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CHINA DAILY

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Policies reinforce investors' confidence

By WANG KEJU, OUYANG SHIJIA and ZHOU LANXU

As the global investment community grapples with the erratic policies of the United States, China's consistent approach to policymaking, coupled with its thriving technological innovation ecosystem, is emerging as a beacon of stability, drawing renewed interest from foreign investors, said economists.

Robin Xing, chief China economist at US investment bank Morgan Stanley, said the overall market sentiment, both at home and abroad, is optimistic toward China's policy package introduced earlier this month during the two sessions — the annual meetings of the nation's top legislative and political advisory bodies.

"While the policy support unveiled during China's two sessions might not have been as aggressive as some had hoped for, the overall direction and substance of the measures are well within the realm of what the market had anticipated," Xing said.

Benjamin Lam, deputy president of MUFU Bank (China), a subsidiary of Japanese global financial services group Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, said that after strategically reviewing their businesses in China, more multinational corporations are reaffirming their commitment to continuing business in the country.

Noting that "the Chinese economy is improving and growing at a much better pace", Lam said China's consistent efforts to revive consumer spending, including an action plan unveiled to boost consumption, are reinforcing investors' confidence.

Meanwhile, a different story has been unfolding on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. The Economic Policy Uncertainty Index for the United States — devised by researchers from Northwestern University, Stanford University and Chicago University — surged to an unprecedented level in February, reflecting the confusion and apprehension among consumers, investors and businesses.

"Weeks into his presidency, US President Donald Trump has unleashed a barrage of tariffs and tariff threats targeting friends and foes," said Stefan Angrick, a senior economist at Moody's Analytics, adding that the trade war is no longer a risk, but a reality.

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Trump, Putin hold phone call

United States President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin had a phone call on Tuesday in which the two were expected to focus on normalizing US-Russia relations and addressing the Ukraine crisis.

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President Xi Jinping (center) sits with villagers around a firepit to discuss rural vitalization on Monday at an ethnic village in Liping county of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Southwest China's Guizhou province. YAN YAN / XINHUA

Xi stresses high-quality growth

Ethnic minority groups encouraged to promote integration of distinctive culture and tourism

By MO JINGXI in Beijing and YANG JUN in Guiyang

President Xi Jinping has called on Guizhou province to promote high-quality development and drive growth by further deepening reform and opening-up comprehensively, saying that the southwestern province should firm up confidence, work hard and take steady steps to advance Chinese modernization.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks as he wrapped up on Tuesday a two-day inspection of the province.

The visit, which came less than a week after the conclusion of the annual sessions of the country's top legislature and national political advisory body, was Xi's third trip to Guizhou since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012.

It took him to a Dong ethnic village in the province's Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture on Monday.

Guizhou is home to diverse ethnic groups and cultures, with people of ethnic minority groups accounting for more than 36 percent of its total population. Eighteen ethnic groups such as Han, Miao, Bouyei, Dong

and Tujia have lived there since ancient times.

In Zhaoxing Dong village, Xi watched a performance of the grand song of the Dong ethnic group, a form of folk chorus inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, visited a Dong culture exhibition center and inspected a local base of special industry featuring weaving, dyeing and embroidery.

"Stilt houses, ancient villages, intangible cultural heritage instruments, the grand song of the Dong people and batik craftsmanship all embody the unique charm of this ethnic culture — both deeply traditional and remarkably stylish," Xi said.

He expressed the hope that with the support of the Party and the government, the villagers will live better lives, further advance rural vitalization, and contribute to the progress of Chinese modernization.

When sitting around a firepit with villagers at a drum tower, a unique architecture of the Dong ethnic group that serves as a communal gathering spot, Xi said that areas with large ethnic minority populations should preserve their distinctive culture and let it shine through the integrated development of culture and tourism.

Tourism has become a major

industry and rural tourism is thriving, Xi said, expressing the hope that the villagers would enjoy greater prosperity with each passing day.

At a work briefing by the provincial authorities on Tuesday in Guiyang, the provincial capital, Xi urged Guizhou to be resolute and bold in exploration, saying that the province should underpin its real economy, strengthen innovation-driven growth and ensure the transformation from old growth drivers to new ones.

Xi also called on the province to accelerate the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, actively develop strategic emerging industries and enhance its digital economy and new energy sectors.

It is essential for Guizhou to effectively pursue higher-quality economic growth while appropriately increasing economic output, Xi said, stressing the need to protect the ecological environment and transform ecological advantages into developmental advantages.

Xi stressed that the vitality of a region's development is closely related to its business environment.

Guizhou should actively integrate itself into the building of a unified national market, eliminate local protectionism, market fragmentation and "involvement-style" competition, and create a stable, fair, transparent and predictable business environment, he said.

Noting that openness is also an important aspect of the business environment, Xi said that Guizhou should seize the opportunity presented by the development of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and proactively align itself with the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Chengdu-Chongqing economic zone, to move faster toward all-around opening-up.

Since the adoption of the Western Development Strategy at the beginning of the 21st century, Guizhou's GDP has increased more than twentyfold and the total length of its highways exceeds 9,000 kilometers.

In recent years, the Belt and Road Initiative and the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor have brought more opportunities for the inland province to open to the rest of the world.

In the first 11 months of 2024, the total trade of goods in the province reached 68.62 billion yuan (\$9.5 billion), representing a year-on-year increase of 10.2 percent. Exports of new energy vehicles, lithium batteries and solar products, known as the "new three items", grew 77.4 percent compared with the previous year, official data showed.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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WORLD WATCH
By Maarif Farooq

US trade barriers will backfire on its economy

The US government's recent decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports has ignited a firestorm of global criticism, with allies and trading partners alike voicing their concerns over the United States' increasingly unilateral and hegemonic economic policies.

Far from being a measure to safeguard US industry, these protectionist acts expose a broader trend of economic nationalism that will not only backfire on the US but also destabilize global trade and push economies toward fragmentation.

The US has long championed the principles of free trade — when it suits its interests. However, the moment global market forces begin to challenge its supremacy, Washington quickly abandons the principles in favor of aggressive protectionism. This latest move on steel and aluminum tariffs is nothing more than a desperate attempt to shield the US' own declining industries, even if it is at the cost of global economic stability.

For decades, the US has enjoyed its position as the dominant economic force, dictating the rules of global trade and using institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as tools to enforce its will. However, the rise of economic powerhouses like China, the strengthening of regional alliances, and the increasing reliance of countries on alternative markets have eroded Washington's ability to unilaterally control global commerce.

Instead of adapting to these shifts, the US has chosen to react with force — imposing punitive tariffs, weaponizing the dollar, and sanctioning countries that refuse to fall in line.

While Washington attempts to justify these tariffs as a means of "protecting American workers", the reality is starkly different. The globalized nature of the supply chain means that these tariffs will ultimately drive up costs for US businesses, leading to higher prices for consumers and a potential rise in inflation. History has shown that protectionist policies rarely yield the desired results. On the contrary, they often cause domestic industries to become complacent, less competitive, and ultimately unviable.

See *Tariffs*, page 3

BIOGRAPHERS EXTRACT EXTRAORDINARY TALES FROM LIVES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

More and more families commissioning memoirs of elderly relatives who were witnesses to history

By WANG XIN in Shanghai wangxin2@chinadaily.com.cn

Tong Xiaojun, 34, is a biographer who focuses not on the great people of history, but instead on those who make up its very fabric.

He is often commissioned by family members who want to record the contemporaneous role an elderly or deceased relative



played as momentous events and change unfolded around them.

Sometimes the writing of a memoir also serves as a healing process in the loss of a loved one or to build better understanding in a

troubled family relationship.

Ju Ruiqi, 41, an administrative supervisor in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, commissioned Tong to write about the life of her grandfather. The brief profile is intended to introduce the "legendary" man to his descendants and be included in the family tree, she said.

See *Memoirs*, page 2

Back to Earth



NASA astronaut Butch Wilmore is helped out of a SpaceX Dragon spacecraft onboard the SpaceX recovery ship MEGAN after he and NASA astronauts Nick Hague, Suni Williams and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov landed in the waters off the coast of Tallahassee, Florida, on Tuesday. REUTERS See story, page 7

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MEMOIRS: ILLUMINATING PAST LIVES

From page 1

"My grandpa's lifetime, if we look at it from a broader perspective, was a precise footnote in the dramatic changes and development of New China," Ju said.

"At first my father wanted me to write the profile, but I was worried that I might not be that professional a writer. So I searched on the social media platform Xiaohongshu (Red-Note) and found Tong," she said.

Last year, Chinese social media platforms witnessed a sudden boom in the professional writing of memoirs of the elderly, providing writers with a decent income stream and shedding light on the lives of ordinary older people who helped transform the country.

Lifting the veil

"Ordinary elders also need to be seen, understood and remembered," Ju said about the memoir-writing trend.

While the public is constantly fed stories about celebrities and their achievements, she believes that ordinary people care more about memories and emotions that are closer to home.

"It is more intimate, and resonates and connects with us as either family members, friends, or just ordinary people from similar backgrounds," she said.

She produces a photo of her grandfather, Ju Zhenyou, showing him as a handsome young man with smiling eyes. He was a military man and joined the People's Liberation Army at the age of 15, fighting in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), the War of Liberation (1946-49), and the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53).

During those tumultuous years, he went through family breakdowns and other hardships in his personal life as he moved from place to place.

Ju said "grandpa" was a man of wisdom, courage, perseverance and great love, adding it was her father who mainly shared her grandfather's stories with Tong.

"Their conversations also gave me the first chance to see grandpa's personal files and clearly learn about his whole life since he was a child. During the process, I felt like he was no longer my grandpa in the story. He became someone I knew as an old friend by my side," she said.

Ju's family got in touch with Tong in early December and they had many online and in-person conversations afterward.

Involved process

Tong said it takes him around three months on average to complete a memoir, which usually contains around 80,000 characters.

The process of producing a memoir involves initial communication, signing a contract, setting schedules, conducting multiple online and in-person interviews, writing sample chapters, formal writing of the document and editing, then finally getting it designed and printed.

Tong started writing memoirs in 2020, when he received a request from a company owner and designer in Dali, Yunnan province. The businessman, aged in his 50s, hoped to summarize his life experiences, thoughts and entrepreneurial strategies for both himself and his successor at the company.

Tong said over the past five years, he has finished five memoirs of old-



Members of Jinshan Guardianship discuss with staff members of a trust providing benevolent funds for an incapacitated elderly client. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: Biographer Tong Xiaojun walks with his father and son in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. **Above:** Tong interviews the father of a client on Dec 16 in Hangzhou. **Right:** Ju Zhenyou, the subject of a memoir by Tong. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

er people. "Since the second half of last year, I have received more inquiries from people to write the memoirs of their elders — or for people who are about to retire themselves. During this boom, I have seen a growing will to express themselves and give them a sense of identity."

Such memoirs are not only to fulfill the needs of family elders, but also benefit their descendants.

Emotional therapy

A woman in her 30s reached out to Tong to write a memoir of her dead father in the hope it would help ease the sorrow of her mother. Another woman in her 40s who had a bad relationship with her mother, asked Tong if documenting the older woman's life could help her better understand her mom.

"I saw deep family love in such inquiries ... I am also now working

“Ordinary elders also need to be seen, understood and remembered.”

Ju Ruiqi, administrative supervisor in Hangzhou



on the memoir of my own father," he said.

"We do not have a bad relationship, but we are not good at communicating either."

Tong said his mother was bedridden for 18 years, and after she passed away he realized he didn't know much about his father. "I remembered when I first mentioned to him writing his memoir, he choked up. It touched me a lot and I think at that

moment, he knew he was seen," he said.

Many memoir writers, including freelancers and part-timers, have been flooding into the sector, and have shared their experiences on Xiaohongshu.

The price of a memoir can vary greatly based on the size, writing styles and the writers' career status and experience, according to posts on the platform.

On average, the cost of memoirs ranges from 20,000 yuan (\$2,760) to 50,000 yuan, with some lengthier ones costing more than 100,000 yuan. However, with more writers entering the market and the application of AI, the sector is likely to fluctuate and prices may fall.

"I don't think writing memoirs for older people is a shrewd or highly profitable business, as it involves much effort and energy and is actually tiring. But the social value behind it, such as showing care for the elderly, is more meaningful," said Tong.

Earlier this year, the Shanghai municipal government rolled out an action plan, encouraging volunteers and organizations to provide memoir-writing services for elderly people in nursing homes and communities.

A group of students from the city's Fudan University have formed a team to provide pro bono memoir writing for senior citizens in Shanghai.

"Running out of time is not the end of life, forgetting is. Pick up the fragments of the glittering memories and link them together in a memoir, so that the world remembers that you were here," the team from Fudan wrote on Xiaohongshu.

At the end of last year, China had 310 million people aged 60 and above, and 220 million aged 65 and older, representing 22 percent and 15.6 percent of the total population, National Bureau of Statistics data showed.

Voluntary guardianship services help the elderly navigate twilight years

By WANG XIN in Shanghai

Voluntary guardianship services are addressing the elderly's immediate needs, especially those who have no traditional guardians such as a spouse or a child.

Under the service, as clarified in the 2020 Civil Code, an adult can choose a reliable person or organization to be their guardian when they become incapacitated.

Fei Chao, 35, director general of Jinshan Guardianship in Shanghai, sometimes receives urgent calls during the night, and often has to rush to the hospital to sign medical documents for a client. This is one of the most critical services Jinshan provides for older people.

Established in 2020, Jinshan is the first nonprofit civil organization in China dedicated to provid-

ing professional guardianship services for the elderly. It was initiated by three nonprofit organizations led by Shanghai Jinmei Elderly Care, which is dedicated to serving residents with dementia. One of the organizations specializes in legal assistance, and the other focuses on hospice care.

After the client and Jinshan sign an agreement, they go through the notarization process that aims to protect both sides and ensure the fair execution of the accord. When the client becomes unable to make independent decisions or requires an agent to act on their behalf in legal matters, Jinshan usually acts as that agent.

When an emergency happens, the organization assumes guardianship of the elderly person, and makes decisions as indicated per

the agreement. These cover areas such as medical decisions, property management, and hospice and palliative care. If the client passes away, the organization is responsible for executing their will, and other duties.

About 200 people have consulted Jinshan on the guardianship services over the past four years. It is now serving nearly 40 elderly people.

Fei said voluntary guardianship is not as complicated as many people imagine. "They may come to us for various reasons, but we are simply focusing on catering to their demands in a timely way with patience, effort and care — we kind of act like their children," said Fei, who leads a team of five people.

He said he and his colleagues never place themselves above their clients, but simply take responsi-

bility for them and offer "service on demand". His team regularly visits the clients to accompany them on outings, chat with them and provide services, especially during festivals and holidays. Most of the time, team members are on call and are prepared to meet needs as basic as grocery shopping and fixing cellphones.

"What we do is not difficult, but it is a bit tedious. But for some of our clients, accompanying them to a surgery or to buy groceries can be of equal importance," Fei said.

A female client surnamed Xu, born in 1950, lives alone in Shanghai. Her association with Jinshan began in July 2022 during the pandemic. She realized the need for the service when her son had to struggle to fly to China from overseas to sign a medical document for her surgery.

Another elderly female client surnamed Hu signed the agreement in February 2022, after she was diagnosed with cancer a few months earlier. The organization accompanied her during her final days, offering over 1,175 hours of services, that included 40 days in the hospital during the pandemic. After she passed away, Jinshan arranged her funeral and spent nearly a year executing her will. Hu had no surviving children, and her assets were distributed to several families who had also lost their children.

"We hope everyone can care about the elders in their family, and we are actually happy to see some clients terminate the agreement with us and return to their own families," Fei said. "But, if they do not have anyone better to turn to, our organization will be their last

choice as a reliable guardian."

As China's aging population grows, Fei believes guardianship services and the overall elderly care service sector will have a bigger role to play.

The nation's efforts to tackle the challenges of an aging society were highlighted at this year's two sessions, the annual gatherings of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which was held from March 4 to 11.

China's Minister of Civil Affairs Lu Zhiyuan said at a news conference on March 9 that elderly care services in China have transitioned from a security net providing basic livelihood support to a system of quality services that integrates both medical and healthcare.

TOP NEWS

On a trot

A metal horse called Zeus that was first seen during the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games is showcased prominently on Monday in Lyon, France, as part of its tour of the country. Lyon residents have been invited to come and see the horse, which will remain in the city till April 2.

JOEL PHILIPPON / PHOTOPQR



China's progress in human rights protection praised

By CHEN WEIHUA
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Human rights protection and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were put in the spotlight on Monday by experts at a side event of the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Jean-Michel Carre, a French documentary director and producer, talked about his painstaking efforts in making a documentary about the Xizang autonomous region, but said his film was nonetheless banned in many European countries.

"I did extensive archival research that allowed me to unearth indisputable documents that contradict the Western narrative on Xizang. It was the highlighting of these documents that led some French and Belgian academics to hate my film and to push the Arte channel to ban the broadcast of my film," Carre said.

"For many years, the West has been talking about human rights on all occasions, but especially on countries with which they have difficulty taking power, economically, politically or militarily," he said.

"For the Chinese government,

the primary human rights for its population are education, having a job, housing and the right to health," he said, adding that these rights are often ignored in some Western countries.

Niluobaier Aierti, a lecturer at Xinjiang Arts University, talked about women's development and the protection of women's rights in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

She said China has established a comprehensive legal system to safeguard women's rights, and the system provides a legal foundation for eliminating gender discrimination in employment, promoting women's entrepreneurship, and preventing domestic violence.

She also highlighted the increased participation by women in political and public life, and the much better education for the young generation.

Every child in Xinjiang now receives 12 years of free schooling, with 15 years in southern regions, she added.

"My family's three generations reflect the progress: My grandmother completed primary school; my mother graduated from a technical secondary school; and I earned a doctorate, thanks to the

great progress in education," she told the audience members, who were from various countries and UN institutions.

Wei Dandan, assistant executive director of the China Foundation for Rural Development, talked about poverty reduction and the human rights development practices of NGOs.

Although the foundation focuses on rural development in China, it also has international programs that have invested a total of 476 million yuan (\$66 million), benefiting about 2.54 million people in more than 30 countries and regions, including Myanmar, Nepal and Ethiopia.

"I believe that social organizations should continue to play to their unique strengths of professionalism, neutrality, innovation and reaching out to the community, and focus on building a network of cooperation, so that they can work with greater determination and more pragmatic action to build a world of equal opportunities, dignity and rights for all," Wei said.

The event on Monday was held by the China Society for Human Rights Studies and the China Foundation for Human Rights Development.

Sun Meng, a professor at China University of Political Science and

Law's Human Rights Institute, said that in the past decade, China has gradually embarked on the path of integrating development with human rights protection.

"China has redefined the foundations, principles and methods of development and has made development sustainable, while gaining magnificent human rights achievements," she said.

Sun said the participation in the Belt and Road Initiative by more than 150 countries will help strengthen the capacity of local people to fight poverty and develop through infrastructure construction.

Da Lu, an associate professor at the Human Rights Institute of Southwest University of Political Science and Law, called for strengthening international cooperation and forging broader consensus in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"Countries should abandon zero-sum thinking, uphold multilateralism and jointly address global challenges," Da said.

"Developed countries should fulfill their official development assistance commitments, while developing countries should enhance capacity building to achieve common development," he added.

HK chief: Ports deal should comply with law

Senior official calls on foreign governments to provide a fair business environment

By WU KUNLING in Hong Kong
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Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said on Tuesday that public concerns about city conglomerate CK Hutchison Holdings' proposed sale of its Panama Canal ports to a United States consortium deserve attention, and expressed firm opposition to any form of coercion or pressure tactics in international trade deals.

Political and business heavyweights in Hong Kong cautioned that the decision may pose risks to China's national interests and the landscape of multilateral trade. It could also undermine the group's long-term development.

CK Hutchison Holdings — founded by Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing — said on March 4 that it had struck a \$22.8 billion deal to sell its majority stakes in two Panama Canal ports, as well as 41 others in 23 countries, to a consortium led by US investment company BlackRock. The announcement ignited widespread discussions amid uncertain global trade markets.

Ahead of an Executive Council meeting, Lee was asked about how businesses operating globally and closely intertwined with Hong Kong's economy should navigate political risks.

He said that public discussions about the issue reflect societal concerns, underscoring its significance.

The chief executive said that the SAR government calls on foreign governments to provide a fair and equitable business environment for all companies, including those from Hong Kong. He firmly condemned the use of coercion or pressure in international economic and trade activities, emphasizing that any transaction must comply with legal and regulatory requirements.

The SAR government will handle the matter in accordance with the law and regulations, Lee added.

Leung Chun-ying, vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee and former chief executive of the SAR, said on social media that some businessmen mistakenly believe in the notion that "business

knows no borders" and assume that everything is purely business.

However, businessmen without a motherland will only face bullying, Leung said, emphasizing that businessmen should also prioritize their country.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant with the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies, a Beijing-based think tank, said that from a business perspective, this deal indeed brings substantial profits to CK Hutchison Holdings and shields the group from potential US pressure on its global ports and infrastructure.

