu of water accumulation each year.

Since it is very difficult to reclaim subsided farmlands and the management of coal mining-induced land subsidence is not effective, subsided areas face serious ecological and social problems that hinder local development, especially in mining areas where the underground water table is high.

So, apart from reclamation of arable land, local authorities should also consider balancing coal mining and arable land protection by managing the subsidence areas based on local conditions and using innovative methods. For instance, people in such areas could be encouraged to develop more "floating farms", plant crops such as rice in different patterns on land where the water surface is between 1.5 meters to 3 meters deep.

According to the third national land resource survey in 2021, the category of land is decided by the use of land based on its surface. The cultivation of rice on subsidence land can be considered as a way of restoring agricultural attributes and production functions. Such "land reclamations" can be introduced as a part of assessing local government's achievements in arable land protection and food security.

In subsided areas with water less than 1.5-m deep, people can cultivate aquatic cash crops, such as lotus roots and seeds, water caltrop, cane shoots and gorgon fruits, with the help of modern technology.

Besides, based on production capacity and national land use planning, the government could adopt dynamic standards to designate such areas as paddy fields. Although aquatic cash crops are already being grown on cultivable land by flooding them, such farmlands should continue to be classified as arable land in this year's land use survey.

Also, local governments can promote the comprehensive recyclable utilization of subsidence areas, develop fishery and set up solar photovoltaic panels on them, as well as integrate rice cultivation and fishery in shallow-water areas and explore ways to restore non-waterlogged areas. And solid waste produced by the coal mining industry can be deep-processed and made into floating boards for rice planting in waterlogged areas, while setting up solar power generation facilities on water surfaces can power agricultural machinery.

The comprehensive utilization of subsided areas will foster the coordinated development of zero-carbon primary and secondary industries, allowing local governments to establish incentive mechanisms for the comprehensive development of such areas. The comprehensive utilization model, however, needs collaborative innovation and industrial cooperation, which in turn requires multi-departmental coordination, and collaboration between industry, academia and research institutions.

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Gao Song

Science, industrial innovation integration the new focus

Scientific revolutions spur industrial revolutions, which in turn drive economic progress. Enhancing innovation capabilities, fostering new quality productive forces, and promoting high-quality development have become the shared priorities for governments, universities, research institutions and businesses alike.

Universities, as engines of science and technological innovation and a major source of talents, play a crucial role in shaping industrial ecosystems and driving economic growth, and their deep interactions with local economies create a mutually beneficial cycle of progress. For example, Stanford University played a key role in the rise of Silicon Valley.

Similarly, the University of Science and Technology of China has been fueling Anhui province's technological progress, while Sun Yat-sen University, with its century-long legacy, has made significant contributions to Guangdong province's economic development.

Today, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) stands as one of China's most open and economically dynamic regions, with the Sun Yat-sen University both benefiting from and contributing to its growth. Hopefully, the university will continue playing its part in building the GBA into an international hub for technological innovation and talents, by not just conducting cutting-edge research but also ensuring its transformation into tangible productive forces.

The Sun Yat-sen University has been pursuing reforms in education, science and talent development, by systematically removing institutional hurdles to strengthen the innovation chain. A key strategy of the university has been the development of key projects, teams and platforms in collaboration with State-owned enterprises,

listed companies and industry leaders to accelerate the commercialization of scientific research.

For instance, in 2024, the National Supercomputing Center in Guangzhou, operated by the university, launched the next-generation domestic supercomputing system, Tianhe Xingyi, which has transformed drug discovery in the biopharmaceutical sector, enabling AI-driven precision drug design and reducing drug development and animal testing cycles from two years to just 49 days. Multiple pharmaceutical companies have already incorporated this breakthrough into their R&D programs.

To further incentivize technology transfer, the Sun Yat-sen University has implemented an innovative profit-sharing policy, allocating commercialization revenue in a 7:1:1:1 ratio among inventors, the university, the operational platform, and relevant departments. This model not only safeguards the interests of researchers but also engages faculties and service institutions in the commercialization process. In 2024 alone, the university helped commercialize 888 technological achievements, a conversion rate of 29.7 percent.

The university has made impressive strides in research in fields such as pharmaceuticals, high-tech equipment, environmental solutions and energy materials. In the medical field, it has pioneered new treatment methods for cataract, glaucoma, gastrointestinal diseases, breast cancer, diabetes, and other conditions, leading to breakthrough anti-tumor and

cough-suppressant drugs, with its cumulative technology transfer revenue exceeding 2 billion yuan (\$275 million). Notably, the university's research on an Epstein-Barr virus vaccine, aimed at addressing the high incidence of nasopharyngeal carcinoma in Guangdong, has attracted significant investment, with enterprises committing 100 million yuan to joint development.

The university has also spearheaded research in smart high-tech equipment, including Zhuhaiyuan, the world's first smart unmanned research ship, and Zhuhaiqin, a foldable, self-elevating deep-sea aquaculture platform. It has achieved success in the environmental and energy sectors, too.

The university also prioritizes workforce development by forging partnerships with leading tech enterprises.

The Sun Yat-sen University-Huawei "Smart Base" talent training program, launched in 2021 is one such standout project, which has integrated 34 courses and developed three new high-quality courses.

The university now plans to leverage its campuses across Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Hong Kong to establish specialized innovation hubs based on the unique strengths of these cities. By fostering deeper industry collaborations, clearing institutional bottlenecks and embracing a results-driven approach to research, the Sun Yat-sen University is setting a new benchmark for transforming knowledge into real-world products and services.

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



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Lhag Chung

Xizang advances ecological civilization to increase growth

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, often called the "Third Pole" of Earth, is a region of immense ecological significance, with its unique topography and climate nurturing diverse ecosystems and exceptional biodiversity, profoundly influencing the climate and ecological systems across China and the entire Northern Hemisphere.

Xizang is the main part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and has been protecting the plateau's environment under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is a land of breathtaking grandeur. Its ecosystems, ranging from glaciers and snow-capped mountains to forests, grasslands, wetlands and deserts, are an essential component of the Earth's natural resources. The plateau's glaciers and permafrost play a crucial role in maintaining regional and global ecological balance, acting as a vast natural reservoir.

Large-scale ecological restoration projects have significantly increased forest coverage in the region, which now stands at 12.31 percent, while comprehensive grassland vegetation coverage has reached 47.14 percent. In 2024 alone, Xizang afforested 1.06 million mu (about 70,687 hectares) and rehabilitated 6 million mu (400,000 hec-

tares) of degraded grasslands. In recent efforts, Xizang has expanded its afforestation and grassland rehabilitation initiatives, including landmark projects in the southern and northern mountains of Lhasa.

Xizang's conservation efforts have led to a resurgence of iconic high-altitude species. For example, the Tibetan antelope population has rebounded to around 300,000, while the number of black-necked cranes is close to 10,000. Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys have increased to 800 and the kiang population exceeds 100,000. Even brown bears, wolves and white-lipped deer are making a noticeable comeback.

Xizang has also made significant strides in pollution control and enhancing environmental quality, by implementing a range of environmental protection measures, including air, water and soil conservation. A substantial land area of Xizang is now designated as an ecological protection zone, ensuring the preservation of its natural environment. The percentage of days with excellent air quality in Xizang remains above 99 percent, and the water quality of major rivers and lakes meets or exceeds Grade III standards. Also, Xizang has established its first artificial forest carbon sink monitoring demonstration base and completed

its first green electricity transaction.

The renowned Tibet University plays a pivotal role in advancing ecological research, integrates inter-disciplinary expertise to address national and regional strategic need, and highlights Xizang's unique ecological conditions and contributes to broader ecological security and sustainability goals.

Xizang's ecological environment is marked by its overall integrity and minimal human disturbance. However, its fragile ecosystems, simplistic structures and limited resilience make the region highly sensitive to global changes and human interference. Once damaged, their natural recovery is extremely difficult. Therefore, building a robust ecological security barrier and an ecological civilization highland on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is a long-term and demanding mission that requires sustained investment, scientific research and institutional innovation.

First, the region should enhance the integrated management of its ecosystems — covering mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, grasslands, deserts and glaciers — by developing a comprehensive theoretical and technical framework, which will lay the foundation for effective conservation. Additionally, the establishment of an

ecological monitoring system and fostering data-sharing mechanisms will support both fundamental and applied research.

Besides, the management of nature reserves should be improved by refining institutional frameworks, recruiting professional teams, and ensuring precise ecological oversight, and ecological restoration policies should be based on local conditions while aligning with national standards to ensure sustainability. And the development of the Xizang national botanical garden and key national ecological laboratories will further enhance research and governance capabilities.

Finally, fostering cooperation across regions and sectors in ecological protection, through clearly defined responsibilities, data-sharing platforms, and coordinated governance, will strengthen Xizang's position as a global ecological sanctuary. By embracing these initiatives, Xizang will not only consolidate its status as a global ecological stronghold but also contribute to a harmonious and sustainable future for both nature and humankind.

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

CHINA

Slots opened to cultivate talent pool

Top universities increase admissions in high-tech and emerging industries

By XU NUO
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Top universities in China are increasing undergraduate admissions in cutting-edge technologies and emerging industries, with artificial intelligence and interdisciplinary studies among the most sought-after programs.

Earlier this month, Tsinghua University announced that it will add about 150 undergraduate slots and establish a new college to cultivate interdisciplinary talent with a solid foundation in AI. Other leading universities in China's "Double First-Class" initiative, a program to enhance higher education quality and global competitiveness, have followed suit.

Days later, Shanghai Jiao Tong University said it will enroll 150 more undergraduates this year in disciplines including AI, integrated circuits, biomedicine, healthcare and new energy. On Saturday, Peking University announced it will add 150 admissions in fields that align with its academic strengths, such as information science and technology, engineering and clinical medicine.

The Renmin University of China, Wuhan University and China Agricultural University are also expanding undergraduate enrollment to cultivate talent in fields that integrate AI with other frontier disciplines.

The moves are part of China's broader effort to restructure higher education and align academic programs with the country's high-level socioeconomic development needs. Last year, China opened 1,673 academic programs deemed critical to national strategies, while eliminating 1,670 programs that did not align with the country's development priorities, Wu Yan, vice-minister of education, said at a news conference in September.

AI and interdisciplinary studies are seen as promising fields as China

seeks to make AI a core driver of economic transformation and establish itself as a global AI innovation hub, according to goals outlined in its next-generation AI development plan issued in 2017.

"Promoting talent cultivation in emerging disciplines and interdisciplinary studies is essential," Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng said during a recent ministers' passage interview at the third session of the 14th National People's Congress. "Efforts should be made to accelerate talent development in alignment with technological transformation and industrial revolution, including in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, new energy and new materials."

China's plan to build an educational powerhouse from 2024 to 2035, issued by the State Council in January, also calls for the orderly expansion of undergraduate admissions at leading universities.

"To continuously improve and upgrade higher education involves expanding undergraduate admissions at "Double First-Class" universities," Zheng Shanjie, director of the National Development and Reform Commission, said at a news conference during this year's National People's Congress session.

"Last year, by expanding undergraduate admissions, top universities and programs added 16,000 enrollment slots. This year, the goal is to increase the number of these slots by another 20,000," he said.

The expansion is part of a broader structural adjustment in higher education, said Liao Aimin, deputy director of the admissions office at Sichuan University.

"The expansion of undergraduate enrollment and closure of certain programs are not simply about adding and subtracting numbers. They are structural adjustments to align academic programs with national strategies and market demands while promoting educational equity," Liao was quoted as saying by China News Service.

In memory of survivors



Huang Xinghua, son of Nanjing Massacre survivor Ai Yiyi, who died on Jan 9, lays flowers in front of her photo during a memorial ceremony at the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Tuesday. The ceremony was held to commemorate survivors Ai Yiyi, Wu Xiuying, Yi Lanying and Tao Chengyi, all of whom died this year. There are only 28 registered living survivors of the Nanjing Massacre. YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Shanghai hospital helps save 2-year-old Filipino boy

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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A Shanghai hospital has successfully performed its first liver transplant on a Filipino child, marking a milestone in medical cooperation between China and the Philippines.

Renji Hospital, affiliated with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, said on Tuesday that the procedure was carried out in mid-February in collaboration with the Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center in Manila. The 2-year-old boy's condition is steadily improving, and he is expected to be discharged later this week.

Representatives from both hospitals met in Shanghai on Monday to discuss international medical collaboration, reviewing the results of their partnership and future prospects.

The boy, nicknamed Nieco, had a condition known as congenital biliary atresia, which led to cirrhosis.

He had experienced gastrointestinal bleeding 12 times within six months, putting his life in imminent danger. With limited medical resources in the Philippines, his family faced few options.

Through the partnership between the two hospitals, a joint expert team was quickly assembled. Nieco's father volunteered to donate a portion of his liver, and Xia Qiang, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Engineering and president of Renji Hospital, performed the transplant.

The six-hour operation gave the child a new lease of life.

"Renji Hospital not only gave my child a new life, but also made us feel the warmth of home," the child's father said.

Renji Hospital, home to the world's largest pediatric liver transplant center, has performed more than 3,800 such procedures, with postoperative survival rates for minor patients ranking among the highest internationally, Xia said.

"We have always upheld the prin-

ciple that 'medicine knows no borders' and have been at the forefront of promoting the clinical application and expansion of Chinese liver transplant technology in Southeast Asia," he said.

In 2019, Renji Hospital partnered with the University of Malaya Medical Centre in Malaysia to establish an overseas office and launch an international training program for pediatric living donor liver transplantation.

Over the past decade, the hospital has systematically trained more than 50 liver transplant specialists from Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. It also helped complete Malaysia's first pediatric living donor liver transplant and has saved 55 critically ill foreign children.

"The success of this first pediatric liver transplant in the Philippines marks an upgrade in China-Philippines medical cooperation from technology export to system co-construction," Xia said, calling it a significant achievement as the

two countries celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year.

Philippine Ambassador to China Jaime FlorCruz, who attended Monday's dialogue, said the collaboration aligns with both nations' strategic development goals, provides a new channel for life-saving treatment in Southeast Asia, and highlights Shanghai's growing influence in global healthcare.

While visiting Shanghai, the medical team from Manila explored Renji Hospital's use of artificial intelligence-assisted diagnosis and treatment, and remote consultation platforms, gaining insights into ways to enhance medical services back home.

Renji Hospital said it plans to establish a China-Philippines medical internet hospital cloud platform to promote case sharing, remote consultations and other digital services, allowing Chinese healthcare solutions to reach more patients in Southeast Asia.

Robot host



A robot greets and interacts with tourists at the Zhangjiajie National Forest Park in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, on Monday. Local tourism management introduced several humanoid robots and robotic dogs to inject fresh vitality into the local tourism and enhance visitor services. WU YONGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Joint research team discovers why male hilsa shad fish are disappearing

By WANG XIN in Shanghai
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A joint team of researchers from Shanghai Ocean University and Jagannath University in Bangladesh has unveiled three groundbreaking discoveries about the hilsa shad, marking a milestone in international cooperation on the study, management and conservation of Bangladesh's national fish.

The findings were led by three Bangladeshi researchers — Md Rashedur Rahman, Kishor Kumar Sarke and Anirban Sarker — all of whom earned their doctorates from the Lab of Molecular Systematics and Ecology at Shanghai Ocean University.

Their research focused on three key areas: the sex reversal, whole genome sequencing and population genomics of the fish.

Notably, Rahman, who completed his doctorate in Shanghai and returned to Bangladesh in December, was the first to confirm that hilsa shad undergo sex changes. Through biological and histological analyses of 203 samples from six regions, including the Padma River, Meghna River and the Bay of Bengal, his study found that the species exhibits "protandrous hermaphroditism", meaning individuals transition from male to female at a certain stage of their life cycle.