However, this transaction inevitably poses threats to China's national interests and security, as the US could intensify actions against China's shipbuilding and shipping industries as well as the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

He called for the company to fully consider the complexity of the international landscape and China's national interests before making business decisions, stressing that pivotal infrastructure plays a highly crucial role in international competition.

Erik Yin-kong, a Hong Kong lawmaker and vice-chairman of China Merchants Port Group, said that the sale by CK Hutchison Holdings could potentially squeeze China's legitimate space for expanding its international trade and logistics industry and may impact multilateral trade, and the company's long-term development.

He emphasized that port management concerns significant national interest. He noted that the sale involves multiple ports located in countries and regions involved in the BRI, and that a quarter of China's import and export goods pass through the Panama Canal.

He warned that US control over the canal would grant access to precise data on China's trade, facilitating targeted actions against China's manufacturing sector.

CK Hutchison Holdings and CK Asset Holdings will hold board meetings on Thursday to deliberate on last year's business performance. The companies said on Tuesday that they would not hold a news conference and analyst meeting on the annual results as they usually do.



Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region John Lee Ka-chiu addresses newsmen on Tuesday ahead of an Executive Council meeting. CHEN YONGNUO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Confidence: Ability to drive tech innovations plays key role

From page 1

"Markets are rattled. Business sentiment surveys show confidence plunging. Equities are struggling. Consumer confidence is eroding. And the US retail sales and employment conditions have worsened meaningfully in the past month or two," he said.

Earlier this month, Goldman Sachs revised downward its 2025 GDP growth forecast for the US from 2.4 percent to 1.7 percent, citing worsening trade policy expectations. Morgan Stanley also lowered its forecast for the US from 1.9 percent to 1.5 percent.

Xing, from Morgan Stanley, said, "When we look at the global market dynamics, it's evident that the US market is wrestling with heighten-

ed levels of uncertainty, while the Chinese market is showing signs of stabilization and recovery."

The divergence of market sentiment in the world's two largest economies is creating a stark contrast that is shaping the perception of investors and businesses alike, he said.

Goldman Sachs has revised its 12-month target for the MSCI China Index upward by 13 percent to 85. This includes shares listed onshore and overseas. The investment banking and securities firm has also raised the CSI 300 Index of the largest yuan-denominated Chinese stocks by 2.2 percent to 4,700.

Xing highlighted the "reignited confidence of entrepreneurs in the sci-tech sector", as the recent fanfare surrounding the "Six Little Dragons" — a group of Chinese tech start-

ups based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, spearhead by DeepSeek and Unitree Robotics — has challenged the long-held perception about China's innovation potential.

Xing said that over the past three years, the general narrative was that the US is the sole superpower in technological innovation, particularly in emerging fields. The current realization is that the world has returned to its multipolar order, in which innovation is not the forte of the US alone and sees remarkable contributions from Asia, particularly China, he added.

Ole Gerda, chief operating officer at Deutsche Bank China, said the realization has sounded a wake-up call for the world that now is the time to invest in China. "We expect this year to be the turning point

where international investors are going to shift their focus and make a higher allocation in the Chinese market," he said.

Looking ahead, Kenny Pan, Asia-Pacific vice-president of Huntsman Polyurethanes, said that China's ability to drive innovation in breakthrough technologies in the coming years cannot be underestimated.

With increasing policy support and investment in research and development, AI technologies will promote innovation across various industries and application fields, Pan added.

Liu Zhuhua contributed to this story.

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Tariffs: US dominance waning in multipolar world

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The steel industry is a perfect example of this. By imposing higher import tariffs, the US government believes it is shielding domestic producers from competition. However, what it is actually doing is making raw materials more expensive for US manufacturers that rely on imported steel. This will drive up production costs for industries such as automotive, construction and energy, making their products more expensive both domestically and internationally.

Moreover, retaliation is inevitable. The affected trading partners will not sit idly while Washington distorts global trade in its favor forcefully. We cannot expect the affected parties not to retaliate. There will definitely be a response which I believe will not amuse the US government.

The world today stands at a defining moment. At a time when

multilateralism should be encouraged to address post-pandemic economic recovery, supply chain disruptions, and the need for global economic stability, Washington's actions serve only to deepen divisions and accelerate economic decoupling.

The tariffs are not just about steel and aluminum — they symbolize a broader ideological battle between two contrasting economic visions. On one side is the US, clinging to its outdated notion of absolute dominance, using economic coercion to maintain control. On the other is a multipolar world that is moving toward shared prosperity, regional cooperation and mutual benefit.

China, for instance, has responded to Western protectionism by strengthening its economic ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, BRICS nations, and the Belt and Road Initiative partners. Europe, increasingly frustrated by Washington's erratic economic poli-

cies, has sought to diversify its trade relationships to reduce dependency on the US market. The Global South, long marginalized by the US-led financial order, is now actively exploring alternative economic structures, including trade in local currencies and non-Western financial institutions.

The US must recognize that its economic hegemony is no longer sustainable. The world is changing, and those who fail to adapt will find themselves left behind. By imposing protectionist policies, Washington is not only harming its own economic prospects but is also accelerating its decline as a global leader.

A key lesson from history is that empires fall not because of external threats but due to their own hubris. The Roman Empire collapsed under the weight of its unsustainable expansion and internal corruption. The British Empire, once the world's most powerful economic force, fell because it refused to

accept the shifting global order after World War II. The US is now at a similar crossroads.

If Washington continues down this path of economic isolationism and unilateral coercion, it will only hasten the decline of its influence. Other nations will move ahead with alternative economic frameworks, forging new alliances that diminish the relevance of US dominance. The dollar's status as the world's reserve currency is already being challenged by alternative payment systems, and economic mechanisms such as "BRICS Plus" are actively working toward reducing dependency on the Western financial system.

The US still has a choice to reverse course. Instead of imposing tariffs and resorting to economic coercion, Washington should seek cooperation through meaningful engagement with its trading partners. A rules-based, fair-trade system — one that does

not disproportionately favor one nation at the expense of others — is the only viable path forward.

This would require a shift in policy from confrontation to collaboration, from imposing sanctions to negotiating trade agreements that are mutually beneficial. The US must recognize that its long-term prosperity depends not on economic dominance but on strategic partnerships and fair competition.

Unfortunately, the political reality in Washington makes this shift unlikely. The rise of economic nationalism, fueled by bipartisan rhetoric about "protecting American jobs", has made it difficult for rational economic policies to take precedence over populist posturing. However, reality will soon catch up with Washington's policymakers. The world is no longer willing to accept unilateral economic decisions that serve only US interests.

The US tariffs on steel and aluminum are not just about trade — they are a reflection of Washington's deeper struggle to maintain its waning dominance in an increasingly multipolar world. These pro-

tectionist measures will backfire, harming US industries, escalating trade tensions, and pushing the world further toward economic fragmentation.

At a time when cooperation is needed more than ever, Washington has chosen to stoke division. But the world is no longer willing to play by outdated rules. The global economic order is shifting, and nations are finding new pathways to prosperity that do not rely on US approval.

If the US does not change its course, it will soon find itself isolated, watching as the world moves ahead without it. What Washington sees as a strategy to maintain control will instead become the catalyst for its own economic decline. The choice is clear: adapt to the new realities of a multipolar world, or face the consequences of self-inflicted chaos.

The author is deputy editor-in-chief of Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Blockbuster boosts sales of lotus root

Popularity of *Ne Zha 2* continues to have impact across vast sectors of society

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and CHEN MEILING

Honghu, Hubei province, saw sales of its lotus root surge recently as the Chinese animated blockbuster *Ne Zha 2* continues to make waves across the country and beyond.

In the movie, the immortal Taiyi Zhenren reshapes Ne Zha's body with lotus root powder. In ancient Chinese culture, lotus root is like the blood vessels of the body — flexible like a spring when stretched, but when broken it remains connected, making it the best choice for recreating the body.

In addition, lotus are a symbol of purity and nobility in China. One poem describes it as "emerging from the mud unstained, washing clean without being tainted", which matches Ne Zha's innocence and rebellious spirit.

"The growth cycle of lotus root is unique. During winter, the rhizomes quietly lie buried in the mud, appearing 'dead' but actually accumulating strength. When spring arrives, they will sprout new shoots, symbolizing the cycle of life and rebirth," said Yan Shoulei, a food science professor from Huazhong Agricultural University in Wuhan.

"The 'nine holes and seven openings' of lotus root correspond to the meridians of the human body, and the pure white lotus root grown in the mud symbolizes the integrity of a gentleman who remains unstained by the mud," he said.

He suggested soft and waxy lotus roots were used instead of crispy ones to reshape Ne Zha, as they fea-

ture a higher starch content.

Lotus root has been planted in China for some 3,000 years, and the country produces 80 percent of the world's supply. Hubei's production accounts for one-third of the national total.

The planting area in the province is 86,700 hectares, with an annual production of 3.2 million metric tons, with both ranking first in China, according to official statistics.

In Honghu alone, the planting area of lotus root exceeds 14,700 hectares, with an annual yield of nearly 300,000 tons.

Honghu lotus root and derivative products generated about 582 million yuan (\$80.1 million) from Jan 29 to Feb 23, with year-on-year growth of 51 percent, data from Honghu Lotus Root Industry Development Center showed.

Sales of fresh lotus root reached 18,700 tons. Sales of deep-processed products such as lotus root powder, lotus sprouts and lotus root soup also achieved year-on-year growth, it said.

"Since Spring Festival, the order volume of our lotus root and deep-processed products has increased significantly, with a year-on-year growth of over 200 percent," said Yuan Jun, deputy general manager of Natrich, a major lotus root food company in Honghu.

Yuan said that during Spring Festival, consumers had a strong desire to try out lotus root products because of the movie.

Due to the popularity of the movie, more vloggers and livestreaming



Clockwise from top: Honghu in Hubei province is known for its large planting area of lotus root. A farmer harvests lotus root in a field. Farmers use bamboo baskets to carry harvested lotus root from pond to the bank. PHOTOS BY WU QI / FOR CHINA DAILY

platforms have contacted the company for collaboration. Its five major series of lotus root products, including lotus sprouts, lotus root soup, beverages, refrigerated products and fresh products, have all benefited, she added.

He Ganggang, the company's sales manager, said orders have surged, and the production lines are

almost "smoking". Wang Meng, a worker at the Honghu branch of China Post, said they collect 5,000 packages from the company every day. To ensure the quality of products during transportation, the postal service has procured moisture-proof and damage-resistant packaging materials.

A Hubei-cuisine restaurant is also

offering "Ne Zha rebirth feast", charging 149 yuan for lotus root and ribs soup, deep-fried lotus root sandwiches with pork and stir-fried tender lotus root slices.

Zhou Hao, a staff member at the center, said they are designing packaging images, co-branding and product packages related to *Ne Zha 2* and expect to launch products soon.

Honghu has 135 companies related to lotus root, which process about 200,000 tons of products with an output value of 3 billion yuan. It has four national geographical indication products — lotus seeds, lotus sprout, lotus root and lotus tea.

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Taiwan deputy seeks family connection across Strait

By SHI XUEFAN and ZHANG YI

Nearly 70 years after her grandmother left her hometown in Taiwan, Chen Guijing visited it for the first time.

Chen, the youngest deputy in the Taiwan delegation of the 14th National People's Congress, was born into a cross-Strait family who holds a deep-seated hope for reuniting with family on the island.

"I have only seen my grandmother in photographs — her bright eyes and neatly styled short hair capturing the grace of a typical Taiwan lady," Chen said. Born in Chiayi, Chen's grandmother was the youngest daughter in her family. In 1948, she moved to Sichuan province with her husband, and, after his passing, settled there with their two daughters.

"My grandmother often told my mother about her home in Chiayi, which was located on Wenhua Road near a bustling night market. Before she passed away, she would always say that she longed to return to her hometown Chiayi," Chen said.

This longing for reunion has passed down through generations with Chen's mother always urging Chen to reconnect with their relatives in Taiwan. "Write to them. Write the letter," she would say.

A letter from a relative in Taiwan arrived for Chen's family around 1995. Her uncle, the child of her grandmother's brother, came to the mainland in search of them. The letter was delivered to the foot of the mountain in Bailuding village in Sichuan's Pengzhou city, and in it her uncle mentioned that he planned to celebrate Chinese New Year in Sichuan with them before returning to Taiwan.

However, due to communication difficulties, by the time Chen received the letter it was already March of the following year. She hurriedly dialed the phone number provided in the letter but was unable to reach her uncle. The family connection was lost again.

In 2016, Chen went to Taiwan for the first time. Guided by the address that she knew by heart,

she found the old house in Chiayi. As her grandmother had mentioned countless times, it was located right beside a bustling night market. However, the old house had long changed hands, and the whereabouts of her uncle's descendants remained unknown.

Chen said that perhaps she would visit again someday. "It's never too late. I know there are still family members there. Wherever my family is, that is home. My hometown is both Bailuding village and Taiwan Island," Chen said.

Leveraging her cross-Strait heritage, Chen introduces Taiwan's expertise to modernize the tea industry in Bailuding and also helps young people from Taiwan participate in the rural vitalization of Sichuan. By collaborating with Taiwan agricultural specialists and young designers, the village has improved its tea cultivation techniques.

"Better tea quality helps boost local farmers' income," Chen said,

adding that community management experiences brought by these Taiwan people are helping local governance.

Among the 13 representatives of the Taiwan delegation, many have unique cross-Strait family histories. They have experienced family separation and are now pursuing reunification. For Chinese people across the Taiwan Strait, many remain deeply aware of their ancestral roots. In recent years, many young people from Taiwan have traveled to the mainland in search of their ancestry.

To preserve and strengthen these connections, efforts are being intensified to collect, organize and showcase archives related to the travel history of Taiwan.

Among them, given the close geographical and cultural ties between Fujian province and Taiwan, with over 80 percent of Taiwan people tracing their ancestry back to Fujian, these initiatives hold deep significance.

During a group discussion of the Fujian delegation at the third session of the 14th NPC, Wang Jinzu, an NPC deputy from Fujian, highlighted the province's efforts to enhance the collection and exhibition of archives documenting the travel of people from the mainland to Taiwan.

He also emphasized the initiative to establish a Fujian-Taiwan genealogy and clan digital platform, aiming to utilize historical context and familial ties to assist more Taiwan compatriots in tracing their lineages, honoring their ancestors and reconnecting with relatives in Fujian.

The importance of cross-Strait integration was highlighted in this year's Government Work Report, emphasizing the advancement of integrated development and collaboration with fellow Chinese in Taiwan to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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Oilfield keeps production, conservation in balance

JINAN — Strolling through a wetland park in early spring, visitors are greeted by nature's awakening — tender green grass emerging from the earth, a pond shedding its icy cover and flocks of wild ducks gliding across the water.

Yet amid this serene landscape, a different rhythm sounds. Oil workers in neat orange suits move about, tanker trucks roll in and out, and pumping engines hum tirelessly.

Guangli River Forest Wetland Park, located in the city of Dongying, Shandong province, is both a popular tourist destination and home to an oilfield management area owned by Sinopec's Shengli Oilfield. Over nearly a decade of development, the management area has expanded to include 284 oil-water wells, producing 267,000 metric tons of crude oil annually.

As the main oil-producing region of Shengli Oilfield, the second-largest in China, Dongying has a well-established petrochemical industry. The city, situated on an estuary of the Yellow River, also boasts an intricate wetland ecosystem.

While oil recovery and wetland conservation might seem worlds apart, the two are harmoniously balanced in the park.

"We are committed to ensuring that every aspect of oil extraction meets environmental standards, and to integrating oil extraction equipment with the park's natural surroundings," said Peng Mingfu, an official of the management area. "We follow strict rules, including no oil spills, no gas emissions, no water discharge and no excessive noise."

Along a patrol path, creative installations blend seamlessly with the landscape. A mushroom sculpture, for instance, serves as a water injection station, treating industrial wastewater before reinjecting it into the groundwater, while pumping engines are painted in various colors to match the park's natural beauty.



A drill site of Sinopec's Shengli Oilfield in Dongying, Shandong province. WANG GUOZHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The noise from the pumping engines is only 30 decibels — quieter than the sound of wind in the winter or bird calls in the summer," Peng added.

Shengli Oilfield is committed to sustainable oil development and environmental protection. It has adopted a green approach across well drilling, production, transportation and maintenance. Last year, its oil and gas output reached 24.3 million metric tons.

"In recent years, we have also developed some 39 new technologies to extend the service life of the equipment and update it to minimize emissions and keep noise levels low," Peng said.

"Beyond environmentally friendly equipment, we also foster a sense of environmental consciousness," Peng added. "We make sure not to drop welding rods, pick up any litter immediately, and minimize horn use while driving."

Before 27-year-old oil worker Fan Jiliang started his current job, he imagined oilfields to be a harsh environment with stubborn oil stains, rumbling sounds of machines and acrid smells.

"But now, when I think of the oilfields, all I see is the beautiful scenery and clear skies," he said.

XINHUA



Chen Guijing works in a field at Bailuding village in Pengzhou, Sichuan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

WORLD

Attack on bus

Bystanders look at the wreckage of a bus in the Nushki area of Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan Province on Monday. At least seven people were killed and 21 others injured when unidentified militants attacked a security forces convoy on Sunday. The proscribed terrorist outfit, the Balochistan Liberation Army, claimed responsibility for the attack. AFP



FRIENDS AFAR

Editor's note: China Daily presents the series Friends Afar to tell the stories of people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries. Through the vivid narration of the people in the stories, readers can get a better understanding of a country that is boosting openness.

Getting world drawn to China

UK archaeologist explores nation's development via ceramics, jades

By ZHENG WANYIN in London
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China is very, very different. Jessica Rawson repeatedly underlines this point.

This idea might seem obvious, but she believes that people often underplay the divergence that China inherits.

"The big trouble is Westerners don't think they need to study China. They think, if China had a past, it would be like the Greeks, the Romans, or something they're familiar with here," she says. "The West doesn't really notice China, doesn't understand the difference, doesn't understand why your culture is not like ours."

Rather than digging into the similarities we share, recognizing how ancient China charted its unique course may lead to adjustment, and then better mutual understanding, she argues.

For the 82-year-old archaeologist, who is a former keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum — one of her many titles, her career over the past 50 years has been consistent: China's distinctive path of development, explored through the eyes of objects, like ceramics, jades and bronze vessels.

By looking into China's material culture, Rawson has provided a new perspective on one of the world's oldest civilizations, uncovering the values, beliefs, and customs embedded in the shapes, colors and motifs of its remains.

China's distinctiveness was revealed to Rawson long before she set foot in the country.

During a trip to the British Museum at the age of 10 or 12, the Rosetta Stone, inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphs — a writing system that used pictures as signs — taught her that there is a language in the world not based on alphabetic letters.

"Why not look at Chinese if you're interested in this," her parents said and then gave her a small book called *Teach Yourself Chinese*.

"When you're 12, you can't teach yourself Chinese," she jokes. "But I started to copy the Chinese characters into a notebook."



Jessica Rawson visits the Baifoshan Grottoes in Dongping county, Shandong province, in 1999. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Pioneering" is a word often associated with her and her approach to looking beyond and looking around was described as "Rawsonian" by Robert Harrist Jr, professor of Chinese art history at Columbia University in the United States.

And she has been determined to study Chinese archaeology and get inside the cosmology of others.

"I've dedicated my entire life to this field," she has written in a letter. "There had been a few resistance along the journey, but I have never thought of giving up."

"Since the Neolithic era, China's developmental path has been uniquely its own. Throughout my academic career, I have increasingly recognized the importance of introducing more people to China's history and the latest results in archaeology. Only by doing so can they cultivate a genuine interest in China."

Language of objects

In 1968, when Rawson joined the British Museum, she was tasked with cataloging thousands of ceramics and jades from the Shang (c.16th-11th century BC), Zhou (c.11th century-256 BC) and Han (206 BC-AD 220) dynasties — relics she found "very surprising" at first sight.

Seeing some objects as "China's greatest works of art", Rawson found that those exquisite things are often not vehicles for self-expression but functional forms for ancestor worship, crafted according to strict standards dictating their shapes, patterns, and decorations, exemplified by bronze vessels.

She wondered why the Chinese were so obsessed with this particular type of object, but not gold or gems.

Breaking it down step by step, what stands out to Rawson is that the ancients' fascination with bronze vessels reveals the distinctiveness of China, from its climate and terrain to the cosmology of the inhabitants.

The Loess Plateau in north-central China once buried the ores or metals under layers of heavy wind-blown dust. The mining alone required an immense workforce, not to mention the demanding craftsmanship needed to smelt and cast even a single piece, which explains why bronze vessels were mostly evacuated from the tombs of royalty and nobility, Rawson says.

Life and the afterlife in China unveil fundamental differences in the nation's ancient society, in how the ancestors were treated as being at the top of a generational hierarchy, and how families, united by shared ancestry and kinship ties, became central, she says.

In her latest book *Life and Afterlife in Ancient China* Rawson explores 12 grand tombs and a major sacrificial deposit from across China.

The "master interpreter", as the former director of the National Gallery in London and British Museum Neil MacGregor describes Rawson, never treats an object in isolation but traces down to the usage, customs, and beliefs — shaped by climate and geology — all pointing to why the Chinese are not like Westerners or anyone else in the world.

While China is fascinated with bronze, the West prizes gold and gems. While the Chinese eat rice from ceramic bowls, the West uses plates for salad. What Rawson believes is that every culture develops its material system.

There are no shortcuts for a foreigner to study Chinese archaeology, Rawson once said.

In 1975, she set foot in China for the first time. It was a time when the country only owned trains in green that chugged her through the vast landscape, from the plains with fields of rice to the endlessly stretching plateau.

"It's a shock to realize how big China is, how many regions are different from each other, and how they're all different from the West and, above all, from Western Asia," she says.

To truly get an impression of the place, the only way is by traveling it, she believes. For the next 44 years, Rawson returned to China nearly every year, traveled alone sometimes, and even once slept at a train station to catch the earliest service.

"China is not a quick thing to learn," Rawson says. But she did not give up trying to get closer to that dream path. "I always wanted to work in China. In a way, people would say I am always addicted to China. I am happier thinking about China or reading about China than doing anything else."

What might be more difficult is introducing what sets China apart from the West, Rawson admits, yet she remains committed to doing so.

As the British Museum stands as one of the most-visited attractions in the UK, the former keeper prioritized her work, especially the refurbishment of the China Gallery, both in 1992 and 2016, as a top priority.

Her career as a curator did not mark a break, even after leaving the museum. She continued to curate blockbuster China-related exhibitions in the UK, such as *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795*, which was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 2005 at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

During her years at the University of Oxford, a major grant by the Leverhulme Trust, which she bid on and received, not only supported the founding of a contemporary China studies program in 2002 but also led to the creation of a China center in 2008.

Her efforts to promote exchanges somehow mirror another of her research achievements — the interactions in ornament culture between China, Inner Asia, and the West. While China's path has been independent, it has never been completely isolated, and "we need to see how much we get from each other," she says.

Carney stresses Canada's relations with UK, France

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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Canada's new Prime Minister Mark Carney has made a point of stressing his country's cultural ties with Europe after visiting Paris and London on his first overseas trip as national leader.

In a speech made alongside French President Emmanuel Macron, who called Canada "a unique friend", and delivered both in French and English, Carney said it was vital for his country to strengthen ties with "reliable allies", calling Canada "the most European of non-European countries".

He also stressed the importance of maintaining "the most positive possible relations with the United States" in light of US President Donald Trump's trade tariffs against his country, and the comments about Canada becoming the 51st state of the US.

From Paris, Carney then flew to London, where he was previously governor of the central bank of the Bank of England, and had a 30-minute private conversation with King Charles, who, as leader of the Commonwealth, is Canada's head of state, before being greeted by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at Downing Street.

Carney said the relationship between the United Kingdom and Canada was "built on shared values" and that "we're at a point in history where the world is being reordered", with Starmer adding that "the relationship between our two countries has always been strong", with "so much in common — a shared history, shared values".

An unnamed Canadian govern-

ment official was quoted by the Guardian newspaper as saying that the destination of Carney's first overseas trip as leader had been chosen to strengthen ties with Canada's two founding countries, adding that Canada was a "good friend of the United States, but we all know what is going on".

At his swearing-in ceremony as prime minister last week, Carney said how Canada was founded on the bedrock of three peoples: the French, the English and Indigenous people, and that it was fundamentally different from the US and will "never, ever, in any way shape or form, be part of the United States".

Speaking to reporters in London, Carney called Trump's comments "disrespectful" and "not helpful", and said he would not be meeting him until his tone changed.

"It will have to stop before we sit down and have a conversation about our broader partnership with the United States," he added. "We're Canada, we don't need other people to come to our aid."

Nelson Wiseman, professor emeritus in political science at the University of Toronto, put it bluntly. "The Trump factor is the reason for the trip," he said. "The Trump factor towers over everything else Carney must deal with."

Canada must have a general election no later than October this year, and Trump's recent intervention could turn out to be a decisive factor.

The governing Liberal Party was widely thought to be facing defeat, but recent surveys have shown a sharp rise in its support, while the Conservative Party of Canada has seen its polling lead slump.



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney (right) is greeted by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at Downing Street as he arrives in London on Monday. SEAN KILPATRICK / THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA AP

US tariffs hurting global economy: OECD report

By EARLE GALE in London
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United States President Donald Trump's trade tariffs are hurting the whole world's economy, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, reported on Monday.

The 38-member intergovernmental organization that advocates for the market economy said in its latest Interim Economic Outlook that it had downgraded its global economic growth prediction, with global GDP growth set to slide from 3.2 percent in 2024 to 3.1 percent in 2025. The OECD said global GDP growth will likely slow further, to 3 percent in 2026.

Before Trump's tariffs were announced, the OECD had predicted global GDP growth would hit 3.3 percent in both 2025 and 2026.

Trump introduced the tariffs to stimulate his own country's economy, but the OECD said they will damage it as well, with US GDP growth now expected to slump to 2.2 percent in 2025 and 1.6 percent in 2026 after it had been expected to stand at 2.4 percent this year and 2.1 percent next year.

There was a modicum of good news for the European Union, with the OECD saying it may not be hit as hard as first feared.

"European economies will experience fewer direct economic effects from the tariff measures incorporated in the baseline projections, but heightened geopolitical and policy uncertainty is still likely to restrain growth," the report added.

The Paris-based OECD said the

United Kingdom's economy will likely grow by 1.4 percent in 2025, instead of the 1.7 percent that had been expected.

The UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves told Sky News: "This report shows the world is changing, and increased global headwinds, such as trade uncertainty, are being felt across the board."

Slower GDP growth will likely send the rate of inflation soaring in the G20 countries, up to 3.8 percent in 2025 and 3.2 percent in 2026, the OECD said.

The organization said Canada and Mexico will be hit hard by Trump's tariffs, with growth likely to be around 0.7 percent this year and next year in Canada, when 2 percent had been expected for both years.

It also stated Mexico could be hit the hardest of all, with the nation being forced into a recession because of the tariffs that look set to cut output by 1.3 percent in 2025 and 0.6 percent in 2026, when the growth of 1.2 percent and 1.6 percent had been expected.

The OECD said ordinary people will pay the price of Trump's decision to impose tariffs and that things could go from bad to worse.

"Further fragmentation of the global economy is a key concern," the report added. "Higher and broader increases in trade barriers would hit growth around the world and add to inflation."

"Governments need to find ways of addressing their concerns together within the global trading system, to avoid a significant ratcheting up of retaliatory trade barriers between countries," it stated.

Trump claims Biden pardons 'void' because of autopen

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump declared on Monday that he was annulling pardons issued by former president Joe Biden to shield Trump critics from retribution, claiming that they were invalid because his Democratic predecessor had supposedly used an autopen for his signature.

It was unclear what, if any, authority Trump has to void presidential pardons issued by his predecessor. It is extremely rare for pardons to be revoked in US history.

The pardons "are hereby declared void, vacant, and of no further force or effect, because of the fact they were done by autopen,"

Trump posted on his social media account Truth Social.

However, he provided no evidence either of the use of an autopen or his contention that it would invalidate the signature.

An autopen is a mechanical device that is used to replicate a person's authentic signature. A pen or other writing implement is held by an arm of the machine, which reproduces a signature after a writing sample has been fed to it. Autopens aren't the same as an old-fashioned ink pad and rubber stamp or the electronic signatures used on PDF documents.

US presidents have long used

autopens, including to sign bills into law.

Biden issued pardons to former senior Republican lawmaker Liz Cheney and other members of the congressional committee that had investigated the Jan 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol by Trump's supporters and multiple attempts by Trump to overturn the 2020 election in which he lost.

The Biden pardons, issued at the end of his presidency, were effectively a blanket immunity to shield the lawmakers from Trump's repeated promises that he would take revenge against them if he won the 2024 election.

Asked by reporters on Monday whether everything Biden signed with an autopen should be voided, Trump said, "I think so. It's not my decision, that'll be up to a court."

But he said on Truth Social that the committee members "should fully understand that they are subject to investigation at the highest level".

Experts who spoke to Axios media outlet pointed out that even if Trump were to lose a court challenge over the move, the damage would already have been done, with those he targets being dragged into stressful legal battles.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD

Renewed attacks kill hundreds

Collapse of truce looms as Hamas says Netanyahu using crisis as political 'lifeboat'

By CUI HAIPEI in Dubai and MIKE GU in Hong Kong

The relative calm of a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas came to an abrupt end on Tuesday when Israel unleashed intense strikes on the Gaza Strip, killing at least 400 people, Palestinian authorities said, threatening a collapse of the truce as Israel vowed to use force to free hostages.

Hamas, on Tuesday, confirmed that the head of its government in the Gaza Strip, Essam al-Dalīs, was among those killed in Israeli strikes on the enclave.

It further said that Mahmoud Abu Wafa, the interior ministry head, and Bahjat Abu Sultan, director-general of the internal security service, were also killed in the strikes.

The surprise operation during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan raised the prospect of a full return to fighting in the 17-month conflict that has killed 48,000 Palestinians and caused widespread destruction and a humanitarian crisis across Gaza.

China on Tuesday called for steps to prevent a "humanitarian disaster" there.

"China is highly concerned about the current situation between Israel and Palestine," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said, calling for parties to "avoid any actions that could lead to an escalation of the situation and prevent a large-scale humanitarian disaster."

The United Nations' humanitarian coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Muhannad Hadi, said: "This is unconscionable. A cease-fire must be reinstated immediately. People in Gaza have endured unimaginable suffering."

However, Israel's state-owned Army Radio said the move indicated the truce "has collapsed". Defense Minister Israel Katz said the operation would "continue as long as necessary" and might expand beyond airstrikes.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin



Injured Palestinians are being brought to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital for treatment as Israel launches 'large-scale' airstrikes across the Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. ALI JADALLAH / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

Netanyahu said he had ordered the strikes because of a lack of progress in the ongoing talks in Qatar to extend the truce. "Israel will, from now on, act against Hamas with increasing military strength," his office said.

Hamas warned that Israel's move has put the fate of Israeli hostages in jeopardy. However, there were no reports of any attacks by Hamas several hours after the bombardment.

"Netanyahu's decision to resume war is a decision to sacrifice the occupation's prisoners and impose a death sentence on them," senior Hamas official Izzat al-Risheq said, accusing the Israeli leader of using the conflict as a political "lifeboat" to distract from internal crises.

'Shocked, angry'

Meanwhile, the main group representing hostages' families accused the government of backing out of the truce, saying it chose to give up on them. "We are shocked, angry and terrified by the deliberate dismantling of the process to return our loved ones," the Hostages and Missing Families

Forum said in a statement on X.

Strikes were reported in multiple locations across Gaza. Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 413 people were killed in the strikes and hundreds more wounded. Rescuers were still searching the rubble for the dead and wounded as the strikes continued. It was among the deadliest days of the conflict.

Ramez Alammari, 25, described carrying children to a hospital southeast of Gaza City.

"(Israel) unleashed the fire of hell again on Gaza," he told AFP, adding that bodies and limbs are on the ground. "They bombed a building in the area and there are still martyrs and wounded under the rubble... fear and terror. Death is better than life."

The United States said it had been consulted before the attacks and voiced support for Israel.

"As President (Donald) Trump has made it clear, Hamas, the Houthis, Iran, all those who seek to terrorize not just Israel, but also the US, will see a price to pay — all hell will break loose," White House Press Secretary

Karoline Leavitt said in an interview with Fox News.

Tensions also flared elsewhere in the Middle East, a major supplier of oil to the global markets, which has seen the Gaza conflict spread to Yemen. In a statement, Yemen's Houthis condemned Israeli strikes on Gaza, vowing escalation in support of Palestinians, after earlier this month vowing to attack Israeli ships in the Red Sea.

Negotiating teams from Israel and Hamas had been in Doha as mediators from Egypt and Qatar sought to bridge the gap between the two sides following the end of an initial phase in the cease-fire.

With the backing of the US, Israel had been pressing for the return of hostages in exchange for a longer-term truce that would have halted fighting until after Ramadan and the Jewish Passover holiday in April.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Major rallies in Yemen amid continued strikes

SANAA — Huge crowds joined protests in Yemen on Monday after deadly US strikes killed dozens and sparked fears of a new cycle of violence in the conflict-torn country.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators, many waving assault rifles, or daggers, chanted anti-US and anti-Israel, slogans in the capital Sanaa.

There were also large crowds in Saada, the birthplace of the Iran-backed Houthi movement, and demonstrations in other major cities, footage from the militias' Al-Masirah TV station showed.

"Yemen will never back down, we defy the Americans, we defy the Zionists," said a man shouting slogans to the Sanaa crowd.

The protests came after the first US strikes on Yemen, aimed at ending the Houthis' Red Sea campaign, which killed 53 people and wounded 98 on Saturday.

The militias launched scores of attacks on ships on the vital route during the Gaza conflict, claiming solidarity with the Palestinians.

The Houthis on Tuesday claimed their third attack on US warships in 48 hours.

The Houthis said on Telegram they had targeted the USS *Harry S. Truman* carrier group with missiles and drones, making the attack the "third in the past 48 hours" in the northern Red Sea.

There was no comment from the United States.

The United Nations urged both sides to "cease all military activity" while expressing concern over

Houthi threats to resume the Red Sea attacks.

Washington has vowed to keep hitting Yemen until the militants stop attacking Red Sea shipping, with US President Donald Trump warning he would use "overwhelming lethal force".

In a social media post, he also addressed Iran, asking it to stop supporting Houthi "terrorists".

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condemned the US strikes and said Washington had "no authority" to dictate Teheran's foreign policy.

A database set up by ACLED, a nonprofit monitor, shows 136 Houthi attacks against warships, commercial vessels, and Israeli and other targets since Oct 19, 2023.

While the Red Sea trade route normally carries around 12 percent of world shipping traffic, Houthi attacks have forced many companies into costly detours around southern Africa.

Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Al-Alimi warned on Monday that maritime routes will remain a persistent source of regional tension as long as Houthi forces maintain control over Yemen's coastal territories.

The statement came during Al-Alimi's meeting with French Ambassador to Yemen Catherine Cormakmoun in the southern port city of Aden, according to the state-run Saba News Agency.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



Demonstrators participate in a rally in Sanaa, Yemen, on Monday. MOHAMMED MOHAMMED/XINHUA

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EU pledges \$6.3 billion support for Syria at Brussels conference

BRUSSELS — Donors at a European Union-led conference on Monday pledged 5.8 billion euros (\$6.3 billion) to help Syria.

The pledges at the Brussels gathering were less than last year's 7.5 billion euros in grants and loans, as EU officials pointed to US aid cuts as a major contributing factor.

The annual conference has been hosted by the EU since 2017.

In a first for a top official from Damascus, Asaad Hassan al-Shibani, head of Syria's foreign affairs authority, attended the conference along with dozens of European and Arab ministers and representatives of international organizations.

"This is a time of dire needs and challenges for Syria, as tragically



Asaad Hassan al-Shibani (center), head of Syria's foreign affairs authority, poses for a photo in Brussels on Monday. YVES HERMAN / REUTERS

evidenced by the recent wave of violence in coastal areas," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said.

But she said it was also "a time of hope", citing an agreement struck on March 10 to integrate the Kurdish-led and US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, which control much of Syria's northeast, into new state institutions.

About 16.5 million people in Syria require humanitarian aid, with 12.9 million people needing food aid, according to the EU.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at the meeting that the EU was increasing its pledge to Syrians in the country and the region to almost 2.5 billion euros for 2025 and 2026. This includes an increase of about 160

million euros to its previous pledge for this year.

Earlier on Monday, European Commissioner Hadja Lahbib said US cuts to humanitarian and development aid had limited the money available for Syria.

Syria's Shibani expressed his appreciation for the pledge by the EU and its partners.

"The reconstruction of Syria is a joint effort and a global partnership that we hope with our friends would contribute to a breakthrough to the Syrian people for further prosperity and progress," he said in a post on X.

In another development, Syria and Lebanon reached an agreement to implement a cease-fire along their shared border and

enhance military coordination on Monday, Syria's defense authorities announced.

The agreement, reached between the defense authorities of both countries, aims to de-escalate tensions and prevent further hostilities in the border region.

The announcement follows a recent escalation between Syria and Hezbollah after Damascus accused the group of kidnapping and executing three Syrian soldiers near the border, an allegation Hezbollah has denied. Syria also blamed Hezbollah for a targeted attack on journalists and for shelling a water station in western Homs, further fueling tensions.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Filmmakers from Gulf nations eye co-productions with China

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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Filmmakers, production companies and entertainment venture funds from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are looking to co-produce more projects in China amid the growing appeal of the nation's movie and TV content in the international market.

Participants from the Gulf nations at the 29th Hong Kong International Film and TV Market, or FILMART, industry event, which opened on Monday, spoke about the soaring popularity of Chinese entertainment content and cultural elements globally, and the potential opportunities for collaborations and joint productions with Chinese partners.

Emad Eskander, head of the Red Sea Fund at Saudi Arabia-based Red Sea Film Foundation, said China "is blessed with a culture something so unique" that has enabled the culture to flourish internationally.

There is food, there is fashion and there is this new animation film that is breaking records, Eskander told China Daily in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of FILMART in Hong Kong.

Eskander, a first-time visitor to Hong Kong and FILMART, and one of the speakers at the event, was referring to the Chinese animated movie *Ne Zha 2*, which has become the fifth on the list of the highest-grossing films in global box office history.

In Japan, the original Chinese version of *Ne Zha 2*, with Chinese and English subtitles, has been released in major cities with high population density, covering 32 theaters. The Japanese-subtitled version is set to be released on April 4.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia lifted a 35-year ban on cinemas as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud's plan to revitalize his nation's traditionally oil-dependent economy through the Vision 2030 agenda. Eskander is optimistic

about the future of Saudi Arabia's film sector, saying it should be able to catch up through international collaborations.

Eskander, a filmmaker himself, told China Daily that at the Red Sea Fund, at least 50 percent of the submissions received by the fund, when it started accepting proposals for post-production projects to include Asia, for the first time — for the first cycle of the year, which ran from Feb 6 to 27 — were from China.

The other 50 percent, he said, came from some 40 countries combined. The fund had previously been opened to the Arab world and Africa.

"I am glad. We're lucky in a sense we got introduced to all these filmmakers," said Eskander.

Eskander said that as Saudi-Chinese relations deepen, the audience engagement "has been there". He noted there has been a lot of Chinese entertainment content that has been watched in Saudi Arabia,

including movies featuring popular icons Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee.

The overall potential for collaboration, he said, is with independent filmmakers.

"I expect the features to lead more than the documentaries. Nevertheless, this is our first year. There is a lot for us to learn and a lot for me to learn," said Eskander.

Established in 2021, the Red Sea Fund has supported more than 280 projects in which several former recipients have gone on to earn global recognition and accolades.

Henry Bolade, finance and commercial director at Kobovaola Resources, an independent animation and gaming development studio based in Abu Dhabi, UAE, told China Daily that in the long term, they would want to start distribution of their products to TV companies, noting a shift from Netflix. He is attending FILMART for the first time.

"It's a good experience for me to

come down and be on the ground to speak to people. Even though this is just the first day, I've already had invitations to go on to Chinese mainland," said Bolade.

"I think China will have a significant role to play," he said.

Julia Nikolaeva, general manager at Animation Media Group, another Abu Dhabi-based company and a previous attendee, told China Daily that they brought their existing catalog as well as new IPs (intellectual property) to this year's event.

With FILMART running until March 20, the Animation Media Group manager hopes to find new partners, saying they are open to co-production collaborations.

"Now we focus on new co-production projects with China. More focus on China. It's still the main market for Asia. It's the biggest," said Nikolaeva.

Jiang Xueqing contributed to this story.

WORLD

China-Japan collaboration bearing fruit

Both countries should leverage each other's unique advantages, experts say

By **JIANG XUEQING** in Tokyo and **HOU JUNJIE** in Beijing

China and Japan should achieve an extraordinary level of technological and industrial cooperation by leveraging each other's unique advantages, experts from the two countries said.

They made the remarks at a dialogue with the theme "China in Springtime—Sharing Opportunities with the World" in Tokyo on Monday.

They particularly named China's impressive advancements in artificial intelligence innovation.

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, from 2014 to 2023, China produced more than 38,000 generative AI-related inventions — six times more than the second-ranking United States. Additionally, five of the world's top 10 GenAI patent applicants were Chinese companies.

"As AI advances, China's manufacturing capabilities will reach an unprecedented level in human history, fundamentally reshaping the global economy," said Hidetoshi Tashiro, chief economist at Infinity LLC, a Japanese consulting firm advising on stock trading and real estate management.

Japan-China collaboration in AI is already underway. Speaking at the dialogue in Tokyo, which was hosted by the Chinese embassy in Japan and China Media Group on Monday, Tashiro highlighted an autonomous vehicle test in Beijing, where a Toyota Lexus was equipped with China's Ponyai self-driving system.