This discovery sheds light on the long-standing puzzle of the apparent scarcity of male hilsa shad, providing key insights into their life cycles, reproductive strategies and sexual transition mechanisms.

"The hilsa shad, a flagship species in Bangladesh, holds immense economic and ecological value. These findings not only deepen our

understanding of its biological characteristics, but also provide a scientific foundation for its conservation and sustainable management," said Huang Xuxiong, executive deputy dean of the College of Fisheries and Life Science at Shanghai Ocean University.

Li Chenhong, a professor at Shanghai Ocean University and supervisor of the lab, said the discoveries resulted from nearly a decade of research by three classes of Bangladeshi students.

"We hope these results will contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of hilsa shad, and we also hope that educational cooperation between the two universities will continue to yield fruitful results," Li said.

The two institutions have strengthened collaboration over the past decade in aquaculture,

resource conservation and marine ecological monitoring. Since 2016, they have exchanged scholars, jointly trained doctoral students and conducted academic exchanges and research projects. In 2019, they signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation agreement to further enhance long-term scientific research under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Huang noted that the hilsa shad species in Bangladesh is closely related to China's, offering potential for aquaculture innovation. The collaboration has advanced research on artificial breeding technologies for the fish and has created new opportunities for China and Bangladesh in aquaculture, biodiversity conservation and marine economic development.

"Bangladesh, with its rich aquatic resources and extensive coastline, shares significant potential with China in developing the blue economy," Huang said. "Through collaboration, we aim to explore pathways for sustainable marine economic growth, contributing to prosperity in both nations and beyond."

China meets national cervical cancer screening goal

By WANG XIAOYU
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China has met its goal to raise the national cervical cancer screening rate above 50 percent ahead of schedule, but experts say more efforts are needed to boost awareness and improve healthcare access in rural areas to close the urban-rural gap.

The national cervical cancer screening rate — defined as the percentage of women who have undergone at least one screening in their lifetime — reached 51.5 percent among women age 35 to 64 from

2023 to 2024, according to a study published by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. That marks a significant rise from 36.8 percent between 2018 and 2019.

The screening rate was 57.9 percent among women age 35 to 44 and 36.8 percent among those age 20 and older, the study found. Researchers analyzed data from nearly 97,000 women across all 31 provincial-level regions in China.

"Our findings suggest that China as a whole has already achieved the 2025 target of screening 50 percent of women age 35 to 64

years by 2024," the study said.

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide, with about 660,000 new cases and 350,000 deaths reported in 2022. Increasing screenings is considered one of the three key strategies for eliminating the disease, alongside expanding HPV vaccinations and improving access to treatment.

China accounts for more than 18 percent of the global disease burden, according to health officials. A national action plan released in 2023 set a goal of increasing the screening rate to 50 percent by

2025 and 70 percent by 2030.

While only three provincial-level regions reached the 50 percent threshold five years ago, the study found that half of all regions — mostly in the eastern, southern and central parts of China — have now surpassed the 2025 target.

"This marked improvement underscores the effectiveness of implementing the free national screening program across diverse geographical regions," the study said.

Still, the screening rate in rural areas remains lower at 48.2 percent, with northeastern China

reporting just 33.8 percent.

"The study demonstrates that women in rural areas, as well as those with low incomes, limited education or unemployment, are less likely to access cervical cancer screening services, thus requiring enhanced governmental attention and intervention," it said.

To further boost screening coverage, the study recommended increased policy and financial support, stronger health education initiatives and improved healthcare access in rural and northeastern regions.

China launched a national free screening program in 2009, providing 280 million screenings for women age 35 to 64 and detecting 902,000 cases of cervical cancer or

precancerous lesions, according to Shen Haiping, director of the National Health Commission's maternal and child health department.

Zhu Lan, head of the obstetrics and gynecology department at Peking Union Medical College Hospital, said reducing cervical cancer rates is particularly challenging in less-developed regions due to low health awareness, transportation barriers and extreme weather.

With a shortage of trained healthcare workers in these areas, she suggested using artificial intelligence tools to train local medical professionals and enhance both screening coverage and accuracy.

CHINA

Innovation drives self-reliance in offshore oil

Engineer witnesses nation's great push to develop industry over last 3 decades

By WANG XIAOYU

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In a scene from *Deepwater Horizon* — a film based on the 2010 offshore oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico — the daughter of a technician demonstrates the workings of deepwater oil rigs by jamming a metal straw into a shaken-up can of soda and sealing it with honey to block the fizzing liquid.

The young girl describes oil from reservoirs beneath the seafloor as "mean, old dinosaurs," and proudly says that "it was my daddy who tamed the dinosaurs." The scene ends with the can exploding ominously, spewing soda all over the kitchen table.

Although the show-and-tell presented by the girl is an oversimplified portrayal of offshore drilling, it conveys a crucial message: navigating the operation demands a blend of courage and intelligence in risky environments, requiring the taming of nature.

China is making rapid strides in catching up with developed nations in offshore drilling, driven by a push toward scientific self-reliance and innovation.

One prominent researcher who has witnessed and propelled the development is Li Zhong, deputy general manager and chief engineer in drilling and well completion at the China National Offshore Oil Corporation Research Institute based in Beijing.

"We used to rely on foreign exports and imported equipment, but over the years, we have achieved significant improvements and innovations in domestic know-how and equipment," he said.

Born in a rural area in Henan province in 1972, Li said that the sight of tall drilling rigs towering over sprawling fields and busy workers



China National Offshore Oil Corporation operates an offshore drilling rig in an oil field in the Bohai Sea. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

dressed in overalls left a mark on his young mind. "Out of curiosity, I used to sneak into their laboratories and warehouses, observing how they fiddled with bottles and jars, and asking them all sorts of questions," he said.

"For a kid living in the countryside, their work was shrouded in an intriguing mist of mystery," he added. "At that time, I made up my mind to apply for a petroleum-related program for college."

In 1994, Li graduated from the Jiangnan Petroleum Institute, now part of the Yangtze University in Hubei province, and was recruited into a subsidiary of CNOOC in Guangdong province, with a focus on tapping into crude oil in the South China Sea.

His maiden trip to an offshore platform was marked by a sobering experience. "I got off the helicopter and was expecting to hear the roaring of massive machines, but there was only an eerie silence and the deck was in disarray," he recalled.

Li later learned that a serious blow-



Li Zhong instructs workers at a drilling platform in the South China Sea in July 2022.

out had occurred shortly before his arrival, leading to the emergency shutdown of the blowout preventer and the shearing of drilling tools.

For him, the incident offered a val-

uable lesson on production safety. "I have internalized a meticulous and rigorous principle at work at all times," he said.

Vast swathes of the western

South China Sea have abundant oil and gas resources, but the complicated seabed conditions have posed numerous challenges and thwarted repeated efforts to explore the treasure trove.

Drilling equipment must endure temperatures surging to about 240 C and pressure roughly equivalent to the weight of a heavy truck bearing down on a surface area the size of a fingernail. "A number of foreign drilling companies had made attempts, but ultimately failed and gave up," Li said.

The frustration of foreign firms only reinforced Li and his co-workers' determination to search for solutions.

Their unwavering dedication spanning 20 years bore fruit, culminating in the development of domestic drilling and completion technology tailored for high-temperature and high-pressure areas in the region. "In 2015, our company and a foreign counterpart carried out drilling operations simultaneously in two

wells located about 20 kilometers apart in the South China Sea," he said.

It took the foreign team 120 days and 360 million yuan (\$50 million) to complete one well, while the Chinese engineers accomplished the task in just 40 days and at a total cost of 80 million yuan.

"We obtained more data and information and estimated a higher reserve capacity," Li said.

Their groundbreaking work won the 2017 State Scientific and Technological Progress Award, one of the nation's top honors.

While retaining a sense of childlike curiosity, Li said he also appreciates the value of pragmatism and rigor.

"As scientists and researchers, it is important to be curious and open-minded about the world around us while keeping both of our feet on the ground," he said.

Data released in February shows that the number of offshore drilling wells across China exceeded 1,000 by the end of last year, with record performances in areas including daily drilling and production efficiency, and downtime reduction.

The average annual number of offshore drilling rigs increased by 60 percent during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) compared to the period from 2016 to 2020.

Li left the subsidiary in Guangdong about four years ago and now works at the CNOOC research institute in Beijing.

He said that more efforts will be dedicated to advancing the integration of digital and intelligent platforms into offshore drilling operations.

Last year, CNOOC released a five-year action plan to promote green and low-carbon development in offshore oil. It plans to establish an environmental monitoring network and use big data and other technologies to further increase efficiencies and reduce emissions.

"I see great potential in leveraging smart and digital tools to generate new productivity and bring fresh benefits," Li said.

Great Wall guardian goes extra mile for protection

By DU JUAN

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Among those who walk the Great Wall of China in northern Beijing daily is Liu Hongyan, a 45-year-old resident in Shixia village and a guardian of this enduring cultural treasure.

As a child, Liu enjoyed stories and scenery shared by her uncle, Mei Jingtian, who had been dedicated to protecting the Great Wall.

"He used to drop by my home on his return. His stories and legends of the Great Wall fascinated me," Liu recalled. "I wanted to help preserve the Wall, just as he did."

In 2019, when her village recruited full-time guardians for the Great Wall, she saw an opportunity to follow in her uncle's footsteps.

Liu was selected as one of the guardians after a tough vetting process — a written exam, interview and physical test — that weeded out many. She proudly shared the news with her uncle, who was glad to pass the baton to his niece.

Accompanied by the early morning sun, Liu patrols a 20-kilometer stretch of the Great Wall with her team members every weekday for six to seven hours.

She navigates gravelly mountain routes and steep ascents with supplies on her back, including food, water and equipment such as a sickle, a saw and a stick.

Her tasks range from collecting trash and clearing weeds to record-



Liu Hongyan collects garbage during a patrol along the Great Wall in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ing signs of damage to the Great Wall's structure.

"At first, my legs would ache for days," she said. "I once sprained my ankle, and my husband stepped in to help when needed, finishing my daily patrol."

Despite the physical strain, Liu returned to her position upon recovery. The trip demands caution and courage. The strong wind in winter can knock one over, while in summer there are snakes and wild boars to watch out for, she said. Under her uncle's guidance and advice, she became an old hand.

The greatest challenge, however, is dealing with illegal visitors. Some tourists, unaware of the regulations

and laws for protecting the Great Wall, attempt to climb the non-public sections and set up tents on the wall.

"Sometimes they argue when we persuade them to leave," Liu said.

"But most of the time, the tourists listen when we explain why their action is against the law. It puts themselves in danger of wildlife attack or getting lost."

She always seeks patience and persuasion. If necessary, Liu and her colleagues call the administrative law-enforcement agency to help.

"In 2023, a man became stuck on the Wall after dark. Not knowing the terrain, he couldn't find his way. Even worse, he had no flashlight, just his phone's light," Liu said.

"The police and firefighters came to rescue him."

Her role goes beyond protecting the Great Wall — she is also an educator. "Many people don't realize that the Great Wall needs protection," she said. "We tell them about its history and the need to preserve it."

Over time, she has seen improvements in how people treat the Great Wall. "Graffiti and trash are less common now. More volunteers join in cleanup events with an increased awareness of preservation," she said.

She explained the need to balance tourism with conservation, hoping the introduction of visitor trails will allow people to experience the legacy while keeping it under good protection.

"My uncle passed the torch of responsibility to me," she said. "I'll pass it on in the future. Safeguarding the Great Wall is more than a job for me — it's part of who I am. It's home."

Guo Yanqi contributed to this story.

Drones scour mountains to detect risks

CHENGDU — In a move to combat natural disasters, Sichuan province has deployed an unmanned aerial vehicle network to monitor geological hazards across Pengzhou, a mountainous area prone to landslides and wildfires.

By late March, seven fixed-wing drone hangars and several multi-rotor systems will achieve full coverage of the area, transforming disaster response with 24/7 surveillance.

Developed by Chinese major commercial unmanned aerial vehicle company JOUAV, which is based in the provincial capital Chengdu, the drones are equipped with high-resolution cameras and advanced sensors, and are capable of cruising at 72 kilometers an hour with a 30-km operational radius.

Stationed at the Sky Eye No 3 base in Cifeng township in Pengzhou, located at the foot of a 780-meter-high mountain, these drones scan rivers, forests and slopes for anomalies, transmitting real-time HD footage and sensor data to command centers.

The system proved its worth during a landslide on Jan 27 in Cifeng's Luping community, where a 2,000-cubic-meter collapse damaged infrastructure. A pre-programmed fixed-wing drone detected the incident mid-patrol, enabling emergency teams to pinpoint the site within minutes.

"It's like having eyes in the sky. The drones act as aerial sentinels," said Zheng Wenqiang, head of the Cifeng operations base. Notably, fixed-wing units can

reach 120 km/h if needed, though their 70 km/h cruise speed already outpaces ground teams, said Zheng.

During this year's Spring Festival, the system slashed manual patrols in Cifeng from 50 workers doing 10-hour shifts to just seven technicians overseeing 20 daily flights.

Potential threats, from forest fire risks to trespassing, were identified 80 percent faster than what is possible via traditional methods, Zheng added.

The scope of these drones extends beyond disasters. They also monitor illegal logging, track lost hikers and even issue verbal warnings via onboard speakers when detecting wildfires or unsafe tourist behavior.

Live feeds allow officials to monitor traffic and crowds without having to conduct on-site inspections.

"We'll build drone hangars at increased elevations in higher-altitude mountainous areas, thereby facilitating seamless drone launches," Zheng noted.

The first phase ensures a 10-minute response time in case of emergencies. Supplementary multi-rotor drones will enhance precision of collected data in urban zones, according to Zheng.

Once fully operational, the network will update data for the whole of Pengzhou on a weekly basis, while serving disaster response, law enforcement, traffic control, farmland protection, tourism oversight and urban management.

"When every second counts, these drones aren't just tools — they're lifelines," Zheng said.

XINHUA



A worker checks a fixed-wing drone in Cifeng township, Pengzhou, Sichuan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rural communities in Guizhou develop taste for trade

GUIYANG — In the remote mountains of Guizhou, a landlocked province in southwestern China where tradition runs as deep as its valleys, locals are transforming agricultural products into global commodities, breathing new life into rural communities.

Tucked away in the rugged landscape of Sinan county, a food company chums out over 100,000 boxes daily of fiery sweet potato noodles —

a spicy instant snack popular among young eaters.

Last year, thanks to cross-border e-commerce platforms such as Alibaba and JD.com, many of the products were shipped overseas. "Food isn't just for domestic tables, it deserves to serve worldwide palates," said Zhang Cheng, the company's chairman.

Zhang added that the company aims to double its overseas sales to \$2 million this year, with a focus on mar-

kets South Korea and countries in Southeast Asia, where Chinese instant noodles are helping to satiate a hunger for convenience foods.

In 2023, Sinan became one of Guizhou's first pilot counties to develop "rural foreign trade." To date, its exports have surged past 200 million yuan (\$28 million), with products like tea and sweet potato noodles sold to Vietnam, Indonesia and European countries, according

to government figures. James Finlay (Guizhou) Tea Company, the county's only foreign-owned enterprise, delivers its products to clients in Poland and the United Kingdom.

Liu Renjun, the company's production manager, said that overseas orders rose following the Chinese New Year, and the company is expected to export 600 metric tons of tea products worth \$1.2 million in the first quarter of this year.

A government plan issued by the provincial department of commerce and other departments in 2023 said Guizhou aims to have 500 enterprises engaged in rural exports by 2025, adding 5 billion yuan to annual export revenue in the sector.

Customs data show that last year the province exported several agricultural products, including honey-sugar plums and gastrodia liquor, for the first time.

According to the Agricultural Trade Promotion Center under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, China's agricultural exports

reached \$103 billion in 2024, marking a 4.1 percent increase over the previous year.