"When Japan's precision manufacturing technology combines with China's bold AI innovation, the result is an unstoppable force. Together, we can achieve an extraordinary level of technological and industrial cooperation," he said.

Tomoyoshi Kimura, a former NHK journalist, said China's development is not just about catching up with other countries — it is about expanding into new frontiers.

"Rather than simply chasing after others, China is carving out new areas of advancement. While it does not follow Japan's industrial model, it has recognized the significance of foundational technologies and is actively integrating small and medium-sized enterprises into its economic strategy," Kimura said.

China's advancements in Deep-Seek exploration and the practical application of small-scale robotics

in everyday life have captured global attention. Additionally, its progress in autonomous driving has impressed Japanese tourists, who were among the first to experience driverless taxis. These breakthroughs highlight China's remarkable capacity for innovation, said Kiyomi Seno, chairman of the Japan-China Society.

Seno noted that the world is undergoing a once-in-a-century geopolitical shift. "Amid this transformation, China has set its annual growth target at around 5 percent, reaffirming its strong commitment to economic expansion. Additionally, by further liberalizing its institutional frameworks and enhancing international cooperation, China is providing a sense of hope and stability to the global economy," he said.

Significant opportunities

A global survey by China Global Television Network reveals that more than 90 percent of respondents commend China's strong economic and technological capabilities and anticipate that its vast market will create significant opportunities worldwide.

"China's development is inseparable from the world, and global prosperity also depends on China," said Shen Haixiong, deputy head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and president of China Media Group.

"In the face of global challenges, no country can tackle problems alone. Rather than operating in isolation, it is better to embrace open-source sharing, rather than decoupling and disrupting supply chains, it is wiser to foster cooperation and mutual benefit," Shen said via a video link at the dialogue.

China will continue to advance emerging industries such as commercial spaceflight and the low-altitude economy while accelerating the growth of future industries like biomanufacturing, quantum technology, and embodied intelligence, said Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wu Jianghao.

"This year, we remain committed to an economic growth target of around 5 percent, a goal set after a comprehensive assessment. We have the confidence, determination, and capability to achieve it," he said.

Contact the writers at jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn.



In full bloom

A drone view shows people taking a selfie between flowering peach trees in Aitona, Spain, in this photo released on Monday. Peaches and apricots begin to blossom during early spring, where the fields are flooded with striking pink. NACHO DOCE / REUTERS

Tariffs detrimental to US, analyst says

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

US tariffs will be detrimental to the US and will not achieve their objective of thwarting Beijing, an expert on the Chinese economy says.

"The tariff approach is a mistake because US tariffs on imports from China are going to hurt Americans more than they're going to put pressure on the Chinese government," said Andy Rothman, a consultant for the China market and founder of Sinology LLC, in an online discussion Wednesday about the economies of China and the US, organized by the 1990 Institute, a nonprofit group.

US President Donald Trump initiated tariffs on Chinese goods in his first term and imposed further tariffs on China shortly after he started his second term.

China can handle tariff pressures for many reasons, Rothman said. For one, China's exports to G7 countries, including the US, have been dropping relative to all of its exports, Rothman said. He cited data that China's exports to G7 countries dropped to 28 percent last year from 48 percent in 2000.

"China has a lot of other markets to rely on, not just the United States," said Rothman.

In addition, China is no longer an export-led economy, said Rothman, because the export surplus contributed only about 1 percent of China's GDP growth on average in recent years. "It's not a trade-driven economy. China is increasingly, like the United States, a domestic demand-driven economy."

Rothman has a deep understanding of China. He visited the country for the first time in 1980 as a student, and began his 17 years of foreign service at the US State Department as a fresh diplomat in Guangzhou in 1984.

In 2000, he began to help institutional investors and companies understand China's changing economic environment. He lived and worked in China for more than 20 years before moving back in 2014, and has witnessed China's incredible growth in the past decades.

Services on rise

Rothman used data to show that China's economy is less driven by manufacturing. "The contribution

of manufacturing to Chinese growth has been declining while services have been on the rise."

While China is facing some economic issues, it alone is forecast to account for about 20 percent of global economic growth for this year and next, said Rothman.

He said Chinese household bank deposits have increased by 90 percent since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"These bank deposits include a lot of very small businesses who don't have a separate corporate bank account," Rothman said. "That is a net expansion equal to about \$10 trillion."

"Once confidence comes back, there's a lot of money liquidity in the financial system in China that can be used to get the domestic demand part of the story going again," Rothman said, adding that China held a meeting with leading entrepreneurs last month to boost confidence.

"This will be the strongest response that the Chinese government can make to any tariffs coming from Washington," Rothman said. "The tariffs are not likely to put a lot of pressure on the Chinese government

to change policies, to do whatever it is that President Trump wants."

He said Trump, in his first term, asked China to cooperate on fentanyl and got cooperation from China.

The Chinese government has taken measures to crack down on and regulate illegal and criminal activities involving fentanyl-related substances.

Nowadays, Rothman said many US citizens think the US helped bring China into the global world, and it hasn't been beneficial for the US. But that is a misconception, he said.

Engagement with China "has actually been really good for most Americans", Rothman said, sharing a graphic showing that since China joined the World Trade Organization, US exports to China are up 646 percent, whereas, to the rest of the world, they're up 171 percent.

Rothman said US agricultural exports to China have increased by 1,200 percent to China over that time, versus 174 percent to the rest of the world. "If you look at studies by academics by the Federal Reserve Bank, you can see the general conclusion is that imports from China have kept inflation low, especially for working-class families who tend to spend a higher percentage of their disposable income on tradable goods," he said.

Bill to ban Chinese student visas slammed

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston

A bill introduced in the US House of Representatives that would ban visas for all Chinese students is "absurd" and would cost the US, said people from both China and the US.

Representative Riley Moore introduced legislation on Friday that would bar Chinese nationals from receiving visas that allow foreigners to travel to the US to study or take part in exchange visitor programs. Five other Republicans co-sponsored the measure.

The measure is unlikely to pass, and it has drawn criticism from organizations and scholars over concerns that hostile policies and rhetoric could hurt US interests.

"No policy should target individuals solely on the basis of their national origin," Fanta Aw, executive director and CEO of NAFSA, an association of international educators, said in a statement.

"Making international students — the most vetted and tracked nonimmigrants in the United States — scapegoats for xenophobic and anti-Chinese sentiment is misguided and antithetical to our national interest," Aw said.

"In reality, this bill has nothing to do with the vast majority of Chinese students studying in the US, including me," said a Chinese graduate student at the University of Chicago, who spoke to China Daily under the pseudonym Benjamin.

Benjamin said the bill aims to

curb "espionage activities" in the US, but the consequence would be to prohibit all Chinese students from studying in the US.

"It is such an absurd and laughable idea, and such a policy will end up hurting the innocent," he said, adding that proposals like this will negatively impact the relationship between the US and China and incite racial prejudice in the US.

"This is dangerous and problematic. It's appealing to the populists to attract eyeballs. But this kind of policy is not embraced by American young people around me," he said. "The public mood is not necessarily in sync with the bill."

Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington,

said China "expresses strong concern and firmly opposes such practices". He said education exchange and cooperation have long been a foundation for stable China-US relations.

John Yang, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice, issued a statement condemning the introduction of this bill. "We strongly reject this move to paint all Chinese students as a threat and caution against racial profiling based on geography and not fact," Yang said in a statement.

"History has shown us time and again that exclusionary policies based on stereotyping rarely address actual national security concerns — instead, they fuel prejudice, division and unfair targeting of Asian immigrants and the Asian American community more broadly," said Yang.

Agencies contributed to this story.

NASA astronauts return via SpaceX after nine-month odyssey

By **HENG WEILI** in New York
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NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams returned to Earth in one of Elon Musk's SpaceX capsules on Tuesday, splashing down off Florida nine months after what originally was to be a weeklong stay on the International Space Station.

The re-entry began when Wilmore and Williams strapped inside their Crew Dragon spacecraft along with two other astronauts and undocked from the ISS at 1:05 am ET Tuesday to embark on a 17-hour trip to Earth, bidding farewell to the station's seven other astronauts.

The four-person crew, formally part of NASA's Crew-9 astronaut-rotation mission, re-entered Earth's atmosphere around 5:45 pm. ET. Using Earth's atmosphere and two sets of parachutes, the craft slowed its orbital speed of roughly 17,000 mph to 17 mph at splashdown off Tallahassee in the Gulf of America.

Dolphins circled the capsule as divers readied it for hoisting onto the recovery ship, which delighted many on social media.

"DOLPHINS are hanging around the astronauts splashdown!" wrote Matt Pieper on X.

"The Dolphins arrive right on schedule," posted Western Lensman.



A support team member works on the SpaceX capsule shortly after it landed with NASA astronauts Nick Hague, Suni Williams, Butch Wilmore, and Russia's Alexander Gorbunov aboard as a dolphin swims past in the water off the coast of Tallahassee, Florida, on Tuesday. KEEGAN BARBER / NASA VIA AP

Within an hour, the astronauts were out of their capsule, waving and smiling at the cameras while being taken away in stretchers for routine medical checks.

The two veteran NASA astronauts, who are both retired US Navy test

pilots, had launched into space as Boeing Starliner's first crew in June for what was expected to be an eight-day test mission.

But issues with Starliner's propulsion system led to continuous delays for their return home when NASA

decided to have them take a SpaceX craft back this year as part of the agency's crew-rotation schedule.

The replacement crew's brand-new SpaceX capsule still wasn't ready to fly, so SpaceX replaced it with a used one, moving things along

by at least a few weeks.

The mission took an unexpected turn in late January when President Donald Trump asked SpaceX founder Elon Musk to speed up the astronauts' return and blamed the delay on the Biden administration.

"Congratulations to the @SpaceX and @NASA teams for another safe astronaut return! Thank you to @POTUS for prioritizing this mission!" Musk wrote on X on Tuesday evening.

"PROMISE MADE, PROMISE KEPT: President Trump pledged to rescue the astronauts stranded in space for nine months. Today, they safely splashed down in the Gulf of America, thanks to @ElonMusk, @SpaceX, and @NASA," the White House X account posted.

Veteran reporter Geraldo Rivera wrote on X: "Musk brought the astronauts back. Boeing couldn't. NASA didn't. SpaceX rocks."

Wilmore, 62, and Williams, 59, ended up spending 286 days in space — 278 days longer than anticipated when they launched. They circled Earth 4,576 times and traveled 121 million miles (195 million kilometers) by the time of splashdown.

"On behalf of SpaceX, welcome home," radioed SpaceX Mission Control in California.

"What a ride," replied Hague, the capsule's commander. "I see a capsule

full of grins ear to ear."

NASA hired SpaceX and Boeing after the shuttle program ended, in order to have two competing US companies for transporting astronauts to and from the space station until it's abandoned in 2030.

By then, the station will have been up there more than three decades; the plan is to replace it with privately run stations so NASA can focus on moon and Mars expeditions.

The ISS, about 254 miles (409 km) in altitude, is a football field-sized research lab that has been housed continuously by international crews of astronauts for nearly 25 years, a key platform of science diplomacy managed primarily by the US and Russia.

Wilmore and Williams said that they didn't mind spending more time in space, but acknowledged it was tough on their families.

Wilmore said he missed most of his younger daughter's senior year of high school; his older daughter is in college. Williams had to settle for internet calls from space to her husband, mother and other relatives.

"We have not been worried about her because she has been in good spirits," said Falguni Pandya, who is married to Williams' cousin. "She was definitely ready to come home."

Agencies contributed to this story.

BUSINESS

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PRIVATE ECONOMY

Better financing support urged for pvt sector

Proposal calls for optimizing credit services, reducing costs for enterprises

By YIN MINGYUE and LIU ZHIHUA

The China Banking Association and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce jointly issued a proposal on Monday, calling on banking institutions to improve credit access for private enterprises, offer better financial services for private technology companies and lower financing costs for the private sector.

The association said the proposal aims to drive banking and financial institutions to make more concrete endeavors to facilitate the high-quality development of the private economy.

Banking institutions are expected to support micro and small private enterprises for debut loans, rollover loans and credit loans, it said.

According to the proposal, enhancing financing services tools, such as intellectual property pledges and receivables pledges, is crucial to actively supporting technology-driven private enterprises in research and development, commercialization of innovations, and transformation and upgrades.

Additionally, banking institutions are expected to reduce the overall financing costs for private enterprises by increasing credit supply and streamlining processes to minimize intermediary expenses, it said.

The move comes amid stronger efforts by the nation to support the high-quality development of its private sector.

Lin Zeyan, deputy secretary-general of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, said that based on a financing assistance program tailored for small and medium-sized enterprises, which the federation has been engaged in over the past five years, the proposal aims to provide stronger support to and cover all private economic entities, and encourage broader participation from banks.

Xing Wei, vice-president of the

China Banking Association, said the proposal will serve as a guideline for banking institutions to improve financial services for private enterprises, fostering the high-quality development of the private economy in the new era.

"In recent years, the financing environment for private enterprises has significantly improved, with loan interest rates steadily declining and financing accessibility markedly enhanced," said Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank.

As of June 30 last year, outstanding loans to private enterprises nationwide reached 71.8 trillion yuan (\$9.93 trillion), a year-on-year growth of 9 percent — 0.8 percentage point higher than the overall loan growth rate, according to the National Financial Regulatory Administration.

Meanwhile, the average interest rate on newly issued loans to private enterprises stood at 3.9 percent, down 0.58 percentage point from a year earlier and cumulatively decreasing by 3 percentage points since 2018.

At a time when the external environment is becoming increasingly complex and uncertain, and the foundation for economic recovery is not yet solid along with insufficient effective demand, China needs to make more efforts to support its private sector, Wen said.

"Addressing the financing difficulties and high costs faced by private enterprises, especially small and micro ones, remains a long-term and systemic endeavor," he said.

Looking ahead, efforts should be made to deepen financial services for private enterprises, provide diversified and innovative solutions, and support growth in emerging sectors to further drive the development of the private economy, Wen said.

Contact the writers at yinmingyue@chinadaily.com.cn



An image shows the installation of a wind turbine blade at a wind farm in Xingtai, Hebei province, on March 12. WANG LEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Turbine makers cutting bigger market slices

By ZHENG XIN zhenzxin@chinadaily.com.cn

China's rapid growth propelled global wind turbine installations to a record high for the second straight year in 2024, according to a recently released report.

Domestic turbine manufacturers dominated the global market in 2024, securing six of the top 10 positions and, for the first time, sweeping the top four spots worldwide, said BloombergNEF.

This shift marked a historic moment, as European and US companies fell outside the top three places for the first time since BloombergNEF's rankings began in 2013.

Chinese wind turbine manufacturer Goldwind Science and Technology Co Ltd continued to be the world's leading wind turbine supplier, with 19.3 gigawatts of new wind capacity added last year. Envision Group was in second place with 14.5 GW.

"Chinese turbine makers increasingly dominate the global wind energy business," said

Cristian Dinca, wind associate at BloombergNEF and lead author of the report.

Installations are soaring in China as provinces race to meet renewable energy targets by the end of 2025, said Dinca.

Industry experts believe this development underscores China's growing dominance in wind energy infrastructure, driven by robust domestic demand and strategic market positioning.

China's renewable energy sector experienced a stellar year in 2024, with total installed capacity of wind and solar power surpassing 1.4 billion kilowatts, further reinforcing the country's role as the global leader in renewable energy development.

Wind power capacity climbed to 520 million kW, up 18 percent year-on-year, said the National Energy Administration.

Technological advancements — including innovations in wind turbine design — have been lowering costs and improving the reliability of renewable energy systems, leading domestic manu-

facturers to further drive down production costs, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

China's expanding market share and the transition to next-generation offshore wind turbines contributed to a wider deployment of larger turbines, he said.

Dinca said that while Chinese manufacturers look to expand sales overseas, they remain chiefly reliant on their home market, which delivered almost all of their capacity additions in 2024.

Wind installations fell by 10 percent from the 2023 levels outside of China, according to the report, adding that the US market shrank for a fourth year, installing a decade-low 5.4 GW in 2024, driven by slow project executions due to longer turbine delivery times, equipment shortages and higher interest rates.

China further cemented its position as the dominant force in offshore wind power in 2024, accounting for over half of global additions with 6.1 GW, it said.

Policy mix key to addressing structural woes

By OUYANG SHIJIA ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

Faced with structural issues at home and mounting external uncertainties, China should put in place a mix of macroeconomic and industrial policies, alongside meaningful reforms, to spur effective demand, stabilize the property market, accelerate the shift from old growth drivers to new ones, and raise the nation's total factor productivity, economists said.

"The downward pressure facing the Chinese economy mainly comes from cyclical fluctuations and structural transition," said Huang Yiping, dean of Peking University's National School of Development in Beijing.

"Stabilizing growth will be crucial; it will remain the main policy priority through 2025. And that requires a combination of macroeconomic, industrial policies as well as reform measures," Huang said at a recent meeting held by Peking University's National School of Development in Beijing.

Huang highlighted weakening traditional growth drivers and insufficient momentum from emerging industries as key structural challenges.

Meanwhile, lackluster domestic demand is exacerbating pressure on cyclical fluctuations. Thus, it is advisable to adopt a coordinated policy framework that combines both macroeconomic and industrial policies, he added.

A report released by the National School of Development during the meeting said that in the short term, macroeconomic policies should focus on stabilizing aggregate demand and preventing any systemic risks arising from the real estate sector. Industrial policies, on the other hand, should focus on facilitating the transition from old growth drivers to new ones.



Stabilizing growth will be crucial; it will remain the main policy priority through 2025."

Huang Yiping, dean of Peking University's National School of Development

"Fiscal policy should aim to stabilize the construction and real estate sectors while enhancing fiscal and tax support for emerging industries," the report said. "Meanwhile, monetary policy should take a more structural approach, providing targeted support for technological innovation and small and medium-sized enterprises."

In the medium to long term, the report said, it is necessary to advance reforms of the market-based allocation of production factors, strengthen property rights protection, and expand high-standard opening-up to stimulate private sector vitality and foster new growth drivers that help boost total factor productivity.

"Macroeconomic adjustments should focus on expanding aggregate demand and improving market expectations, while more efforts should be made to accelerate the formation of new growth drivers as old ones phase out," Huang said. "On the reforms front, deepening reforms will bolster confidence among businesses, improve market efficiency, and fully unlock economic potential and lead to faster growth."

Huang emphasized the critical role of stabilizing the real estate market, saying it will help stabilize the overall economy. Meanwhile,

he pointed to the ongoing digital revolution, particularly those related to emerging fields like artificial intelligence and robotics, as a golden opportunity for economic transformation. "The key is whether we can seize this opportunity and translate it into real growth," he said.

Stimulating domestic demand is China's top priority this year, as it seeks to cushion the impact of more US tariffs.

In its 2025 Government Work Report, delivered during the annual two sessions, China announced that it will vigorously boost consumption and investment, and stimulate domestic demand across the board. It will also double ultra-long-term special treasury bonds earmarked for its trade-in program to 300 billion yuan (\$41.53 billion) this year.

Zhang Bin, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, highlighted the necessity of expanding public investment, noting that it will be the most effective way to boost household incomes and spur consumer spending.

He said during the meeting that consumption and investment are not in a zero-sum relationship but are positively correlated. "When investment grows faster, consumption grows faster. When consumption performs well, investment also grows faster, and economic growth accelerates."

Looking into the full year, Wu Ge, chief economist at Changjiang Securities, said China's preset annual growth target of around 5 percent is achievable this year, while the country may need stronger and unconventional policies if it aims to see the GDP deflator return to positive territory. The deflator is the broadest measure of prices across goods and services.

Moleskine notebooks embrace digital era

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

If in today's world, you have at your disposal virtual reality, artificial intelligence and all the other latest technological breakthroughs, do you still keep a notebook in your pocket?

Christophe Archaibault, CEO of Moleskine, said he believes that you should, because "the more digital the world is becoming, the more writing the world will need".

In January, Archaibault was appointed CEO of Moleskine, a legendary notebook said to have once been used by Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso and Ernest Hemingway.

The original notebook was brought back to life by a small Milanese publisher in 1997, establishing the Moleskine trademark. At the end of 2016, the brand was acquired by D'leteren Group.

"Shanghai is an important city for us and it's an important city for me, because I lived five years in Shanghai, so I always love to go back to Shanghai," he told China Daily.

"We believe that there is potential and we should start in the larger cities ... so Shanghai is the priority force."

The existing five Moleskine stores in Shanghai are far from enough and Archaibault believes that the company "can probably double the size of the network we have in the city", and "the next priority is to expand in Beijing; after that, it is going to be to expand in Chengdu".

"Moleskine is not a big luxury company and needs to grow at its own pace," he said. "We have a five-year plan to grow our business in China and that's going to come about through connecting with consumers and giving them a beautiful shopping experience."

Moleskine has traditionally been favored by the art and creative communities worldwide, and through the past decades the Moleskine Foundation has built up a collection of more than 1,500 notebooks created by renowned artists from all over the world.

Once a year the company presents an exhibition of these artworks in a project named Detour, and "the first one we did after the COVID-19 pandemic was in Shanghai", Archaibault said.

"That's why I said Shanghai is important to us. We're going to redo it again. I think it's important for us to show, to explain the beauty of writing, the beauty of putting things down on paper."

Meanwhile, the digital age has expanded the boundaries for writing. The company has launched Moleskine Smart, for example, which is a notebook with a special ink that is connected to the phone of the user.

"That's a way for us to use generative AI digital tools to make sure that what you write is also available on your best companion, which is your phone."

"You can still enjoy the pleasure of writing, and have all the benefits of being able to color, send and email it," he said. "Again, the whole starting point is this is your life. The day you put the elastic on, it is private; it is your safe. No one can look at it. And we want to preserve that."

Archaibault carries his notebook wherever he goes, as "writing is a way to fix my thoughts and crystallize what I have in mind. I can have a thought, but forcing me to put it on paper is forcing me to think it through properly."

He then shared a personal story about how he met his wife by writing on a Moleskine notebook. "I was so shy at the time that I only dared to write on a piece of paper, tear off the page and put it on her door ... I cannot tell you what I wrote on the paper ... but I was lucky enough I had my notebook with me. Otherwise, I would not have been able to write to her ... It worked, because I married her and we're still married," he said, beaming.



Online See more by scanning the code.



A bank employee explains loan products tailored for micro and small enterprises in Chongqing in October.

SUN KAIFANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Power use in nation up 8.6% in Feb

China's electricity consumption, a key barometer of economic activity, signaled steady expansion last month, said the National Energy Administration on Tuesday. Power use rose 8.6 percent year-on-year in February to hit 743.4 billion kilowatt-hours. Specifically, power consumed by the country's primary and secondary industries gained 10.2 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively, while that of its tertiary sectors rose by 9.7 percent.

Volkswagen, FAW team up for EVs

Volkswagen and FAW have signed a new agreement on a roadmap for future models for their Chinese FAW-Volkswagen joint venture, in an ambitious product expansion plan to tap into China's booming electric vehicle market. From 2026, FAW-Volkswagen plans to introduce 10 new Volkswagen-brand models and one Jetta-brand model tailored for the Chinese market, Volkswagen Group China said on Monday.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS



Visitors gather at the Ping An Bank booth during a trade fair in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Banking institutions in action to lift consumption

By ZHOU MO
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The nation's banking institutions have a chance to respond to the policy directives aimed at boosting China's consumer spending with loans and other retail credit solutions that can provide consumers with greater flexibility as the country recalibrates its economic growth model, according to senior executives of Ping An Bank.

The General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a special action plan on Sunday to shore up consumption. The move is part of the country's broader efforts to shift its economic development from an export and investment-led model toward a consumption-oriented model.

Financial institutions will be encouraged to increase the issuance of personal consumption loans, provided risks are controllable. They should reasonably set

loan limits, terms and interest rates, according to the plan.

The plan reflects the urgent and critical need to stimulate consumer spending, said Ji Guangheng, president of Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based Ping An Bank.

"It is essential for us, as a retail-focused banking institution, to fully understand the policy directives and formulate plans that align with the policy," he said at the lender's annual results announcement in Shenzhen on Monday.

The bank generated approximately 146.7 billion yuan (\$20.3 billion) in operating revenue in 2024, down by 10.9 percent year-on-year. Net profit dropped 4.2 percent on a yearly basis to 44.5 billion yuan.

Ji said the plan has stepped up support for trade-in programs for consumer goods, covering automobile, home appliance and electronic products, which is wider in scope and greater in intensity. This will "broaden the scenarios of retail credits" and "increase the flexibility" in the bank's product offerings, he said.

"We will adjust our loan limits, terms and risk tolerance to better meet the evolving needs of consumers," the executive said.

During the recently concluded two sessions, the annual meetings of the nation's top legislature and top political advisory body, boosting consumption was placed as the country's top priority.

Responding to questions as to how the downturn in the Chinese property market will affect the bank, Wu Leiming, president assistant and chief risk officer of Ping An Bank, said the risks associated with real estate remain "manageable" and the loss is "limited".

The overall market has stabilized, with property inventory gradually being cleared and corporate cash flow improving, he said, adding that new home sales in 2024 improved, while the first two months of this year have also seen stability.

However, Wu acknowledged that it may take some time for key indicators to return to a positive trajectory.

Yu Lingqu, deputy director of the Department of Financial Development and State-owned Assets and State-owned Enterprise Research at China Development Institute, a Shenzhen-based think tank, said the purpose of the action plan to boost consumption is to address the unsustainable issues arising from China's over-reliance on investment and exports.

On one hand, consumption growth will stimulate economic growth, leading to a better balance between consumption and investment. On the other, consumption upgrades will drive industrial upgrades, with fast development in service sectors such as elderly care, tourism and education, he said.

"In the future, the structure of financial services will also undergo significant changes to adapt to the rapid development of consumption and modern service industries. Consumer finance and elderly care finance are expected to become new growth drivers of financial institutions."

GECs seen as key to boosting green progress

Experts underline proof of clean energy use in China for global decarbonization

By LIU YUKUN
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China is making efforts to enhance the mutual recognition of green electricity certificates (GEC) with the global community in order to bolster economic and trade interactions, amid growing calls for carbon footprint proof of progress from businesses as more economies adopt carbon pricing mechanisms for imports, said officials and experts.

GECs function as digital identification for transactions involving green energy. Given the uniformity of electricity, once it enters the grid for distribution, its specific attributes cannot be discerned by the grid or end users. These certificates serve as proof of green energy usage for holders, with each GEC representing 1,000 kilowatt-hours of green energy generated from renewable sources.

The National Energy Administration said that as of January, a total of 5.186 billion GECs had been issued nationwide, with 3.529 billion of them being tradeable.

According to the China Renewable Energy Engineering Institute, manufacturing sectors such as telecommunications and automotive accounted for 70 percent of green electricity certificate purchases.

However, global recognition of GECs faces challenges. For instance, the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism explicitly does not recognize any form of green certificates, acknowledging only direct green power transmission between generators and users.

Zheng Ying, department director at energy service provider Beijing PowerChain Technology, said: "China stands out as a nation for being

the largest producer of green products globally and simultaneously leading in consumption in key sectors like new energy vehicles and photovoltaics. For us, globalization means more than just exporting our goods. It involves creating a market within our own borders that can expand internationally, while aligning with global standards. The mechanism of green electricity certificates aims to cultivate a market for green power consumption domestically and facilitate the dissemination of these principles abroad through our businesses venturing abroad and foreign enterprises."

Li Chuangjun, head of the new energy department at the NEA, said the administration is in talks with key trading partners to boost global acceptance of green certificates. They are enhancing dialogue with the EU to expedite the signing of a mutual recognition agreement between China and the EU for GECs, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of the certificates in carbon-related trade regulations. Additionally, some departments are actively engaging with RE100, a global corporate renewable energy initiative, to ensure the unconditional recognition of Chinese GECs.

"Currently, green trade has emerged as a global trend, with many multinational corporations setting targets for green electricity consumption and imposing requirements on their industrial supply chains for green energy use. As the world's largest producer and consumer of green electricity, China actively participates in global green efforts. Green electricity certificates have become an important topic in international energy cooperation, providing strong support for global energy transition," Li said.

Gaggenau launches flagship store in Beijing

By ZHONG NAN
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Gaggenau, a German luxury kitchen appliance manufacturer owned by Munich-headquartered BSH Home Appliances Group, inaugurated a flagship store in Beijing on Tuesday, marking a notable step in expanding its presence in North China.

After launching its first flagship store in China in Shanghai in 2022, the German company plans to open its third store in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, later this year, followed by a fourth in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in 2026.

Executives of the company said that numerous opportunities stem from China's rising consumption upgrades and an optimized business environment driven by strong innovation and policy assistance.

Hubert de Haan, senior vice-president of BSH China, which has more than 10,000 employees across the country, said Gaggenau will continue to upgrade and launch new products in China over the next three years. The brand will introduce new appliances, combining technological innovation and new designs, this year.

By deepening channel partnerships and actively enhancing online engagement, Gaggenau aims to transcend traditional industry boundaries, and attract new customers and partners, said de Haan, who also is chief sales and marketing officer of BSH China.

Highlighting that China has demonstrated formidable and sustained innovation capabilities in breakthrough technologies, Peter Goetz, managing director of Gaggenau, said the country's investments in research and development, coupled with a robust talent pool and supportive policies, have created a conducive environment for technological advancement.

"We are confident that China will

continue to lead in artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies, driving industry progress and generating new opportunities for companies like Gaggenau," said Goetz, adding that the brand will launch next-generation flagship products to meet Chinese consumers' evolving expectations in the latter half of this year.

Stressing that China's trade-in policy and its enforcement will continue to contribute to the country's consumption growth, de Haan views this initiative positively, as it enhances market vitality and strengthens consumer confidence while also enabling more consumers to upgrade and experience premium home appliances.

Under the trade-in policy, more than 36 million consumers purchased over 56 million household appliances in 2024, driving sales worth 240 billion yuan (\$33.21 billion), statistics from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

Meanwhile, about 60 million items of home improvement and kitchen and bathroom renovations were sold, and over 1.38 million electric bicycles were traded in for new ones.

The trade-in program has not only delivered significant economic benefits to consumers, but also created new growth opportunities for industries like home appliances and furniture, while strongly stimulating the overall consumer market, said Li Gang, director of the department of market operation and consumption promotion under the Ministry of Commerce.

Speaking at a news conference in Beijing on Monday, Li said that more efforts will be made to promote the development of service-based consumption and nurture diversified purchasing scenarios and new types of consumption to further stimulate buying sentiment and unleash consumption potential.

Oral care sector in China shining biz for P&G

By ZHU WENQIAN
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US consumer products maker Procter & Gamble, which owns toothpaste brand Crest, plans to capitalize on the growing demand for oral care products in China as consumers seek high-quality and innovative means to improve their oral hygiene.

According to P&G China, the country is experiencing a shift toward more innovative products that can help consumers tackle a range of oral health challenges, including teeth discoloration and bad breath.

Younger consumers have become more conscientious about the state of their oral health as many of them happen to be frequent coffee and milk tea drinkers. Both practices have boosted demand for toothpaste and other products that can help rid their teeth of stains and yellowness, as well as freshen their breath.

"With a lot of brands coming into the space, it means that consumers are looking for more and better products. Besides, we are seeing more Chinese consumers become aware of the problems that happen in their mouth, and I'm very excited about future opportunities," said Amy Alt, president of oral care at P&G China.

This year, P&G celebrates the 30th anniversary since it introduced its Crest toothpaste brand in China. With the affinity that the brand has built over the years, the company anticipates more demand to drive growth as an increasing number of Chinese consumers

focus more attention on the functions and components of toothpaste with their diversified needs.

To respond to these needs, P&G has leveraged the dramatic changes that have occurred in oral care over the past three decades, launching multiple products and contributing to meet the diverse oral care demand of Chinese consumers.

P&G said it plans to continue to collaborate with multiple partners to improve consumers' oral health awareness, guided by the principles set forth in the Healthy China 2030 initiative, a national guideline aimed at promoting overall health.

Crest's research institute said with the improvement of Chinese consumers' living standards, the brand has noticed that consumers have indicated a higher demand for teeth-cleaning, teeth whitening, fresh breath and gum health, which has created new challenges and opportunities for the research and development of related products.

P&G said it would continue to innovate and promote the high-quality development of the sector, and develop more products that are suitable for consumers in different age groups.

"Innovation is critical, but product safety and quality are even more important. We stick to our highest standards of product manufacturing," said Alt.

With evolving consumer perceptions toward oral care, China's oral care market has continued to expand. In the first six months of 2024, online retail sales of oral care products tracked on key e-commerce



A visitor checks out P&G products during a trade expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

platforms reached 13.37 billion yuan (\$1.85 billion), up 9.8 percent year-on-year, according to a report by the China Oral Care Industry Association.

Over the same period, online sales of the toothpaste and tooth powder category increased by 16.7 percent year-on-year. In addition, a growing demand for social interaction and personal image maintenance has driven the popularity of oral spray products, with year-on-year sales growth of 15 percent, the report said.

"With Chinese consumers' increasing demand for maintaining oral health, coupled with policy support, the number of dental medical institutions, professionals and oral care products has continued to increase in the country," said Rong Wensheng, secretary-general of China Oral Health Foundation.

"Still, the oral health awareness of the entire population needs to be improved, and there is an imbalance in oral healthcare resources

between urban and rural areas," Rong said.

RT-Mart, a supermarket chain in China, said it has noticed significant changes in customers' preferences for oral care products in recent years. With consumers' increasing health awareness, the demand for functional products has been growing on a yearly basis.

Sales of oral care products offering teeth whitening, anti-sensitivity and breath freshening effects, are showing a significant upward trend, especially in major cities and developed areas, where consumers' preferences for such products are more prominent, RT-Mart said.

"However, basic cleaning products still occupy the largest share of the market. Basic toothpaste and toothbrush products are still the mainstream choices, especially in third- and fourth-tier cities, and among middle-aged and elderly consumers," said Lu Xiaoxian, marketing director of RT-Mart.

Q&A WITH CEO

Editor's Note: This year marks a critical milestone as China concludes its 14th Five-Year Plan. To help in assessing the success of the process, we have asked multinational executives to share with our readers their insights about their business achievements in the past few years and further expectations in the years to come.

Global execs keen on pro-consumption moves



Jo Santens
CEO, Danobat Group China



Kenny Pan
Vice-President, Huntsman
Polyurethanes APAC



Zhu Xiaoxiao
General Manager, Moloco Greater
China



Simon Song
President China, BSH Home
Appliances Group

Q1 What's your view on this year's two sessions? Do you expect any specific policy measures for further deepening reforms and expanding high-standard opening-up? What more should China do to create a more enabling business environment for foreign investors?

SANTENS: My expectations for the two sessions are that they will focus on policy continuity, deepened reforms and actionable steps to strengthen market confidence. I urge reaffirming commitments to high-level opening-up, particularly in advanced manufacturing and tech sectors, building on the 2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment. Key priorities include institutionalizing measures like expanded market access and eliminating manufacturing investment restrictions, with clear timelines to reduce ambiguity.

PAN: The annual two sessions are a significant event in China's political and economic calendar. Huntsman Corp looks forward to the signals that the two sessions will send out. We have already observed the Chinese government's ongoing efforts to improve the business environment. For instance, the release of the 2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment demonstrates the government's commitment to further opening-up and creating a fairer and more business-friendly investment landscape. We are eager to see concrete steps to promote trade and investment, ensuring that China remains an attractive and competitive destination for global businesses. In particular, we look forward to follow-throughs on pledges that have been made in policies such as the recent action plan, including incentives for foreign-invested enterprises to reinvest in China through various channels, and support for foreign enterprises participating in China's new industrialization process, especially in high-tech fields.

ZHU: We look forward to policies that further drive technological innovation and promote cross-border collaboration. As the global business landscape evolves rapidly, China will play a pivotal role in shaping this transformation. Moreover, we anticipate policies that will support Chinese enterprises in their global expansion. Moloco is committed to being a strategic partner for these businesses, and leveraging our expertise in machine learning to help them achieve sustainable growth in international markets.

SONG: We have a positive outlook for the two sessions. China has been creating a business environment that benefits foreign investors like BSH. The country's abundant resource advantages, cutting-edge infrastructure, and concentration of technological innovation and talent have provided a solid foundation for our development. We hope China will continue to maintain such a favorable business environment. Policies like the trade-in program and the focus on new quality productive forces align well with our development path in China. China is and will always be one of the most important markets for BSH. We are confident that with the continued support of the Chinese government and the favorable business environment, we will be able to further expand our business and contribute to the high-quality development of China's home appliances sector.

Q2 "New quality productive forces" is widely seen as key to helping China achieve industrial upgrade and "high-quality development". How can your company help cultivate such forces in China?

SANTENS: Our company is uniquely positioned to foster "new quality productive forces" in China by integrating innovation, sustainability and local collaboration. Through these actions, we aim to catalyze high-quality growth by merging global expertise with China's industrial ambitions, creating shared value in the era of intelligent manufacturing.

PAN: As a kind of key foundational material, new chemical materials serve as a fundamental driver of innovation in emerging industries and have become a key element in cultivating new quality productive forces in China. Huntsman Group deeply recognizes the pivotal role of new quality productive forces in China's industrial upgrade and high-quality development, and we are committed to advancing this process through innovation and sustainable development. The high-performance materials we provide support progress and efficiency improvements in fields such as electric vehicles, green building, aerospace, energy, electricity transmission, and electronic information and data — all of which are integral components of China's high-quality development. As a multinational corporation, Huntsman has extensive global experience in green innovation and green transformation. These efforts not only drive Huntsman's own sustainable development, but also provide valuable insights for China's green and low-carbon initiatives.

ZHU: Moloco's mission is to empower businesses of all sizes through advanced machine learning, and we have been a trusted partner to Chinese enterprises. In 2025, we will further enhance our product ecosystem in China with the launch of Moloco Commerce Media and Moloco Streaming Monetization. These innovations will enable developers, e-commerce platforms, and streaming services to unlock their full potential and drive performance growth. Strengthening partnerships with consumer apps is a top priority for Moloco this year. We will continue expanding our collaborations with leading consumer applications to help optimize user growth and monetization strategies. Additionally, Moloco's premium inventory strategy will provide Chinese businesses with more efficient monetization and growth opportunities, ensuring our partners can reach high-value users with precision.

SONG: We will leverage advanced technologies such as AI and IoT to enhance the functionality and efficiency of our products in China. Our smart appliances, for instance, offer features like automatic detection of laundry loads and dirtiness levels, thus optimizing water and energy usage. We are continuously expanding our product categories to improve the quality of life at home for consumers. For example, we have introduced dishwashers, dryers and built-in water dispensers that meet the growing demand for high-quality lifestyles of Chinese consumers. The establishment of the BSH Global R&D Center in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, underscores our commitment to local innovation and talent development. This center plays a crucial role in developing products tailored for Chinese consumers and for the world, and it will become a global R&D hub for our group. Our advantages in intelligent manufacturing will enable us to quickly respond to market changes, improve production efficiency and reduce costs, thus empowering other markets through our global network. We also believe that local talent is crucial for driving innovation and understanding the unique needs of the Chinese market.

Q3 DeepSeek has been a buzzword and surprised the world starting this year. AI technology has been deeply integrated with various industries around the world. What opportunities do you foresee for your business from AI technology? What's your view on China's ability to sustain innovation in breakthrough technologies in the coming years?

SANTENS: I see AI as a transformative accelerator for our business and the manufacturing sector. Our immediate focus is leveraging AI to optimize predictive maintenance and precision manufacturing — for instance, deploying DeepSeek-inspired algorithms to analyze real-time data from 50,000+ connected machine tools, reducing unplanned downtime by 40 percent and cutting energy waste by 25 percent in clients' smart factories.

PAN: We are pleased to see Chinese and foreign high-tech companies jointly advancing technological progress. From Huntsman's perspective, artificial intelligence technology will bring numerous opportunities to the chemical industry and our business. Within Huntsman, our global IT team has been working diligently to modernize our digital footprint by moving our infrastructure to the cloud to allow for faster and more efficient adoption of AI technology. China's ability to drive innovation in breakthrough technologies in the coming years cannot be underestimated. China has made significant strides in the application and promotion of AI technologies, particularly with unique advantages in data collection, model training and the expansion of application scenarios. With increasing policy support and R&D investments, AI technology will empower efficiency improvements and technological innovation across various industries and application fields. The evolution and development of downstream applications will, in turn, drive changes and innovations in the demand for chemical raw materials, providing new momentum and ideas for the global chemical industry's growth.

ZHU: Chinese businesses in gaming, e-commerce, and digital entertainment are rapidly integrating AI into their strategies, and Moloco is at the forefront of this transformation. Our advanced AI/ML technology empowers these companies to optimize efficiency, maximize ROI (return on investment), and achieve sustainable success in global markets. Looking ahead, the seamless integration of AI and ML into core business operations will be crucial for long-term growth. At Moloco, this commitment to innovation has always been at the heart of our strategy.

SONG: China has demonstrated a strong ability to sustain innovation in breakthrough technologies. The country's investment in research and development, coupled with its talent pool and supportive policies, create a favorable environment for technological advancements. We are confident that China will continue to lead in AI and other cutting-edge technologies, driving the industry forward and creating new opportunities for businesses like BSH. AI technology presents significant opportunities for BSH to drive innovation and enhance product development, improve operational efficiency and deliver exceptional consumer experiences. AI will enable us to develop products with advanced features, such as smart diagnostics, energy optimization and personalized user experiences. These innovations not only enhance the functionality of our appliances, but also contribute to a more sustainable and convenient lifestyle for consumers.

Q4 Driving domestic consumption is one of the top priorities for China to spur economic growth this year. How do you see China's potential to drive a consumption-led impetus for the economy? How will that affect your company's profitability this year?