In sweet potato noodle production alone, more than 60,000 county residents are involved in the industrial chain from farming and processing to sales. Zhang's company plans to recruit more than 100 people to open more production lines to meet the rising orders.

"Together with domestic orders, we're targeting 1 billion yuan in sales revenue this year," Zhang said.

XINHUA

WORLDUS

Balance expected from new Canada PM

By YANG GAO in Toronto
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The new Canadian prime minister is expected to take a strong stance against US tariffs while seeking diplomatic compromises, according to experts.

In Prime Minister Mark Carney's first speech after winning the Liberal Party leadership contest, he called the United States a "country we can no longer trust" and had a message for President Donald Trump.

"America is not Canada, and Canada never, ever will be part of America in any way, shape or form," Carney said.

Carney received 86 percent, or 131,764 votes of the 151,899 cast by the nearly 400,000 Liberal Party members who registered to participate in the leadership election.

Carney, 59, is expected to face Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre, 45, in the next nationwide election, which is officially scheduled for Oct 20 but could be held as soon as April 28 or May 5.

The prime minister said he'll keep Canada's counter-tariffs in place until all of Trump's tariffs are lifted.

John J. Kirton, professor of political science at the University of Toronto, said that approach has helped unify Canada's Liberal Party, positioning Carney as a leader with stronger national support than his predecessor, Justin Trudeau.

Kirton said that Carney's extensive economic background — a former governor of both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England — makes him suited to navigate the challenges, though significant hurdles remain.

"The first thing he has to do is use his intimate contacts on Wall Street," Kirton told China Daily. "He needs to tell the great giants of Wall Street to inform Trump and his treasury secretary that these tariffs are really killing the financial heart of the US economy," he said.

He said that continued trade disputes could have severe consequences.

"Unless Trump stops and turns around, the US could even face another financial crisis, similar to what happened when Lehman Brothers collapsed and triggered the Great Recession," Kirton said.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said on Tuesday that the province would suspend its 25 percent surcharge on electricity exports to three US states after Trump floated additional duties on Canadian aluminum, steel, electricity and vehicles.

Ford said he had a productive conversation with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Tuesday.

"Secretary Lutnick agreed to officially meet with Premier Ford in Washington on Thursday, March 13, alongside the United States Trade Representative, to discuss a renewed USMCA [United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement] ahead of the April 2 reciprocal tariff deadline," the two officials said in a joint statement posted on X. "In response, Ontario agreed to suspend its 25



White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt holds a "handy-dandy chart" on Tuesday showing tariffs on US goods exported to Canada, India and Japan. Leavitt said "the president is responding to the fact that Canada has been ripping off the United States of America and hard-working Americans for decades".

ZHAO HUANXIN / CHINA DAILY

“He is by nature a middle-of-the-road person, and we can expect that he will try to move away from confrontation and towards an amicable settlement.”

Ron Stagg, professor emeritus of history at Toronto Metropolitan University, about Prime Minister Mark Carney

percent surcharge on exports of electricity to Michigan, New York and Minnesota.”

Kirton said he believes negotiating with the US will be a delicate task. "The biggest challenge is that Trump's policies change day by day," he said.

Kirton pointed to past instances where American tariffs disrupted supply chains, particularly in the auto industry, leading major CEOs to pressure the US administration into temporary concessions.

Kirton expected a similar pattern moving forward. "The three big auto industry CEOs went to Trump and said, 'We're going to be killed with these tariffs,'" he said.

Kirton said he believes that Carney will push back strongly against US trade policies while also looking for pragmatic solutions.

"If Carney stands next to leaders like Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and says, 'If we have to impose an export tax on our oil to the US, we

will, he has the constitutional power to do it," Kirton said.

Carney will also need to manage Canada's relationship with China.

"We need a prosperous China — one that continues to import from the G7 and the broader global economy," Kirton said.

He also noted the importance of maintaining access to China's technology and raw materials.

"If we want to tackle the only genuinely existential threat — climate change — we need to be able to import low-cost renewable energy technology from China, such as solar panels and wind turbines," he said.

While tensions between Canada and China have led to reciprocal tariffs, Kirton remains cautiously optimistic about relations.

"We have to start by de-escalating trade wars, both between Canada and China and between the US and China," he said.

Ron Stagg, professor emeritus of history at Toronto Metropolitan University, sees Carney adopting a firm stance against US tariffs while balancing economic diplomacy.

"Carney has said that Canada will match all tariffs imposed on Canadian goods, which is very much what the vast majority of Canadians want now.

But, of course, many do not fully realize the consequences of such a policy," he told China Daily.

"Given what the Canadian people are expecting of him, he will be confrontational. But, based on his background, he will also be looking for ways to smooth out relations to reduce the tariff war," he said.

"He would want to re-establish the kind of trade relationship Canada has had with the US up to this

point, while trying to get businesses, with government help, to seek new markets," he said.

However, Stagg maintained that this shift could be difficult. "Businesses are reluctant to take advantage of trade ties with Europe and Asia when trading across the border is so much easier."

He pointed to Trump's broad interpretation of security provisions affecting trade, as well as potential threats to key industries such as automotive and dairy.

"If he waits until the (USMCA) agreement is up for renewal in 2026 and refuses to accept any compromises with Canada, this too will be a major challenge."

While Carney has positioned himself as a firm negotiator, Stagg said he believes Carney's instincts will lean toward compromise.

"He is by nature a middle-of-the-road person, and we can expect that he will try to move away from confrontation and towards an amicable settlement," he said.

"Try is the key word. Politically, Carney cannot be seen by Trump, or by the Canadian public, to show any signs of what might be termed weakness," he said.

Stagg said that Carney's approach to China is expected to be more measured than his US strategy.

"Canadian relations with China, while not as confrontational as those with the United States, are complicated by security and trade concerns," he said.

"I expect that Canada under Carney will pursue this approach, despite Chinese tariffs on Canadian agricultural goods," Stagg said. "Negotiations rather than another trade war."

Envoy to US: Ease up on the pressure

Ambassador Xie Feng says US' 'maximum pressure', tariffs and trade wars won't work

By ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington
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The Chinese ambassador to the United States has urged Washington to change its "maximum pressure" approach to the bilateral relationship and collaborate to steer it back to a steady and sound path.

In a speech that coincided with the first 50 days of the Trump administration, Ambassador Xie Feng made a candid assessment of the status of China-US relations, noting that heavy-handed strategies, like tariffs or trade wars, are unproductive.

"It is true that China-US relations face challenges and have once again reached a critical crossroads," he said via video link at the "China in Springtime" global dialogue held in Chicago on Monday.

China was mentioned four times in the White House's document, "50 Wins in 50 Days," released on Monday, detailing President Donald Trump's actions.

In addition to imposing fresh sanctions, the Trump administration last Tuesday doubled the blanket 10 percent tariff placed on Chinese imports in February, citing the fentanyl issue, a move that China said was unproductive; it responded with retaliation.

"Maximum pressure, tariff wars or trade wars won't work. Investment restrictions are futile. Using Taiwan to contain China will only backfire," the ambassador said.

Xie also emphasized the historical perseverance of the Chinese people and the country's ability to overcome adversity.

"The Chinese people are resilient — we have endured many hardships yet remain steadfast, confident and perseverant," he said.

"China's development, progress and prosperity are built on the sweat and toil of no force can deny us a better future," he added.

Given the futility of the "maximum pressure" and other restrictive measures, Xie urged Washington to try to change its tactics.

"We hope the US side will reconsider its approach, return to the right path of dialogue and cooperation, and work with China in the spirit of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation. Together, let's

strive for a stable, sound and sustainable China-US relationship," he said.

In his speech, Xie also countered the narrative of a "foreign capital outflow" from China by emphasizing that the story in China today is one of rising investor confidence in its vast, dynamic market.

Citing reports, Xie noted China is now a key trading partner for more than 150 countries and regions, and last year, it registered a 9.9 percent increase in newly established foreign-invested companies.

In January, investment from Great Britain, South Korea and the Netherlands surged by 324 percent, 104 percent, and 76 percent, respectively.

"Instead of a 'foreign capital outflow,' there is rising confidence in China's big market as a top priority," Xie said.

Xie was in Beijing in the past few days attending the two sessions — the annual gatherings of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

He said that through the window of the two sessions, the world sees vast opportunities as a result of high-level opening-up.

The Government Work Report, delivered on March 5, when the annual national legislative session opened, emphasizes stabilizing trade, attracting foreign investment and advancing the orderly opening-up of sectors such as the internet and culture.

Pilot programs in telecommunications, healthcare and education will expand, reaffirming China's commitment to opening-up and global cooperation, according to the work report.

"When economic globalization faces headwinds and countercurrents, China remains steadfast in expanding institutional, self-initiated and independent opening-up," Xie said.

The China Council for the Promotion of International Trade found in a survey that about 90 percent of the more than 400 foreign companies polled in China during the third quarter rated the country's business environment as "satisfactory" or higher.

Nearly 20 percent of those surveyed expressed plans to increase their investment in China, up by 2.07 percentage points from the previous quarter, according to the report, released on Oct 31.

Greenland votes



Election workers begin counting the votes after the polls closed in Nuuk, Greenland, on Tuesday, on the day of the autonomous Danish territory's legislative elections. Greenland voted on Tuesday in legislative elections that could yield a timeline for independence for the Danish self-governing territory coveted by US President Donald Trump. ODD ANDERSEN / AFP

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As Tesla faces backlash, Trump buys an EV

By HENG WEILI in New York
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Tesla vehicles and dealerships have been the target of nationwide vandalism since Elon Musk, the CEO of the electric vehicle company, has spotlighted US government spending as head of the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

The multi-billionaire Musk, once celebrated by environmentalists because of his successful mass production of EVs, has drawn the wrath of political opponents of US President Donald Trump, whom Musk has stoutly supported on X.com, the social media platform that he owns.

As of Tuesday, the DOGE website said the department so far has saved taxpayers \$105 billion through a "combination of asset sales, contract/lease cancellations and renegotiations, fraud and improper payment deletion, grant cancellations, interest savings, programmatic changes, regulatory savings, and workforce reductions".

In a show of support for Tesla and Musk, the president sat in a Tesla vehicle at the White House on Tuesday.

"Wow," Trump said as he got into the driver's seat of a Model S. "That's beautiful."

Musk, 53, sat on the passenger

side and joked about "giving the Secret Service a heart attack" as they talked about how to start a vehicle that can reach 60 miles (95 kilometers) per hour in a few seconds.

"And I just want people to know that he can't be penalized for being a patriot,"

Trump said. "And he's a great patriot. And he's also done an incredible job with Tesla."

Trump told reporters that he would write a check for the car, which retails for roughly \$80,000, and leave it at the White House so his staff can drive it. The president also said he hoped his purchase would boost Tesla, which is coping with falling sales and a decline in its stock.

But on Tuesday, Tesla shares likely got a boost from Trump's support as they closed at \$230.58, up \$8.43, or 3.79 percent in Nasdaq trading. The automaker's stock had been down 10 percent since Election Day.

On Tuesday, Trump said he would label violence against Tesla dealerships as domestic terrorism amid recent "Tesla Takedown" protests.

"I'm going to stop them," Trump said. "You do it to Tesla, and you do it to any company, we're going to catch you, and you're going to go through hell."

Musk said he wanted to "thank

everyone out there who is supporting Tesla. It's really terrible that there's so much violence being perpetrated against people at Tesla, Tesla supporters, Tesla owners, Tesla stores. These are innocent people who have done nothing wrong."

Seattle fire officials said a fire that damaged four Tesla Cybertrucks late Sunday is being investigated. The trucks were parked in a Tesla lot in Seattle's industrial district.

At a protest Saturday at a Tesla showroom in Manhattan, demonstrators chanted "Nobody voted for Elon Musk" and "Oligarchs out, democracy in." The New York Times reported. One protester held a sign saying, "Send Musk to Mars Now!!" (Musk is also the owner of SpaceX).

On March 6, police outside of Portland, Oregon, responded to gunshots fired at a Tesla showroom at about 1:45 am local time, CNN reported. Investigators say at least seven shots were fired, damaging three cars and shattering windows. One bullet went through an office wall and into a computer monitor.

In Massachusetts, the Brookline Police Department on March 4 posted a photo with the comments: "We are looking to identify this suspect who was seen tagging Tesla vehicles with Elon Musk decals. When confronted the suspect claimed he has

the right to deface the property of others because it's his 'free speech.'"

Seven Tesla charging stations were set ablaze at a shopping center outside Boston on March 3, police said.

In Colorado, police arrested a suspect in vandalism spree against a Tesla dealership that included Molotov cocktails thrown at vehicles, the words "Nazi cars" spray painted on the building, and a message that appeared to be directed against Musk, according to court documents.

Lucy Grace Nelson was arrested on Feb 24 in Loveland, Colorado, after police said the suspect returned to the dealership there with "additional incendiary devices" and materials used in vandalism.

In one of the incidents, someone spray painted an obscenity believed to be directed at Musk before being chased away by a security guard.

Security footage from the dealer also showed someone throwing Molotov cocktails into a row of Tesla sedans. The affidavit said at least four vehicles worth a combined \$220,000 were targeted by the incendiary devices, which were made from empty liquor bottles.

Agencies contributed to this story.

WORLD

Experts see climate change fueling rise in malaria cases

By OTIATO OPALI
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Climate change, including rising temperatures, has left Africa facing a rise in malaria cases and other mosquito-borne infections such as dengue fever, and this is placing immense pressure on public health systems, according to health experts.

Dorothy Memusi, an academic researcher who has previously served as deputy director of the malaria division in Kenya's Ministry of Health, said climate change is worsening disease patterns, and diseases are emerging in areas where they did not exist before.

She cited study results showing that Kenya's highland regions, such as parts of the Rift Valley that previously had a low prevalence of malaria, are currently recording rising cases of the disease, and these are linked to subtle changes in the region's climate.

"The resurgence of malaria in the east African highlands has shown how small changes in climate can influence the geography of some tropical diseases," Memusi said.

According to a report published by the World Health Organization in December, climate change is increasing the risks of malaria transmission globally. In Africa, it is expected that climate change will lead to 550,000 additional deaths due to malaria between 2030 and 2049, according to the report.

According to Memusi, research has shown that at 18 C it takes the malaria parasite 51 days to mature. The average life span of the female Anopheles mosquito is about three weeks. At lower temperatures, the parasite simply does not have time to become infectious. She also said an increase of about two degrees in highland areas can lead to an exponential increase in transmission because the parasite takes much shorter to develop inside the mosquito.

Changes in temperature can affect the development and survival

of malaria parasites and the mosquitoes that carry them, according to another joint study conducted in 2004. Rainfall also influences the availability of mosquito habitats and the size of mosquito populations, the research found.

"A rise in temperature, rainfall, and humidity is likely to cause a proliferation of the malaria-carrying mosquitoes at higher altitudes, resulting in an increase in malaria transmission in areas in which it was not reported earlier. At lower altitudes where malaria is already a problem, warmer temperatures have proved to alter the growth cycle of the parasite in the mosquito, enabling it to develop faster, increasing transmission and thus having implications on the burden of disease," Memusi said.

Human activities

However, despite the ongoing research into the matter, Memusi urged caution and warned that it may not be possible to quantify how climate change affects malaria transmission, which depends on many factors such as population and demographic dynamics, and human activities such as deforestation, insecticide resistance, drug resistance or irrigation.

Willis Akhwale, a medical doctor and a special adviser to the Kenya End Malaria Council, said that despite malaria cases being reported in places that did not previously exist particularly the highland regions in Kenya that used to be too cool for malaria, rising malaria rates are more likely the result of increased drug resistance in malaria parasites and the infrequent use of pesticides in mosquito breeding grounds.