SANTENS: China's consumption upgrade holds immense potential, with a growing middle-income group and policy stimuli — such as equipment renewal programs — fueling demand for high-end manufacturing. We're accelerating localized smart solutions, projecting over 15 percent revenue growth and improved profit margins in China for 2025. Of course, once we see an important milestone of current production localization in Shanghai, the increase will exceed expectations.

PAN: China's consumption upgrade is well underway, and there is significant potential for consumption-led economic recovery. With a growing middle-income group, rising consumer confidence during the economic rebound and strong government support for the economy, China remains a key driver of global demand. We are optimistic about the outlook for this year and look forward to supporting China's high-quality consumption growth. Huntsman has also keenly observed profound shifts in consumer attitudes and behaviors. Consumers are increasingly prioritizing personal health and scientific care, as well as placing greater emphasis on the environmental friendliness and cleanliness of materials. Consumers are no longer blindly chasing premium brands, but are instead focusing more on the "quality-to-price ratio" and practicality of products, willing to spend on products and services that offer genuine value. This transformation has brought us significant business opportunities.

ZHU: Moloco's machine learning technology helps Chinese enterprises enhance their competitiveness in global markets, driving sustainable growth and revenue expansion. However, our vision extends beyond this. We are also actively exploring the domestic market, committed to providing high-quality, diverse services to more Chinese enterprises. For example, our collaborations with leading gaming companies like Tencent and NetEase have played a pivotal role in their international success. These achievements not only contribute to China's foreign exchange earnings, but also create valuable employment opportunities, thus further strengthening the domestic economy. At the same time, we are focused on the burgeoning field of Connected TV, developing advertising solutions for this medium. We look forward to deepening our partnerships with Chinese enterprises, leveraging cutting-edge digital marketing technologies to unlock global opportunities and drive mutual success.

SONG: China's focus on driving domestic consumption to spur economic growth presents significant opportunities for BSH. The government's supportive policies, including the expansion of the trade-in program for a wider range of appliances, directly benefit our business. The inclusion of dishwashers and water dispensers in the trade-in policy highlights the growing importance of these categories. BSH has a strong presence in these emerging segments, and with our diverse product portfolio, we are well-positioned to capitalize on this opportunity. We support the trade-in trend through various online and offline marketing activities, free design and installation services, making it easier for consumers to upgrade to our energy-efficient appliances. These policies are expected to positively impact our sales and profitability this year by driving sales and enhancing our market presence in China. The growing interest in smart home technologies aligns with our focus on AI-powered, connected appliances.

Q5 As China continues to pursue high-quality development along a Chinese path to modernization, what opportunities do you anticipate for your business as this process gains more traction? Will you increase investment in China in the coming years? How will you further expand your footprint in China?

SANTENS: We foresee opportunities in green tech, smart manufacturing and rural industrial upgrades. We'll boost investment over three years, try to localize R&D for dual-carbon solutions, and expand into new sectors via partnerships. Our "East-to-West" supply chain strategy will deepen integration with China's high-quality growth agenda.

PAN: Guided by the core principle of "rooted in China, serving China, and nurturing talent in China", Huntsman Group has been cultivating its local presence in the Chinese mainland for over three decades. To date, Huntsman has accumulated investments exceeding 15 billion yuan (\$2.06 billion) in China, making the country one of its most important global markets. Looking ahead, as China continues to pursue high-quality development along the Chinese path to modernization, Huntsman sees significant opportunities for business growth. The expansion of the Chinese market provides the conditions for us to deepen our presence and strategic planning, and we have made new investments accordingly. Huntsman remains firmly confident in the future development prospects of the Chinese market. We firmly believe that, leveraging China's vast market size, continuous innovation vitality and cost advantages, the overall profitability of the China region will remain robust. Huntsman will continue to deepen its localization strategy, optimize its industrial layout in China through technological innovation and industrial chain integration, and strengthen its market position in the fields of polyurethanes, advanced materials and performance products. These initiatives not only reflect Huntsman's long-term commitment to the Chinese market, but also demonstrate its determination to support China in achieving green, low-carbon and high-quality development.

ZHU: China's digital economy continues to thrive, and we are committed to expanding our investment and localized services in the market. By leveraging real-time machine learning, we empower Chinese enterprises to scale their international presence and drive greater success. Moloco has seen tremendous growth in China, and our goal is to further expand our ecosystem and deepen partnerships with local businesses. Looking ahead, we remain dedicated to enabling sustainable growth for our partners in China and beyond. Given the abundance of AI/ML talent in China, Moloco plans to recruit further local experts for our team. We aim to collaborate with these professionals to drive innovation and support our growth in the Chinese market.

SONG: As China pursues high-quality development, BSH anticipates significant opportunities for our business. This process emphasizes the development of advanced R&D centers and high-end manufacturing — areas with which BSH's growth strategy is fully aligned. Our focus on innovation and sustainability positions us well to contribute to and benefit from China's high-quality development. We will further expand our market presence in China by reaching more consumers in lower-tier cities and by continuing to innovate our product offerings, as well as collaborate with local partners to achieve customer success, including distributors and retailers, to enhance market penetration. We also launched our own livestreaming house in China in 2023. This platform allows us to interact with consumers, showcase product advantages and maximize online conversions.

COMMENT

Editorials

US getting into deep water with exorbitant port fees proposal

The United States Trade Representative's recent proposal to levy punitive charges on Chinese-built and -operated vessels entering US ports is yet another example of Washington's protectionist and politically motivated tactics aimed at constraining China's development. This move, justified under the guise of addressing so-called "unfair practices", is not only baseless but also harmful to global trade, US businesses, and the already strained relations between the two countries.

The USTR's proposal, which includes exorbitant port entry fees of up to \$1 million per vessel owned by Chinese maritime operators and even higher fees for non-Chinese operators using Chinese-built ships, is being justified on the conclusions of a Section 301 investigation initiated in March 2024. This investigation, prompted by a petition from five US labor unions, alleges that China's dominance in the global shipbuilding, maritime and logistics sectors is the result of unfair subsidies, intellectual property theft, and other nonmarket practices. However, these accusations are unfounded and reflect a deliberate attempt to scapegoat China for the long-standing decline of the US' maritime industries.

The truth is that the US shipbuilding industry has been struggling for decades, long before China emerged as a major player in the global market. By the 1970s, the US had already lost its dominant position to competitors such as Japan and the Republic of Korea due to its high costs and low efficiency. Instead of addressing these internal challenges, the US has chosen to blame China for its own failures. This is not only preposterous but also counterproductive.

If the US is serious about reviving its shipbuilding industry, it should focus on reducing costs, improving efficiency, and fostering innovation — not resorting to protectionist measures that distort market competition.

But the US move is not just about protecting domestic industries; it is part of a broader strategy to contain China's rise and maintain the US' primacy in critical sectors. By targeting Chinese maritime and logistics industries, the US aims to safeguard its own trade and defense interests while undermining those of China and constraining China's legitimate economic development. This approach is driven by the bipartisan anti-China sentiment in Congress, which prioritizes geopolitical rivalry over constructive dialogue and cooperation.

It would be remiss not to mention that the US accusations of unfair subsidies and state support are also hypocritical. While criticizing China's industrial policies, the US is simultaneously seeking to bolster its own industries through tax credits, grants and other incentives. This double standard only serves to highlight the true nature of Washington's complaints: it is not about fairness but about maintaining the US' economic and strategic dominance.

The proposed charges, if implemented, will have far-reaching consequences. Industry experts have warned that such measures could lead to logistical disruptions, harm US businesses, and damage the broader economy. As a Florida-based ship broker pointed out, there is no evidence that China is deliberately targeting the US maritime sector. Instead, China, along with other shipbuilding nations such as the ROK, Japan, and Türkiye, has simply been meeting the global demand for maritime transportation. Punishing Chinese-built vessel operators would disproportionately affect smaller and medium-sized logistics enterprises, particularly those trading with regions such as the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa, ultimately harming US economic interests.

China firmly denies the US allegations and points to the success of its maritime industries as being the result of economies of scale, legitimate policies, and market-driven growth. The US investigation and its proposed punitive charges are unjustified, politically driven, and inconsistent with international trade rules. They undermine the principles of free trade and multilateralism, both of which the US claims to uphold.

Rather than resorting to protectionism and economic coercion, the US should engage in constructive dialogue with China to address their trade issues. Its autocratic trade practices will not revive the US' shipbuilding industry but will instead harm global trade, damage US businesses, and further destabilize US-China relations, which are already strained due to disputes over trade, technology and geopolitics.

The US should abandon its all-harming protectionist agenda and work with China to foster a fair and rules-based international trading system that yields the shared dividends of global economic stability and growth.

Lai stands on shaky ground with risky gambling

The secessionist-minded Lai Ching-te authorities of Taiwan should be well aware of why their appeal for foreign support, following what they claimed to be "destabilizing" military drills the People's Liberation Army launched near the island on Monday, has met with a cold shoulder from the world, as the international community clearly sees that they are the party that is intentionally undermining cross-strait stability.

The PLA's exercises represent a resolute response to foreign connivance and support for the island's secessionists. They send a clear message that Beijing has the resolve and capability to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It is the extremely provocative "pro-independence" speech Lai gave in Taipei last week that has prompted the Chinese mainland to organize the military drills.

In his speech, the die-hard secessionist Taiwan leader for the first time openly claimed the island to be "an independent sovereign democratic country", labeled the mainland a "foreign hostile force" and unveiled measures to counter Beijing's "infiltration".

It is worth noting that the United States removed the expression that reflected the one-China principle and its declaration that it does not support "Taiwan independence" from the website of the US State Department last month. Although the US side has tried to downplay this as "a routine update" operation, it has clearly sent a wrong signal to the Lai authorities. No wonder Hsu Szu-chien, deputy head of the island's so-called "security council" said on Monday after the PLA drills that the Lai-led Democratic Progressive Party authorities on the island expect the new US administration to support them in case of hostilities with Beijing, laying bare the collusion between the two sides.

Yet Lai's speech suggests that he adheres to the adage that it is a squeaky wheel that gets oiled. His reckless remarks only serve to expose his deep anxiety that the US administration might do an about-face in its policy toward the island. Having sacrificed the island's semiconductor companies and investment, Lai has no more cards left to play at a time when the US administration demands a pound of flesh.

It is the DPP authorities' collusion with external forces in their insidious push for "Taiwan independence" that is the real threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the greatest fueler of cross-strait tensions.

That's why Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning urged the US to realize that "mishandling of the Taiwan question will shake the very foundation of China-US relations" and seeking to contain China by playing the "Taiwan card" will only lead to self-harm.

As she said, "Taiwan independence" is as incompatible with the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait as fire is with water.

The US should fulfill the commitments made by past US administrations on the Taiwan question, stop the provocative actions that seek to push the envelope on Beijing's red lines, and handle Taiwan-related questions with greater caution to avoid causing further serious damage to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and to China-US relations.

Beijing has exercised remarkable restraint in the face of the provocations underscoring the significance it attaches to regional stability. But the provocations of Lai and his ilk have certainly been added to their accounts, and they will be charged repayment of both the principal and interest in due course.

No matter how much military spending the DPP authorities allocate and what support they can obtain from external forces, they cannot stop the historical trend of the island's inevitable reunification with the motherland.

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Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Coordinated policy support needs to focus on stimulating demand

Latest data released by the National Bureau of Statistics show that, with the gradual implementation of more proactive fiscal policies and appropriately accommodative monetary policies, China's economy was stable from January to February. Various indicators exceeded market expectations.

Retail sales, a key measurement of consumer spending, surged 4 percent year-on-year over the January-February period, after rising 3.7 percent in December. The country's value-added industrial output, which measures activity in the manufacturing, mining and utilities sectors, expanded by 5.9 percent year-on-year, following a 6.2 percent increase in December. In the same period, fixed-asset investment, which tracks spending on infrastructure, property, machinery and equipment, rose by 4.1 percent year-on-year, up from the

3.2 percent growth recorded for the entirety of 2024.

The country's household consumption demand and structure are continuously upgrading, the proportion of service-based consumption expenditures is steadily increasing, and new market space is constantly expanding. At the same time, there is significant investment potential in areas such as new industrialization, new urbanization, and energy-saving and carbon-reduction transformations.

Strengthening China's domestic demand is essential to form a virtuous cycle between supply and demand. In addition to implementing a more proactive package of incremental macro policies, the new plan on special initiatives to boost consumption will translate into various supportive policies. These policies seek to enhance consumption capacity by increasing

incomes and reducing burdens. The aim is to create effective demand through high-quality supply and to strengthen consumption willingness by optimizing the consumption environment, thereby releasing the potential of consumption.

Currently, all policies and initiatives are centered around supporting employment expansion, promoting household income growth and burden reduction, and strengthening consumption incentives to form a virtuous cycle between economic development and livelihood improvement. By enhancing the coordination of fiscal, monetary, employment, credit, livelihood and regulatory policies, China can effectively and comprehensively expand the consumption of goods and services, and thereby unleash vitality.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

EU must diversify trade to counter tariff threats

The European Union recently slapped tariffs on €26 billion (\$28.38 billion) worth of goods from the United States, covering agricultural products, textiles, home appliances, and products from key Republican states, responding with precision to the 25 percent tariffs the US has imposed on imported steel and aluminum products from the EU. The EU estimates that US tariffs will cause it about €6 billion in direct losses, while its countermeasures exceed this by more than four times.

However, behind the seemingly tough stance, the EU remains constrained by its weak economic recovery, internal political divisions, and insufficient strategic autonomy. Its weak growth constrains the EU's ability to retaliate. In 2024, the EU's economic growth rate was 0.9 per-

cent, with an expected growth rate of no more than 1.5 percent in 2025.

Meanwhile, although the eurozone's inflation rate dropped to 2.4 percent in 2024, food and energy prices continue to rise, household savings rates remain high, and corporate investment willingness is low.

Also, divisions among EU member states on multiple issues continue to widen. For example, cracks have already appeared among EU member states on how to respond to the US threat to impose 200 percent tariffs on EU wine.

Europe's dependence on the US for defense and energy security makes it difficult for it to completely break free from strategic reliance on the US. So when the US imposes unilateral tariffs in the name of "national

security", Europe lacks substantive means to counterbalance it.

In November, European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde suggested that the EU purchase more goods from the US, such as liquefied natural gas, to reduce possible conflict and promote cooperation.

A recent trade policy assessment by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy in Germany stated that if the US tariffs are fully implemented, they will lead to an economic contraction in the EU. To mitigate the risks of a trade conflict with the US, the EU needs short-term measures, such as strengthening trade cooperation with other countries and regions, promoting trade diversification, and enhancing policy coordination to counter US trade threats.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

What They Say

Japan should honor its legal obligations on Taiwan

A member of the Japanese Diet recently submitted a letter of inquiry to the Japanese government inquiring whether local governments and local councilors in Japan have the legal obligation to observe Taiwan-related content in the 1972 China-Japan Joint Statement.

What makes the otherwise normal inquiry of a lawmaker an international concern is the Japanese government's reply. In a letter of reply to the inquiry, the Japanese government claimed that the 1972 China-Japan Joint Statement is "not legally binding".

That is tantamount to a covert encouragement to some Japanese local councilors' activities in Taiwan, which not only shakes the political foundation of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations but also sends a wrong signal to the secessionists on the island.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning made clear, China firmly opposes official interaction in any form between Taiwan and countries having diplomatic ties with China. The one-China principle is the foundation for China-Japan relations.

The Japanese government recognizes that there is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable

part of China, and the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, as it explicitly acknowledged in the 1972 China-Japan Joint Statement. It pledges in the statement that "The Government of Japan fully understands and respects this position of the Government of the People's Republic of China, and it firmly maintains its position under Article 8 of the Potsdam Proclamation".

Article 8 of the Potsdam Proclamation unequivocally states that the "terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out". And the 1943 Cairo Declaration explicitly demands that "all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored" to China.

These documents not only confirm the fact that Taiwan belongs to China, but also constitute the legal basis for ending the state of war between the Allied Nations and Japan and building the postwar international order in the Asia-Pacific. They are certainly legally binding.

In 1978, the Chinese and Japanese governments signed the Treaty of

Peace and Friendship Between China and Japan, in which the two sides affirmed that the China-Japan Joint Statement "constitutes the basis for relations of peace and friendship between the two countries and that the principles set out in that statement should be strictly observed". The treaty officially came into effect after deliberation and approval by the legislators of the two countries. It affirmed the principles and content of the joint statement in legal terms and is also legally binding.

Taiwan has thus been back under China's sovereign jurisdiction for 80 years. It is ridiculous that the Japanese side now tries to obscure historical facts regarding the Taiwan question, which severely misleads the Japanese people and violates the Japanese government's promise of adhering to the one-China principle.

The Japanese side should fulfill its relevant legal obligations, abide by the principles and spirit of the four political documents that are the basis for its relations with China, act prudently on the Taiwan question and honor its promise of adhering to the one-China principle with concrete actions.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Klaus F. Zimmermann

Boost China-EU trade to nullify US tariffs

Published in 1776, Adam Smith's seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations*, laid the foundation for modern economic theory, advocating for the division of labor and free trade. Smith argued that specialization increases productivity and efficiency, leading to greater wealth for all. Free trade between countries follows the same principle: countries focus on producing what they do best and exchange goods and services freely, benefiting consumers with lower prices and better quality. Barriers such as tariffs disrupt this system, leading to inefficiency and economic losses.

Despite these well-respected insights, US President Donald Trump asserts that tariffs will "Make America Great Again". He is once again pursuing a "reciprocal tariff" policy, imposing duties on imports from countries that have tariffs on US goods, claiming this will protect US industries and jobs while generating revenue.

However, economic realities contradict this view. Tariffs function as a tax on consumers and businesses, leading to higher prices and inflation. As import costs rise, manufacturers relying on foreign raw materials face increased production costs, often passing these costs on to consumers. Also, retaliatory tariffs by other countries harm US exporters, reducing market access and causing job losses in affected industries. The economic disruptions triggered by tariffs far outweigh any short-term revenue gains.

Reports indicate that the US' reciprocal tariff policy disproportionately impacts major trade partners such as the European Union, Brazil and India. Among them, the EU may emerge as the "biggest loser", as US tariffs target crucial sectors such as automobiles, where the EU holds a competitive edge. The EU's auto industry, already facing

challenges from electrification and regulatory pressures, could face more problems if its access to the US market is reduced.

However, the impact extends beyond automobiles. The machinery, pharmaceutical and aerospace industries are also vulnerable to trade barriers. Given that these sectors contribute significantly to the EU's GDP and employment, prolonged tariff conflicts could lead to economic slowdown, job losses, and reduced investment.

At the same time, Chinese manufacturers have made significant progress in electric vehicle production and innovation, a challenge EU automakers are struggling to address.

Adding to the pressure, Trump is also pushing large EU companies to move production to the United States, arguing that it would create jobs and strengthen the US economy. Trump claims the EU exploits the US economically, but the fact is: while the US has a trade deficit with the EU in goods, the EU has a trade deficit with the US in services.

The US also benefits significantly from high-skilled immigration, including professionals from Europe and elsewhere in the world who contribute to US innovation and industry. Many of the most groundbreaking companies in Silicon Valley have been founded or led by immigrants, and numerous Nobel Prize winners in science and economics have come from abroad. For example, Elon Musk, founder of Tesla and SpaceX, grew up in South Africa, got his university education in Canada, and later built his business empire in the US.

A critical factor to consider is that the US threat to impose tariffs may be part of a strategic game to force the EU into making concessions, buying more US products, or increase imports of US oil and gas. The EU has several potential responses to the US' trade pressures. It could use counter-tariff measures, making US goods more expensive in the EU markets. But such measures risk escalating

the trade conflict, eventually harming both economies. A more strategic response would be to diversify trade relations away from the US. The EU has already been pursuing trade agreements with Latin America, Canada and India, aiming to expand market access and reduce dependence on any single trading partner.

The EU and the four Mercosur (Southern Common Market) countries — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — recently reached a political agreement to develop a deep partnership. The EU is already Mercosur's most important trade and investment partner. By deepening trade relations with China, the EU could further access a vast market for its exports, particularly in high-value industries such as automotive, luxury goods and pharmaceuticals. China, facing its own trade challenges with the US, is likely to welcome closer economic cooperation with the EU, potentially offering investment opportunities and reduced trade barriers.

In addition, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, during her recent visit to India with a high-profile delegation, held detailed discussions on a free trade agreement with the country. The EU and India aim to sign the agreement by the end of the year, making it the largest trade deal of its kind anywhere in the world. The EU hopes to gain greater access to the Indian market for its cars and spirits, despite India's traditionally high tariffs on these goods, and is pushing for a broader investment agreement.

However, negotiations on agriculture remain difficult, with both sides struggling to find common ground.

While the US seeks to exert economic pressure through tariffs, it is unlikely that the EU will be the biggest victim of these policies. The EU remains an economic powerhouse with a large internal market, and a strong and diversified export orientation. Unlike smaller economies that struggle to absorb trade shocks, the EU is resilient enough to adjust its trade strategy and

mitigate the effects of US tariffs, while its commitment to multilateral trade agreements reinforces its ability to navigate economic challenges. Given these strengths, the US will find it difficult to effectively execute its tariff policy without facing significant domestic backlash.

As a result of these developments, the EU is likely to pursue greater strategic independence in economic and other foreign policy matters, including military issues. The shift away from its reliance on US trade could extend to defense cooperation and diplomatic alignment. Strengthening China-EU ties may again emerge as a strategic priority, with economic collaboration forming the basis of broader geopolitical engagement.

While recent discussions have focused on reducing dependence on China in key supply chains, the practical need for stable trade relations may override decoupling efforts. As the EU seeks to hedge long-term risks, China will have an opportunity to enhance its standing and influence within the region. Additionally, the EU may develop a long-term strategy to attract and retain high-skilled migrants, ensuring that its own innovation ecosystem remains competitive compared with that of the US.

Ultimately, the US' reciprocal tariff policy may backfire, not only weakening its own economy but also accelerating the EU's shift toward a more diversified and independent global strategy. The EU's response will shape the future of international trade, highlighting the importance of strategic partnerships and economic resilience in an increasingly uncertain global landscape.

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The hard truth of soft power behind *Nezha*, *Black Myth*

The rise of China's soft power comes as no surprise. What is more intriguing is to observe the emerging new logic behind the shifting scenes.

The landmark breakthrough appears like a meticulously orchestrated multi-act drama. First, *Black Myth: Wukong*, hailed as the "definer of next-generation Eastern fantasy", stormed global gaming markets. Then, DeepSeek R1 burst onto the scene, forcing Silicon Valley and similar tech hubs across the world to reassess China's competitiveness in AI.

Meanwhile, *Ne Zha 2* shattered many box office records for animation films, surpassing Pixar's *Inside Out 2* by a large margin.

Finally, as if to crescendo this momentum, a report from a prestigious London-based institution announced that China's soft power has not only climbed to second place among the 193 UN member states evaluated but also achieved significant growth in six of the eight "pillars of soft power" and two-thirds of specific metrics listed by Brand Finance.

Amid these phenomenon-level events, one analysis stands out. Beyond the overarching backdrop of societal and cultural progress, as well as the Belt and Road Initiative's role as a bridge between China and the world, a cluster of "hardcore" factors has been driving China's soft power ascendance. Economic diplomacy, technological leadership and global brand expansion are identified as new engines propelling Chinese soft power into the fast lane.

The growth of China's soft power is not a solo sprint in any single domain but a coordinated advance across economy, technology, culture, and society at large.

Over the past 17 years, the number of Chinese brands in Brand Finance's Global 500 surged from 13 to 68, with total value multiplying more than 23-fold. In the "advanced science and technology" category, China's "leading technological innovation" index rose to second globally. For four consecutive years, China has topped both "superior business environment" and "future growth potential" rankings. This reflects the international community's confidence in China's development prospects, and suggests that the Chinese wisdom of "development as the ultimate truth" applies equally to soft power cultivation.

Brand Finance CEO David Haigh rightly attributes China's soft power rise to sustained investments in economic appeal, cultural engagement and governance stability. Yet the root lies in China's unwavering focus on comprehensive modernization. The growth of China's soft power is not a solo sprint in any single domain but a coordinated advance across economy, technology, culture, and society at large. It mirrors the nation's rising comprehensive strength while offering a textbook case of hard power nurturing soft power.

For China, soft power acts as a global image reflecting both developmental achievements and aspirations, creating a virtuous cycle with hard power. Soft power elevation relies on hard power foundations. As China bolsters its economic and technological prowess, it transforms emerging tech advantages into potent vehicles for cultural narratives, vastly enhancing Chinese culture's global reach.

The coincidentally triumvirate success of "Wukong-DeepSeek-Ne Zha" exemplifies "hardcore soft power" forged through innovative fusion of technology and culture. In particular, *Ne Zha 2* and *Black Myth: Wukong*, now globally resonant cultural IPs, blend traditional heritage with modern digital technology to pioneer new modes of tech-empowered cultural expression.

Three and half decades after Joseph Nye, a professor at Harvard University, introduced the concept of soft power in *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, the picture is changing. A new variable — technology — is redefining soft power. Every cultural wave rides technological breakthroughs; every tech revolution reshuffles cultural influence.

While technological progress marches perpetually forward, the thrust of progress at this particular moment carries transformative implications for soft power. Core to this shift is information technology, which disrupts one-way cultural exports and one-sided processing of cultural symbols. A decentralized cultural transmission model is redrawing the global cultural map, tilting the balance away from traditional power centers.

In a broader paradigm shift, deeper trends may be crystallizing. Nye's original concept, inevitably tinged with Cold War mentality, framed soft power as a strategic tool to assist hard power and maintain hegemony.

Amid discussions on how turbulent geopolitics might reshape global soft power dynamics, one correlation seems plausible: future evaluation frameworks may marginalize ideological biases, while soft power as a substitute for warfare must retreat. Should the unfolding chaos of today yield any constructive outcome, let it be a recalibration of global perceptions, fostering a more balanced and healthy soft power ecosystem.

Nye's definition of soft power as "the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or payment" remains largely valid. Nevertheless, a sequel to *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* might need to be written to align with the changing realities of the world.

Pan Helin

Increasing consumption to drive quality growth

The third session of the 14th National People's Congress set China's economic agenda for 2025, with special focus on boosting demand and enhancing investment efficiency. Since one of China's major challenges is insufficient domestic demand, boosting demand is a core objective of the government this year.

Domestic demand can be divided into two parts: personal consumption and public consumption, with public consumption primarily focusing on public services and infrastructure development.

In terms of personal consumption, China needs to take measures to boost both supply and demand. On the supply side, optimizing the supply of the consumer goods and services involves two main aspects.

First, there is a need to empower traditional enterprises through technological advancements, including digitalization, to improve production efficiency and enhance the quality of products and services. In this regard, Chinese automakers are already promoting smart, light and electric vehicle technologies, enhancing the competitiveness of the country's auto industry.

Second, the authorities need to foster technological innovation to create new products, services and ecosystems that cater to emerging consumer needs. By improving the supply side, China can boost consumer demand and drive growth through innovative endeavors, including in the fields of films, animations, online literature and gaming. In recent years, games like *Black Myth: Wukong* have captivated audiences worldwide with their creative approach, boosting economic development and expanding China's cultural influence globally.

In order to boost demand, the authorities should first help increase the purchasing power of consumers. Initiatives such as equipment upgrading and trade-in programs will encourage consumers to spend more on goods and services. On this front, the trade-in policy has already shown positive results in the automobile sector, with a notable increase in car sales.

According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, car sales in 2024 grew by 4.5 percent year-on-year. This growth, achieved on an already high base of the previous year,



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

can be partly attributed to the implementation of the trade-in policy.

To increase consumer spending, the central and local governments should continue supporting personal consumption, and encouraging financial institutions to help consumer markets grow. In fact, financial institutions issued more consumer loans last year, creating a win-win scenario for both the financial sector and consumers.

But while encouraging people to spend more on goods and services is necessary, helping enhance their purchasing power is equally, if not more, important. And since purchasing power increases due to rising incomes, it is essential for the government to take steps to increase people's incomes.

There are three sources of personal income: wages or salaries, business, and property sales. By implementing favorable policies and promoting technological innovation to strengthen industries, China is poised to boost the economy, which in turn will raise the employment rate and increase people's

incomes. At the same time, by stabilizing the real estate and stock markets, and increasing stock dividends, the authorities can help households increase their income from property sales and investment.

Also, government subsidies are set to increase significantly, especially to help disadvantaged groups and improve social welfare programs such as health care, pensions, education and housing. This year will see the government acquiring existing housing stocks and turning them into affordable housing for urban residents. This move will greatly ease the housing burden of city residents and address the high real estate inventory problem.

In other words, boosting personal consumption requires optimizing supply and creating new consumption opportunities, as well as increasing incomes to unlock potential demand.

To boost public consumption, the central government has set the deficit ratio at around 4 percent this year, thereby bolstering the amount of

resources at its disposal. The government introduced a debt conversion plan worth 12 trillion yuan (\$1.65 trillion) in November to reduce the rising debts of local governments. The plan is aimed at replacing local governments' implicit debts with explicit debts, in order to revitalize their financial capabilities to a certain extent. This will boost their capacity to invest in local economic development and social welfare programs.

Both the central and local governments have a strong financial foundation, with accommodative monetary policy creating room for implementing more fiscal measures. In such circumstances, central and local government bonds will provide substantial funds for financing public works.

But while fiscal revenue is expected to increase this year, expenditure needs to be optimized. Over the past two decades, returns on investments have been diminishing because of the country's overreliance on investment-driven growth. To address the issue, the government should redirect part of the public spending to more efficient fields so as to increase revenue and social benefits.

To avoid redundant constructions and repetitive investments, it is imperative that governments at all levels meticulously plan their fiscal expenditure. Prioritizing limited financial resources in key areas is essential. For example, more fiscal funds should be allocated to social welfare programs to enhance the well-being and security of residents, which will help boost consumer confidence and spending. Besides, more investment is needed to promote technological innovation and high-quality development.

Looking ahead, while the dual engines of personal and public consumption will help boost domestic demand, coordinated efforts on both the supply and demand sides will increase public consumption. And the robust growth in domestic demand will inject new vitality into the Chinese economy, ushering in a new era of prosperity.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

MICHAEL SCHUMANN

Bridge or battleground

AI represents a crucial opportunity for China and the EU to work together to drive innovation that benefits people

As the European Union and China mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, their relationship is being reshaped by both technological transformation and shifting geopolitical realities.



Once defined primarily by trade and investment, this partnership now stands at the threshold of a new era — one where digital innovation, particularly artificial intelligence, could either become a bridge for cooperation or a battleground for competition.

With the rapid advancement of AI-driven industries, the EU and China have a clear opportunity to forge a partnership that benefits both sides. But whether this potential will be realized depends on how both parties navigate growing regulatory divides, geopolitical tensions, and economic uncertainties. As the global balance of power shifts, digital technology is emerging as a critical test of the EU's ability to engage with China on its own terms, rather than simply reacting to external pressure — particularly that from the United States.

For decades, EU-China relations have been shaped in part by the broader transatlantic alliance, with Europe often calibrating its China policy in response to Washington's approach. However, recent geopolitical shifts are challenging this dynamic. During Donald Trump's second term, the US has begun embracing a more inward-looking foreign policy, reducing its engagement with international institutions and partnerships that once shaped global trade and diplomacy. This retreat compels Europe to face a critical question: Should it follow Washington's lead in treating China primarily as a geopolitical rival, or should it develop a more independent, pragmatic strategy that balances competition with cooperation?

Some European leaders have argued for the latter, pushing for an EU policy on China that prioritizes European interests over alignment with US concerns. This recalibration is taking place at a time when China itself is expanding its influence, particularly in digital technology and infrastructure. The AI race has become a defining aspect of global power competition, and China has emerged as a formidable leader. Its

investments in AI research, coupled with its ability to implement large-scale digital projects, have positioned it at the cutting edge of global technological development. From smart cities to AI-driven healthcare, China is not just catching up with the West — it is, in some areas, pulling ahead.

Much of the recent discourse around AI has revolved around economic competition and security risks. But lost in this conversation is the fact that AI is also one of the most powerful tools for improving lives. If Europe and China focus only on competition, they will miss a crucial opportunity to drive innovation that benefits people, rather than just markets.

In healthcare, China has made remarkable advances in AI-driven diagnostics, drug discovery and personalized medicine. Meanwhile, Europe leads in medical research ethics, regulatory oversight, and public healthcare systems. A structured initiative to develop AI-driven healthcare solutions — merging China's technological speed with Europe's focus on safety and patient rights — could revolutionize early disease detection, making lifesaving treatments more accessible and affordable.

Similarly, AI has the potential to accelerate climate action. Both China and the EU have committed to ambitious carbon reduction targets, and AI-powered solutions could be instrumental in optimizing renewable energy production, improving grid efficiency, and reducing industrial emissions. China's expertise in AI-driven smart cities — where machine learning enhances energy efficiency, reduces congestion, and cuts pollution — could be adapted to European urban centers struggling with sustainability challenges.

And in education, AI could play a critical role in bridging learning gaps. China has already implemented AI-assisted learning platforms that personalize education for students in remote and underserved regions. If combined with Europe's strong policies on digital inclusion and ethical AI deployment, these technologies could ensure that AI-powered education tools serve as a bridge to knowledge rather than a barrier controlled by a handful of dominant players.

Of course, cooperation does not mean ignoring security concerns. Europe has valid reasons to scrutinize AI governance, from data privacy to the

risks of deepfakes and disinformation. The EU's AI Act, which establishes clear guidelines on transparency and accountability, offers a model for responsible AI governance that could be integrated into global discussions on digital ethics.

However, outright decoupling from China's AI ecosystem would not only be impractical but also self-defeating. Europe benefits from China's rapid pace of AI development, just as China benefits from Europe's regulatory expertise. The challenge is not whether to engage, but how to do so in a way that ensures fair competition, protects security interests, and maximizes the benefits for society.

A structured EU-China digital dialogue focused on practical cooperation — such as AI in healthcare, sustainability, and education — could be the foundation of a new era in technological diplomacy. Such an approach would allow both sides to collaborate where their interests align while maintaining safeguards where needed.

The AI revolution is unfolding at an unprecedented pace. The question is whether Europe and China will embrace the possibilities it offers for bettering lives, or whether they will allow mistrust and political posturing to stifle the opportunities at hand.

A world in which digital technology is used solely as a geopolitical weapon is a world that fails to unlock its true potential. But a world in which AI is harnessed for human progress, where innovation is channeled into solving real-world problems, can set the stage for a smarter, more sustainable future. Europe and China have a choice: They can let fear and rivalry dictate their digital policies, or they can engage constructively, focusing on the areas where cooperation makes sense. The best way forward is not isolation, but partnership; one that puts people at the center of technological progress.

The author is chairman of the board of the German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade and chairman of China Bridge, a public diplomacy forum for more constructive engagement with China based in Berlin. 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.



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LIN BOQIANG

Clean room

China has opportunity and capability to take leading role in the global energy transition

The global energy transition is currently at a critical stage, and if it fails, the consequences will be unbearable for all of us.

Promoting clean energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels have become an international consensus. However, the world's major economies, such as



the United States and the European Union, have gradually increased trade barriers, imposing global trade sanctions through measures such as anti-dumping, countervailing duties, and carbon tariffs, leading to the significant rise of unilateralism and protectionism in global clean development. These measures have changed the situation of global energy trade and have had a profound impact on the global low-carbon transition.

The US and the EU are seeking global trade decoupling for geopolitical reasons, which is particularly evident in the renewable energy industry and has caused a huge shock to the global energy transition. Considering geopolitical and energy security factors, the US and the EU hope to strengthen their domestic industrial chains through green trade barriers. Measures, such as anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations, and carbon footprint investigations are becoming more frequent. For example, the US launched anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations on crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells from four Southeast Asian countries in May 2024, attempting to suppress the new energy industry of these countries and gain a more favorable competitive advantage in the market. Not only did this move undermine free trade, it also disrupted the global renewable energy supply chain and raised the cost of the energy transition. Moreover, the EU implemented its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism in October 2023, effectively erecting a carbon tariff barrier. This mechanism shifts the burden of emissions reduction in high-carbon industries and undermines the fairness and sustainability of the global energy transition.

The new Donald Trump administration has increased tariffs and withdrawn from multilateral agreements, worsening the situation for the global clean energy transition and slowing down the process. On the one hand, the US has waved the tariff stick and pushed for the reshoring of manufacturing, which further escalated trade frictions, disrupted the international trade order, reduced the efficiency of the division of labor based on competitive advantage in global manufacturing, and the increased costs of the energy transition. On the other hand, the US has withdrawn from international climate agreements and supported the development of fossil energy, damaging the trade environment for clean energy and casting a shadow on the future prospects of the global energy transition. This kind of rising trade protectionism gravely impacts the global energy transition.

First, it has impeded the global flow of clean energy technologies and green

financing, restricting the dissemination and application of green technologies worldwide. Technical innovation and cost reduction are the key drivers of the clean energy transition. For example, the continuous decline in the costs of wind power, electric vehicles and solar energy has provided strong support for the energy transition. However, as the US and the EU raise their trade barriers, clean technology sharing faces severe challenges, and access to low-cost, large-scale clean energy technologies has become more difficult. The global progress of technological advancement is at risk of stagnation, which could, in turn, hamper the energy transition.

Second, it has led to the fragmentation and disintegration of the new energy industry, disrupting the global renewable energy supply chain and increasing the costs of the energy transition. In an attempt to seize the higher ground in the new energy industry, the US and the EU have introduced measures such as the Inflation Reduction Act, the Batteries Regulation, anti-dumping investigations, and carbon tariffs. However, these efforts to localize and regionalize the clean energy industry supply chain only lead to a fragmented and splintered global industry supply chain, reducing production efficiency and undermining the sustainable growth of the new energy industry. Moreover, the disruption of the global supply chain caused by trade protectionism has further increased production costs and undermined the efficiency of the clean energy industrial supply chain, leading to higher transition cost.

Third, it has weakened international cooperation and collaborative development, which is a key to lower the cost of green transition. The Trump administration's new policies have reversed efforts toward the energy transition and hindered the coordinated global push for low-carbon transformation. The Trump administration has threatened to increase trade barriers by imposing excessive tariffs. On the one hand, its policy emphasizes the revival of fossil fuels and the relaxation of regulations on oil and gas, which undoubtedly obstructs the growth of new energy and poses a significant shock to the energy transition worldwide. On the other hand, the US' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement has further weakened global cooperation on climate change.

Thus, it is imperative for China and the international community to implement strategies to counter the impact.

First, it is essential to enhance clean energy innovation and technological cooperation to promote the global flow of clean energy technologies and inject new momentum into the global energy transition. China will further expand its investment in green technology research and innovation and in the construction of new energy infrastructure and advance market-oriented reforms to facilitate clean development. The government should provide policy incentives to encourage domestic enterprises and research institutions to strengthen cooperation in the fields of clean energy and low-carbon technologies, drive breakthroughs in core technologies, reduce costs, and increase the

added value of products. On the basis of enhancing its own technological innovation, China should actively promote transnational cooperation and technology transfer to facilitate the global flow of green technologies and provide more technical support for the global energy transition.

Second, it is important for China to consolidate its advantages in the new energy industry supply chain to promote global cooperation. Clean development is the only way to tackle climate change and China can assume a more important role in the global energy transition. Facing the fragmentation of the new energy industry chain and cost increases caused by the rise of trade protectionism, China should sharpen its own industrial chain advantages to boost win-win cooperation in the global industry chain. It should facilitate collaboration and resource sharing among multinational enterprises in the raw material and manufacturing segments, avoiding the inefficiencies and cost increases brought about by the fragmentation of the industry supply chain, and optimizing the overall efficiency of the supply chain.

Domestically, China should improve its research and development, design, and integrated manufacturing systems for the full industry supply chains of wind power and photovoltaics, further enhance the competitiveness of its industry chain and lower costs, and play a demonstrative role in the global energy transition by leveraging its industry scale and cost advantages.

Third, it is important for China to promote diversified cooperation in the global market, actively participate in international frameworks for climate change governance and low-carbon energy transition, and contribute Chinese wisdom and strength to the world's low-carbon energy transition within the framework of global response to climate change. Given the tariff barriers and high market entry thresholds imposed by the US and EU, coupled with the uncertainties brought by the Trump administration's new policies, China needs to actively explore other markets.

There are other opportunities. Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, China can deepen green energy cooperation with emerging market countries and friendly neighboring nations, providing technical and financial support to help developing countries in their clean energy development and driving the global energy transition toward a more equitable and sustainable path. By participating in multilateral platforms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the G20 and the BRICS cooperation mechanism, China can proactively share its experience in developing green energy, promote a global consensus on the energy transition, and coordinate actions among countries.

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Z WEEKLY



Mastering mahjong: a game of strategy

Top players from across China prove that mahjong is more than just a game — it's a test of strategy, skill, and endurance.

By GUI QIAN
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Mahjong has long been a beloved pastime across China, but few realize it's also a sophisticated intellectual sport.

From March 1 to 4, the Global Mahjong Champions League 2024 China Finals were held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, featuring 16 top teams from across the country and nearly 200 professional mahjong players.

After 10 hours and 64 intense games on the final day, the Sichuan Panda Club emerged as the champion.

During the four-day event, the team fielded eight players, with Wang Yu, 29, from Chongqing, and Ge Rui, 32, from Deyang, Sichuan, serving as core members. Both Wang and Ge played almost continuously throughout the competition. "It shows that mahjong is indeed a sport that tests not only mental but also physical strength," explained Wu Taikang, the captain of the Sichuan Panda Club and one of the participants.

The members of the Panda team all have full-time jobs in diverse fields such as education, technology, investment, acting, and directing.

They usually play mahjong once a week to keep their skills sharp. However, to prepare for this competition, they engaged in intensive training sessions, practicing and analyzing live match videos, sometimes until 3 a.m.

According to Wang, there is a key difference between casual and competitive mahjong. In recreational play, the focus is on perfecting each hand. Competitive mahjong, however, relies on a strict point system and follows a duplicate rule, with four players at each table from two different teams. This reduces the influence of luck and requires participants to concentrate on strategy, teamwork, and card-counting skills, including logic, memory, and mathematical abilities.

Dispelling misconceptions

The Panda team's average age is around 30, and its members boast impressive educational backgrounds, earning them the nickname "academic team".



The Sichuan Panda Club is crowned the champion at the award ceremony of the Global Mahjong Champions League 2024 China Finals, held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, on March 4. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wang and Ge both graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees from Peking University, while Wu graduated from the prestigious Harbin Institute of Technology in Heilongjiang and later obtained an MBA from Tsinghua University.

However, Ge stated that he doesn't want people to misunderstand that "only smart people can play mahjong".

"A good sense of the game can solve over 95 percent of the problems," he explained. "When I was a kid, I quickly picked up the rules just by watching my parents play. Any-

one with strong analytical skills can play well."

Wang agreed. "My mom plays mahjong much better than I do," she laughed, highlighting the importance of practice and experience in mastering the game.

Despite the team's success, competitive mahjong still faces a major challenge: prejudice.

"When people talk about mahjong, many still associate it with idleness or even gambling. But competitive mahjong is entirely free of gambling," Wu explained. "We advocate for healthy mahjong playing

and encourage people to take the game seriously."

The club's motto is: Enjoy the fun of mahjong, convey the competitive spirit. According to Wu, true "competitive spirit" is about not giving up, embracing challenges, analyzing problems, and finding solutions.

"This is the spirit we aim to share with the world through mahjong — a spirit that young people should embody," he said.

Changing the image of mahjong is a long-term effort that requires dedication from those involved in competitive play.

As Wu noted, public perception may gradually shift from skepticism to neutrality, and eventually to appreciation — recognizing mahjong as a "national treasure" that showcases the depth of Chinese culture.

"When I play mahjong, I feel connected to the wisdom of our ancestors who created and developed this game. The element of uncertainty and randomness reflects the natural order and objective laws of the world," Wu elaborated. "Mahjong trains people to handle complex situations in life and work."

Although mahjong originated in China, it has gained global recognition.

In 2017, the World Mind Sports Games officially designated mahjong as a competitive sport. Hollywood star Julia Roberts is also a mahjong fan and once described the essence of the game in an interview: "(Mahjong is about) creating order out of chaos based on the random drawing of tiles."

Wu first participated in a global mahjong competition in 2016, with teams from Asia, Europe, and the Americas. According to him, many countries, such as Canada, Russia, and Singapore, host regular local competitions. In Japan, there are even professional mahjong players who can make a living from it full-time.

Immense potential

In China, the development of competitive mahjong has made significant progress in recent years. A club-based operating system has been established, along with a structured athlete development program.

Currently, mahjong players are ranked from amateur first level to professional ninth level. The Panda team's recent championship victory will elevate Wang and Wu to professional fifth level, while Ge will become a top-ranked player in China, certified by the Mahjong International League.

The rise of livestreaming and short video platforms has also accelerated the sport's expansion.

For example, the 2024 China Finals live broadcast reached more than 300 million viewers. Over the past three years, more than 5.2 million people nationwide have registered as professional mahjong players.

Wang has noticed that more young people are tuning in to mahjong livestreams and adopting a more "academic" approach to the game as they analyze match footage.

Ge expressed his hope to present more exciting matches in the future. "As a relatively veteran team, we hope to promote the spirit of competitive mahjong, expand the sport further, and contribute to its development," he said.



Red envelopes were once a tradition exclusive to the Spring Festival and shared only among family members.

However, "digital red envelopes", now popular among young people, have evolved into interactive, game-like experiences. They have become social tools not only during the Chinese New Year but also on occasions like Valentine's Day and International Women's Day.

This shift reflects Generation Z's approach to interpersonal relationships and social practices.

Gen Z reinvents the red envelope tradition

Generation Z, known for both preserving traditions and embracing the future, is reshaping the way red envelopes are used while keeping their cultural significance alive. By adopting new and creative formats, they uphold the emotional and ethical values of this tradition, infusing it with modern meaning.



Sun Yixue

For Chinese Gen Zers, digital red envelopes on platforms like WeChat and Alipay are the norm. Unlike traditional red envelopes, which were primarily exchanged within families, these digital versions now extend to

friends, colleagues, and even business contacts. What was once a formal ritual has evolved into a fun and dynamic social tool. This change has led to creative variations like the "Red Envelope Lucky Draw", where recipients rely on pure luck to claim a portion of a total amount, and the "Red Envelope Relay", where the person who

receives the largest sum must send the next red envelope. These trends reflect Gen Z's playful and free-spirited nature.

Personalization is also a defining feature. Apps now allow users to design customized "emoji red envelopes" or "funny video red envelopes", blending Western and Chinese styles. Gen Zers also enjoy "red envelope challenges", where envelopes are hidden and recipients must solve riddles to find them, making the tradition more engaging. Some even donate their red envelopes to charity, giving them a deeper, humanitarian significance.

Despite these modern adaptations, the core values of red envelopes — happiness, joy, and harmony — remain unchanged. Traditionally, elders give red envelopes to juniors as a blessing, but Gen Zers have introduced "reverse red envelopes" to show gratitude to their parents.

The amount of money in red envelopes has also become a meaningful way for Chinese people to express love and appreciation, especially in a culture where direct verbal expressions of affection are uncom-

mon. Numbers like 520 yuan (which sounds like "I love you" in Chinese) and 1,314 yuan (meaning "forever and always") serve as playful numerical puns that add warmth and modern appeal to the tradition.

As with any tradition, change is inevitable. Gen Z is naturally shaping its own understanding of Spring Festival culture, giving red envelopes new interpretations through modern technology.

US sociologist George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) proposed in his theory of symbolic interactionism that meaning arises through social interaction, with people using symbols — such as words, gestures, and objects — to construct shared realities.

This generation values individuality and is eager to put its own stamp on tradition, creating a personalized world that distinguishes it from previous generations. Yet, while their expressions of culture may be evolving, the red envelope remains a timeless symbol — one that allows them to celebrate their love for Chinese culture in a fresh, youthful way.

China's new era fosters cultural confidence and a strong desire to preserve and develop traditions. The values and philosophies embedded in red envelopes help Gen Z bridge the past and present, connecting tradition with the modern world.

In other words, Gen Z blends a "digital shell" with a "cultural core" to keep traditions alive while preserving the unique sentiments of red envelopes — demonstrating a broader global perspective and adaptability.

Written by Sun Yixue, dean of the College of International Cultural Exchange at Tongji University in Shanghai. His research focuses on comparative literature, world literature, and the international dissemination of Chinese culture. He has conducted postdoctoral research at the University of Edinburgh in the UK and has been a senior visiting scholar at the University of Virginia and Arizona State University in the US.

Translated by Gui Qian.

Z WEEKLY

A safe space on the line

Mental health hotline operators play a vital role in crisis intervention, offering professional guidance and a compassionate ear to those in distress.



Above: Zhang Lixia (left) and Wu Hengqian at the psychological support hotline of Zhengzhou No 8 People's Hospital in Zhengzhou, Henan.
Left: Feng Jing (left) and Zhang Han. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By MENG WENJIE
and LIU KUN in Wuhan

A phone rang, breaking the silence. Wu Hengqian, a 29-year-old operator at a mental health support line, picked it up. On the other end, a caller in deep distress expressed thoughts of suicide. Acting quickly, Wu brought in a crisis intervention expert for additional assistance.

Despite their best efforts, the caller remained unstable and refused to provide her location or emergency contact information. With time running out, Wu and his colleague decided to contact the police — a decision that ultimately saved the caller's life.

The next day, Wu followed up with the caller to check on her well-being and was relieved to hear that she was going to seek treatment at a hospital.

This call was just one of over 1,000 that Wu has handled in his five years as a psychological assistance hotline operator.

"Helping others gives me a sense of fulfillment and constantly reminds me why my work matters," Wu said.

The hotline where Wu works was established in 2020 at Zhengzhou No 8 People's Hospital in Henan province.

On Jan 27 this year, the hospital joined the nationwide "12356" mental health support hotline, which officially launched on Jan 1.

"Joining
1 2 3 5 6

has greatly improved access to psychological support, leading to a significant increase in the number of calls we receive," said Zhang Lixia, director of the hospital's Psychological Health Center.

The hotline operates 24/7, staffed by 22 professional psychotherapists, and supported by over 200 doctors and specialists from various departments.

"In urgent cases, or when operators need additional assistance, we quickly connect with the appropriate doctor or specialist for psychological intervention during the call," Zhang explained. "This three-way connection ensures callers receive immediate support and seamlessly links the hotline to medical services."

In late February, the hospital's hotline center introduced the AI model DeepSeek, which transcribes calls in real-time, allowing operators to access conversations instantly. This system also enhances the three-way call process by extracting key phrases, enabling operators to quickly identify core issues and connect with the right specialists.

Zhang believes mental health support hotlines are more cost-effective, accessible, and private compared to traditional psychotherapy, allowing callers to open up without revealing their identities.

"Hotlines also offer quicker responses than scheduled counseling sessions," she added.

However, Zhang also pointed out that hotlines have limitations. Without nonverbal cues, therapists may struggle with complex issues, and many therapeutic methods require in-person interaction and long-term follow-up.

Healing through listening

Before the launch of the 12356 service, several universities and social enterprises in China, including Zhengzhou No 8 People's Hospital, had already set up psychological support hotlines.

One such initiative is the MOE-CCNU Mental Health Service Platform. Established in 2020 by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and managed by Central China Normal University (CCNU) in Wuhan, Hubei province, the platform was originally designed to support frontline medical workers and the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The service continues to operate today, running daily from 6:30 pm to 10:30 pm.

According to Xia Mian, an associate professor at CCNU's School of Psychology, the platform is accessible via a WeChat mini-program and phone calls and has expanded to include AI-driven psychological services.

"The AI system offers free psychological assessments and therapy services online, available 24/7," Xia explained.

Feng Jing, 35, is a volunteer operator at the platform. After graduating from CCNU's School of Psychology, she now

works as a psychological counselor at a college in Wuhan.

Feng joined the platform as a volunteer shortly after its launch and has been contributing her expertise for five years. "I want to use my knowledge and skills to help those in need," she said.

The platform provides comprehensive professional training and supervision, enabling operators to quickly assess risks and take appropriate action during emergencies.

"The key during calls is to be 'with' the caller," Feng said. "It's about listening attentively, showing empathy, and offering a steady, warm, and supportive space."

Zhang Han, 35, a psychological counselor, echoed this perspective. Between 2022 and 2024, she worked as a hotline operator for "Jiandanxinli" (translated as "simple psychology"), a startup mental health service platform in China.

"We focus on active listening, encouraging callers to openly express themselves, as many emotional and psychological struggles arise because people feel they aren't truly heard, accepted, or understood in their daily lives," she explained.

The hotline operates from 6 pm to midnight on

weekdays and from 2 pm to midnight on weekends, offering each registered user up to 30 free calls.

Zhang Han shared that, of the nearly 600 calls she has handled, most callers are between 20 and 40 years old, facing a variety of issues such as academic pressure, career concerns, relationships, and personal struggles.

"Anxiety is the most common emotion expressed," she said, noting that intense competition and shifting social values often leave many young people questioning their sense of self-worth.

"Today's challenges are more about seeking spiritual fulfillment than material needs," she added.

The platform allows callers to leave feedback and share their feelings with the operator. After one particularly difficult call with a suicidal individual, Zhang Han received a message that read, "Thank you for saving me tonight."

"In psychology, pain isn't measured by its cause," she said. "Whether it's triggered by a single word or a significant loss, the emotion is real. Psychological hotlines are like band-aids, offering immediate first aid for emotional wounds."

Mental health counts

As a frontline mental health professional working with children and adolescents, Zhang Lixia has seen a rise in mental health issues among young people over the past decade.

In response, her hospital regularly provides mental health education and holds counseling sessions in schools and communities. With support from the local government, the hospital also trains village doc-

tors in Zhengzhou on mental healthcare and treatment.

These efforts will be integrated with the hotline service. "In urgent cases, for example, if the caller provides their address, we can intervene both online and offline, with the help of local service stations or village doctors," Zhang Lixia explained.

On a personal level, Zhang Han advises individuals to be mindful of their emotions but cautions against labeling mental health issues.

"For example, if others perceive you as obsessive-compulsive, that's OK as long as you're comfortable and happy with your organized lifestyle," she said.

She added that if emotions cause significant distress or disrupt daily life, even leading to physical symptoms, it's crucial to seek professional help.

Zhang Han's two years as a hotline operator not only helped her develop professionally but also allowed her to build meaningful connections with her callers.

"In a confidential, professional environment, sharing deeply personal feelings with a stranger is an incredibly valuable experience," she said.

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Z WEEKLY

Turning wood into gold

Shao Rupeng, a skilled woodworker and gold medalist, combines tradition and creativity to inspire the next generation of craftsmen.

By MENG WENJIE
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At just 23 years old, Shao Rupeng has already made a name for himself in the world of joinery.

Currently a teacher at Shanghai Technology and Innovation Vocational College, Shao made history at the WorldSkills Competition 2022 Special Edition, where, at just 20 years old, he won the gold medal in joinery — marking a historic first for the Chinese team in this category.

In January this year, he was named one of the “Shanghai Craftsmen” of 2024. Among the 105 skilled individuals recognized, he stood out as the youngest recipient of the title.

Shao's fascination with woodworking began in his childhood when he often observed carpenters making furniture at his home. “I was curious and loved watching them work,” he recalled.

In 2018, Shao began studying construction engineering at Shanghai City Science and Technology School. There, he learned that a senior student had won a gold medal in an international joinery competition, which reignited his passion for the craft.

“I believed I had strong hands-on skills and wanted to give it a try,” Shao said.

However, his journey was far from smooth. When he first joined the school's woodworking club, he had little knowledge of the tools or techniques. The initial training was basic and repetitive, involving day after day of cutting straight lines with saws and carving mortises with chisels.

“Woodworking isn't as simple as it looks. A single misstep can ruin the wood,” Shao explained. “It takes a lot of practice to develop a good feel for it.”

Rising to the challenge

After six months of basic training, Shao stood out among 35 students and was selected for the school's elite team for the WorldSkills competitions.

As training intensified, Shao and his teammates had to forgo regular classes, dedicating all their time to the workshop.

“We trained from 8 am to 9 pm, six days a week, with no breaks during winter or summer vacations,” Shao recalled.

Within the team, the number of tools Shao used grew from just a few basic ones to dozens, even hundreds. Each day, he had to master new techniques, with higher standards expected of his work.



Left: The gap between two wooden pieces in a sunmao joint must be less than 0.2 millimeters. Right: Shao Rupeng and his works. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

One of the biggest challenges Shao faced was perfecting the precision of traditional Chinese sunmao (mortise-and-tenon) joints.

This essential technique requires that the gap between two wooden pieces be less than 0.2 millimeters.

“If even the measurement of one part is off, it affects the entire piece,” he explained.

Shao also paid meticulous atten-

tion to the internal structure of his work, striving to make it as flawless as the 3D models created in software.

“Some traditional craftsmen believe the inside of a wooden piece doesn't matter since it's not visible, but I disagree,” Shao said.

His relentless pursuit of excellence earned him the highest score in the internal structure module at

the WorldSkills Competition 2022 Special Edition, securing the gold medal in the joinery category.

Achieving this was not easy. To compete on the world stage, Shao had to pass multiple rounds of selection, starting at the school level and progressing to municipal and national levels.

According to WorldSkills rules, participants are prohibited from

competing in the next edition, regardless of their results. This made the opportunity even more valuable and fueled Shao's determination to perform at his best.

Before the competition, Shao was assigned his workstation by a draw, placing him between the Austrian and British competitors, both renowned for their exceptional joinery skills.



Craftsmanship can be described with many positive words, but for me, it's all about creating with your hands.”

Shao Rupeng, 23, a teacher at Shanghai Technology and Innovation Vocational College

“Seeing their speed and craftsmanship up close added significant pressure,” he recalled.

However, the real challenge came later. Shao explained that the competition usually releases a sample task three months in advance, with the final task typically differing by 30 to 50 percent.

“But when I saw the final task, it was completely unrelated to the sample,” Shao said, meaning his months of preparation were in vain.

This “blind task” caught all participants off guard. According to Shao, most competitors had barely finished their work by the end of the competition. However, thanks to his solid skills and ability to adapt on the spot, Shao was able to complete his work beautifully.

Crafting the future

At the end of 2022, Shao transitioned from being a student to a joinery coach at his school. He found his new role to be quite challenging.

“Teaching woodworking is completely different from doing it yourself,” he explained. “I have to break down every step so that students can understand and grasp the details and principles.”

Some things, however, can't be taught. “It's difficult to teach the ‘feel’ of woodworking,” Shao said. “I can only instruct them on the methods — the rest they must learn through practice.”

While Shao encourages his students to make good use of modern technology to handle repetitive tasks, he stresses that it is human creativity that “transforms a piece of wood into something truly unique.”

“Craftsmanship can be described with many positive words, but for me, it's all about creating with your hands,” he said. “If you only dream and never take action, you'll accomplish nothing.”

Global Insights

Spreading the spirit of volunteerism worldwide

I have been passionate about public welfare since childhood, but I never imagined that a Chinese figure named Lei Feng would become an integral part of my life — my guiding star and the inspiration behind a global movement.

In 2018, I came to China for the first time to study at Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics (JUFE) and actively participated in the university's public welfare activities.

During these events, local people often called me “Yang Lei Feng,” which I later learned means “foreign Lei Feng.”

Curious, I looked him up online and discovered a young soldier known for his selflessness and dedication to helping others. The more I read, the more I saw how his values aligned with the principles I aspired to uphold.

Growing up in Bangladesh, I was acutely aware of the challenges facing my community and my country — poverty, inequality, and limited access to education and healthcare were stark realities that I witnessed firsthand. These experiences ignited my determination to contribute to positive change and alleviate the suffering of others.

Inspired by Lei Feng's spirit, I established the Lei Feng International Volunteer Association on March 5, 2021 — Lei Feng Day — alongside young people from different countries at JUFE.

Our mission is to support children with special needs, assist the elderly, promote environmental awareness, empower through education, and foster cross-cultural understanding.

Through these efforts, we continue to keep Lei Feng's spirit alive in a modern, global context.

Wanting to know more about this young man, I traveled in 2023 to Liaoning province, the birthplace of Lei Feng's spirit. I visited the Lei Feng Memorial Hall in Fushun, the city where he spent much of his life. The exhibits — his photographs, personal belongings, and diary entries — offered a glimpse into his deep commitment to helping others.

One of his quotes particularly struck me: “Human life is finite, but service to the people is infinite. I will devote my finite life to the infinite cause of serving the people.”

In a world often focused on individual success, Lei Feng's philosophy of selfless-



Top: Mohammad Saiyedul Islam shares the story of Lei Feng at the Party School of Jiangle county in Sanming, Fujian, on Feb 10, 2025. Above: Islam interacts with a student at a primary school in Nanchang, Jiangxi, during a Lei Feng-related event on March 23, 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ness and community service felt more relevant than ever. His life was not about grand gestures but rather a series of small acts of kindness that, when multiplied, can create a better world for all.

Returning from the trip, on Lei Feng Day in 2023, I took a bold step to spread his legacy beyond China by launching the global “Learn from Lei Feng” initiative. We celebrated the day in five countries — Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Algeria, and China — through discussions on his biography, charity programs, and community service activities.

What began as a vision to promote his values internationally has since grown into a global movement, now spanning 15 countries. Our efforts not only strengthen cross-cultural bonds but also contribute to building a more compassionate and service-oriented world.

Last month, I joined Sanming University in Fujian province as a senior lecturer and researcher at the School of Overseas Education (School of Foreign Languages). Eager to carry forward Lei Feng's legacy, I proposed establishing the Lei Feng International Volunteer Team at the university.

On March 5, the team was officially

launched, bringing together 36 Chinese and international teachers and students from 10 countries, including Bangladesh, Mali, Nigeria, Russia, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan.

For me, this initiative represents a full-circle moment. From discovering Lei Feng's story online to now inspiring future generations to follow in his footsteps, I am reminded of how one person's story can spark a movement.

Lei Feng may have lived only 22 years, but his spirit continues to shine brightly, illuminating the path for those who come after him.

Through initiatives like the Lei Feng International Volunteer Association and Lei Feng International Volunteer Team, we make sure that his legacy lives on, inspiring people across the globe to be the change they wish to see.

Written by Mohammad Saiyedul Islam, PhD, a senior lecturer and researcher at the School of Overseas Education at Sanming University in Fujian, and an adjunct fellow at the ASEAN — China Research Centre at the University of Indonesia.