"We still insist that surveillance and preparedness will remain major components of the malaria control strategy. In addition to early diagnosis and prompt effective treatment, selective parasite control and capacity-building to prevent epidemics and control transmission have been the other areas of focus," Akhwale said.

Dancing on ice



The Turkish Ice Skating Federation's Synchronized Women's National Team, consisting of 18 athletes, performs on the frozen Lake Cildir in Kars, Turkiye, on Sunday. ISMAIL KAPLAN / GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

PAKISTAN

Militants hold train passengers hostage

Armed militants held hundreds of train passengers hostage on Tuesday in an ongoing siege claimed by a separatist group that is behind rising violence in southwestern Pakistan. The militants wounded the driver as they took control of the train in a remote, mountainous area of Balochistan Province which borders Afghanistan and Iran. "Over 450 passengers onboard are being held hostage by gunmen," Muhammad Kashif, a senior railway government official in Quetta, the capital of the province, told AFP. Security forces said an explosion had been heard around the tunnel and that they were exchanging fire with the militants in a mountainous area. The attack was immediately claimed by the separatist Balochistan Liberation Army. In a statement, it said gunmen bombed the railway track before

storming the train. Pakistan's interior minister, Mohsin Naqvi, condemned the attack and said the government would not make any concessions to "beasts who fire on innocent passengers". The Balochistan government has imposed emergency measures to deal with the situation.

MEXICO

At least 32 dead in two separate bus crashes

At least 32 people were killed on Monday in two separate bus crashes in Mexico, authorities said. A bus turned over along a highway in southern Mexico's Oaxaca State, killing 18 people, the state regional government said in a statement. In the country's north, 14 people died in a fiery collision between a tractor-trailer and a bus carrying passengers from Texas in the US state of Texas, civil protection authorities in Durango State said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Palestinians gather around a fire to keep warm in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on Monday, during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan. OMAR AL-QATTAA / AFP

Mediators struggle to bridge gaps in Doha

Israel-Hamas negotiations aim to break cease-fire impasse as Gaza aid blocked

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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Mediators from the United States, Egypt and Qatar struggled to bridge huge differences between Israel and Hamas as they convened in Doha in an attempt to break the impasse on a Gaza cease-fire deal that could either extend the first phase of the truce, or reach a deal on the second stage.

The talks take place amid deteriorating humanitarian conditions and hunger triggered by Israel's blockade. Hamas said Israeli troops are not adhering to the truce as they still occupy the border area between Gaza and Egypt, preventing aid from reaching Gaza.

The group also slammed Israel for violating the cease-fire agreement and undermining it by stalling the troops' withdrawal from the Philadelphi Corridor.

"Israel has not complied with the gradual drawdown of its forces during the first phase, nor has it begun its withdrawal as scheduled," Hamas was quoted as saying by Turkiye's Anadolu Agency.

"The withdrawal was supposed to be completed by the 50th day of the agreement, which was Sunday. Yet it has not happened," Hamas added, as it called on mediators and the international community to intervene and pressure Israel to honor its commitments and resume the second phase of talks. Hamas also said it showed flexibility in dealing with mediators.

Adam Boehler, the US envoy for hostage affairs, revealed in an inter-

view with Israeli broadcaster Kan News that Hamas had proposed a five to 10-year cease-fire deal and a full prisoner exchange in backroom talks.

Boehler also clarified that the series of interviews was meant to explain the US position. He also defended the talks by saying Washington is "not an agent of Israel".

US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff said there needed to be "a deadline" for the negotiations with Hamas. He was speaking during an interview with Fox News before traveling to the Middle East region where he is expected to join negotiators in Doha.

Families' demand

The Hostages and Missing Families Forum, meanwhile, has demanded that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu grant Israel's negotiating team in Doha a full mandate to reach an agreement on returning all hostages immediately and at once, according to a statement. It added that foot-dragging would cost the lives of more hostages.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich admitted during a news conference at the end of his party's weekly meeting in the Knesset in Jerusalem on Monday that a return to fighting would pose a challenge to the safety of the hostages, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Israel on Sunday announced it cut off electricity supply to Gaza in the run-up to the planned discussions in the Qatari capital despite a cease-fire and prisoner exchange agree-

ment. The previous week, it ordered the blocking of humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, increasing widespread hunger. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan condemned Israel's decision.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, noted it had been almost 10 days since Israel banned the entry of humanitarian aid and commercial supplies into Gaza.

Muhammad Hadi, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, has said that "international humanitarian law is clear" and Israel must allow "unimpeded entry" of aid supplies to Gaza.

Hunger spreads in Khan Younis as Israel keeps up the blockade on Gaza. Thousands of Palestinians are queuing for hours at bakeries across Gaza every day due to a lack of food, Al Jazeera reported.

Prime Minister of Palestine Mohammad Mustafa has called on the international community, particularly the European Union, to place pressure on Israel to open the Gaza borders, which have been sealed for almost 10 days.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, in a statement on Monday, warned the suspension of aid to Gaza by Israel, including the recent electricity cut, risks plunging the Palestinian enclave further into an "acute humanitarian emergency".

Al Jazeera reported that Israeli forces had pushed more Palestinians from their homes and killed at least one man during an overnight raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank.

AGENCIES CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY.

Syria govt, Kurdish-led militia reach deal

DAMASCUS — The Syrian interim government and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, on Monday reached an agreement on merging all civil and military institutions in the Kurdish-controlled region under state institutions, state news agency SANA reported.

The integration involves those institutions on border crossings, airports, as well as oil and gas fields, SANA reported, adding the agreement was finalized during a meeting earlier in the day between Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and the SDF's top commander Mazloum Abdi.

The agreement also includes provisions to guarantee the rights of all Syrians, the official recognition of the Kurdish community as an integral part of Syria, a nationwide cease-fire, and the protection for returning displaced Syrians, SANA reported.

"The executive committees will work to fully implement the agreement by the end of this year," SANA reported, citing a joint statement by the interim government and the SDF.

The deal is a major breakthrough that would bring most of Syria under the control of the interim government.

The deal, to be implemented by

the end of the year, would bring all border crossings with Iraq and Turkiye, airports and oil fields in the northeast under the central government's control.

Syria's new rulers are struggling to exert their authority across the country and reach political settlements with other minority communities, notably the Druze in southern Syria.

Earlier on Monday, Syria's government announced the end of the military operation against remnants of the ousted Bashar al-Assad govern-

ment and his family in the worst fighting since the end of the civil war.

A war monitor reported hundreds of civilians were killed in Alawite villages since Thursday as government forces sought to crush what they described as an insurrection.

In a Reuters interview, Sharaa said mass killings of Alawites were a threat to his mission to unite Syria, and promised to punish those responsible, including his own allies if necessary.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



People celebrate in Damascus on Tuesday after the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces signed a deal agreeing to integrate into Syria's new state institutions on Monday. KHALIL ASHAWI / REUTERS

Africa urged to enhance exchanges on development

By OTIATO OPALI
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In their quest to improve governance in Africa, political parties in the continent have been urged to explore the Communist Party of China's inclusive approach in order to attain progress. Mwaivu Kaluka, the National Chairman of the Communist Party Marxists — Kenya said for the past decade, African countries have achieved a lot through economic partnership with China and it is time they sought ideological exchanges on governance.

Mwaivu said through programs like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative, African countries have benefited immensely from China's support in infrastructure, trade and industry and it is time African political parties elevate this cooperation to the ideological level.

"It is worth noting that China's cooperation with Africa did not start recently, but during our liberation struggle from the West's colonialism. China actively supported freedom movements in Africa. We should move beyond economic cooperation to ideological cooperation to facilitate Africa's adoption of policies that are not as exploitative as those inherited from our former colonial powers," Mwaivu said.

Speaking ahead of the two sessions, the annual meetings of China's National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, he added that the CPC's system of democratic centralism creates a balance between people's participation and central governance — by involving the people through democracy while ensuring that the Party's policies are guided by a central ideology and structure.

Consultative approach

"If you take the two sessions for example, you will realize that it is an opportunity for Party officials, Party cadres and people from all over China to come together and review their policies and strategies and this ensures that everybody is brought on board. It is through this consultative approach that China was able to lift over 800 million people out of poverty," Mwaivu said.

Since independence, most African political parties have been operating under the Western idea of democracy, but Mwaivu said this system has promoted the exploitation and plunder of the continent and should be abandoned. He added that the Western model is not based on production but on exploitative financial tools.

"When you go to China, the leaders are always talking about increasing manufacturing, streamlining production and improving agriculture — because it is through production that we can develop capital. However, the fictitious capital promoted by the West has proved to be a failure," Mwaivu said.

He argued that the West falsely accuses China of leading Africa into a "debt trap" when in reality, Africa is unfairly indebted to Western countries through various instruments and unrealistic financial models.

As a political party, Mwaivu said his party has benefited from working closely with the CPC and its party officials have attended training sessions in China and held several exchange programs.

He encouraged the CPC to take a more prominent role in collaborating with African countries on political and governance training.

Online
See more by scanning the code.



WORLD

Ex-Philippine president Duterte petitions court over govt role in arrest

By PRIME SARMIENTO
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Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte submitted a petition to the Philippine Supreme Court on Tuesday, challenging the government's cooperation with the International Criminal Court in sending him to custody.

Shortly after arriving at the Manila International Airport on Tuesday morning from a weekend trip abroad, Duterte was taken into police custody.

The Philippine Presidential Communications Office said in a statement that Interpol's Manila office received a copy of the International Criminal Court arrest warrant earlier on Tuesday.

The country's prosecutor general presented the ICC notification, confirming the arrest warrant for Duterte, which accused him of "crimes against humanity."

Duterte questioned his detention. In a video released by his family on social media, the former president said: "What is the crime I committed? ... I was brought here not on my own volition. It's somebody else's."

Barely 12 hours after Duterte was detained, a chartered plane flew him to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, the Netherlands, on Tuesday night.

A social media post by one of his lawyers, Martin Delgra, showed a picture of a small plane that would take the 79-year-old to The Hague.

Delgra also told a group chat open to journalists on messaging app Viber that Duterte boarded the plane with three others.

The Presidential Communications Office has not issued a statement on Duterte's departure.

Veronica Duterte, the former president's youngest daughter, said on Instagram he had boarded the plane but the family had not been informed of its destination, accompanying the post with a picture of a small bus on an airfield.

"They took dad from us, put him on a plane and wouldn't say where to. People, wake up," she posted.

When asked about Duterte's detention, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo said, "This is a development which is being handled by other agencies, especially the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Philippine National Police and the Department of Justice."

Manalo made the statement on the sidelines of a meeting with his

Slovenian counterpart in Manila, the Philippine News Agency reported.

Enrico Gloria, an assistant professor of international relations at the University of the Philippines, told China Daily that the issuance of the arrest warrant was "a significant case, as it raises questions about accountability and justice on an international scale."

The Philippines unilaterally withdrew from the International Criminal Court in 2019 under the Duterte administration.

His successor, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., did not rejoin the ICC after being elected president in 2022 with Duterte's daughter, Sara Duterte, as vice-president.

In January last year, Marcos said during an interview with local media that the ICC has no jurisdiction over the Philippines and his government would not cooperate in the investigation into Duterte's "war on drugs."

Marcos altered his stance in November, saying his government would not block the ICC if Duterte agrees to be investigated.

The Philippines will not cooperate with the ICC but it has obligations with Interpol, he added.

Responding to reports on Duterte's arrest, China said on Tuesday it is closely monitoring the developments.

"China has noticed the relevant news and is closely following the developments," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a daily news conference.

Mao said China has always maintained that the ICC should strictly follow the principle of complementarity in jurisdiction.

The ICC should "exercise its powers prudently in accordance with the law and avoid politicization and double standards", she added.

Arie Afriansyah, a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Indonesia, told China Daily that the ICC's arrest would only be possible if Manila allows it and waives any immunity to the person.

"An investigation does not necessarily lead to an arrest warrant. If the prosecutor has enough evidence, it would issue an arrest warrant. This situation will only prove how (the) national state has a critical role in making the arrest possible," Arie said.

Jan Yumul in Hong Kong, Zhang Yunbi in Beijing, Xinhua and agencies contributed to this story.



Delegations from Ukraine and the United States, accompanied by Saudi Arabian officials, hold a meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday. WANG DONGZHEN / XINHUA

Saudi talks focus on Ukraine concessions

Kyiv seeks partial truce, minerals deal amid major drone attack on Moscow

By CUI HAIPEI in Dubai, UAE
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High-level delegations from Ukraine and the United States held talks in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, with Kyiv ready to sign a key minerals deal with the Donald Trump administration and poised to propose a partial cease-fire with Moscow — in an effort to mend ties and restore support from Washington.

The three-day meeting in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah started as the US was gauging if Ukraine is willing to make concessions for Trump's efforts to swiftly end Europe's biggest conflict since World War II. Since taking office in January, the US president has engaged directly with Russia, while halting military assistance to and intelligence sharing with Ukraine.

Ukrainian presidency chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, who is part of the Ukrainian delegation, said the discussions had begun positively. "The meeting with the US team started very constructively, we continue our work," he wrote on X.

China supports all efforts conducive to a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis and hopes all parties can reach a just, lasting and acceptable solution, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Tuesday.

China is willing to continue to work with the international community to play a constructive role in the political settlement of the crisis, she told a news briefing in Beijing.

However, Ukraine on Tuesday launched its biggest drone attack on Moscow to date, deploying at least 91 drones, killing at least three people, injuring 18 others and causing a short shutdown of the Russian capital's four airports, according to Russian officials.

The Jeddah talks were expected to also focus on a minerals deal between the US and Ukraine. Trump has framed the deal as key to continued US support and compensation for \$65 billion in US military aid to Ukraine in three years.

Previous row

On Feb 28, Trump and Vice-President JD Vance accused Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky of avoiding a cease-fire with Russia, and of being ungrateful to the US and Trump for supplying military and other assistance.

Zelensky later said he is still willing to sign the deal on critical minerals, though US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said it would not be the focus of Tuesday's meeting.

Two senior Ukrainian officials said earlier their delegation is ready to sign the minerals accord and will propose a partial cease-

fire covering the Black Sea and long-range missile strikes, as well as the release of prisoners.

Rubio signaled that Trump would likely be pleased by such a proposal. "We have to understand the Ukrainian position and have a general idea of what concessions they'd be willing to make. You're not going to get a cease-fire and an end to this war unless both sides make concessions," he told reporters.

However, Rubio declined to specify the concessions each side has to make, but said Kyiv would have difficulty reclaiming all of its lost territory. "The Russians can't conquer all of Ukraine, and obviously it'll be very difficult for an any reasonable time period to sort of force the Russians back all the way to where they were in 2014," he said.

Rubio and Zelensky landed a few hours apart on Monday in Saudi Arabia, but did not meet. They both met with the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday.

According to a joint statement published on Tuesday by the Saudi state news agency, the crown prince and Zelensky discussed efforts to achieve "sustainable, fair, and comprehensive" peace in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Trump's Middle East Special Envoy Steve Witkoff plans to visit Moscow to meet President Vladimir Putin, a person briefed on the plans said on Monday.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Virgin eyes train routes from UK to EU capitals

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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Businessman Richard Branson's Virgin Group is seeking to raise 700 million pounds (\$905 million) in a bid to launch a rival train service to current monopoly holder Eurostar on routes between the United Kingdom and mainland Europe.

The Virgin Group began in the music industry but has grown to include finance, airlines, and the running of intercity train services across the UK. It is understood that it would initially want to run rival services to those of Eurostar — from London to Paris and Brussels by the end of the decade, adding Amsterdam at a later date.

"The cross-Channel route is ripe for change and would benefit from competition," said a Virgin Group representative. "While Virgin is not committing to launching a service just yet, we are seeking investment from like-minded partners to invest alongside Virgin and we are delighted with the progress made so far."

Currently, all passenger services between London St. Pancras International and cities including Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam are run by Eurostar, as has been the case since November 1994. It makes the journey under the sea through the Channel Tunnel, which was completed in the same year, after six years of construction work.

There is also a separate rail service carrying road vehicles, called Euro-tunnel Le Shuttle, between Folkestone, England, and Calais, France.

In December, Robert Sinclair, chief executive of London St. Pancras High-speed, which owns the terminus, told the Financial Times that it was keen to double passenger numbers.

"Our high-speed line has 50 percent spare capacity ... There's a significant opportunity that is sitting there waiting underutilized," he said.

Potential new player

Another potential new player in services between London and other European capitals is the Spanish EVOlyn group, which announced in October 2023 that it wanted to take on Eurostar's monopoly. The company's CEO Jorge Cosmen told the House of Commons' All-Party Parliamentary Rail Group that his group could offer more than \$1 billion of investment.

However, any company seeking to challenge Eurostar's monopoly faces a problem over access to the Temple Mills depot in east London, where Eurostar trains are parked and maintained.

The British government's Office of Rail and Road has commissioned an independent study, which is due to report back soon, into the capacity of the facility, because Eurostar has said it is already full.

Project leader for the Virgin Group, Phil Whittingham, told The Daily Telegraph the company did not think "the economics would work for three operators competing" and that it was ready to move as soon as the independent study delivered its verdict.

Australian anti-China think tank decried

By ZHAO JIA
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China on Tuesday strongly criticized the Australian Strategic Policy Institute for fabricating and spreading lies about China, following the think tank's suspension of its anti-China "research" because of funding cuts from the United States.

An ASPI analyst recently posted on social media that the freezing of US aid had left the organization without sufficient anti-China materials, making it difficult to produce content attacking China while urging the US or other entities to immediately resume funding for its anti-China operations.

Speaking at a daily news briefing,

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the post was a self-exposure of the ASPI's own scandal, once again revealing its "hypocritical anti-China nature" of manufacturing lies and smearing China under US sponsorship.

"There is no credibility to speak of for this so-called institute," she said, adding the ASPI has received

long-term funding from the US Department of Defense, diplomatic agencies, and arms manufacturers, serving the interests of its financial backers.

The Wall Street Journal reported that US government grants have accounted for roughly 10 to 12 percent of the ASPI's funding and financed about 70 percent of its China research since 2019.

In its latest annual report, the ASPI said it received nearly \$1.9 million in US State Department grants

during the 2022-23 financial year.

Mao said the ASPI's "research findings" lack basic factual grounding, violate the professional ethics expected of academic research, and have repeatedly been exposed as disinformation.

She said she hoped that all sections of Australian society and the international community can distinguish right from wrong and collectively denounce and resist the ASPI's disgraceful acts of fabricating and spreading false information.

HOW MUCH DOES A DROP OF



WATER MEAN TO AQUATIC LIFE?



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Policies hint at new phase of opening-up

By ZHONG NAN
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China's recently announced policies and development direction, including those from the two sessions, signal a new phase of high-standard opening-up marked by "mutual empowerment", according to both domestic and multinational companies.

They said on Tuesday that "mutual empowerment" is a two-way process in which foreign companies benefit from China's vast market and innovation strength, while Chinese exporters and technology firms gain from globalization and international cooperation. This fosters competition, collaboration and shared benefits in a dynamic market.

These developments are being supported by concrete policy measures.

According to this year's Government Work Report, China will ensure national treatment for foreign-funded enterprises in fields such as access to production factors, license applications, standards setting and government procurement.

China will bolster policies for stabilizing foreign trade and support enterprises in securing orders and exploring new markets, as well as cultivate new growth drivers, such as green trade and digital trade, said the report.

"These policies will create a more favorable environment for foreign investment and business operations in China," said Dereck Ji, managing partner for China at Belgium-based ADL Consulting.

For example, effectively ensuring the national treatment of foreign-funded enterprises in terms of factor acquisition will help attract more foreign capital into the Chinese market and promote the effective integration and optimal allocation of domestic and international resources, Ji said.

Chinese companies are at the forefront of cross-industry data collaboration, large-scale AI implementation and optimizing agile innovation processes, creating favorable conditions for their own growth and attracting global capital, he noted.

Denis Depoux, global managing director at German consultancy Roland Berger, expressed a similar view.

With the announcement of several policy measures, China's reaffirmed commitment to expanding high-standard opening-up demonstrates consistency and provides assurance. This is critical in shaping foreign investment sentiment for future decisionmaking and planning, Depoux said.

At the same time, the globalization of Chinese companies has become an important trend, he said.

"Chinese companies are globalizing and seeking new international markets, in both developed and emerging markets," he said, urging the government to further support domestic businesses in expanding globally by deepening multilateral, bilateral and regional economic cooperation.

Suzhou Huaxing Optoelectronics Technology Co Ltd, an LCD (liquid crystal display) panel and component manufacturer based in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, has been expanding its presence in emerging markets to mitigate the effect of geopolitical complexities. Its products have reached 15 countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

According to data from Suzhou Industrial Park Customs, a local branch of Nanjing Customs, the Chinese company's exports of electro-mechanical products totaled 568 million yuan (\$78.39 million) in the first two months of 2025, marking a 33 percent year-on-year increase.

Lu Yu, Suzhou Huaxing's Customs affairs manager, noted that the company's LCD exports to India and Vietnam have surged significantly since the beginning of this year.

Wahl Clipper Ningbo Ltd, an overseas subsidiary of the United States-based Wahl Clipper Corp and a household appliances manufacturer in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, saw its exports, including electric scissors and hair dryers, jump 24 percent on a yearly basis to 810 million yuan in 2024, data from Ningbo Customs showed.

China's vast consumer base provides global companies with a broad market space, while its accelerated digital transformation offers new opportunities for them to develop greener and more advanced products, said Huang Kai, head of the US company's supply chain management unit.



Shoppers browse digital products offering trade-in subsidies at a store in Hefei, Anhui province.
CHEN SANHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Boosting spending appetites tops agenda

Expanded bond issuances, enhanced trade-in incentives key to consumption

By WANG KEJU
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China has largely scaled up its fiscal firepower toward consumption-boosting initiatives — a top priority on the country's policy agenda for the year ahead — in order to offset sluggish homebuying appetites and possible shocks to overseas demand, analysts said.

Along with a consumer goods trade-in program, policymakers will also increase fiscal spending on public services to alleviate financial burdens on households and empower them with greater purchasing power, thus creating necessary conditions for consumption-led growth, they added.

China announced last week in its Government Work Report that it would double ultra-long term special treasury bonds earmarked for its consumer goods trade-in program to 300 billion yuan (\$41.39 billion) this year, which was within market expectations.

The incentives, an expansion from last year's 150 billion yuan program launched in March 2024, will cover 15-20 percent of the purchase price for a wider range of select products, including mid-range smartphones, home appliances and new energy vehicles.

In early January, the Ministry of Finance had already front-loaded 81 billion yuan in fiscal funding for this year's trade-in program.

Chen Changsheng, deputy director of the Research Office of the State Council, the country's Cabinet, said, "China faces rising external uncertainty and subdued domestic demand, particularly in the tepid consumption sector."

The current macroeconomic environment calls for a more robust policy response to address the challenge of insufficient overall demand, with consumption being a key concern, Chen said.

"The expanded bond issuance and enhanced trade-in incentives will provide a much-needed boost to consumption and help drive a moderate rebound in inflation," said Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International.

These supportive policies could help propel the year-on-year growth of total retail sales of consumer goods from 3.5 percent in 2024 to around 5.5 percent this year, Wang said, adding, "We cannot rule out the possibility of further intensification of fiscal policies to boost consumption in the coming period."

Minister of Finance Lan Fǎn said at a news conference on Thursday, "China has sufficient fiscal policy tools and ample flexibility to effectively respond to potential domestic and external uncertainties."

Data from the Ministry of Commerce showed on Thursday that, as of March 5, the government had received over 700,000 applications for vehicle replacements.

Meanwhile, over 9.4 million consumers had purchased over 12 million units of home appliances under the trade-in program, while 34 million consumers had applied for subsidies on over 42 million digital products, including smartphones, according to the ministry.

"We believe that domestic consumption in China will gradually recover," said Kelly Zhang, general manager of Bimbo China, adding

that the country's efforts to stimulate domestic consumption began to show positive results from the end of last year.

This will give Grupo Bimbo, a Mexican multinational food company, confidence to deepen its investment in China, helping speed up geographic and category expansion in the market, Zhang said.

"With its 1.4 billion population, China's market presents unparalleled potential for bakery industry growth."

China's policymakers are not only focused on stimulating short-term consumption through the trade-in program, but also increasing fiscal spending in areas such as eldercare, healthcare, employment and education to provide a solid foundation for transitioning to a consumption-driven economic model, said Yang Zhiyong, president of the Chinese Academy of Fiscal Sciences.

"More funds and resources will be used to serve the people and meet their needs. This will help create more jobs, increase people's incomes and reduce their burdens, and provide more incentives to stimulate consumption," Yang said, citing the Government Work Report.

"China has been allocating over 70 percent of its fiscal expenditure to public service sectors directly impacting people's livelihoods over the past few years. This year, China has increased its fiscal deficit to GDP ratio to 4 percent, the highest on record, allowing for a significant expansion in government spending on public services. This will alleviate the financial strain on households, which in turn boosts their overall purchasing power over the long run," Yang said.

Ouyang Shijia contributed to this story.

Driverless tech needs more local govt say

By CHENG YU
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China should grant more autonomy to local governments to expand autonomous driving and streamline regulatory approvals to accelerate commercialization, said a national political adviser on the sidelines of the two sessions, which ended on Tuesday.

The comments were made as the autonomous driving sector has been developing rapidly, both at home and abroad. United States electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc also strives to expand its full-self driving functions in China.

Zhong Zhanhui, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and a renowned professor of wireless communication at Beijing Jiaotong University, said, "China should fully empower qualified localities to conduct pilot demonstrations, expand support for broader applications across more regions and scenarios, and simplify unnecessary procedures for large-scale deployment."

Zhong said some cities have already launched commercial pilot projects, but the expansion of autonomous vehicle fleets and road network coverage has slowed for various reasons.

"From the supervisory level, some approval processes are still lengthy. Additionally, the boundaries for large-scale commercialization need to be clearly defined," he added.

For example, regulations on road testing and demonstration applications of intelligent connected vehicles allowed local governments to set their own implementation rules, but failed to clarify the boundary between demonstration applications and full-scale commercial operations.

"Also, some key questions remain unanswered, such as how many vehicles can be included in pilot programs and how to define pricing standards. Many regions are still feeling their way forward," he said.

Zhong therefore called for the quick revision and implementation of the law at the national level to grant autonomous driving a proper legal status, clearly define the rights and responsibilities of AI drivers, and better protect the interests of all stakeholders involved in autonomous driving.

He also suggested defining clear risk boundaries for large-scale commercial applications to ease concerns from both government and business.

In China, more than 60 provinces, cities and regions have released guidelines for testing and demonstrations, 35,000 kilometers of roads have been opened for testing, and 10,000 km have been upgraded to accommodate intelligent vehicles in the country.

To date, 16,000 autonomous vehicle test licenses have been issued. As public roads are opened further and coverage increases, public acceptance of autonomous driving has grown. In Wuhan, Hubei province, for example, over 90 percent of those surveyed believe autonomous driving is safer than human driving.

Meanwhile, the US is also accelerating the development of autonomous driving. Waymo, the autonomous driving unit of Google, now provides 175,000 paid rides per week and plans to expand its autonomous vehicle testing to 10 additional US cities by 2025.

Zhong said: "The race in this cutting-edge field is not about technological routes, but about the speed and scale of real-world applications. The larger the application scale, the sooner problems can be identified and solved, which in turn accelerates technological iteration."

Briefly

Chinese mainland shares close higher

Chinese mainland stocks closed higher on Tuesday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index up 0.41 percent to 3379.83 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 0.33 percent higher at 10861.16 points. The combined turnover of these two indexes stood at about 1.48 trillion yuan (\$206.3 billion), down from 1.51 trillion yuan the previous trading day.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 8 pips to 7.1741 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

NEV brands gaining ground in Europe

By LI FUSHENG
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Chinese car manufacturers are gaining more ground in Europe with their innovative products and long-term market approaches.

Sales of China's largest new energy vehicle maker BYD skyrocketed in the United Kingdom by 550.8 percent to 1,614 units in January, seizing 1.2 percent of the country's overall vehicle market share.

It was the first time that the Warren Buffett-backed carmaker had outsold Tesla on a monthly basis, which saw its sales fall 8 percent to 1,458 in the same month, said the country's Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

BYD's share in the electric vehicle market in Western Europe, including the UK, was 2 percent last year, according to Schmidt Automotive Research.

SAIC's sales across Europe surged by 37 percent year-on-year in January, with its MG brand becoming one of the fastest-growing automakers in the region, according to the Europe-

an Automobile Manufacturers' Association.

The rise of Chinese carmakers' popularity in Europe is driven by cutting-edge technology and a deep understanding of consumer needs, said analysts.

BYD, for instance, has made waves with its Blade battery, which offers superior safety and energy density compared to conventional EV batteries.

This technology has not only enhanced the performance of its vehicles, but also addressed safety concerns that have long plagued the EV industry.

Similarly, Nio has introduced a battery-as-a-service model, allowing customers to purchase cars without batteries and subscribe to battery-swapping services instead.

This approach has proved particularly appealing in Europe, where cost-conscious consumers are looking for flexible and affordable EV ownership options.

Xpeng is the first Chinese startup to achieve deliveries of over 10,000 vehicles in Europe. CEO He Xiaopeng said the company is bringing its intelligent driving technology to the global market.

"We hope that when overseas car owners first encounter Chinese NEVs, they will be impressed by the 'intelligent and technological leadership' rather than just a monotonous and joyless vehicle," he said.

Europe's push toward electrification has created a fertile ground for Chinese automakers. The European Union's ambitious target to phase out internal combustion engines by 2035 has accelerated the adoption of EVs.

In January, electric vehicles in the EU totaled 124,341 units, accounting for 15 percent of the market, up from 10.9 percent in January 2024, according to statistics from the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association.

Hybrid vehicles surged ahead to nearly 34.9 percent of the market, once again becoming the most popular choice among EU car buyers, said the association.

Chinese automakers have also adopted a localized approach to production and marketing, which



A BYD vehicle on display during an auto expo in Paris, France last year. GAO JING / XINHUA

allows them to better meet the demands of local customers while alleviating the financial pressure from the EU's extra tariffs on China-made EVs that went into effect in October.

BYD is building a manufacturing facility in Hungary that is set to begin production by the end of 2025.

Stella Li, BYD's executive vice-president, said the company is also bringing other options to Europe like plug-in hybrids, and plans to launch its premium Denza brand in the con-

continent later this year.

MG, a brand with historical ties to the UK, has leveraged its heritage to build trust and recognition. The company's SUVs, such as the MG ZS EV, have ranked among the top-selling models in countries like the UK and Spain.

Chery has also announced plans to start production in Spain, while startup Leapmotor has started production of its electric models in Poland via a joint venture with its European partner Stellantis.

COMMENT

Editorials

Robust legislative process underpins development achievements and progress

It is no coincidence that those disparaging the National People's Congress and almost all Chinese State organs as rubber-stamp agencies are also those peddling the "China threat" theory that China will leverage its fast-growing national strengths to "threaten" the "civilized world". Or that while trying to get people to swallow their "China collapse" forecast, they shun the question of how a country with such a supposedly rigid and dysfunctional system can continually achieve its obvious and remarkable development achievements.

If the anti-China parrots bothered to take a look at the packed and meaningful agenda of the annual session of the NPC, the country's top legislature, they would have a more objective view on the answer to the question they sidestep.

For instance, in its closing meeting in Beijing on Tuesday afternoon, the third session of the 14th NPC voted on a draft resolution on the Government Work Report, a draft decision on amending the Law on Deputies to the NPC and to the Local People's Congresses at Various Levels, a draft resolution on the implementation of the 2024 plan for national economic and social development and the 2025 plan for national economic and social development, a draft resolution on the execution of the central and local budgets for 2024 and the central and local budgets for 2025, and draft resolutions on the work reports of the NPC Standing Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

A look into any of these documents present on each of the lawmakers' desks would indicate that China's political system is by no means what the China vultures try to portray to the world. By exercising legislative power, making decisions on major issues, and supervising other State organs, the NPC plays a vital role in the nation's political system.

The NPC is obliged to ensure the country's laws and legal system meet the needs of the time. In the process of development, the rule of law has been established as a fundamental principle for the governance of the country.

Over the past year, the 14th NPC Standing Committee reviewed 39 bills and passed 24 of them, including six laws, 14 amendments to laws, and four decisions on legal and major issues, laying a solid foundation for the country's pursuit of high-quality development.

For instance, it is working on formalizing a unified energy law to consolidate existing regulations and address emerging challenges in the energy sector to better safeguard national energy security and promote the country's green and low-carbon transformation. It has revised the Mineral Resources Law to promote the rational utilization of mineral resources and development of the sector. It has also reviewed the draft financial stability law and the draft revision to the Anti-Unfair Competition Law, which are aimed at promoting the development of new quality productive forces and establishing a new development pattern.

This year marks the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and the drawing up of the 15th (2026-30), which are key components of China's long-term vision to achieve socialist modernization by 2035 and become a global leader in innovation and technology by mid-century.

The 2025 economic development plan is the stepping stone for the broader strategy to transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a high-tech, innovation-driven economy while addressing the country's social and environmental challenges. The success of these efforts will depend on both domestic reforms, such as supply-side structural reforms and those of the financial and healthcare sectors, and China's ability to overcome the economic headwinds and geopolitical dynamics.

The annual session of the 14th NPC exemplified China's commitment to the country's whole-process people's democracy. As the nation embarks on the next phase of its development journey — guided by the principles of innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity, and the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core — the NPC Standing Committee will continue to carry out the robust legislative processes that have underpinned the country's development achievements and progress so far, so as to ensure that the 15th Five-Year Plan gets off to a good start.

Port fees, another foot-shooting proposal

China is a major player in the global maritime sector. That the United States has now turned its fire on China's shipbuilding and maritime shipping sector is another indication that the US administration is relentlessly intensifying its bid to suppress China's development.

In a move that is expected to create chaos in the world ocean shipping industry, and hugely disrupt global trade flows and supply chains, the administration has proposed steep new fees on Chinese-built and Chinese-operated ships docking at US ports.

US President Donald Trump is reportedly drafting an executive order that would impose fees on any vessel that enters a US port, "regardless of where it was built or flagged, if that vessel is part of a fleet that includes vessels built or flagged in the PRC." The US would also impose tariffs on Chinese cargo-handling equipment, according to the draft order.

The document draws from a US Trade Representative's Office proposal last month to levy fees of up to \$1.5 million on Chinese-built vessels entering US ports after an investigation by the USTR concluded that China has been using "unfair policies and practices" to dominate the shipbuilding industry and global maritime and logistics sectors, which "burdens or restricts US commerce".

But China's shipbuilding industry has led the world for more than a decade in terms of shipbuilding completion volume, new orders received and backlog orders, thanks to the country's complete industry chain, strong manufacturing capability, and breakthroughs in technological innovation. The advancement of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road has given additional momentum to the fast growth of its shipbuilding industry.

The US, on the other hand, has seen its ranking in commercial shipbuilding decline from No 1 in 1975 to 19th. As former trade representative Katherine Tai bemoaned, the US builds "less than five ships each year, while the PRC is building more than 1,700 ships."

Yet it is nonsensical to attribute the US' competitive failure to so-called unfair practices by China. The US' claims that the country "displaces foreign firms, deprives market-oriented businesses of commercial opportunities, and creates economic security risks" are groundless and instead reflect the "tough-on-China" strategy the US has adopted because of its peer pressure anxieties.

The World Shipping Council estimates the USTR's proposed port fees "could add \$600-\$800 per container" with the additional costs to be inevitably passed on to the end consumers, which means it is the US businesses and consumers that will have to pay the price of increased shipping costs. They are also likely to push inflation higher and further harm the US economy, which is already suffering the self-inflicted wounds from the administration's wanton weaponization of tariffs.

According to the WSC, the fees, if imposed, would amount to an additional tax on US consumers of up to \$30 billion annually.

It is unrealistic for the US administration to expect that the US will be able to exclude Chinese-built ships from its ports without hurting the US' own trade interests, or for potential ship buyers to switch to non-Chinese shipyards to avoid the costs proposed by the US, given that Chinese shipbuilders account for more than half of all merchant vessel cargo capacity produced globally each year.

There is also the question of whether the administration will impose the fees on a US entity that owns or operates a US-flagged vessel built in China, or US operators that have purchased ships from Chinese shipyards. Not to mention that the move may also violate the US' Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation treaties.

If the US pushes ahead with its planned port fees, the damage will be multiple times that caused by the disruptions to commercial shipping in the Red Sea due to attacks on merchant ships by Yemen's Houthis militants last year. The US can also expect China taking countermeasures to safeguard its own shipbuilding industry's legitimate rights and interests.

The US really should think twice before resorting to yet more hooliganism to try and gain a competitive edge.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Upcoming Beijing meeting can give fresh spur to gender equality

Thirty years ago, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was a turning point in the global fight for gender equality. The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action set a comprehensive agenda for women's rights. As China prepares to host another global women's summit later this year, it is a fitting moment to reflect on the challenges that remain.

Since that conference in Beijing, China has diligently integrated the principle of gender equality into its national policies. Chinese women have seen significant improvements in education, health and economic participation. For instance, women now constitute 50 percent of higher education students and over 45 percent of the scientific workforce, showcasing their growing role in shaping the nation's future.

Moreover, China's legal framework has been strengthened to protect

women's rights. The enactment of the Women's Rights Protection Law and the inclusion of gender equality in the national development agenda underscore the government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for women.

In February, a panel discussion themed on commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was held at the 58th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The upcoming global women's conference in Beijing is expected to reignite international commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, gender-based violence, unequal pay, underrepresentation in leadership positions, a lack of career opportunities and gender stereotypes and biases continue to hinder women's full participation in society. In China, women still face societal

expectations that prioritize family roles over professional aspirations.

To address these issues, a multi-faceted approach is needed. Strengthening legal protection, promoting gender-sensitive policies and fostering a culture of equality are essential. Additionally, empowering women through education and economic opportunities is critical to achieve sustainable development.

Clearly, the journey toward gender equality is far from over. By continuing to champion women's rights and fostering international collaboration, China can lead the way in building a more equitable and inclusive world. In the words of the Beijing Declaration, "Women's rights are human rights." Let us honor this legacy by ensuring that every woman and girl has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the world.

—ZHANG XI, CHINA DAILY

Even anti-China think tanks left in the lurch

After US President Donald Trump signed an executive order, on Jan 20, announcing the suspension of all foreign aid programs for a period of 90 days, stemming the tide of "international aid", certain "think tanks" that were using the money for anti-China "research" are suddenly finding themselves in the lurch.

Funding from US institutions such as the State Department, the US Agency for International Development and the National Endowment for Democracy has been suspended.

Among those hit by the decision is the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, which recently complained to The Wall Street Journal that the US government's suspension of funding has prompted them to stop their "research" and "data" projects related

to China. These projects, worth approximately \$1.2 million, focused on cybersecurity and technology issues.

The topics the ASPI conducted research on — such as "forced labor" in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region — show how their conclusions were foregone. China and local officials have more than once debunked the "forced labor" accusations with facts, but the think tanks have stuck to their prejudices and continued reaching "conclusions" although they lacked any proof.

For long it has been pointed out that such research institutes received money from certain US agencies precisely because they would dutifully demonize China.

Which is why they went about their jobs without even once visiting Xinji-

ang despite the local government always extending open invitations to visit the place and see for themselves. Now, with the funding from certain US agencies halted, their business is no longer going to be sustainable.

If these think tanks want to continue their research, maybe they should change their approach.

China is a huge and varied topic that requires serious academic research, and the suspension of funding gives such think tanks an opportunity to get rid of their colored glasses and do some unbiased, serious research to arrive at fair instead of foregone conclusions.

That way their reports can be unbiased and they may not face problems finding funding.

—ZHANG ZHOUIXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

US still looking to exploit Ukraine crisis

Peace is anything but the real motive for Donald Trump's help in brokering an end to the Gaza conflict and the Ukraine crisis. The pursuit of peace is only a means for the US president and his colleagues to cover up their attempts to maximize the United States' interests and, if necessary, to use as a weapon to attack any party questioning their endeavors.

In Trump's showdown with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Feb 28, whenever the latter's remarks showed the possibility of exposing the US' impure purpose with its so-called mediating efforts, Trump and his deputy jumped in to stop the Ukrainian leader. Wielding their anti-peace baton against him they misled the viewers by accusing him of being ungrateful to the US for its assistance.

Although the US side is expected to repeat that trick in the planned meeting between US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Zelenskyy in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, what has happened

since the last meeting between the two sides might prompt both sides to fine-tune their approaches.

Over the past nearly two weeks, Europe has reaffirmed its commitment to protect Ukraine, although pressing Kyiv to keep its door open to the US' mediation efforts; Russia has markedly intensified its offensives against Ukrainian targets after the US suspended its military and intelligence assistance to Kyiv; and the Trump administration is facing a strong backlash at home and abroad against some of its domestic and foreign policies.

No wonder Rubio said before the Jeddah meeting "We're not going to be sitting in a room drawing lines on a map but just get a general sense of what concessions are in the realm of the possible for them (Ukrainians)", adding both Russia and Ukraine need to "do difficult things", and securing a deal on Ukraine's mineral resources was not the primary focus of Tuesday's talks.

While Zelenskyy wrote in a social media posting late Monday "Strong positions on the front line and strong diplomacy must work together to achieve a just and lasting peace".

Meanwhile, Trump has voiced interest in making continued military aid conditional on access to Ukraine's mineral resources.

Rubio told a reporter "There's still more details to work out ... And that would take a little bit more time" after meeting with Saudi officials on Monday. That means Washington has realized the process to end the crisis might take longer than it previously thought.

That White House Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff is planning to travel to Moscow later this week for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin also indicates the resolution to the Ukraine crisis not only involves multiple parties but also the state of other burning issues in today's world.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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GLOBAL VIEWS

PAUL FRIMPONG

Intercontinental development driver

The AfCFTA has the potential to revolutionize the continent's economic landscape, but for one handicap — inadequate infrastructure

Africa is undergoing a significant transformation driven by aspirations for sustainable economic growth, industrialization and regional integration. The African Union's Agenda 2063, a strategic framework for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse by 2063, is central to this vision. A key component of Agenda 2063 is the African Continental Free Trade Area, a landmark trade agreement aimed at eliminating barriers and creating a single market for Africa. By enhancing intra-African trade, particularly in value-added goods and services, the AfCFTA has the potential to revolutionize Africa's economic landscape. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, weak transportation networks and inefficient border facilities hinder its full implementation. Addressing these issues requires substantial investment in infrastructure development, a priority that aligns with the objectives of China's Belt and Road Initiative.



The BRI has emerged as a key player in supporting Africa's modernization. With investments in transport, energy, telecommunications and industrial zones, the BRI closely aligns with the AU's Agenda 2063 and AfCFTA objectives. Infrastructure projects under the BRI framework contribute to key Agenda 2063 initiatives such as the African Integrated High Speed Railway Network, the Grand Inga Dam project and the Single African Air Transport Market. By improving connectivity, trade logistics and industrial capacity, the BRI fosters

deeper regional integration and economic cooperation.

One of the most notable BRI projects in Africa is the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, which has significantly improved transportation between Kenya's port city of Mombasa and its capital, Nairobi. This railway has reduced travel time, lowered freight costs, and enhanced trade efficiency, demonstrating the tangible impact of the BRI in advancing Africa's infrastructure and regional integration goals. Other investments in energy, logistics and technology further reinforce Africa's aspirations for industrialization and economic diversification.

Infrastructure projects under the BRI framework contribute to Africa's economic transformation by facilitating trade, energy security and digital inclusion. In the energy sector, China has invested in renewable projects such as Kenya's Garissa Solar Plant, which supports Africa's transition to a low-carbon economy. Such projects not only enhance energy security but also contribute to climate resilience, a key aspiration under Agenda 2063.

The digital economy is another area where China's investments are making a significant impact. Huawei's expansion of 4G and 5G networks across Africa has improved internet connectivity, enabling digital trade, fintech innovations and e-commerce growth. By fostering digital inclusion, these projects empower African youth, drive entrepreneurship and create opportunities for participation in the global digital economy.

Beyond physical and digital infrastructure, China's cooperation with Africa extends to human capital development. Training programs and vocational initiatives

equip African youth with the technical skills necessary for realizing industrialization and economic competitiveness. Investments in education and workforce development not only address unemployment challenges but also build Africa's self-reliance and capacity to manage large-scale projects in the future.

Despite substantial progress, Africa still faces major infrastructure deficits that hinder full economic integration. To enhance connectivity and facilitate regional trade, strategic actions are needed. First, harmonized regional infrastructure planning led by the AU and regional economic communities can ensure projects align with continental development objectives. Second, leveraging public-private partnerships can mobilize both public and private sector investments, reducing financial burdens on governments. Additionally, multilateral cooperation with institutions such as the African Development Bank can provide funding and technical support for large-scale projects. Finally, prioritizing sustainable and green infrastructure development ensures long-term benefits, particularly in sectors such as transportation, energy and urban development. By integrating sustainability into infrastructure projects, Africa can achieve economic growth while addressing environmental challenges.

A critical aspect of the Africa-China partnership is the debate surrounding debt sustainability. The narrative of so-called debt trap diplomacy suggests that China deliberately burdens African nations with unsustainable debt to gain influence. However, empirical data challenges this assertion.

According to the African Development Bank, China accounts for only 12 percent to 15 percent of Africa's total external debt, with a significant portion owed to multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Moreover, China has demonstrated flexibility in debt restructuring, as seen in Zambia, where debt payments have been deferred multiple times without asset seizures. Similarly, allegations of China seizing Uganda's Entebbe International Airport have been refuted by both Chinese and Ugandan officials. Unlike Western lenders that impose strict conditions, China often structures loans with renegotiation terms, providing African nations with financial flexibility.

Debt sustainability ultimately depends on responsible borrowing, transparent agreements and effective utilization of funds. African governments must strengthen governance frameworks and financial accountability to ensure that borrowed funds drive economic growth rather than exacerbating fiscal vulnerabilities. Additionally, establishing better international financial mechanisms can reduce dependency on external borrowing and enhance Africa's economic resilience.

China's path to modernization offers valuable experiences for Africa, particularly in strategic planning, investment in human capital, and technology-driven growth. One of China's key strategies was its focus on long-term development planning, prioritizing infrastructure, industrialization, and technological advancement. Africa can adopt a similar approach by formulating clear industrial policies, investing in research and develop-



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

ment, and fostering innovation-driven economies.

Another experience is the emphasis on education and skills development. China's rapid economic transformation was fueled by a well-educated workforce equipped with technical expertise. Africa must invest in education, vocational training, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields to build a competitive labor force capable of driving industrialization and digital innovation.

Furthermore, China's success in creating special economic zones can serve as a model for Africa's industrialization. By establishing SEZs, Africa can attract foreign direct investment, promote export-oriented industries, and create employment opportunities. Strengthening partnerships with China to develop SEZs and industrial parks can accelerate Africa's manufacturing sector and reduce reliance on raw material exports. In conclusion, Africa's path to

modernization hinges on strategic partnerships, industrialization and infrastructure connectivity. The BRI aligns with Africa's long-term vision under Agenda 2063 and AfCFTA by supporting economic integration, energy development and digital transformation. Despite concerns surrounding debt, empirical data highlight the mutual benefits of China-Africa cooperation. Experiences from China's modernization journey underscore the importance of strategic planning, investment in human capital, and technology-driven growth. By leveraging these insights, Africa can achieve sustainable and inclusive development, paving the way for a prosperous future.

The author is founder and executive director of the Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory, an Accra-based think tank. 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.

FIKRESUS AMAHAZION

Power of good

Potential for green energy cooperation between China and Africa is immense as the world transitions to a sustainable energy future

The Africa-China Dar es Salaam Consensus, issued at the 13th meeting of the China-Africa Think Tanks Forum in March 2024, outlines strategies for addressing global challenges and fostering deeper cooperation between the two sides. The first-year anniversary of this milestone document offers a valuable opportunity to further explore its key dimensions, particularly in the realm of green energy cooperation.



The future of green energy collaboration between China and Africa carries profound implications, not just for both sides but for the entire planet. With climate change posing one of the most pressing global threats, the urgency for sustainable energy solutions cannot be overstated.

China and Africa are uniquely positioned to lead the quest for a more sustainable world. Together, they possess the resources, technology and human capital to reshape the global energy landscape. Beyond just a bilateral endeavor, green energy cooperation between China and Africa could serve as a model for international collaboration, demonstrating how cross-regional partnerships can address global challenges.

China and Africa are ideal green energy development partners and their cooperation in this field can thrive for many good reasons. First, China and Africa possess complementary strengths, making them natural partners in the pursuit of green energy. On the one hand, China has established itself as a global leader in renewable energy. It boasts the world's largest solar and wind power industries and has registered significant advancements in energy storage, grid infrastructure and electric vehicles.

Meanwhile, Africa is richly endowed with renewable energy resources. Africa holds approximately 60 percent of the world's most optimal solar energy resources and possesses enormous wind, hydro and geothermal potential. Additionally, it has massive deposits of raw minerals used in new energy technologies for EVs, sta-

tionary energy storage and green hydrogen production. But despite its huge potential, Africa remains energy poor. It accounts for about 6 percent of global energy production and more than 600 million Africans still lack access to electricity.

Accordingly, China's expertise in manufacturing, clean technology and large-scale project implementation makes it an ideal partner for Africa to drive toward its renewable energy aspirations. Africa can work with China to harness its resources and tap into its potential, which will help it meet rising energy demands and also contribute to global efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

Second, the fact they share an interest in sustainable development positions China and African nations as natural green energy partners. Notably, China has now entered a stage of accelerated green and low-carbon high-quality development, while it aims to hit peak carbon emissions before 2030 and

achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. Moreover, its signature Belt and Road Initiative emphasizes sustainable development.

This aligns seamlessly with Africa's Agenda 2063 and other regional strategic frameworks that center on green development. Despite being least responsible for the global climate crisis and accounting for under 4 percent of global emissions, Africa is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Ultimately, Chinese and African shared interests and aims create opportunities for productive collaboration. Working together, they can achieve their multifaceted development ambitions while meaningfully addressing climate change-related challenges.

Third, green energy cooperation between China and Africa promises socioeconomic benefits. For example, across Africa, where many countries remain underdeveloped and face high unemployment,

investments in renewable energy infrastructure can create jobs and improve living standards. From manufacturing solar panels and wind turbines to building and maintaining energy grids, the employment opportunities are vast.

Also, China's experience in building a green economy offers valuable insights for Africa. By leveraging Chinese expertise in sophisticated renewable energy technology and infrastructure development, African countries can create new industries and build a sustainable energy sector that drives robust economic growth. For China, the continent also presents an alternative market, which is crucial as the West increasingly imposes tariffs, adopts protectionism and pushes for economic decoupling.

Finally, China and Africa's long history of engagement is also crucial. It establishes a foundation of trust, institutional knowledge and

rich experiences that can be drawn from and built upon to establish fruitful green energy cooperation.

There are several avenues through which China-Africa green energy cooperation may flourish. Through support and investment, China can help African countries reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and transition to cleaner energy sources, while the focus on rural electrification can help alleviate poverty and improve living standards for millions of people. Moreover, investments can include capacity-building dimensions, which will ensure Africans are appropriately trained to operate or manage new infrastructure, thus supporting long-term employment and sustainability.

China and Africa could look to develop regional energy grids across the continent. Presently, many African countries rely on stand-alone power grid energy systems that are aging, costly to run and unreliable. Through developing interconnected regional grids, African countries can share renewable energy resources, balance supply and demand, and enhance their energy security.

In this regard, China's prowess in building and managing large-scale grid infrastructure would be invaluable. Furthermore, developing transnational power grids that connect countries with abundant renewable energy resources to those with high demand would not only improve energy access in Africa but also promote integration and cooperation throughout the continent.

Another avenue for cooperation is technology transfer and knowledge exchange. China has accumulated a wealth of expertise in renewable energy technologies, ranging from solar panel manufacturing to wind turbine design and grid management. Accordingly, sharing this expertise with African

countries can accelerate the development of the continent's renewable energy sector.

In addition to continuing to provide scholarships and training opportunities, one option is establishing renewable energy training centers in Africa, with support from Chinese experts. These centers could nurture and provide training to locals in various aspects of renewable energy, including installation, maintenance and management of solar, wind and hydroelectric power systems. By strengthening local capacity, African countries can develop a skilled workforce that is capable of addressing local challenges and driving the renewable energy sector forward independently.

Alongside all the above, China and Africa can collaborate to establish effective policy and regulatory frameworks to encourage the adoption of renewable energy and smooth private sector investment. As an example, China's experience in crafting supportive policies for renewable energy, such as feed-in tariffs and subsidies, offers valuable insights for African policymakers. Alternatively, cooperation could include harmonizing standards and regulations for renewable energy technologies, which can facilitate the trade of renewable energy equipment and also ease foreign investment.

By leveraging their complementarity, sharing knowledge and technology, and investing in renewable energy infrastructure, China and Africa can create a powerful partnership that benefits the two regions and helps the planet.

Importantly, this cooperation is not just about addressing the urgent challenge of climate change. It is also about seizing the opportunity to drive economic growth, create dignified jobs and improve the quality of life for millions of people, as well as building a future where clean, affordable and reliable energy is accessible to all.

The author is a research analyst at the Eritrean Center for Strategic Studies. 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.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Z WEEKLY



From visitor to voice: reporting at the two sessions

By DYLAN WALKER
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As a young American, I had stepped into the Great Hall of the People twice before, but this time was different.

In 2016, I was a university student and tourist, captivated by its solemn atmosphere, and in 2017, I attended a concert by renowned Chinese singer Jiang Dawei, experiencing the unique blend of music and architecture. This time, however, I participated in the two sessions as a bilingual host and journalist for China Daily 21st Century Media, bearing the responsibility of recording and reporting. My emotions were completely different from my previous visits.

My attention shifted from the symbolic significance of the building itself to the voices and stories emerging from the two sessions. The Great Hall became the central stage of China's political life, where National People's Congress (NPC) deputies and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) offered advice on national development.

My role was to document these key moments, through words and images, and I realized that the two sessions are not just about formulating national policies — they are closely connected to the daily lives of ordinary people, affecting areas such as education, healthcare, employment, environmental protection, and technological innovation.

Standing in Tian'anmen Square during the two sessions for the first time, I felt the weight of responsibility that came with my role. However, as I prepared to conduct interviews, I found myself facing a new challenge — approaching and interacting with the NPC deputies and CPPCC members.

The first time I walked up to a CPPCC member for an interview, I was so nervous that I could barely articulate my question. I worried about whether my wording was appropriate and whether the interviewee would be willing to respond.

During one press Q&A session at the Fujian province open-day event, despite having carefully prepared my question, I felt anxious the moment I stood up to speak. I was supposed to ask my question in both Chinese and English, but I completely forgot to speak in English. Instead, I introduced myself and asked my question entirely in Chinese. It wasn't until I sat down that I realized my small "mistake".

Although both incidents were minor, they made me more aware of the challenges of public speaking and the importance of staying composed under pressure. After a few attempts, I gradually found my rhythm and even began to enjoy the process.

This experience transformed me from a mere observer into a recorder, shifting my understanding from vague awareness to a profound appreciation of the two sessions — something I had previously only understood through news headlines and policy summaries.

It was also a personal journey of growth and learning. I now see the role of a journalist in a new light — not just as a recorder of facts, but as a bridge between cultures and perspectives. I will continue using my words, images, and videos to share China's story with the world, helping more people understand this dynamic and prosperous country.



Online
Watch the video
by scanning
the code.



Dylan Walker takes a selfie in front of the Great Hall of the People on March 4. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Building dreams and businesses in China

Foreign entrepreneurs are turning their dreams into thriving businesses, making an impact in China's dynamic market, **Gui Qian** reports.

When Zach Cagle first came to China in 2008, he knew little about the country beyond a few history courses he took in Atlanta, US. Seventeen years later, he has opened three restaurants in Zhengzhou, Henan province, with plans for a fourth.

Cagle decided to settle in China and start his career in 2010. He honed his cooking skills, navigated the registration process, sourced the right ingredients, and scouted real estate. In 2013, he and his wife opened their first American-style BBQ restaurant in central Zhengzhou.

Today, Cagle runs ZAX BBQ, a well-recognized grill chain. "Managing this business has given me everything," he said.

ZAX BBQ was Zhengzhou's first authentic American barbecue, which drew attention and helped the business grow. Word of mouth brought curious Chinese customers and foreigners living in the city. The restaurant soon began hosting Halloween parties, Thanksgiving dinners, and Christmas nights.

"We became the center of the foreign community in Zhengzhou," Cagle said with pride. "We've had customers from over 50 countries."

Cagle believes China is a great place to do business. He found the work permit and registration processes straightforward, and the process has become even more efficient with everything online.

Opening a restaurant is "absolutely feasible and attractive as China modernizes," he said. "As restaurants continue to keep up with Chinese demand, there will never be a lack of curiosity or need for interesting international food."

In recent years, Cagle has seen more foreigners coming to China to start their own businesses, ranging from sports to textiles, fashion, farming, and pharmaceuticals.

For Cagle, opening ZAX BBQ has been more than just a business venture. "Essentially, my wife and I have not only grown a business, but we've grown a family together, which I would call the 'China Dream', and I'm still living it," he said. The couple now has a nine-year-old daughter.

"We're fortunate to have kept our business open this long and to continue expanding. We have nothing but hope for the future and gratitude for the opportunity," he added.

Rapid success

Unlike Cagle, who has been running his business for a long time, Anna Gavrilova from Siberia, Russia, established her international logistics company in China just a year ago but has already achieved nearly 10 million yuan (\$1.38 million) in revenue.

Gavrilova studied English and Chinese bilingual translation in her hometown and dreamed of working in China.

In 2017, she was hired by a logistics company in Dalian, Liaoning province, where she met her future husband. In 2021, she returned to Russia to set up her own logistics business in Saint Petersburg and Vladivostok. In 2024, Gavrilova moved back to China with her husband, founding an international logistics company named Ancheng in Xianning, Hubei, her husband's hometown.

Ancheng specializes in the transportation of bulk commodities like timber, energy, grain, machinery, and more. They manage container loading, shipping, customs clearance, and final delivery.

During the startup phase, Gavrilova received substantial support from Xianning's enterprise incubation base. They provided rental subsidies, connected her with potential customers, and kept her informed on policies and industry developments.

"The Chinese government has always sup-

"I can say that the nine years I have spent in China have far surpassed the experiences I gained during the 22 years I spent abroad. I will always be grateful."

Steven Senshan (pseudonym), a Canadian entrepreneur in Shenzhen, Guangdong

ported export and foreign trade businesses, especially under the Belt and Road Initiative," she explained. "For example, shipments from cities like Wuhan in Hubei, Shijiazhuang in Hebei, and Yiwu in Zhejiang can receive significant subsidies, greatly reducing our costs. Our company handles many orders from Yiwu to Hamburg, Germany, and Budapest, Hungary."

With offices in both China and Russia, Gavrilova's company is well-positioned to handle trade between the two countries. They can often find better routes and more favorable prices. They even assist other Chinese business owners in visiting Russia for commercial cooperation.

Gavrilova is optimistic about the future. "I feel like I've found an industry in which I can invest long-term efforts," she said.

Communicating worlds

Steven Senshan (pseudonym), from Canada, is an expert in helping Chinese companies expand globally. Just over a year ago, he founded Midori Creative in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, specializing in creating branded, localized content for international audiences.

So far, the company has worked with around 15 Chinese brands, including smartphone companies Xiaomi and Realme, robot vacuum cleaner makers Roborock and Dreame, and oral care brand Soocas.

Midori Creative primarily focuses on creative campaigns for markets in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. It also collaborates with top photographers, filmmakers, and content creators.

Senshan started Midori Creative because he saw a growing need for Chinese brands to expand beyond mere sales volume and build strong brand images.

"A lot of new Chinese brands are going up against international brands that have over 100 years of brand value and exposure, so it's our job to make sure these brands get the spotlight they deserve to showcase their strengths and competitive advantage," he said.

From his point of view, many Chinese brands, such as Huawei and DJI, are at the forefront of the world in product design and user experience. China's rapid manufacturing pace and efficient supply chain enable quick product iterations, making these brands highly competitive.



From top to bottom:

Steven Senshan (pseudonym) from Canada runs a creative company in Shenzhen, Guangdong, assisting Chinese brands in expanding internationally. Anna Gavrilova from Russia founded her international logistics company in Xianning, Hubei. Zach Cagle from the US owns three restaurants in Zhengzhou, Henan.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

However, since the cultures and consumption habits are very different abroad, Senshan feels his international background — half-Japanese, half-Canadian, born in Canada and raised in the US — gives him a unique perspective on cross-cultural communication.

"Connecting these very disparate worlds is part of my DNA," he said, which is why he designed his company's slogan as "We Make Worlds".

Senshan's decision to launch Midori Creative was also motivated by the strong entrepreneurial atmosphere in Shenzhen, where he met many people starting their own businesses, including many of the clients he later collaborated with, who were also startups.

For Senshan, Midori Creative marks the beginning of a lifelong career — he hopes it will be his "last job" and plans for it to always be based in China, as it was born and has grown here.

"China is developing very quickly, and I get to do many things here. I can say that the nine years I have spent in China have far surpassed the experiences I gained during the 22 years I spent abroad. I will always be grateful," he said.

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Z WEEKLY

Youth leaders share knowledge and break barriers

University students create a platform where top scorers share their study secrets and personal experiences to inspire and guide young learners across China.

By GUI QIAN
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Many people have turned to top students for help with their questions during school, much like in a "cyber classroom" called "House of Youth".

In this online space, around a dozen provincial-level top scorers from the 2023 *gaokao* (China's college entrance exam) serve as companions and "mentors", teaching and answering viewers' questions.

This public online classroom is an account on Douyin (Chinese version of TikTok), founded by three post-2000 university students: Zhang Boyu and Liu Zimian from Tsinghua University, and Zhang Chujian from the Central University of Finance and Economics.

The "study secrets" shared by the top scorers include theoretical knowledge of various high school subjects, problem-solving strategies, study methods, preparation for the *gaokao*, personal experiences, advice on choosing a major, and some introductory university courses.

The first video of House of Youth was released in March 2024, featuring Jin Zehan, the top science scorer of the 2023 *gaokao* in Heilongjiang province, answering physics-related questions. Since then, House of Youth has gained over 1 million followers in just three months. To date, they have posted over 160 videos and accumulated more than 1.43 million subscribers.

Zhang Chujian, 21, from Changchun, Jilin province, acknowledges that social media platforms and the involvement of top scorers have helped them reach a wider audience more quickly. They aim to create a model of "youth leaders", where "one young person leads a large group of young people", he said.

"In past media reports, top scorers were often portrayed as unreachable figures, surrounded by parents holding bouquets of flowers. We want to bring these top scorers back down to earth, so they can truly walk alongside young people and share their real experiences and valuable insights," he explained.

Convincing so many top scorers to join this endeavor wasn't about chasing network traffic or economic benefits.

"What motivated the top scorers the most was a vision: to do good, to use their resources to give back to society, and to align their actions with their values," explained Zhang Boyu, 21, who is also a high school classmate of Zhang Chujian.

"In our own words, it's about lighting up the eyes of young people. Whether it's the young audience or the top students teaching the lessons, we want everyone to have a spark in their eyes and to find their future direction," he added.

The other founder, Liu, 22, is from Hanzhong, Shaanxi province. He became the provincial top scorer in the independent admissions exam and secured a place at



Clockwise from top right: Zhang Boyu, Liu Zimian, and Zhang Chujian, the three founders of House of Youth. Top left and center: Founders and guest speakers recording video lessons for House of Youth. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tsinghua University at 17. Before founding House of Youth, he already had a personal video account with over 1 million followers.

According to him, while House of Youth

focuses on producing hard-core knowledge videos, it's equally important to incorporate an "internet vibe" to better connect with the audience. For example, top scorers often

teach lessons from their dorm rooms rather than a traditional classroom, with Liu himself occasionally playing the role of a distracted student alongside them.

Before last year's *gaokao*, they also invited several top scorers to record motivational videos for the examinees, which netizens affectionately dubbed "lucky charms".

Equal access

Through their platform, the three founders of House of Youth hope to break down regional barriers and bridge the information gap in educational resources.

Zhang Boyu recalled the words of one of their guest speakers, Sun Weixiang, the top science scorer in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in 2024, who comes from a small city called Baise. Sun mentioned that what was most lacking in his hometown were English teachers — he had hardly taken any English classes before high school.

"What we want is to leverage high-traffic platforms like Douyin to spread knowledge in the most popular way, contributing to educational equity," said Zhang Boyu.

Liu has been volunteering to teach across China since his freshman year, with his footprints covering Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shaanxi, Gansu, and Inner Mongolia. "When I saw the living conditions of those students and their curriculum, I could truly empathize with what they really needed," he said.

He remembered his time teaching in Inner Mongolia, where he observed that students' preparation for the *gaokao* was one-dimensional. They were unaware that social activities and academic competitions could also contribute to gaining extra points. In Gansu, he found that many students had simple goals, focusing only on completing their coursework without considering the importance of long-term planning.

"This is why, at House of Youth, we've created a lot of content that goes beyond textbook knowledge," he said.

Their efforts have received a lot of positive feedback. What impressed Zhang Chujian the most was a message from a high school girl in a small town in Southwest China. Her parents had passed away due to illness, and she was struggling to cope with the heavy academic pressure of her senior year while also taking care of her younger brother. She found it hard to focus on her studies, but House of Youth's videos rekindled her confidence and made her feel that "life is still hopeful".

"At that moment, I felt that all our efforts were not in vain. What we were doing was meaningful and valuable to society," he said.

This summer, the three founders are all about to graduate and plan to hand over House of Youth to their junior schoolmates.

They have declined many business invitations from multichannel network companies (MCNs), as they do not want to commercialize the account. Instead, they hope to pass it on and maintain its ecosystem of youth co-creation.

"House of Youth is not just an account. It's a platform, a belief," said Zhang Boyu.

Hockey game promotes inclusion for autistic children

By GUO JIATONG
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As the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games take place in Turin, Italy, from March 8 to 16, a different kind of game was already underway in Shanghai.

On Feb 23, 15 families with autistic children were joined by 40 volunteers from around the world for a special floor hockey match at Huangpu Riverside Skateboard Park.

Under the guidance of professional hockey coaches, the children actively participated in the game. But the event was about more than just hockey — it was about creating a space where autistic children felt included, valued, and understood.

Wang Ziqing, a 16-year-old volunteer from Shanghai's Cao Yang No 2 High School, recalled her interactions with a young boy who, despite his challenges, demonstrated remarkable intelligence and insight.

"Spending time with autistic children made me realize they are smarter than we thought. Sometimes, their parents worry too much. I think these kids are already doing an amazing job," she said.

Zheng Jiayuan, a 10th grader at Wellington College International Hangzhou in Zhejiang, volunteered as an interpreter for the event. Yet, he quickly discovered that his role was almost unnecessary.

"None of the international volunteers spoke much Chinese, but they connected with the children effortlessly. Some things transcend language — emotions, body gestures, smiles, and love don't depend on nationality," he said.

Before the game, Zheng Xingkui, founder of Green House — the charity that organized the event — introduced the volunteers to the basics of autism and the concept of "neurodiversity", which emphasizes that neurological differences, such as autism, are a normal part of human diversity rather than deficits to be fixed.

Sergio Bassett, a 19-year-old volunteer from Nicaragua, reflected on this idea. "They are just like us, but they have difficulties with communication," he said. "This experience reinforced the importance of respecting everyone, no matter who they are or how they look. Everyone deserves respect."

Volunteers noticed a transformation in



Top: Children with autism play floor hockey with volunteers at Huangpu Riverside Skateboard Park in Shanghai on Feb 23. Above: Chiara Muller (front left) interacts with an autistic child. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the children as the game progressed.

"They might have been shy at first, but after playing and interacting, they seemed more comfortable and happier," said Maria Jimenez Diez Del Sel, a 23-year-old volunteer from Spain.

"Sports have this incredible power to unite people, transcending borders and differences," added Chiara Muller, a 23-year-old volunteer from Italy.

Embracing differences

According to Zheng Xingkui, Green House organizes activities every one to two weeks, with sports like cycling, kayaking, and hiking playing a big role. The core philosophy, he explained, is "integration".

"We create opportunities for these children to engage with their peers so they can experience and connect with the real world," he said.

Since its establishment in 2017, the charity has been dedicated to raising awareness about autism spectrum disorder through sports activities and cross-cultural exchanges.

The impact of these events is immediate. After the hockey game, for example, Muller

said she was delighted to "feel like a kid again".

"Sometimes, we get too serious in life, and it's important to remember that inside, we're still kids who like to play. That was a fun moment for me," she said.

Inspired by the event, Zheng Jiayuan decided to share his experience with his classmates.

"Not everyone has time to volunteer, but those of us who do should use our voices to make a difference," he said. "The autism community is often misunderstood or even excluded in social settings. Instead of distancing ourselves because of their differences, we should make the effort to understand them and show more patience and kindness."

Wang stressed that young people have a responsibility to advocate for the autistic community.

"With social media and other platforms, we have the power to raise awareness and inspire greater compassion for these children," she said.

"We need to build on the work of those before us while bringing fresh energy, new ideas, and innovation," she added.

Z WEEKLY



Heroines at the border

An all-female team in Yunnan tackles transnational drug trafficking with resilience and unique insights, ensuring safer communities and stronger border security.

By GUO JIATONG and CHEN XUE

Growing up in Anhui, a peaceful province in East China, Lu Yao (pseudonym) had little exposure to the harsh realities of drug-related crimes in Southwest Yunnan, where trafficking thrives due to its long border with Myanmar, a hot spot for transnational drug activity.

However, during her years at China People's Police University, Lu became fascinated by anti-drug cases and chose this topic for her graduation thesis.

After earning her degree in border inspection, she made a bold decision to leave behind a stable job in her hometown and join the border management unit in Mangshi, located in Dehong Dai and Jingpo autonomous prefecture, Yunnan.

"People like my parents and my sister have never encountered drugs. For them, crime is limited to things like petty theft or traffic accidents. But here, we conduct drug busts involving hundreds of kilograms at a time, and every operation requires us to carry firearms," explained the 37-year-old. "It's a reality that civilians like my parents could never imagine."

What makes Lu's team unique is that it is made up entirely of women. Currently, the all-female investigation team consists of eight members.

Since its founding in 2015, the team has handled over 240 drug cases, dealt with more than 300 cross-border security violations, arrested over 800 suspects, and seized more than 1,000 kilograms of illicit drugs.

Their efforts have earned numerous honors, including the "March 8 red-banner collective" title this year.

The team was founded in response to the growing number of drug trafficking cases involving pregnant women and underage girls, many of whom were coerced into the illegal trade.

According to Sun Lili (pseudonym), a 37-year-old member who joined in 2017, female investigators bring a distinct advantage when interacting with female suspects.

"Because of our shared gender identity, we can address maternal concerns with pregnant suspects or discuss childcare responsibilities, making it

easier to connect and break emotional barriers with them," she explained.

While drug investigations are often seen as requiring physical strength — an area where men tend to dominate — much of the work involves tasks such as close observation, intelligence gathering, suspect interrogation, and operation planning. According to Pan Yali (pseudonym), a 39-year-old investigator, women excel in these areas.

"Suspects are usually highly alert, but they tend to let their guard down when facing a woman, making them more approachable," she said.

This is why a significant portion of the team's work takes place behind the scenes, with members often going undercover as hotel receptionists, nurses, supermarket cashiers, street vendors, or even drug users to gain close contact with criminals.

Pan emphasizes the importance of mental toughness in this line of work.

"We're human too, and we get scared," she said. "But I know the suspects must be more nervous than I am because they're in the wrong, and I'm in the right. The law is my backbone."

Invisible strength

In addition to emotional resilience, the team is meticulous, especially during body searches.

"Drugs can be hidden in the most unexpected places — like the soles of shoes, hairpins, or even ear studs, which suspects might swallow when we aren't looking," Lu explained. "Every detail matters. Missing something small can mean the difference between success and failure."

The team's adaptability goes beyond undercover operations to managing physically demanding conditions and grueling schedules. A single interrogation session can take at least three hours, and surveillance in thick forests may stretch for days, with the team battling mosquitoes and sometimes freezing temperatures at night.

"We're on duty 24/7, so whenever the phone rings, we must respond immediately. Criminals don't follow a 9-to-5 schedule," said Sun.

Cases often peak during holidays and weekends. Sun remembers one



“They may never see the darker sides of society, but that's exactly how it should be — making sure they never have to face fear or danger is our greatest success.”

Lu Yao (pseudonym), an investigator at the border management unit in Mangshi, Yunnan

Spring Festival eve when, after finishing her shift late and just arriving home in the early morning, she got a call and had to rush back to the unit to interrogate a suspect.

For these women, however, the satisfaction of putting criminals behind bars is unparalleled.

"The moment we get the verdict for a suspect, we're proud that the criminal has received the punishment they deserve, and that our work hasn't been in vain," said team leader Xian Shasha (pseudonym), 32.

But their commitment extends beyond investigations and arrests — they also play a key role in legal education.

"When I first started handling cases, I was shocked by how little people knew about the law. Some suspects didn't even realize they were committing a crime when they agreed to carry drugs for dealers," said Yang Xuejiao (pseudonym), a 37-year-old team member.

"Raising public awareness of the law is crucial. Educating individuals and families about the legal consequences can help prevent such situations from happening in the first place," she added.

According to Xian, they have seen a decrease in drug-related offenses in recent years, attributing this success to the team's legal awareness campaigns.

These women are deeply fulfilled by their work, knowing they are keeping people safe.

"We stand guard at the borders of our country so that people like my parents can live peaceful, secure lives," said Lu. "They may never see the darker sides of society, but that's exactly how it should be — making sure they never have to face fear or danger is our greatest success."

Contact the writers at guojiatong@i21st.cn

Weaving a new future for a Zhuang village

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou
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Jingui village, located in Futang township, Lianshan Zhuang and Yao autonomous county, Guangdong, buzzed with activity on a spring morning as busloads of tourists arrived.

Ji Qiyu, a young entrepreneur, greeted and guided visitors in his neat Zhuang ethnic costume. Villagers welcomed tourists with high-quality agricultural products, while many visitors eagerly tasted traditional Zhuang and Yao dishes. Others tried their hand at Zhuang brocade weaving. Before departing, many purchased specialty products as souvenirs.

The ancient Zhuang ethnic village has undergone significant changes in recent years — houses have been renovated, roads are now clean and well-maintained, and villagers have gained multiple sources of income.

The village has also become a popular tourist destination, drawing visitors from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and beyond.

Many locals credit Ji, 29, as the driving force behind the village's transformation.

Known as the "male embroiderer", Ji is the seventh-generation inheritor of the Zhuang brocade technique and has introduced innovations to both the art form and the village. He has developed new styles of Zhuang brocade and turned the village into a thriving tourist hub.

Now, about five tourist groups visit the village every month. These visitors spend their time sightseeing, relaxing, and attending cultural workshops, immersing themselves in the charm of the rural mountainous village and the unique Zhuang ethnic culture.

Ji grew up in a family of Zhuang brocade craftsmen. As a child, he watched his mother and grandmother weave beautiful brocades on the loom. He began learning the art form at 13.

During college at Guangdong Polytechnic, Ji improved weaving machines to enhance efficiency and incorporated bio-protein fibers to make the fabric more comfortable and durable.

He also revolutionized traditional plant dyeing, expanding Zhuang brocade's color palette from five shades to more than 220.

Innovating tradition

After graduation, Ji returned to his hometown and founded a Zhuang brocade cooperative. His technological innovations lowered the barrier for others to learn the craft, offering local women the opportunity to work from home and earn an income.

"Previously, all the embroiders in the village were women, and when I first started learning to weave brocade, they didn't understand why a boy would be interested," Ji recalled.

He spent a lot of time communicating with the villagers and explaining his vision and eventually persuaded many to join the cooperative.

Ji's designs, which combine ethnic costumes and brocade elements, have gained market recognition for their uniqueness and craftsmanship.

"The village has distinctive ethnic characteristics, exquisite crafts, and beautiful scenery, and I believe it should be shared with a wider audience," he said.

To support his vision, Ji launched public training programs, providing free Zhuang brocade instruction and creating employment opportunities for 980 villagers, benefiting over 2,000 residents.

He also organized efforts to renovate old houses, preserve traditional weaving machines, clear neglected land, plant trees, and establish cultural gardens and homestays — turning the village into an ethnic-style ecological park focused on tourism.

"I want to present our folk culture in a 'living ecology' format that allows visitors to experience it firsthand by seeing and touching our traditional items," Ji explained.

The village's new ecological park now attracts tens of thousands of visitors each month, boosting local job opportunities and sales of agricultural products.

"Tourists often purchase our agricultural products, sometimes in quantities of dozens of kilograms, and after trying them at home, they return to buy more," Ji said.

Today, more than 900 villagers are involved in Ji's cooperative. They weave Zhuang brocade at home, repurpose their spare rooms into homestays, and sell their agricultural products.

"This flexible employment allows them to work while taking care of their families," Ji said. "A household can now earn over 10,000 yuan a month from tourism."

Thanks to Ji's efforts, Zhuang brocade — renowned for its vibrant colors and intricate patterns — has been preserved and revitalized. With over a thousand years of history, the art form continues to be passed down through generations.

Luo Jiabao contributed to this story.



Ji Qiyu (third from right) showcases the unique cultural and tourism products of his village in Lianshan Zhuang and Yao autonomous county, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The all-female investigation team of the border management unit in Mangshi, Yunnan, combats drug trafficking with courage and intelligence. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY