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# CHINA DAILY

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## Factory activity sees modest March growth

PMI expansion attributable to AI-led emerging sectors, policy stimulus, improved sentiment

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China's factory activity expanded modestly for a second straight month in March, adding to a string of recent indicators pointing to a stabilizing economy amid improved sentiment in the manufacturing sector.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday that China's official purchasing managers index for the manufacturing sector rose from 50.2 in February to 50.5 in March, its highest level in a year, staying above the 50 mark that separates expansion from contraction.

Analysts said the mood in China's manufacturing sector has improved, with both demand and supply picking up, buoyed by the optimism following the recently concluded two sessions, the annual meetings of the nation's top legislative and political advisory bodies.

They added that policymakers' push for consumption- and innovation-driven growth could help cushion the impact of the United States tariff hikes, sustain growth momentum and support long-term economic restructuring.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, attributed the expansion in manufacturing PMI to the full resumption of work and production after the Spring Festival holiday, the improved prosperity level of strategic emerging sectors with the rise of artificial intelligence model DeepSeek, continuous stimulus measures aimed at spurring consumption and investment, and boosted market sentiment following positive signals from the two sessions.

"The latest figures reflect both seasonal recovery and the effectiveness of pro-growth policies. These indicate that the economy maintained a relatively strong momentum in the first quarter, with GDP growth expected to reach around 5 to 5.2 percent year-on-year," he said. Considering the impact of US tariff hikes and the ongoing correction in the real estate market, Wang said he expects policymakers to step up countercyclical adjustments of macroeconomic policies. "We anticipate that the window to reduce interest rates and the reserve requirement ratio will reopen in the second quarter," he added.

The NBS data showed that China's nonmanufacturing PMI, which includes subindexes for activity in the services and construction sectors, increased to 50.8 in March from 50.4 in February. Meanwhile, the country's official composite PMI, which covers both manufacturing and nonmanu-

facturing activities, rose to 51.4 in March from 51.1 in February.

Fitch Ratings said in its latest report that it expects a rotation in the pattern of China's growth this year, with domestic demand becoming the predominant growth driver.

"The impact of US trade policy on China — both direct and indirect through slower global growth — will be partly offset by looser fiscal and monetary policy, and exchange-rate depreciation," the report said. "Moreover, there are signs of some stabilization in the property market, meaning that the real estate sector may become less of a drag on whole-economy investment."

This year's Government Work Report pledged a "more proactive fiscal policy", a shift from the previous stance of adopting a "proactive fiscal policy", setting the annual projected fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio at around 4 percent, up from 3 percent last year and the highest since the record started in 2010.

Ben Simpfendorfer, a partner at consultancy Oliver Wyman, said that China's strong fiscal stimulus will provide support for the economy by offsetting headwinds.

"The annual growth target of around 5 percent seems a quite reasonable — and certainly practical — target over the course of the year. That growth remains realistic," he said.

Citing China's sharpened focus on stronger consumption and innovation-led growth, Simpfendorfer emphasized that the country is betting not just on short-term growth, but also on long-term restructuring.

"China's growth miracle is unique in many ways. It has relied on three key factors — a vast market to scale products, a vast manufacturing sector to integrate those products and a State-led direction to mobilize resources," he said, adding that this helps explain why the country has been "so successful" over the past few decades and why it has "such a promising future".

Marc Horn, executive vice-president of Merck and president of Merck China, expressed strong optimism about the prospects of the world's second-largest economy. "The two sessions showed very strong confidence in a stable, resilient economy, focusing again on continuous innovation," he said.

China is Merck's second-largest market and an important source of innovation, he noted.

"We are very confident in remaining committed to our investments. Over the past 10 years, we have already spent 7 billion yuan (\$965 million) here in China across various businesses such as electronics, healthcare and life sciences," he added.

## Rushing to help



Members of the Chinese Red Cross International Emergency Response Team work on Monday in quake-affected Mandalay, Myanmar. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY See more, pages 3, 7, 11

## MODERNIZATION FOR ALL

### Bangladesh hails China as 'great friend'

By MO JINGXI  
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The China-Bangladesh relationship has reached a peak after five decades of development, and Bangladesh looks forward to bringing bilateral ties to new heights in the next half-century, said the chief adviser of the South Asian nation's interim government.

Muhammad Yunus made the remarks in an exclusive interview with China Daily on Saturday before wrapping up his first visit to China since assuming his current post in August.

Yunus, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and globally renowned social-business entrepreneur, said that China's neighborhood diplomacy resonates deeply with him, as do a series of major China-proposed global initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

As this year marks the 50th anniversary of the China-Bangladesh relationship, Yunus said the

**\$23.9 billion**

worth of bilateral trade took place between China and Bangladesh in 2023.

two neighboring countries have set an example of state-to-state relations and people-to-people exchanges that the rest of the world could follow.

Yunus also said the bond of the China-Bangladesh relationship is strong enough for a long and successful journey, because the two nations make it a point to "be frank with each other, be friendly to each other, share things with each other, help each other".

"Having such a great friend together with us makes us feel good, makes us feel strong. It's a very inspiring relationship for us," he said, adding that his visit to China will help the work back in Bangladesh, as the country is now at a historic juncture.

In recent years, the economic and trade cooperation between China and Bangladesh has

achieved a high level of development. China has been Bangladesh's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, with bilateral trade exceeding \$23.9 billion in 2023.

### Belt and Road projects

Bangladesh was the first country in South Asia to join the BRI. The implementation of a series of Belt and Road projects, especially in infrastructure construction, has injected impetus into Bangladesh's economic growth and improved the livelihood of its people.

Yunus said the BRI, which was proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, is very important for Bangladesh, which has vast access to the ocean, because it can connect the region's landlocked nations together and jointly promote economic development.

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Online See more by scanning the code.

## XIONG'AN: EMERGING HUB OF CREATIVITY AND LIVABILITY

Eight years on, new area continues to attract talent, high-tech firms

Editor's note: In April 2017, China's central authorities announced the establishment of Xiong'an New Area in Hebei province. Over the past eight years, Xiong'an has played an important role as an engine for regional development by absorbing Beijing's noncapital functions and promoting innovation.

By ZHANG YU in Xiong'an, Hebei  
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Chen Hongsheng, a 42-year-old researcher, has spent the past year building a new life in Xiong'an New Area — a rising innovation hub in Hebei province, 100 kilometers southwest of Beijing.



Relocated from the capital under a national initiative to decentralize noncapital functions, Chen is part of a wave of professionals drawn by the area's opportunities, cutting-edge industries and high-quality urban living environment.

After working and living in the emerging city for over a year, Chen is trying to persuade his wife to join him in Xiong'an New Area. He enjoys a comfortable lifestyle there and is working hard to afford the couple's dream apartment.

Chen relocated from neighboring Beijing, and is typical of the new residents in Xiong'an, which was established eight years ago as a pilot project to help address the capital's big city issues.

See Xiong'an, page 2

## Food for thought



A woman holds up a placard during a protest on Sunday calling for a change in the Japanese government's agricultural policies in downtown Tokyo. About 3,200 rice growers and dairy farmers marched down a street, demanding measures for income security. RICHARD A. BROOKS / AFP

## Urgent task to protect children in conflicts

By almost every measure, 2024 was one of the worst years on record for children living in conflict zones in the history of the United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF. More than one in every six children globally now live in areas affected by conflict, and are forced to face unthinkable violations.

Unfortunately, 2025 does not look much better for children.

Children do not start wars but they pay the highest price. They are more likely than adults to be killed or maimed by bombs or weapons. They lose the protection and care of family members and friends. They're abducted from their homes, recruited by armed groups and sexually violated. Their schools and hospitals are destroyed, and many are



By Amakobe Sande

denied lifesaving aid, based simply on who they are or where they live.

From the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti to Myanmar, Sudan and beyond, we cannot allow a generation of children to become collateral damage to the world's unchecked wars. UNICEF refuses to accept this deadly new normal. We can all work together to make change happen.

Citizens everywhere can begin by refusing to avert our gaze from children's suffering, or not staying silent when attacks on child-

ren occur, just because it is too distant or the situation too complex. We must insist that protecting children from conflicts they had no hand in triggering is the cornerstone of our shared humanity. We should support leadership that takes decisive action to end and prevent attacks and violence against children trapped in war zones.

All warring parties where conflicts rage must act to fulfill their obligations to protect children — ending attacks that kill and injure children or destroy their schools, hospitals and other infrastructure and services they rely on, and stopping abduction, sexual violence and recruitment of children in conflicts.

See Gaza, page 3



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## PAGE TWO

## Xiong'an: New area redefining urban living



An aerial photo of the Xiong'an Business Service Center and Rongdong area in Xiong'an New Area, Hebei province, taken on March 21. PHOTOS BY WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## From page 1

Designated as a centralized relocation area for the non-capital functions of Beijing — mainly universities, research institutes, medical institutions, corporate headquarters, financial institutions, and public institutions — Xiong'an is promoting the smooth migration of these sectors and enhancing its ability to attract them through "internal driving forces".

## Wonderful scenes

As an employee of China Datang Technology Innovation Co — a participant in the relocation process, Chen's experiences and feelings about the shift illustrate how these internal driving forces are becoming more robust.

"I came to Xiong'an for the first time in January 2024. Initially, it felt quite sparse and quiet here. But throughout the year, many work units gradually moved in, making the area livelier," Chen said, adding that amenities are close by, and shopping and entertainment facilities are well-equipped, making daily life very convenient.

The local government in Xiong'an has issued him a Talent Card B, which offers many public service conveniences. The card also provides a monthly housing subsidy for employees who have relocated to the new area.

"The conditions for entrepreneurship and living, as well as benefits for relocated personnel, are not lower than when they stayed in Beijing," Zhang Guohua, Party secretary of Xiong'an New Area, said in an interview with China Daily in early March.

According to the committee, the new area's housing provident fund standards, which provide funding support for individuals to buy houses, are aligned with Beijing's policies.

And a one-card pass for social security in Beijing and Xiong'an enables intercity mutual recognition for use of public transport, medical treatment, and medicine purchases.

"Working and living in Xiong'an also allows you to experience the wonderful scenes of no traffic congestion, mini football fields, tree-lined parking lots, and a paradise for migratory birds," Ni Yuefeng, secretary of the Hebei Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, said during the two sessions in March.

These efforts align with directives from China's central authorities, who have prioritized Xiong'an's development as a millennial plan of national significance.

Policies related to children's education, healthcare, housing, compensation, social security, medical insurance, and the housing provident fund for relocated personnel should be further refined and implemented, in order to ensure that both relocated work units and personnel enjoy tangible benefits.

## Opportunities plentiful

Initial success in alleviating Beijing's non-capital functions can be seen already, with landmark resettlement projects happening one after another.

Central State-owned enterprises, including China Satellite Network Group Co, China Huaneng Group Co, Sinochem Holdings Co, and China Mineral Resources Group Co, have either fully moved to the new area or

are speeding up construction and renovations of office buildings.

Beyond State-led relocations, market-driven projects are also gaining momentum, such as the China Telecom Smart City Industrial Park, a complex that integrates research and development offices, technology services, operational management, and lifestyle amenities.

In 2024, a total of 47 new central enterprises' secondary and tertiary subsidiaries and more than 300 various central enterprise branches based themselves in the new area, according to local government statistics, forming a favorable situation for the continuous advancement of resettlement.

These transferred subsidiaries and branches, whether listed for relocation or market-driven, are rapidly multiplying in Xiong'an. And their employees, far from being marginalized, have instead found new work and research opportunities.

As a researcher in new energy-storage technologies, Chen is pleased that the new area can facilitate research-centered companies, like his, development of large laboratories.

"Having a lab is crucial for us. While in Beijing, we had been expecting a lab, it seemed challenging," Chen said.

But in the first year in Xiong'an, his company has already started construction of a 2,000-square-meter lab in Zangang, a pilot base planned by the new area's government. "We researchers are looking forward to it," he said.

Despite Xiong'an's appeal, Chen faces personal challenges.

"My wife has a stable career in Beijing, so

“  
We are creating a city that's friendly for people of all ages, constructing a series of wonderful city scenes, and building 15-minute living circles, and making a high-quality living environment a distinct feature of Xiong'an.”

Zhang Guohua, Party secretary of Xiong'an

it's not easy for her to decide changing her job. Meanwhile, her parents who have lived with us for years to help take care of the child, are used to life in Beijing, including the neighborhood and their friends," he said.

Chen, who has lived in the capital for almost 20 years and plans to gradually relocate his whole family to Xiong'an, said "I have to take it slowly".

"I'm working hard to buy an apartment, and it makes me anxious when properties are quickly snapped up by others," Chen said, adding that the new area's urban planning and modern design concepts make

him feel comfortable and offer inspiration.

According to Chen, the housing in the new area is in high demand as more people are moving there because of the city's appeal. "It seems that everyone is very optimistic about the city's development," he said.

## Attracting talent

His feelings about Xiong'an attractions are shared by other talents moving there.

Zhang Zequn, a PhD candidate jointly supervised by the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei, Anhui province and Eastern Institute of Technology in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, came to Xiong'an in August 2024.

As a talent, he represents a major new type of cohort in Xiong'an. "In July last year, I visited Xiong'an for the first time to evaluate its ecosystem and support for emerging industries, which turned out to be very encouraging," Zhang said, adding that he and his peers immediately decided to create a company there.

According to Zhang, the area has strong policy backing, with targeted incentives for cutting-edge sectors aligned with his start-up's vision.

Though he is only 26 years old, Zhang co-founded Xiong'an Anying Technology Co with his peers, serving as a chief technology officer. The company contributes to the advancement of medical AI solutions.

"The four of us unanimously chose Xiong'an, a new city full of opportunities, to incubate our cutting-edge products," Zhang said. The company's chairman Zhou Haoran, 27, is from Tsinghua University,

while the other two founders are a returnee from Australia and a graduate from Chongqing.

The team is developing and promoting a portable cerebral hemorrhage detection and analysis device aimed at addressing urgent brain medical needs such as strokes, by providing rapid qualitative screening and real-time intracranial bleeding monitoring, Zhang said.

"This empowers medical institutions to provide brain imaging at patients' sides promptly, reducing the time from symptom onset to treatment or intervention," Zhang said, adding that the device is expected to launch by the end of the year after completing clinical trials.

"Xiong'an itself is a dream, and a place where we young people can realize our dreams like this," he said.

Ni Yuefeng, the provincial Party secretary, said that more than 170 academicians, over 1,000 entrepreneurs from Beijing's Zhong-guancun Science Park, and more than 50,000 college students have visited Xiong'an to evaluate what it has to offer. "After experiencing the modern vibe of Xiong'an, more and more innovative talents are voting with their feet for the new area," Ni said.

A large number of talented people in their fields have chosen Xiong'an, and, like Zhang, have settled in the area to pursue their dreams, according to the administrative committee of Xiong'an.

With the attraction of talent, Xiong'an is focused on becoming an innovation hub and entrepreneurship hot spot of the new era. "A series of high-level innovation platforms have been established to cover all stages from research and development to commercialization," said Zhang Guohua, top official of the new area.

According to Zhang, Xiong'an has integrated into Beijing's high-level talent hub, attracted leading enterprises, key figures, and innovation teams, established an alliance for relocated universities, set up a special fund for talent, and implemented the Sixteen Xiong Talents Policies.

Among the 16 policies is a measure to attract top global talent for key development industries such as new-generation information technology, modern life sciences and biotechnology, new materials, aerospace information, green energy, and fintech. To work in Xiong'an, top scientists will be offered with 20 to 50 million yuan in research funding and 3 million yuan in living allowances, plus spacious accommodations of no less than 200 square meters.

"Such benefits are unmatched by other cities," Zhang Zequn, the PhD candidate, said.

While various policies are offered to attract new talent to Xiong'an, the original residents of the area, which covers Anxin, Rongcheng and Xiongxin counties, have not been forgotten.

According to Zhang Guohua, more than 100,000 local people are gradually transitioning from rural to urban life.

"We are creating a city that's friendly for people of all ages, constructing a series of wonderful city scenes, building 15-minute living circles, and making a high-quality living environment a distinct feature of Xiong'an," he said.

With its dual focus on innovation and livability, Xiong'an is poised to redefine urban development in China.



Top left: A resident plays with her child at Fujuyuan residential community in Rongdong area, Xiong'an New Area on March 20. Top right: Tai chi enthusiasts engage in group exercises in Ding'an community, Rongdong area. Above left: An inspector explains bird habitat conditions at a bird monitoring station in Baiyangdian Scenic Area in Xiong'an. Above right: Employees work at Xiong'an Anying Technology Co in the Xiong'an Science and Technology Innovation Center. PHOTOS BY WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

## Joyous festivities



Young people perform fire-eating stunts on Monday during Eid al-Fitr celebrations in Makassar, Indonesia. Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. MUCHTAMIR ZAIDE / AFP

## China, India called on to bolster bilateral relations

By ZHAO JIA  
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Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong has emphasized that China-India relations are at a pivotal moment for progress, and he called for both nations to overcome challenges and proactively strengthen ties on a stable, healthy path.

Tuesday marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and India, the first non-socialist country to establish diplomatic relations with China.

"Despite fluctuations, the bilateral relationship has overall maintained a positive momentum of development, with friendly exchanges and cooperation always being the mainstream," Xu said in an interview with China Daily.

"History has repeatedly proved that China-India relations extend far beyond the bilateral scope, holding significant regional and global influence. Unity and cooperation between China and India benefit both nations, Asia and the world at large," he said.

In October, President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met in Kazan, Russia, leading the bilateral ties to overcome difficulties and embark on a new journey.

Since then, interactions at various



Xu Feihong

Secretary Dialogue, have taken place and reached a number of points of consensus.

China is willing to collaborate with India to reflect on experience, properly resolve differences and enhance exchanges and cooperation across all sectors and levels, Xu said.

He highlighted development as the "greatest common denominator" between the two nations, advocating aligned strategies to support mutual success.

China has long been India's top trading partner, with bilateral trade in 2024 reaching \$138.48 billion, up 1.7 percent year-on-year.

Xu said that China's ongoing comprehensive deepening of reforms and expanding of high-level opening-up offer Indian businesses broader market access and closer cooperation opportunities, adding that he hopes India will ensure a "fair, transparent and sustainable business environment for Chinese companies".

Since assuming his role in May

levels, including the 23rd Meeting of Special Representatives for China-India Boundary Question and the China-India Vice Foreign Minister-Foreign Secretary Dialogue, have taken place and reached a number of points of consensus.

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Since assuming his role in May

last year, Xu has visited several Indian states. "I have deeply felt that China and India not only share close historical and cultural ties and similar social values, but also have common goals of prosperity and development, underpinned by a solid foundation of people-to-people friendship."

Underlining China's commitment to boosting people-to-people exchanges with India, Xu said that Chinese diplomatic missions in India issued 280,000 visas to Indian citizens in 2024.

In the first quarter of this year, about 70,000 visas were issued, up about 15 percent year-on-year.

Last week, during a consultation between officials of the two nations' foreign ministries, the two countries agreed to accelerate efforts to resume direct flights, facilitate personnel exchanges and enable the reciprocal sending of reporters.

"Currently, the competent authorities of both sides are engaged in intensive discussions to negotiate specific plans," Xu said, expressing his hope that India will work with China to achieve tangible progress on these matters at an early date.

Youth engagement is another priority for Xu, who sees the world's largest youth populations in China and India as the future of the bilateral friendship.

"I am delighted to see many young Indian internet bloggers

tasting food, exploring night markets, and taking high-speed trains in China, using their cameras to showcase an open, safe, vibrant and sincerely friendly China," he said, encouraging more frequent visits by young people to foster stronger ties.

Xu also emphasized the significance of China and India in the international arena, saying that they are both vital forces in a multipolar world, dynamic drivers of global growth and leading forces among Global South countries, and they should contribute to a more stable and better world.

He quoted President Xi's remarks during a visit to India in September 2014, when Xi said, "If we speak with one voice, the whole world will listen, and if we join hands, the whole world will pay attention."

The ambassador called for deeper coordination and cooperation in international affairs to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of developing nations, promote a more just, fair and reasonable international order, and jointly address global challenges such as climate change, energy and food security, and terrorism.

## Inside

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## Gaza: Joint efforts, swift action urged

From page 1

Warring parties must also unfailingly enable safe access to lifesaving and protective services and supplies for children. This includes taking action to prevent and end attacks on humanitarian workers risking their lives to save and protect children.

Governments that have influence over warring parties should use that influence to ensure children are protected in accordance with the requirements of international law, reinforcing diplomatic efforts to prevent and end violations against children.

International peace and security institutions, such as the UN Security Council and regional organizations, should re-engage in collective action to consistently prioritize the safety and well-being of children trapped in armed conflicts, including proactive diplomatic efforts to end conflicts.

The international community should urgently increase investment in programs to protect children impacted by conflicts, alongside

investments to intensify efforts to monitor and report on violations against children and advocacy to end them once and for all.

Communities in conflict-affected areas must be supported to create protective environments for all children, taking into account their vulnerabilities based on their age, gender, disability and legal status.

Action is being taken, including here in China, by both the government and citizens. Last year, for example, people, including children, in China raised 19.5 million yuan (\$2.7 million) to support children affected by the conflict in Gaza. These funds were donated to the embassy of the State of Palestine in Beijing, which in turn donated them to UNICEF.

The funds are now being used to meet the urgent needs of children in Gaza in fields such as education and child protection. This is helping many of the most vulnerable children in Gaza access basic education through temporary learning spaces.

In other words, we must all come together to protect children from the horrors of war, reverse this deadly "new normal" of attacks against children, and preserve our shared humanity.

Children cannot wait. We must act now.

The author is UNICEF representative to China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Ties: Complementarity unlocks great potential

From page 1

The chief adviser said it is normal for "anything you do for the first time", such as the BRI, to encounter doubts, but everyone will ultimately be comfortable with it as long as it meets the needs of the people.

According to Yunus, a special economic zone in Bangladesh has been established under the BRI for Chinese investors to set up their industries and sell their products more conveniently to the world.

"You benefit from access to our market and the global market. We benefit by having your production facilities in Bangladesh, by taking our young people to help build and work for those factories. That way, we can get the complementarity between the two countries," he said.

## Deep impression

During the chief adviser's four-day stay in China, he held talks with Xi, who Yunus said is "an inspiring person" he has always admired.

The two had previously met in China in 2009.

Yunus said that Xi is a wise person who is looking for ideas and looking

for things to do for his people.

Xi can see the real problems of the people on the ground, he said.

Yunus, a former banker, who pioneered the microcredit movement, which provides very small loans to millions of the world's poorest people, said that Xi still remembered their first meeting.

"I was very impressed that someone at this position was thinking about something I do far away with the poor women in the village. So I always admire him for that," Yunus said.

He also said he believes that the vision proposed by Xi of building a community with a shared future for mankind arises from the idea that "no matter where we are in the boat together, if this boat sinks, we are finished".

It's not about one country or another country, Yunus said, but rather "as a human being on this planet, we have to save this planet. That's the No 1 goal".

Yunus said he has been promoting something similar in the notion of creating a world of "three zeros — zero poverty, zero unemployment and zero net carbon emissions."

"It's our collective responsibility to protect this (planet)," he said.

## Chinese teams rescue 6 people in Myanmar

Government to send \$14 million in emergency humanitarian support to affected nation

By JIANG CHENGLONG  
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Multiple rescue teams from China have rescued six survivors, including a pregnant woman, in earthquake-hit Myanmar as of 8 am local time on Monday, as the first group of emergency humanitarian aid from China arrived in the Southeast Asian country.

The magnitude 7.9 earthquake, which struck Myanmar on Friday, has resulted in 2,056 deaths and more than 3,900 injuries, and over 270 people were still missing as of Monday night, according to the country's state television channel MRTV.

Meanwhile, three Chinese citizens had been killed and 14 injured in the massive earthquake as of 5 pm local time, the Chinese embassy in Myanmar said.

According to the Ministry of Emergency Management, the China Search and Rescue Team arrived in the hard-hit city of Mandalay on Sunday afternoon local time and immediately sent an advance unit to conduct on-site assessments and rescue operations.

At 12:40 am on Monday, the team rescued a woman near a hotel. In addition, the CSRT and China's Zhejiang Rescue Team of Ramunion, a civilian rescue organization, worked together to rescue three trapped women near an apartment building in Mandalay on Monday morning.

The rescued individuals were transported to medical facilities for treatment, and rescue efforts were still ongoing, the Ministry of Emergency Management said in a news release.

In addition, an elderly man who had been trapped for nearly 40 hours under the rubble of a hospital in Nay Pyi Daw on Sunday was rescued by a team from Southwest China's Yunnan province, Xinhua News Agency reported. Also on Sunday, members of the Blue Sky Rescue Team from Hunan province rescued a survivor at Mandalay Buddhist Hall.

According to the Ministry of Emergency Management, a total of 91 members from five social emergency response teams organized by the ministry have arrived in Myanmar and are participating in or assisting with the rescue operations.

Following assessments, the CSRT established a campsite in an open area near the Chinese consulate-general in Mandalay on Sunday night.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Security Bureau said on social media on Monday that a Hong Kong rescue team had just arrived in the disaster-stricken area of Mandalay and immediately joined the CSRT for a briefing on the local disaster situation.

The team, which was equipped



About 400 Chinese earthquake experts and rescue and medical personnel are participating in the earthquake relief efforts across Myanmar."

Guo Jiakun, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman

with professional gear and search and rescue dogs, then coordinated with the CSRT and conducted search and rescue operations in two affected areas in Mandalay, the Security Bureau said.

On Monday, the first shipment of emergency humanitarian earthquake relief supplies provided by the Chinese government arrived in Yangon, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said at a regular news conference, adding that the Red Cross Society of China had also provided relief supplies.

The relief supplies included 1,200 tents, 8,000 blankets and over 40,000 first aid kits, according to the China International Development Cooperation Agency.

On Saturday, the Chinese government announced the provision of 100 million yuan (\$14 million) in emergency humanitarian aid to Myanmar.

Guo said that after the earthquake, China quickly activated its emergency mechanism to carry out rescue and consular protection efforts.

"The Yunnan rescue medical team arrived in Myanmar 18 hours after the earthquake, becoming the first international rescue team to enter the earthquake-hit area, and successfully rescued a trapped victim in cooperation with local rescue forces," he said.

In addition to several official rescue teams, civilian rescue forces from various parts of China have already entered or are entering Myanmar, Guo said.

"Currently, about 400 Chinese earthquake experts and rescue and medical personnel are participating in the earthquake relief efforts across Myanmar," the spokesman said.

China will work with Myanmar to overcome difficulties, make the most of the 72-hour window to rescue survivors, treat the injured, and deliver aid supplies to the disaster victims, he said.

"We believe that with the support of the international community, the government and people of Myanmar will be able to unite and overcome the disaster, and rebuild their homes."

## Holiday hotspot



Tourists look at large chunks of ice that have washed up on a beach in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, on Monday. Fueled by recent geopolitical tensions and the opening of a new airport in Nuuk, tourism in Greenland has surged by 14% year-on-year. LEON NEAL / GETTY IMAGES

## CHINA

## Honoring the founder



People gather for the annual ceremony honoring Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor, on Monday in what is now Xinzheng, Henan province, which is believed to be his birthplace. Huangdi is believed to be the progenitor of Chinese civilization. Held to commemorate his birthday, the event falls on the third day of the third month of the Chinese calendar. It was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2008. XU ZONGFU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## BRI legal aid association formed

Increasing exchanges, projects fuel establishment of specialized service

By CUI JIA in Xiamen, Fujian  
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China will provide better legal services to businesses operating in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative as BRI projects expand in scale and the demand for specialized legal services, risk mitigation mechanisms and dispute resolution systems grows, legal practitioners said.

Speaking at the International Forum on Belt and Road Legal Services on Sunday in the city of Xiamen, Chen Wenqing, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee, said the Belt and Road Initiative aims to create a "road of happiness" benefiting nations worldwide. He emphasized the importance of the rule of law in strengthening international cooperation and ensuring sustainable development under the initiative, which involves more than 150 countries and regions.

He called for joint efforts to align laws, policies, and regulations among participating countries, enhance cooperation in legal serv-

ices such as arbitration and mediation, and develop mechanisms for law enforcement collaboration and cross-border dispute resolution.

With increasing international economic and trade exchanges and cross-border investments, the demand for legal services for business entities involved in the BRI is rising. The role of the rule of law in promoting the high-quality development of the BRI is also becoming more important, said Wang Junfeng, head of the Belt and Road International Legal Services Association, which was established on Sunday.

"The newly established association aims to help enterprises efficiently resolve cross-border disputes and continuously optimize the business environment," said Wang during the forum.

The China-initiated organization will optimize legal service resources across the entire chain of lawyers, arbitration, commercial mediation and other legal services in countries and regions participating in the BRI, providing professional legal teams, organizational support and diverse legal platforms for businesses.

Currently, Chinese law firms

have established 207 branches in 37 countries and regions, with 73 branches set up in BRI-participating countries and regions. Meanwhile, the number of lawyers engaged in international legal services has exceeded 12,000. The parties involved in international arbitration cases now come from more than 100 countries and regions worldwide, according to the Ministry of Justice.

Since its launch in 2013, the BRI has evolved into a critical framework for advancing global infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation and economic integration. Its success relies not only on financial investments, but also on robust legal frameworks and rule-of-law guarantees, as commercial disputes in BRI projects are inevitable, said Ismail Selim, president of the International Federation of Commercial Arbitration Institutions.

"BRI projects involve complex transnational transactions that require harmonizing legal disparities across jurisdictions," Selim said. "Participating countries operate under diverse legal systems, creating challenges in contract enforcement, intellectual property protection and regulatory compliance. Legal practitioners must bridge these gaps by drafting agreements that align with both local regulations and international standards."

Gao Zicheng, chairman of the All China Lawyers Association, said the most common cross-border legal issues enterprises and citizens face include intellectual property rights, environmental protection, and foreign investment and financing.

The number of foreign-related consultations on business operations under the BRI received by lawyers in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which is the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt, has seen an average annual increase of 30 percent in recent years, said Geng Baojian, head of the Xinjiang Lawyers Association.

More businesses in Xinjiang are interested in the opportunities brought by the BRI, especially in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and need detailed legal services, including information on registering local branches, paying taxes, and understanding cultural and political risks that may affect operations, Geng said.

"There has been a surging demand for services from lawyers who are familiar with both Chinese law and the laws of the countries enterprises want to invest in," he added.

"We have stepped up efforts to train Xinjiang lawyers to meet this demand, which will only continue to grow at a faster pace."

## Artificial intelligence advances green solutions

By YAN DONGJIE  
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Experts highlighted the role of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in accelerating green industrial upgrades and advancing global sustainable development at the 2025 Zhongguancun Forum.

Speaking at the Carbon Peak and Carbon Neutrality Science and Technology Forum, Ding Chibiao, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said AI is reshaping energy systems and driving China's dual carbon goals.

"AI is a cornerstone of innovation for future energy structures, driving green transitions," Ding said. China aims to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and reach carbon neutrality before 2060.

Ding noted that AI adoption has already improved efficiency in high-carbon industries such as chemicals, aligning with the academy's strategic action plan for science and technology supporting carbon peak and carbon neutrality released in 2022. He pledged deeper interdisciplinary collaboration to advance AI-enabled low-carbon energy solutions.

Ye Mao, a researcher at the academy's Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics and head of its intelligent chemical engineering team, detailed progress in AI-driven chemical engineering.

Since 2016, a team led by Liu Zhongmin, the institute's director and an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, has pioneered AI applications in the field. Last year, they launched Chem-ELLM, a large model for autonomous chemical process design, followed by an upgraded Chem-ELLM 2.0 in November.

"The new version significantly improves capabilities in catalysis,

safety and foundational chemistry, broadening industrial applicability," Ye said.

More than 50 chemical companies have tested the model, with adoption growing steadily. However, Ye said traditional engineering and AI-human collaboration will continue during the transition.

"Building an intelligent chemical ecosystem requires time, but it will boost efficiency, safety and support China's energy revolution," he said.

At the International Forum on Sciences for Sustainable Development — part of UNESCO's International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024-2033) — global experts examined digital technology's role in achieving the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Guo Huadong, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and director of the International Research Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals, unveiled the Beijing Initiative on Digital Science and Technology for Sustainable Development. The plan calls for scaling AI, big data, the internet of things and space technology to combat climate change, biodiversity loss and poverty.

"Digital tools are key to optimizing energy use, cutting emissions and improving resource management," Guo said. The initiative also advocates global platforms for sharing digital resources, integrating technology into policymaking and boosting public sustainability literacy.

Highlighting China's contributions, Guo said SDGSAT-1, the world's first science satellite dedicated to the 2030 agenda, has delivered more than 420,000 datasets to 104 countries since its 2021 launch. The data aids in monitoring urban heat islands, assessing emissions and disaster response.

## AI meteorological center inaugurated in Shanghai

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai  
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The Shanghai AI Meteorological Application Innovation Center was inaugurated on Monday, accelerating the city's adoption of AI-driven weather forecasting.

The center is a joint initiative of a number of institutions, including the Shanghai Meteorological Service, the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization, the Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, the Shanghai Academy of AI for Science and the National Meteorological Center. It aims to serve as a comprehensive platform for technological innovation, industrial incubation and international cooperation in AI meteorology.

During the inauguration, officials unveiled two advanced weather forecasting models: Yushi, or "Rain Master," and Fuyao, meaning "Whirlwind".

Developed by the Shanghai Meteorological Service, the Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, the National Meteorological Center and the National Meteorological Information Center, Yushi specializes in predicting sudden severe convective weather in Shanghai.

By analyzing three-dimensional radar data and incorporating vertical velocity calculations from continuity equations, Yushi can map the 3D structure of thunderstorm cells, improving accuracy in predicting

when storms will form and dissipate, said Xu Jianming, head of the Shanghai central meteorological observatory.

"With these capabilities, the model is expected to enhance severe convective weather warnings by 15 to 45 minutes, providing Shanghai with a critical buffer for disaster prevention," Xu said.

Fuyao, developed by the Shanghai Meteorological Service and the Shanghai Academy of AI for Science, focuses on bursts of heavy rainfall, thunderstorms and strong winds. By rapidly integrating radar, satellites, automatic weather stations and numerical forecast data, it can increase forecast frequency from hourly updates to every 10 minutes, with the potential to deliver warnings at the subdistrict level.

A multi-hazard early warning toolbox designed for countries and regions participating in the Belt and Road Initiative was also introduced at the event.

The toolbox includes risk assessment, monitoring alerts, information dissemination and emergency response functions, leveraging algorithmic models and past case studies to enhance preparedness.

"The innovation center will actively promote international cooperation in meteorological AI, contributing Shanghai's expertise to global early warning efforts," said Feng Lei, director of the Shanghai Meteorological Service.

## Hotel-like tourist train gearing up for April launch

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan  
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A new customized tourist train featuring hotel-like services rolled off the production line on Friday in Qingdao, Shandong province, ahead of its planned launch in mid-April.

Developed by CRRC Sifang and China Railway Zhengzhou Group in Henan province, the train is themed around the Yellow River and will connect scenic destinations in Henan, including Luoyang, Anyang and Sanmenxia.

"The upgraded train adopts the style design of electric multiple units and provides hotel-like accommodations in terms of infrastructure, cabin layout, sanitation facilities and special accessibility," said Zhan Weipeng, a technical expert at CRRC Sifang.

The train is managed with hotel-style service standards and offers gourmet meals by renowned chefs, interactive cultural activities and a multifunctional car with a tea lounge, game room and karaoke zone, Zhan said.

Designed for comfort, particularly for elderly passengers, the



The customized tourist train featuring hotel-like services parks in a facility in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Friday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

train includes safety features such as fluorescent handrails, anti-slip flooring and stepladders. A dedicated medical area is equipped with emergency supplies and senior care items.

The train consists of 14 soft sleeper cars with double, triple and quadruple bed compartments, a dining car, a multifunctional car and a personnel car. Each compartment has an inde-

pendent dry-wet-separation bathroom with a temperature-regulated toilet, anti-pinch door handles and an SOS emergency call system.

"In the double-bed compartments, the two single beds can be reconfigured as twin or king-size options, while quadruple-bed compartments feature privacy curtains. Triple and double-bed compartments both include mul-

tifunctional storage and minibars," Zhan said.

Advanced soundproofing ensures privacy, while double-decker windows maximize natural light, he said.

The train's exterior features wavelike patterns flowing dynamically along its body, inspired by ancient painted pottery techniques. The design captures the surging waves of the Yellow River, which flows through nine provinces and regions, including Henan and Shandong.

Inside, the train's decor incorporates cultural elements from Henan's heritage, creating a mobile exhibition of the province's history. Signs blending Chinese characters with modern visual elements provide intuitive guidance for passengers, offering a fresh cultural and tourism experience.

The launch of the customized train underscores the railway sector's role in driving regional economic and tourism growth.

"With elevated service standards, the train is expected to boost the integration of railway and tourism, injecting new vitality into the industries," China Railway Zhengzhou Group said in a statement.

## Fans show up



Darren Watkins Jr. (center), a US internet celebrity better known to his over 37 million YouTube followers as IShowSpeed is surrounded by fans in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Monday. HE HAIYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## CHINA



From left: Zhan Jiaqin (front) competes in the 2024 Everest 135 race in Nepal. Zhan (left) walks near the base camp of Mount Qomolangma during the race.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## AI used in revealing biological secrets of crop seeds

By ZOU SHUO and HE CHUN in Changsha

After eight years of groundbreaking interdisciplinary collaboration, a Chinese research team has pioneered a revolutionary leap in agricultural technology: a nondestructive testing system that performs "seed CT scans" to assess the vitality of individual seeds.

The innovation, led by Yu Yinghong, a researcher at the Hunan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, is embodied in a prototype device that combines cutting-edge laser spectroscopy and artificial intelligence to reveal the biological secrets within seeds — without damaging them — ushering in a new era of precision agriculture.

Collaborating with the Hefei Institutes of Physical Science, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the CAS Changchun Institute of Optics, Fine Mechanics and Physics, the interdisciplinary team established an optical nondestructive testing system based on supercontinuum laser spectroscopy.

They collected transmission spectra and germination phenotype data from hundreds of thousands of crop seeds, building a comprehensive "spectrum-vigor" database.

By harnessing the supercontinuum laser beams to capture detailed spectral "fingerprints" of seeds, this system detects microscopic indicators — from metabolic activity to structural integrity — hidden beneath the seed coat.

"Everything has its spectrum and for seeds, its vitality is determined by the things it contains, which can be reflected in the spectrum," he said. "We do not know what each spectrum means, but when we collected the information of enough seeds, the correlation becomes clear, so the research cannot be done without big data and AI."

Once commercialized, this technology is expected to significantly enhance seed quality for crops such as corn, cotton, rice and soybeans, thereby boosting large-scale yield improvement, he said.

Emphasizing that seeds with superior vitality possess greater potential for yield improvement and stress resistance, Yu said that achieving nondestructive, single-seed vitality detection and sorting could break through current bottlenecks in the seed industry by ensuring higher-quality seeds for cultivation.

Data shows the technology achieves almost 100 percent accuracy in predicting seed vitality when applied to rice, corn, soybeans and cotton.

Using this breakthrough, the team engineered the world's first prototype for nondestructive rice seed vitality detection and sorting.

Post-sorting germination rates also reach almost 100 percent, with the results validated by the Hunan Provincial Agricultural Society. Experts concluded that the achievement fills a critical gap in optical nondestructive seed testing and holds substantial scientific and agricultural value.

Yu said the team is working hard on the commercialization of the technology, which he hopes can be achieved within five years.

More than 20 patents have been obtained for the technology and the team is actively applying for more government support, especially to have more seeds for testing, he said.

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## Endurance run tests limits of retiree

Former executive restores health through dedicated training regimen

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Zhan Jiaqin, a 61-year-old retired corporate executive from Hunan province, has etched his name in endurance sports history by conquering the 2024 Everest 135, or Everest Extreme — a 231.2-kilometer race through a section of Mount Qomolangma in Nepal, dubbed one of the planet's toughest high-altitude races.

With a staggering cumulative elevation gain of 19,709 meters, temperatures swinging between 25 C and -20 C, and a peak altitude of 5,517 meters, the six-day event tested human limits. Zhan, finishing in 130 hours and 10 minutes, became its oldest amateur participant to complete the race.

Zhan was born in Pingjiang county, Hunan in 1964. He graduated from Tongji University in Shanghai in the 1980s and worked at a State-owned construction company in Changsha, the provincial capital, for 19 years before becoming the general manager of a local private real estate company.

His running journey, however, began not on mountain trails but in a moment of humble self-reckoning.

In 2013, at age 49, Zhan's life took a pivotal turn during a company hiking trip in a remote forest. Struggling to keep pace with colleagues, he faced a stark reality: his deteriorating health could no longer be ignored.

Determined to change, he embarked on a rigorous fitness regimen, rising at 4:30 am daily for two-hour runs before work, later incorporating gym sessions to build strength. "I started with 2 to 3 kilometers and couldn't even finish that," he said.



Clockwise from top: Zhan (back right) poses with participants before the start of the 2024 Everest 135 race on May 5. Zhan (middle) runs a marathon with his wife (left) in Changsha, Hunan province. Zhan climbs Muztagh Ata, a 7,546-meter peak in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

km in Hebei province, where he battled rain, freezing temperatures and scorching sun over 45 hours.

To prepare, Zhan adopted a science-backed approach: morning 20-km runs, afternoon hill repeats on Yuelu Mountain in Changsha with weighted packs, and meticulous study of navigation tools.

"Blindly running won't work. You need strategy," he said. "More importantly, no matter which event you participate in, once you feel uncomfortable, you need to contact the staff quickly."

The Everest 135, however, demanded unprecedented rigor. The race — open only to athletes with 7,000-meter summit experience and rigorous medical clearance — required signing a "life-and-

death waiver". Zhan, the sole amateur in the 135-mile category, faced a field of elite international competitors. Armed with dual satellite navigation watches, a phone and backup power banks, he navigated desolate trails where "not a blade of grass grew".

"I focused only on reaching the next aid station, even if it was 10 km away," he said. "There was also great mental stress and especially immense loneliness."

Crossing the finish line, swollen-faced and tearful, he remarked, "I do not remember the last time I cried, but the tears this time will be ingrained in my mind forever."

Running reshaped Zhan's life beyond physical feats. Once prone to late-night drinking and erratic habits, he now adheres to a monastic routine: bedtime at 10 pm and running 300-400 km monthly paired with gym sessions.

His health metrics — a resting heart rate of 50 bpm, blood pressure of 110/70 mm Hg — reflect this transformation.

His wife and daughter, initially skeptical, joined him. His wife completed her first 116-km race in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province in 23 hours, while the family collectively finished the Tengchong Marathon in Yunnan province.

Zhan's influence extends beyond his household. He mentors runners such as Bai Liqin, a 38-year-old novice he guided to a sixth-place finish in her debut 100-km race. "He taught me to train smart, not just hard," Bai said.

Now retired, Zhan eyes new horizons: the 400-km "800 Liusha" across the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region's deserts to Dunhuang in Gansu province, and other international races.

Yet his ultimate ambition transcends sport: "I want to inspire people to chase dreams at any age. I've reached Qomolangma's base — next, I'll stand on its summit."

Zhu Youfang contributed to this story.

## Chinese breakdancer takes win on way to defending world title

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

A 15-year-old from Jilin province won a breakdancing event in Vietnam last month, on his way to defending his world title.

Cui Shengyu, a student from Hui-gu School in Changchun, capital of Jilin, won the Radikal Forze Jam World Street Dance Championship held last month in Da Nang, Vietnam.

Without taking a rest after returning, Cui immediately began preparations for the third ISF U-15 Gymnasiade, which will be held in Serbia this month.

Cui started breakdancing at the age of 6. "He was often ill when he was young, so I took him to attend a street dance course on the recommendation of a relative," said Cui's mother Song Chunxiu. "I just wanted to improve his physical strength."

At first, as Cui was too young and "naughty", he often failed to concentrate in the class and couldn't keep up with the rhythm of the teacher, said Song. "However, he persevered and demonstrated his talent and

interest in breakdancing," the mother said.

Under the guidance of Bao Bo, a member of the Jilin Dance Association's Street Dance Committee, Cui made great progress.

After practicing breakdancing for about two years, Cui began to participate in domestic competitions, usually finishing in the top eight or top four.

"The coach told me that my son performed even better at competitions than in regular practices," said Song. "He has strong control over the rhythm of the live performance and excellent adaptability. I also find that he gets excited and exudes a strong presence onstage."

Cui attends school in the morning and practices in the dance studio from afternoon until evening.

"Thanks to his teachers, who also used their spare time to help Cui keep up with school courses, he can focus more on dancing," Song said.

However, just practicing hard is not enough for Cui. The key to success is improving efficiency.

"During practice, I never think about anything else, but only focus on solving the issues pointed out by

the coach," said Cui. "After explaining a concept, my coach asks me to consider how to better demonstrate a new difficult point or technique."

"Good dancers need to have their own ideas and creativity," Cui added. In August 2023, Cui won the breakdancing championship at the second ISF U-15 Gymnasiade, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It marked the first time a Chinese dancer had won an international gold medal for breakdancing.

In the past two years, Cui has won several championships at international competitions.

Breakdancing is the earliest form of street dance popular in North America, which originated in New York in the 1970s. It focuses on dancers' individual styles.

Last year, breakdancing made its debut at the Olympic Games in Paris.

Wang Senda, director of the Jilin Dance Association's Street Dance Committee, said that Cui's achievements reflect the professional development of street dance education in China.

"With breakdancing becoming an official Olympic event, a complete



Cui Shengyu dances during the Radikal Forze Jam World Street Dance Championship last month in Da Nang, Vietnam.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

system from youth training to national team selection has been established domestically," he said. "More young talent like Cui is stepping onto the international stage through systematic training."

Cui said that his goal is to step onto the Olympic stage and win an Olympic gold medal.

"I hope I can showcase the power

of Chinese street dancers to the world," said Cui. "And I also hope to see the Chinese flag raised in more competitions."

Han Junhong contributed to this story.

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## WORLD

## Iran: Door to indirect talks with US open

By MIKE GU in Hong Kong  
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Iran's president said on Sunday the door to indirect talks with the United States stays open — which an expert said offers a ray of light in the estranged and tense relations between the two sides.

President Masoud Pezeshkian said the US' behavior would determine whether or not indirect negotiations could progress, while noting that the US' history of violating commitments had eroded trust between the two countries.

In a letter to Iran via an emissary from the United Arab Emirates on March 12, US President Donald Trump urged Teheran to open negotiations for a "new deal" on its nuclear program.

Pezeshkian said Teheran's response was delivered to the US side through Oman.

While Iran has explicitly rejected the possibility of direct negotiations with the US, the option of indirect talks remains on the table, he said.

"In its response, Iran reaffirmed that it does not avoid negotiations, but rather it has just been the US' repeated violations of agreements and commitments that have created obstacles in this path."

Prior to Pezeshkian's comments, Trump said he was considering military action and secondary tariffs, if Iran does not agree to a nuclear deal.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Monday that the US would receive a strong blow if it acts on Trump's threat to bomb.

## Subtle shift

Abdolreza Alami, a senior lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA in Malaysia, told China Daily that Pezeshkian's remarks to keep open indirect doors signal a subtle shift in Iran's foreign policy.

Iran's strategic response, in terms of strategic management, demonstrates that it is far from being passive, he said. By choosing Oman as a mediator instead of the UAE and by insisting on indirect rather than direct talks, Iran is attempting to shape the playing field to its advantage.

"However, the current situation resembles a psychological war aimed at securing greater leverage in potential talks rather than an unequivocal readiness to resolve disputes."

Both governments appear fundamentally open to negotiations to secure mutual interests, yet they are engaged in a strategic game aimed at influencing the other side and gaining the upper hand in future talks, Alami said.

"Iran's approach indicates that if the US demonstrates good faith and honors its commitments, the door to dialogue remains open, but only on terms of respect and equality, not unilateral imposition."

Agencies contributed to this story.



First responders embrace each other at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on Sunday as the bodies of Palestinian medics killed a week earlier in an Israeli strike on ambulances arrive at the facility. AFP

## Gaza aid workers face grave situation

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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Medical and humanitarian workers in Gaza faced a grim reality on Sunday as the Palestine Red Crescent Society retrieved 15 bodies, including eight of its own staff, a week after losing contact with them.

The recovery came just a day after the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies called for "urgent access and information following seven days of silence on the fate of nine medics in Gaza."

It said the crew came under heavy gunfire while responding in the Al-Hashashin area of Rafah in the early hours of March 23.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA, also gave an update about a rescue operation in Gaza on Sunday that concluded with the recovery of the 15 bodies.

It confirmed eight were from the Palestine Red Crescent Society, six from the Palestinian Civil Defense, and one from the UN.

"Their co-workers found them buried in the Tal Al Sultan area of Rafah," the UN said. "The available information indicates that the first team was killed by Israeli forces on March 23 and that other emergency and aid crews were struck one after another over several hours as they searched for their missing colleagues."

The bodies were found along-

side their wrecked emergency vehicles, which were "clearly marked ambulances, a fire truck, and a UN car", it said.

Jonathan Whittall, head of the OCHA office in Palestine, said on X that first responders "should never be a target."

One survivor claimed Israeli forces had killed both personnel in his ambulance, Whittall said, and OCHA has for days coordinated to reach the site "but our access was only granted five days later."

"While traveling to the area on the fifth day we encountered hundreds of civilians fleeing under gunfire," he said.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said on Sunday that it was "outraged" at the deaths of the eight medics.

The devastating incident "represents the single most deadly attack on Red Cross (and) Red Crescent workers anywhere in the world since 2017", it said, adding that 30 Palestine Red Crescent Society volunteers and staff members had been killed since Oct 7, 2023.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society said it was devastated by the killing of the eight medics, who were "targeted by the Israeli occupation forces while performing their humanitarian duties". A ninth medic remains missing, it added.

Israel has yet to respond to the tragedy, but Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee has issued a

warning that soldiers would soon resume intense combat operations.

According to the NGO Physicians for Human Rights, the number of attacks recorded on health workers, patients, hospitals, and other medical infrastructure in Palestine since Oct 7, 2023, surpassed 1,000 last year.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials said Israeli forces killed at least 64 people, including children, in Gaza on Sunday, the first day of Eid al-Fitr, the holiday that marked the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Israel's military admitted to Agence France-Presse on Saturday that it had fired at ambulances in Gaza after earlier identifying them as "suspicious vehicles", but did not say if there was fire coming from the vehicles.

Ahmad Ghouri, a senior lecturer at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom, told China Daily that the deaths of the medics highlight a grave violation of international humanitarian law.

"The deliberate targeting of medical personnel or facilities constitutes a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court," he said. "Even in cases where there is suspicion of misuse of medical emblems or vehicles, the principle of proportionality and the obligation to verify targets must be upheld to avoid harm to civilians and humanitarian workers."



## Engineering the future

Staff members make final adjustments at the Siemens booth ahead of the Hannover Messe in Hanover, Germany, on Sunday. The industrial trade fair, a key global platform for showcasing cutting-edge technologies, kicked off that evening.

HANNIBAL HANSCHKE / EPA-EFE

## Growing electronic waste raises concerns in Africa

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya  
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Urgent policy action is needed to tackle the growing challenge of electronic waste in Africa, experts warn.

At the 7th East African Communication Organization Regional Conference on Sustainable E-Waste Management, they painted a grim picture of e-waste in Africa, citing global statistics that showed the continent lags behind in e-waste management.

The three-day event, held last week in Kenya's capital Nairobi, brought together more than 100 participants, including senior government officials, regulators and industry representatives.

Stanley Kamanguya, CEO of the Kenya Information and Communications Technology Authority, said Africa generates nearly 5 million metric tons of e-waste annually but

has a very low recycling capability. This disparity needs to be urgently addressed, he said.

Tackling the e-waste crisis in Africa will not only reverse the environmental damage caused, but is also expected to enhance job creation and resource recovery from e-waste, he said.

"Improperly managed e-waste poses significant environmental risks, including soil, water and air pollution, as well as the release of toxic substances that can harm human health and ecosystems. However, e-waste is not just an environmental issue. It is an economic opportunity and a shared responsibility."

While calling for a concerted regional effort to tackle e-waste, Burundi's permanent secretary in the ministry of environment, agriculture and livestock, Emmanuel Ndorimana, said the transboundary nature of

e-waste necessitates that African countries align their national policies with international best practices to ensure effective management.

Citing the reference tool Global E-Waste Monitor 2024 by the UN Institute for Training and Research, William Kabogo, Kenya's cabinet secretary for information, communications, and the digital economy, said only 1 percent of e-waste in Africa is formally collected and recycled.

"The statistics are staggering. The fact that Africa has the lowest documented e-waste recycling rate globally should alarm us all," he said.

However, Kabogo noted that while Africa generates less e-waste per capita compared with other regions, more than 60 percent of it comes from imports fueled by the skyrocketing penetration of mobile phones and the increase in the sale of electronic goods.

"There is a need for urgent policy action to address the growing e-waste crisis in Africa. The rapid pace of technological advancement, coupled with the high demand for modern information and communications technology products, has led to billions of tons of e-waste globally, with Africa bearing the brunt of improper disposal," Kabogo said.

Data from the Global E-Waste Monitor 2024 indicate that global organized crime groups have been smuggling e-waste into Africa, with one such group caught trying to smuggle more than 5 million kilograms of e-waste from the Spanish Canary Islands to Ghana, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal in 2023.

In 2020, Spanish authorities intercepted a network responsible for shipping 2.5 billion kg of material to African countries, including 750,000 kg of falsely certified e-waste.

## Speakers tell of dangers of alien land laws

By MAY ZHOU in Houston  
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Gary Nakamura, national vice-president of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), joined a rally Sunday against Texas land bills that was organized by the Chinese American community in Houston's Chinatown. He shared his family's story on the serious consequences of such alien land laws.

"My late grandparents could not own land in the state of California, even though they came to this country back in 1902 because of the original set of alien land laws," Nakamura told the crowd. "That affects all of us in so many ways. It affects our ability to create generational wealth. It affects our ability to really just have a decent life and pursue the American dream."

Those alien land laws across the United States led to "distrust, misinformation that targeted my Japanese-American community, which ultimately resulted in the mass incarceration of over 125,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, including my late father, who, by the way, was a highly decorated US Army veteran in World War II," Nakamura continued.

Similar rallies were also held in Dallas and Austin over the weekend. Elected officials and leaders from 46 Texas and 30 some national organizations — including civil rights groups from the African, Iranian and Latino communities, joined the rallies, according to the organizers. US Representative Al Green from Houston joined the rally in Dallas.

Currently, there are more than a dozen land bills in the Texas Legislature to restrict Chinese nationals and entities from purchasing real property in Texas. Of which, SB 17, "relating to the purchase of or acquisition of title to real property by certain aliens or foreign entities", was recently swiftly passed in the Senate, and a similar bill, HB 17, is set for voting soon.

Two years ago, strong protests from the Asian American community prevented similar bills from passing, but now similar bills are coming back in more stringent forms, said Gene Wu, minority leader of the Texas House of Representatives.

"We thought they listened. And then we came back this year and testified in the Senate again, reminding them that these types of laws were discriminatory. And they promised us that they would fix it, they would change it. And they made it even worse. They made it even more dangerous for us," said Wu.

Wu, who led the fight to defeat the Texas alien land law SB 147 two years ago, is again at the forefront of the fight. He said that the current bills stipulate that "the government can come and just file a lawsuit against your property without letting you know, without letting you even have a chance to fight for it. And they can just take it."

A lawyer by profession, Wu said the provision would create an in rem action which is rare but was used before against Japanese Americans during World War II when they were rounded up. In rem refers to a focus on property rather than individuals. "These same types of provisions

were used to take their property, bank accounts, cars, farms houses, everything without asking," Wu said, warning that the current bills could be pathways to a second Chinese Exclusion Act or become a Chinese interment similar to what Japanese Americans had suffered.



We thought they listened. And then we came back this year and testified in the Senate again, reminding them that these types of laws were discriminatory."

Gene Wu, minority leader of the Texas House of Representatives

In a zoom meeting after the rally, Wu said many people in the community think that they will be fine because the bills target only Chinese nationals. He warned that citizenship will not protect the community with these types of laws because when people of Japanese ancestry were rounded up at gunpoint into trucks and trains, two-thirds of them were American citizens, born and raised here. "Citizenship does not matter," he said.

Wu said there are at least a half-dozen bills that directly target China and other specific countries. "The next is banning Chinese people from working in technology, in academics, in research, in medicine. Next is banning people completely and saying, if you're Chinese, you have to get into the truck and go to the concentration camp. This is all coming."

Alice Chen, Mayor Pro Tem of Stafford, Texas, warned of the danger of such bills by using the Chinese metaphor of "boiling frog in warm water" — if a person is in a gradually deteriorating environment, they will not perceive the danger if the change is slow — until it is too late.

Kenneth Li, nicknamed "the mayor of Chinatown" for his many civic roles involving the development of Houston's Chinatown, said some authors of the bills are from Houston and its suburbs.

"Don't give them money, don't vote for them, and find somebody else to vote against them, and get them out," Li told people at the rally.

Austin Zhao, partner and vice-president of Transworld Business Advisors of South & West Texas, New Mexico, and Wyoming, was one of more than 200 people who showed up at the Houston rally.

"Many people in the community haven't realized the potential impact on Chinese Americans that such bills would bring. It's not about land; it's political discrimination against all Chinese here, and it will negatively impact us and our future generations," Zhao said.

Zhao said Chinese Americans tend to be less politically engaged. "You have to fight for your own rights. Political participation is very important and powerful. If you are not at the table, you are under the table," he said.



Gene Wu, minority leader of the Texas House of Representatives, speaks against Texas alien land bills at the rally in Houston on Sunday. MAY ZHOU / CHINA DAILY

## WORLD

## US tariffs on agri-products raise concern

State officials warn against 'reckless policies' raising costs for consumers

By LINDA DENG in Seattle  
lindadeng@chinadailyusa.com

A senior commerce official in the US state of Washington said that while trade imbalances are a legitimate concern, tariffs have historically harmed rather than helped the state.

"Tariffs often function as a tax on American consumers and businesses," Joe Nguyen, the state's commerce director, said in an interview with Seattle radio station KUOW. "We've found that nearly 93 percent of tariffs are passed on to consumers, driving up costs."

Nguyen expressed particular concern for agricultural communities, which depend on global exports of apples, cherries and hops, and emphasized the need for predictable trade policies to foster economic stability.

"Washington state can't fully insulate itself from reckless federal policies," he said. "Trade decisions made on a whim have global consequences. Our focus must be on protecting local businesses, workers and consumers as much as possible."

Washington, one of the most trade-dependent states in the US, relies heavily on international commerce, with 40 percent of its jobs tied to trade and about \$60 billion in annual exports.

China is the state's third-largest export market, according to a fact sheet released by US Senator Maria Cantwell. In 2023, the value of produce grown or processed in Washington exported to China was \$857 million.

"When retaliatory tariffs strike our farmers, just as they did in the first Trump administration, it's not going to be fun. It's going to be a nightmare for our farmers," Cantwell said in a Senate meeting on March 4.

Oregon Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner said the tariffs could increase inflation, trigger job losses and slow long-term economic growth.

"Government should be predictable and steady," she said. "Businesses and families rely on rational policymaking."

Economists estimate the tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China — three of Oregon's top four export markets — could cost households an additional \$1,200 a year.

"For too many Oregonians, budgets are already stretched thin. An unasked-for \$1,200 expense is unsustainable, especially for families struggling to save," Steiner said.

Last year, Oregon exported \$34 billion in goods, with nearly half going to Mexico (\$6.3 billion), China (\$5.9 billion) and Canada (\$3.3 billion). Steiner argued that any disruption to those markets would have far-reaching consequences for the state's economy.

## Permanent damage

An industry expert also expressed concern, saying that the US had lost long-term market share in China's fresh produce sector due to the trade war, and that regaining it will require more than just lifting tariffs. Structural changes in global supply chains and China's strategic diversification could mean the damage is permanent.

"I think what China saw in 2017, '18 is the US wasn't a reliable trading partner, and that they needed to diversify their suppliers," Alexis Taylor, chief global policy officer at the International Fresh Produce Association, said at a food policy meeting in Washington, DC, on March 17.

Taylor said that more of Brazil's production is coming online, such as corn, soy, and beef, while China is opening new market access to Brazil because it's a new supply chain.

"When I look at the numbers from the fresh fruit and vegetable exports, we (the US) haven't recovered from that trade war with China," she said. "On average, from 2005 to 2017, we were exporting about \$500 million or \$450 million worth of products."

The figure dropped on average to \$200.36 million from 2020 to 2024, Taylor said.

"When you lose some of these markets it's very hard to get them back," she said.



Members from the China Search and Rescue Team and the Rescue Team of Ramunion transfer a pregnant survivor at a quake site in Mandalay, Myanmar, on Monday. MYO KYAW SOE / XINHUA

## Asia-Pacific rallies round Myanmar

By PRIME SARMIENTO  
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Rescue and medical teams from across the Asia-Pacific region are continuing relief and search operations in Myanmar, helping the nation recover from Friday's devastating magnitude 7.9 earthquake.

The disaster killed 2,056 people in Myanmar as of noon on Monday, injured about 3,900, with 270 missing, and sent violent tremors to nearby Thailand.

India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam sent emergency response teams to Myanmar soon after the quake, while the Philippine disaster response team will arrive on Tuesday.

Japan has dispatched an assessment team and will provide emergency relief supplies to those affected by the earthquake through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Timor-Leste held an emergency meeting on Sunday to discuss humanitarian aid to Myanmar.

They agreed to strengthen relief and recovery efforts through the ASEAN Standby Arrangements and member states' contributions.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, this year's rotating chair of ASEAN, conveyed Malaysia's condolences and pledged to distribute 10 million ringgit (\$2.25 million) in humanitarian aid to Myanmar citizens affected by the tragedy.

In a message posted to his social media account Sunday, Anwar said he had directed Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan to lead a humanitarian mission to Myanmar this week. He had also called Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra to express his deepest condolences and sympathy, Anwar said.

In the Thai capital of Bangkok, the death toll has hit 19, rescuers said on Monday.

The earthquake — measured as a magnitude 7.9 by the China Earthquake Network Center and a magnitude 7.7 by US authorities — is the strongest the region has experienced in nearly 200 years. The last tremor of a similar scale was recorded in the 1830s.

India said it had dispatched 15 metric tons of relief items by aircraft to Yangon, including ready-to-eat meals, blankets and generator sets. Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said New Delhi had also sent four naval ships with relief supplies.

Australia will provide an initial A\$2 million (\$1.25 million) to

Myanmar through the International Committee of the Red Cross, or ICRC. The funding will help the ICRC carry out immediate lifesaving support, such as addressing emergency medical needs.

Canberra also welcomed the release of \$5 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund to support urgent needs such as shelter, food and water.

Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said on Sunday that the kingdom would provide Myanmar with \$100,000 in initial emergency assistance.

The United Arab Emirates also has expressed its sympathies and solidarity with the governments and peoples of Myanmar and Thailand, and the families of the victims.

In a statement on Saturday, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari offered condolences for the loss of human lives and affirmed support for those affected.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also offered Pakistan's assistance to Myanmar and Thailand, saying "our thoughts and prayers are with the people of both countries as they pass through this difficult time".

Cui Haipei in Dubai, Jiang Xueqing in Tokyo, Xin Xin in Sydney and Xu Weiqi in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

## Russia, US discuss rare earth metals cooperation

MOSCOW/WASHINGTON — Russia and the United States have started talks on joint rare earth metals and other projects in Russia, and some companies have already expressed interest in them, President Vladimir Putin's investment envoy said in remarks published on Monday.

Amid efforts by US President Donald Trump to end the conflict in Ukraine, minerals cooperation with Washington has been floated by both Kyiv and Moscow, though Trump said on Sunday that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wants to back out of a proposed deal.

Putin suggested in February that the US might be interested in exploring joint exploration for rare earth metals deposits in Russia, which has the world's fifth-largest reserves of such metals — used in lasers and military equipment.

Kirill Dmitriev, Kremlin special envoy on international economic and investment cooperation, told the Izvestia newspaper in remarks published on Monday that talks had already begun.

"Rare earth metals are an important area for cooperation, and, of course, we have begun discussions on various rare earth metals and (other) projects in Russia," said Dmitriev, who is also the CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund.

Trump said on Sunday he was "pissed off" at Putin and will impose secondary tariffs of 25-50 percent on buyers of Russian oil if he feels Moscow is blocking his efforts to end the war in Ukraine.

Trump told NBC News he was very angry after Putin last week criticized the credibility of Zelensky's leadership, the television network reported. Trump later reiterated to reporters he was disappointed with Putin, but added: "I think we are making progress, step by step."

On Sunday, Trump repeated his suggestion that he might seek a third term as president.

In a phone call with NBC News, Trump said "I'm not joking" when asked to clarify a remark on seeking another term, adding: "There are methods (by) which you could do it."

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## Azerbaijan to walk with China along digital highway

By YANG RAN

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With close political ties as the bedrock of the bilateral relationship, Azerbaijan is actively enhancing its partnership with China by focusing on trade and investment, said Elnur Mammadov, Azerbaijan's deputy minister of foreign affairs.

During a visit to Beijing last week, Mammadov highlighted the long-standing ties between the two nations, which date back to the ancient Silk Road. Over the past 30 years, this partnership has been characterized by stability and resilience, evidenced by approximately 90 bilateral agreements across various fields, he said.

Azerbaijan established diplomatic ties with China in 1992 and was one of the first countries to join and actively participate in the Belt and Road Initiative. Last July, the two sides jointly announced the establishment of the Azerbaijan-China strategic partnership, marking an important upgrade of bilateral ties.

Mammadov emphasized China's role as a priority and reliable partner. "Based on our joint strategic partnership statement, we agreed to

expand cooperation across various fields, strengthen our interaction in international affairs, and jointly protect our common interests."

Speaking at the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based think tank, Mammadov noted Azerbaijan's intention to continue investing in its relationship with China due to the immense opportunities it offers.

According to China's General Administration of Customs, trade between the two countries has consistently grown since 2022, with total imports and exports exceeding \$2.46 billion in 2024, a 43 percent increase from the previous year.

Mammadov expressed optimism about the future trajectory of trade, highlighting the digital economy, green energy and infrastructure as key areas for collaboration.

"We often talk about the ancient Silk Road, which passed through many countries, including Azerbaijan. Today, we also refer to the digi-

tal Silk Road, which was built along the same historic route. Azerbaijan has recently signed an agreement to lay a digital cable on the Caspian Sea bed to provide an alternative digital connection to Europe — a project we call the digital Silk Way," he said.

Azerbaijan is prioritizing digital transformation, the deputy minister said. "We have strong partnerships with Chinese high-tech companies assisting us in this digital transformation. AI and information technologies will be central to our agenda with China and will become increasingly significant in our partnership."

Apart from the digital partnership, the "Middle Corridor," or Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, is another significant area of cooperation, Mammadov said. This route, which runs from China through Kazakhstan and the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan and beyond, significantly reduces transport time between China and Europe.

The Azerbaijan Railways Closed Joint Stock Company reported that freight volume via the "Middle Corridor" in 2024 increased over 25 times compared with the previous year, reaching more than 27,000 containers. In March 2024, a freight train

from Xi'an, China, arrived in Baku in just 11 days. By November, Azerbaijan sent its first freight train to China.

"In green energy, Chinese companies are involved in the construction of renewable energy sources in Azerbaijan. We have purchased electric buses from BYD, a major Chinese new energy vehicle maker, and are working on joint electric vehicle local production," the deputy minister said.

Beyond bilateral collaboration, Mammadov highlighted the shared views of Azerbaijan and China on international affairs.

"Both Azerbaijan and China adhere to multilateralism, support the international system under the United Nations and will continue to strengthen cooperation within the framework. As developing countries, we are also ready to strengthen cooperation and jointly protect the common interests of developing countries," he said.

"Azerbaijan backs China's three global initiatives — the global development, security and civilization initiatives — and plans to actively participate in these frameworks to accelerate the UN Sustainable Development Goals," Mammadov said.

## UK hosts summit to fight against illegal migration

By JONATHAN POWELL in London  
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Representatives from the United States, Vietnam, Iraq, France and more than 35 other nations gathered in London on Monday for a summit aimed at coordinating global efforts to counter illegal migration and the people-smuggling gangs.

Speaking at the Organised Immigration Crime Summit, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer called for nations to pool resources to tackle

the problem of illegal migration at "every step" of the route.

The UK government said the two-day event marks the first time a global summit of this scale examined all aspects of illegal migration — from small boat supply chains to trafficking, finance and social media advertising.

Delegations from Interpol and social media companies including Meta, X and TikTok are also in attendance for discussions on how to disrupt a criminal trade worth an

estimated \$10 billion a year, reported the BBC.

"This evil trade exploits the cracks between our institutions, it pits nations against one another, it profits from our inability at the political level to come together," Starmer told the summit. "I simply don't believe that organized immigration crime cannot be tackled. So we've got to combine our resources, share intelligence and tactics and tackle the problem upstream at every step of the smuggling journey."

The UK Home Office said the summit will deliver "concrete outcomes" for nations across four continents, while Home Secretary Yvette Cooper told Sky News on Sunday that officials are exploring options to process asylum claims in other countries.

Cooper said the summit is necessary because illegal immigration is a "global problem."

"The criminal gang networks that end up with people arriving in the UK stretch back through northern

France, through Germany, across Europe, to places like the hills of Kurdistan or the money markets in Kabul," she said.

More than 6,000 people have crossed the English Channel in 2025, surpassing the 5,435 arrivals recorded in the first quarter of 2024 and marking a record start to the year, reported Sky News.

Ahead of the summit, the UK government announced a package of measures for tackling illegal migration, including more funding for border security and prosecutions, stricter right-to-work checks with heavy penalties for businesses in the UK, a review of human rights

laws in migration cases, targeted funding for Iraq's Kurdistan region and social media campaigns in Vietnam.

The summit follows a series of bilateral agreements the UK has secured with other countries to tackle the rising number of small boat arrivals, noted the BBC.

Starmer was elected in July, promising to "smash the gangs" behind the crossings. He immediately ditched the previous Conservative government's policy to deter migrants through a program to deport them to Rwanda.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## BUSINESS

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A shopper browses Japanese goods at a sales exhibition of products from China, Japan and South Korea, in Qingdao, Shandong province. WANG HAIBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## China, Japan, S. Korea to bolster trade ties

By ZHONG NAN  
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Amid tariff increases by the United States and growing economic fragmentation worldwide, China, Japan and South Korea — three manufacturing powerhouses that depend heavily on foreign trade — are likely to form closer ties to preserve Asia's economic stability and create a buffer against unilateralism, said trade experts and business leaders on Monday.

The three nations announced on Sunday that they have agreed to accelerate negotiations on their trilateral free trade agreement and enhance cooperation in supply chain management and export controls, according to China's Ministry of Commerce.

During the 13th meeting of economic and trade ministers from the three countries, which took place in Seoul, South Korea, on Sunday, top trade officials reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening collaboration within regional and multilateral frameworks.

Faced with mounting pressure on the global economy, they convened for their first talks in five years, as tensions rise over impending tariff threats from the United States.

After announcing 25 percent tariffs on car and light truck imports from all countries in late March, a decision that will significantly affect Japanese and South Korean automakers, Washington plans to start collecting these tariffs from Thursday.

Lu Hao, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences'

Institute of Japanese Studies, said the close geopolitical and economic ties among China, Japan and South Korea are an objective reality. Efforts by the US to push Japan and South Korea to "de-risk" or decouple from China are unlikely to succeed, given the Northeast Asian economies' deeply intertwined economic ties.

"Recent White House policies have heightened concerns among Washington's Asian allies, particularly Japan and South Korea," said Lu, adding that these two countries should return to a path of strengthening regional cooperation and improving engagement with China in order to cope with US pressure.

The revival of trilateral cooperation, particularly in economic and trade affairs, is a prevailing trend, he added.

Echoing similar views, Zhang Yuyan, a member of Academic Divisions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, noted that in the wake of US tariff hikes, many countries, especially Japan and South Korea, have increasingly come to appreciate the importance of intra-Asian cooperation.

At the meeting in Seoul, the three countries also agreed to deepen collaboration in digital and green economies, enhance local cooperation, and foster a more favorable environment for cross-border business.

Reflecting the growing business confidence in regional cooperation, Tetsuro Homma, executive vice-president of Panasonic Holdings Corp, said the Japanese company

will expand production capacity at its electronic materials plant in Shanghai this year, with operations expected to begin in 2027. This follows the company's launch of a semiconductor factory project in Suzhou, Jiangsu province last year.

He said China's leadership in technologies such as artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, solar cells, and other sustainable energy innovations will serve as key drivers of future economic growth.

China and Japan saw their bilateral trade value decline 0.6 percent year-on-year to 324.07 billion yuan (\$44.72 billion) in the first two months of 2025, while export and import value between China and South Korea dropped 0.1 percent on a yearly basis to 335.51 trillion yuan, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Within the framework of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, China, Japan and South Korea have already established a set of reciprocal terms and market access commitments, said Yuan Bo, a researcher specializing in foreign trade at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

If the three countries build on this foundation to broaden trilateral free trade cooperation, including in goods and services trade, as well as further market liberalization and reciprocal policy alignment, it will anchor them more firmly in a shared vision of achieving mutual benefit through better regional development, said Yuan.

## Key banks eye 520b yuan via placements

Sector challenged by limited profit growth, narrow net interest margins

By WANG KEJU and LIU YUKUN

China's major State-owned commercial banks plan to raise up to 520 billion yuan (\$71.7 billion) via private placements from investors, including the finance ministry, a forward-looking move which analysts said will help forestall financial risks and better support the real economy.

The fundraising aims to replenish core tier-1 capital — the core capital held in a bank's reserves — to help ensure that the financial system has the necessary resilience and lending capacity to support the economy's transition toward innovation and consumption-led growth, they said.

Bank of Communications, Bank of China, Postal Savings Bank of China and China Construction Bank announced plans on Sunday to raise a combined 520 billion yuan through additional offerings through the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

The Ministry of Finance will fully subscribe to the new shares issued by Bank of China and China Construction Bank, while also taking up over 90 percent of the new shares offered by Bank of Communications and Postal Savings Bank of China, committing a total of 500 billion yuan in cash subscriptions.

The banking sector is currently facing challenges of limited profit growth, primarily due to factors such as narrowed net interest margins. This constraint has hindered the capacity to strengthen capital reserves through retained earnings, necessitating external capital infusions, said Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China.

Amid economic challenges and subdued demand, the sector is increasingly exposed to risks associated with nonperforming loans, highlighting the critical need for enhanced capital buffers to reinforce risk resilience capabilities, Lou said.

The ministry said in a statement on Monday that it will issue the first batch of 500 billion yuan in special government bonds in 2025, with the proceeds earmarked to support the core tier-1 capital replenishment of major State-owned banks.

"The current core tier-1 capital adequacy ratios of State-owned banks are higher than the regulatory bottom line, and their operations are stable," said Ming Ming, chief economist at CITIC Securities.

According to the latest financial data, the core tier-1 capital adequacy ratios for Bank of Communications, Bank of China, China Construction Bank and Postal Savings Bank of China stood at 10.24 percent, 12.2 percent, 14.48 percent and 9.56 percent, respectively, as of the end of last year, well above regulatory minimums of 5 percent.

The bank-specific and market-oriented approach to capital replenishment is a forward-looking strategic arrangement, prioritizing the long-term financial stability and growth of the real economy, Ming said, adding that by leveraging a multiplier effect of eight, the 500-billion-yuan capital injection can potentially catalyze 4 trillion yuan in additional lending capacity.

Since September last year, policymakers have said on various occasions they would issue special government bonds to support the

core tier-1 capital replenishment of the country's six State-owned commercial banks — the four aforementioned ones, along with Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and Agricultural Bank of China.

After capital replenishment, Lou said it is expected that these banks will notably boost credit issuance, with a specific focus on channeling additional financial resources toward strategic fields, including tech-focused small and medium-sized enterprises and strategic emerging industries.

Lian Ping, head of the Guangkai Chief Industry Research Institute, said that amid the country's broader efforts to stabilize growth, lenders will not be constrained by capital adequacy ratios or other indicators when it comes to meeting the credit demands of the economy in the years to come.

Ming said, "The enhanced capital strength of these banks will not only strengthen their risk-bearing capacity, but also provide a critical buffer to help resolve the debt risks in the real estate sector and facilitate the transformation of local government financing platforms."

Although minority shareholders may face dilution of earnings per share over the short term, the increase in the banks' capital adequacy ratios will ultimately improve the quality of their returns on equity, coupled with the State-owned banks' stable dividend policies, thereby strengthening the investment safety margin and return expectations for these shareholders, Ming added.

Tan Guoting contributed to this story.

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## Reforms to further push digital China

By FAN FEIFEI  
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China will ratchet up resources to deepen reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data elements and facilitate the high-quality development of both the digital economy and digital society, as part of a broader push to advance the building of a "Digital China", the country's top data governance regulator said on Monday.

Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration, said that 21 policy documents have been published concerning data property rights, circulation and transaction, revenue distribution and security governance, to establish the basic systems for data since 2024.

According to Liu, the transaction scale of China's data market exceeded 160 billion yuan (\$22.06 billion) last year, up more than 30 percent year-on-year, while the nation's total data output is expected to have risen by more than 20 percent in 2024 compared to a year earlier.

China's added value of core industries of the digital economy accounted for about 10 percent of GDP last year, Liu said.

Liu made the remarks at a news conference for the 8th Digital China Summit, which is scheduled to be held in Fuzhou, Fujian province, from April 29 to 30. More than 800 entrepreneurs, 30 academicians, as well as experts and scholars will attend the summit.

The two-day summit, which will focus on showcasing the latest achievements of the Digital China initiative, will feature an opening ceremony, the main forum, over 20 sub-forums and a digital innovation competition, with an on-site experience area set up.

Liu also stressed the significance of high-quality data in bolstering the application of fast-evolving artificial intelligence technology and industry-specific large language models.

More efforts should be made to advance the construction of computing power infrastructure, press ahead with the mega data project dubbed the "east-data-west-com-

puting", step up the supply of high-quality data and boost the circulation and transaction of data elements to contribute to the nation's AI Plus initiative, Liu added.

By the end of this year, new computing power in major computing hubs will account for more than 60 percent of the country's total, and the use of green electricity is expected to exceed 80 percent, he noted.

Wang Yongli, executive vice-governor of Fujian province, said the province will make greater efforts to develop core digital industries, emerging and future-oriented industries, including integrated circuits, network communications, new-generation displays, artificial intelligence and quantum communication.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at the Central University of Finance and Economics, said deepened reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data should fully unleash the value and potential of massive data resources in 2025.

## Briefly

## Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 30 pips to 7.1782 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed

to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

## Major oilfield found in South China Sea

The China National Offshore Oil Corp announced on Monday that it has discovered a major oilfield in the South China Sea, with proven

reserves exceeding 100 million metric tons. The newly discovered Huizhou 19-6 oilfield marks a breakthrough in China's offshore oil exploration, as it is the country's first large-scale integrated clastic oilfield discovered in deep to ultra-deep layers, CNOOC said.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## NEV sales in China seen topping 16m this year

By MA SI  
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Sales of new energy vehicles in China are expected to exceed 16 million units in 2025, as the market enters a stable growth phase with annual growth rates moderating, experts said.

Ouyang Minggao, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said after rapid growth for several years, China's NEV market will enter a moderate growth stage, but the total number of NEVs plying China's streets is expected to soar to 100 to 160 million units by 2030.

Ouyang made the comments at the China EV 100 Forum 2025, which wrapped up on Sunday in Beijing.

In 2024, China's sales of NEVs amounted to 12.9 million units, marking a year-on-year increase of

35.5 percent, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Ouyang said level 4 autonomous driving, powered by advanced AI large language models, will see large-scale commercial applications in mid-to-high-end vehicles in China by 2030.

Level 4 autonomous driving is part of broader standards developed in relation to the degree to which autonomous machines take over driving functions. Level 4 means that vehicles can perform all driving tasks under specific circumstances, but human overrides are still an option. Level 2 means partial driver assistance.

Chen Qingtai, head of China EV 100, an auto industry think tank, said: "The pace of intelligent vehicle development in China has exceeded industry expectations. In the first half of 2024, the penetration rate of

L2 or level 2 plus advanced driver-assistance systems in new passenger vehicles surpassed 55 percent."

Xin Guobin, vice-minister of industry and information technology, said on Sunday that more efforts will be made to pursue breakthroughs in core vehicle-related technologies and widen cross-regional application pilots for autonomous driving.

Wang Chuanfu, chairman of BYD, said 2025 will be the first year for smart driving to become main features of cars sold in China, predicting that nonautonomous vehicles will soon become niche products.

"The pace of automotive intelligence is accelerating, with transformative advancements expected to mature within two to three years. Concurrently, China's NEVs currently lead the global market by approximately three to five

years in both technological innovation and industrial chain capabilities," Wang said.

"It is critical to seize this strategic window, uphold open innovation, and leverage cutting-edge green technologies and products to propel higher-level international collaboration," Wang said.

By capitalizing on complementary strengths and fostering open cooperation, China's automotive sector can achieve global success while driving sustainable growth, Wang added.

Zhang Yaqin, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and dean of Tsinghua University's Institute for AI Industry Research, said unmanned driving will be the largest application for embodied AI in the next five years.

Embodied AI, as highlighted in this year's Government Work



A new energy vehicle production line in Changxing county, Zhejiang province. TAN YUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Report, refers to AI that is integrated into physical hardware, such as robots. It represents a significant leap in intelligent systems capable of interacting with and adapting to their environments, experts said.

Zhang highlighted how generative AI and large language models are accelerating level 4 autonomous driving by addressing challenges like data scarcity, long-tail scenarios and common sense reasoning.

# BUSINESS



FedEx employees unload cargo from an aircraft at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport in Guangdong province in March. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## FedEx pledges further investment in China

US logistics giant highlights flexibility of global supply chain amid trade woes

By ZHONG NAN  
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FedEx Corp plans to further expand its presence in China as the United States-based express transportation service provider aims to fortify supply chains and boost investment in response to China's pivotal role in the global economy, the group's top executive said.

Amid escalating global protectionism and economic challenges, Raj Subramaniam, FedEx's president and CEO, emphasized the critical need for governments and businesses to boost supply chain flexibility and resilience by streamlining processes and reducing regulatory trade barriers.

"FedEx remains committed to investing in markets that are critical to the future of global commerce," said Subramaniam. "We acknowledge China's influential role in global trade and seek to build strong, transparent and mutually beneficial partnerships that support shared innovation and long-term success."

He stressed that trade is the lifeblood of the global economy and highlighted the company's recognition of global trade's immense benefits — from opening new markets and diversifying supply chains, to uplifting people and communities.

After announcing increased international cargo flights between Xiamen, Fujian province; Qingdao,

Shandong province; and the US — along with opening international gateway facilities in these cities in 2024 — the Memphis, Tennessee-based group plans to further optimize its network this year to enhance connectivity between China's second- and third-tier cities and global markets.

In early March, FedEx launched a Picture Proof of Delivery (PPOD) service for express residential deliveries on the Chinese mainland, where signatures upon delivery are not required. With recipient authorizations, FedEx couriers can deliver the parcel to customers' doorsteps and take a real-time photo showing its exact position, according to the company.

This service marks a new step in the company's ongoing digitalization efforts and enhances the customer experience while supporting e-commerce growth in China.

Subramaniam said his recent visit to China and productive meetings with Chinese leaders have significantly reinforced his unwavering confidence in China's long-term growth.

"The valuable insights and diverse perspectives shared during our discussions helped deepen our understanding of the evolving opportunities in this important market," he added.

To maintain its appeal to global investors in 2025, China will further

open up internet-related, cultural and other sectors in a well-regulated manner and expand pilot programs to open areas such as telecommunications, medical services and education, according to this year's Government Work Report.

The country will encourage foreign investors to increase reinvestment and support collaboration with upstream and downstream enterprises along industrial chains.

Lin Meng, director of the modern supply chain research institute at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said China's ongoing improvements in market openness, product innovation and business model transformation will strengthen its position as a strategic hub for global manufacturers and supply chain service providers, ensuring sustainable long-term returns.

This perspective aligns with the latest data. Foreign-invested businesses in China saw their export value grow 6.9 percent year-on-year to 1.08 trillion yuan (\$148.9 billion) in the first two months, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Stabilizing global supply chains is crucial to addressing challenges like rising costs and slower shipping cycles, as they could exacerbate global inflation, said Lin.

FedEx entered China in 1984, and to date has nearly 11,000 staff members nationwide. It operates more than 300 international flights weekly and owns a fleet of 3,000 vehicles within the country.

## France's fast fashion bill targeted at Chinese e-tailers, seen violating rules

By CHENG YU  
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China is likely to take countermeasures if France proceeds with a fast fashion bill that could disproportionately impact Chinese e-commerce giants such as Shein and Temu, said experts on Monday.

They made the comments as French lawmakers plan to impose punitive measures on fast fashion, which will see incremental fines of up to 10 euros (\$10.83) attached to each garment by 2030, as well as a ban on the advertising of such products.

The anti-fast fashion bill, which has already been passed by the National Assembly, is expected to be submitted for review in May. Chinese e-commerce giants such as Shein and Temu are likely to be most affected, while brands like Zara and H&M would remain unaffected.

Chen Jin, chief professor of the modern service research center at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said that the bill is a form of trade protectionism disguised as environmental protection, that is designed against China's burgeoning fast fashion companies.

"The dynamics of global competition have shifted. Trade disputes are increasing because Chinese products now lead in technology, quality and pricing. This unilateral adoption of so-called protective measures severely violates the WTO's principles of free competition and trade," Chen said.

The bill has been created in response to the rapid growth of platforms like Shein, Temu and AliExpress, which have gained significant traction in France. According to a study by shopping app Joko, Shein was the most purchased brand in France in 2024, overtaking Vinted which had held

the top spot since 2020. The study also noted that Temu's sales surged by 178 percent year-on-year in 2024, with both companies now handling more parcels in France than Amazon.

French industry groups have expressed concerns over the impact of fast fashion on local businesses. However, Shein has defended its business model, emphasizing that its on-demand supply chain reduces waste by keeping unsold inventory in the low single digits, compared to traditional retailers' 40 percent excess stock.

Market consultancy Boston Consulting Group said in a report that agile supply chains can enable fast fashion companies to balance supply and demand, thereby reducing inventory costs, improving capital efficiency, increasing revenue and sharing benefits with customers by reducing product prices.

Chen said, "If France implements

such trade protectionism measures and Chinese companies are treated unfairly, we must firmly oppose them. In response to such clear violations of fair competition principles, enterprises should actively defend their rights and respond accordingly."

Chen added that French lawmakers should uphold multilateral trade rules and respect the authority of the WTO to create a fair competitive environment.

"Fundamentally, China seeks to maintain the multilateral system and resolve issues within the WTO framework. If a reasonable solution cannot be reached, trade countermeasures remain a possibility," he emphasized.

China's response to the bill could impact French exports, which have seen rapid growth in the Chinese market. France's luxury sector, as well as some brands such as LVMH and Decathlon, has benefited from stable market access in China. Since 2021, China has been the top global export market for French cosmetics, and France is now one of China's largest trading partners worldwide.

With billion-yuan sales in China, Decathlon views the market as a key pillar of its global strategy. LVMH Group generated 26.7 billion euros in revenue from Asia (excluding Japan) in 2023, with China dominating sales.

Experts caution that should France proceed with targeted sanctions on China's apparel industry, countermeasures may follow, potentially affecting French luxury brands and other exports.

France has already seen examples of such responses. When the European Union proposed tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles last year, China swiftly imposed anti-dumping measures on EU brandy, requiring importers to post deposits exceeding 30 percent of sales value with Customs.



## Back on track

A construction worker waves a flag at a train running on a 27-kilometer newly relocated section of the Zhangping-Quanzhou-Xiaocuo Railway in Fujian province on Friday. A project shouldered by China Railway Construction Corp's 24th bureau, the rail section was relocated — and also renovated — to facilitate the construction of Bailai reservoir — a national livelihood water project that will be a major water resource for Quanzhou, Fujian. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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### Cages, bows & arrows away, raptors free

Between heaven and earth, together with other sentient beings, I live.

—Zhuangzi's Qi Wu Lun (Essay on Seeing Things as Equal)

## BUSINESSFOCUS

# Consumer electronics see electric performance

High-tech gadget purchases, including via trade-ins, boosting consumption

By MASI  
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China's consumer electronics sector is witnessing a remarkable upswing, on the back of technological innovation and favorable policy support to spur consumption, officials and company executives said.

Since February, China's consumer electronics sector has seen its industry index surge 11.7 percent, said Shenwan Hongyuan Securities.

E-commerce platform Tmall also reported a spike in sales between Jan 20 and Feb 9. Smartphone transactions rose over 41 percent, tablets over 72 percent, and smartwatches/bands in excess of 60 percent compared to the previous month.

The recovery in demand for consumer electronics has been driven by a combination of supportive government policies and tech advancements, experts said.

The electronics department of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said in an interview with China Daily that: "China's stable supply chain, recovering global demand and robust policy support have solidified its position as the world's largest producer of consumer electronics. Moving forward, the industry is poised to capitalize on opportunities brought by next-generation artificial intelligence, accelerating the adoption of new technologies and products while enhancing the resilience and security of the supply chain."

A key highlight of this year's policy initiatives is the introduction of subsidies for purchasing new digital products such as smartphones and tablets. During the Spring Festival period (Jan 28 to Feb 4), national smartphone sales revenue surged by approximately 182 percent, with over 4.5 million digital products sold. Sales of these products accounted for 45 percent of the total revenue generated from the trade-in program, said the National Development and Reform Commission.

The revitalization of the consumer market has also spurred growth in upstream supply chains, creating new opportunities for related sectors. As of the end of 2024, China had 1.79 billion mobile phone users. If 10 percent of these users participate in the trade-in subsidy program, it could generate a market size of hundreds of billions of yuan for smartphone replacements, experts added.

According to the latest data from the China Academy of Information

and Communications Technology and global market research firm Omdia, domestic smartphone shipments reached 314 million units in 2024, marking an 8.7 percent year-on-year increase. Notably, Chinese manufacturers accounted for nearly 60 percent of global foldable smartphone shipments, underscoring the country's growing influence in the global consumer electronics market.

Companies across the consumer electronics supply chain are leveraging these policy opportunities to accelerate product upgrades. For example, Sichuan Changhong Electric Co Ltd's intelligent manufacturing industrial park in Mianyang, Sichuan province, has increased its annual production capacity to 6 million units, reducing delivery times by over 50 percent.

Zhu Xuewen, head of Changhong Meiling's China marketing division, said: "The 2025 subsidy policy is driving the market toward high-end, intelligent and green products. Enterprises are focusing on green supply chains, government-enterprise subsidies and technological innovation to capture new market opportunities."

Similarly, Hu Baishan, executive vice-president and chief operating officer of Vivo, emphasized that consumers are increasingly demanding better performance, quality and innovative features. Vivo is investing heavily in areas such as battery life, communication, display and AI to meet these requirements across different price segments.

The industry's recovery is also reflected in its financial performance. As of Feb 20, 47 A-share listed consumer electronics companies had released their 2024 earnings forecasts. Among them, 24 companies reported a year-on-year increase in net profit for the fourth quarter, with seven expecting surges of over 100 percent.

Ma Beibei, director of the electronic manufacturing research office at the China Center for Information Industry Development, said that consumer electronics products, which directly serve end-users, have a significant impact on upstream and midstream industries. The trade-in policy has not only boosted sales of products like TVs, computers and smartphones, but also driven market expansion and technological upgrades for related components.

From foldable smartphones to AI-powered devices, Chinese consumer electronics companies are leading the charge in innovation. In



**Top:** Douyin e-commerce invites online anchors to broadcast live at the Appliance & Electronics World Expo in Shanghai on March 20.

**Chen Yuyu / FOR CHINA DAILY**  
**Above:** An employee explains subsidy policies for trade-in programs to residents at a community service station in Qingdao, Shandong province, on March 27.

**Zhang Ying / FOR CHINA DAILY**

“The 2025 subsidy policy is driving the market toward high-end, intelligent and green products.”

**Zhu Xuewen**, head of Changhong Meiling's China marketing division

2024, Chinese manufacturers dominated the global foldable smartphone market, accounting for nearly 60 percent of shipments. Additionally, Chinese brands occupied eight of the top 10 spots in the global smart robot vacuum cleaner market in the third quarter of 2024, with a combined market share exceeding 60 percent, data from research companies Omdia and International Data Corp showed.

The rapid adoption of AI technology is expected to unlock further opportunities across the supply chain. Ma from the China Center for Information Industry Development highlighted that AI-powered terminals, including smartphones, computers and even AI glasses, are gaining traction. In the future, AI is expected to find applications in humanoid robots, smart home devices and more.

The recovery in the smartphone sector, with its extensive supply chain encompassing thousands of components and parts, not only reflects reviving consumer demand, but also generates new growth opportunities for upstream suppliers.

According to Kaiyuan Securities, the combination of AI-driven smartphone upgrades and government incentives is expected to significantly boost domestic smartphone sales in 2025. This, in turn, is likely to enhance the performance of upstream component and chip manufacturers, especially when considering operational utilization rates.

Lens Technology, a key player in the consumer electronics supply chain, highlighted that the government's inclusion of smartphones in the trade-in subsidy program has created a synergy between policy stimulus and product cycles. This is anticipated to effectively ignite market enthusiasm and present new development opportunities for the consumer electronics industry. Lens Technology has expressed a readiness to capitalize on this wave of innovation.

At a recent earnings call on Feb 12, Zhao Haijun, co-CEO of Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp, a leading semiconductor maker, said that the national consumption stimulus policy has led to a strong willingness among clients

to replenish inventory. This has resulted in a surge of urgent orders in consumer electronics, internet and smartphone sectors, causing the traditionally slow first quarter to be unexpectedly robust.

However, some industry insiders caution that the impact of the subsidy policy on upstream supply chains may take time to fully materialize. The subsidies, available in most regions until Dec 31, 2025, are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, with a total cap on funds.

Despite the positive short-term effects, there are concerns about the long-term efficacy of the subsidy policy. Qi Yingnan, an independent industry analyst, believes that while the subsidies aid the transition from traditional to AI smartphones, the strategy remains a short-term market stimulus. Although it may lead to a temporary spike in replacement demand, particularly boosting sales in the first half of 2025, consumer habits and product choices are ultimately driven by personal needs and product innovation.

Despite challenges, experts believe that China's consumer electronics sector is well-positioned to maintain its global leadership thanks to its comprehensive supply chain, innovative enterprises, vast market size and ongoing policy support.

Looking ahead, the MIIT said that China will seize opportunities presented by next-generation AI, strengthen R&D in new technologies and products, and promote the construction of new ecosystems. By enhancing the quality of innovative and user-friendly consumer electronics, China aims to tap into both domestic and international markets, bolstering its global competitiveness.

"At the same time, we will continue to strengthen collaboration across the entire supply chain, improve resource allocation and utilization efficiency, and enhance the resilience and security of the industrial chain. This will provide a solid foundation for the high-quality and sustainable development of the consumer electronics sector," the electronics department at the MIIT added.

## Chinese handset giants joining lighter, thinner fray

By MASI

Chinese smartphone companies are scrambling to roll out lighter, thinner foldable smartphones featuring cutting-edge artificial intelligence functions, with the aim of establishing a beachhead in the segment.

Oppo, for one, recently unveiled the Find N5, which it claims as the world's thinnest foldable smartphone, as the Chinese company beefs up its push into research and development to drive technological progress.

Oppo said that at just 8.93 millimeters, Find N5 is the world's thinnest book-style foldable flagship smartphone. Find N5 is slimmer than any of its foldable rivals, including the Honor Magic V3, Samsung's new Galaxy Z Fold, and the iPhone 16 Pro.

Pete Lau, senior vice-president and chief product experience officer at Oppo, said Find N5 unlocks the

potential of folding phones, putting tablet and laptop experiences in consumers' hands. More importantly, foldable phones should be as thin as bar phones.

Xiao Xu, a director at the Beijing Enterprise Reform and Development Research Association, said the new Oppo model showcases the development trends of waterproof, ultrathin and durable foldable handsets, which will also drive industry enterprises to accelerate R&D in hinges, materials and other aspects to pursue greater innovation.

The foldable phone market is showing robust growth momentum. Market research firm International Data Corp predicts that the compound annual growth rate of foldable phone shipments in the Chinese market will reach 37.5 percent by 2027.

Oppo's rivals are also on the march. In a recent update on Weibo, a Chinese social networking platform, Li Kun, flagship product

manager at Honor, hinted at the upcoming release of the next-generation Magic V foldable phone in the first half. Li emphasized that the new device will prioritize slimmness and lightweight design, claiming it will set a new industry standard.

Other Chinese players such as Huawei Technologies Co and Xiaomi Corp are also setting slimmness and lightweight design as their priorities for foldable smartphones.

The trend comes as foldable handsets — once hailed as the future of mobile technology for their ability to break the limitations of traditional screen sizes — have faced inherent challenges due to their complex mechanical structures.

A 2024 survey by iiMedia Research revealed that 36 percent of Chinese consumers are reluctant to purchase foldable phones due to their bulkiness and inconvenience, 25 percent expressed concerns about durability, and 23 percent cit-

ed limited functionality and practicality as key drawbacks.

China's foldable smartphone market experienced significant growth in 2024, with annual shipments reaching approximately 9.17 million units, a year-on-year increase of 30.8 percent, according to the latest data from IDC.

However, the fourth quarter of 2024 saw a notable shift, as foldable phone shipments dropped by 9.6 percent to 2.5 million units, marking the first decline after nine consecutive quarters of rapid growth.

Despite these challenges, the AI phone market is projected to enter a rapid growth phase, driven by advances in chipsets, user scenarios and mobile-based large language models. IDC forecasts that global AI phone shipments will surge to 827 million units by 2027, with a compound annual growth rate of 100.7 percent from 2023 to 2027.

Lau from Oppo said the foldable



Consumers experience the Huawei Pura X, a foldable phone that can be used both horizontally and vertically, at a Huawei mobile store in Shanghai on March 20. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

smartphone market is still in its early stages, and Oppo has been refining its foldable products through continuous optimization.

"For the 2025 domestic smartphone market, we believe 'thin and lightweight' and 'AI' will be the key trends," Lau added.

Oppo said Find N5 has seen over-

whelming demand, with preorders exceeding expectations and limited stock availability in both online and offline channels. For example, online platforms such as Tmall and JD.com have shown that certain models, particularly the top-tier satellite communication version, face waiting times for preorders.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Military brinkmanship in Asia will not make US great again

Way back when, the Roman historian Titus Livius observed that men have an innate desire to propagate rumors or reports. US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, whose confirmation hearing showed he could talk the talk about “warfighting, lethality, meritocracy, standards, and readiness” but had little grasp of the military complexities involved in walking that talk, has shown that what’s true of the past is true of today.

Recent revelations from The Washington Post regarding a Pentagon internal guidance memo, bearing his signature, have once again highlighted the United States’ fixation on China as its primary strategic competitor, and the lack of new thinking, flexibility and forethought in its approach.

Since the US leader’s first term in office, the US has explicitly framed China as its principal long-term challenge, a stance that is reaffirmed in this latest memo, which designates China as the Pentagon’s “sole pacing threat” and which, ignoring the actuality that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory, posits the island as a focal point for military contingency planning.

What is striking about the memo is its suggestion that the US’ European allies handle the “threat from Moscow” while the US shifts its focus to Asia — This should pull any vestiges of wool from the eyes of the European leaders who might still harbor some hope that the US will strengthen the European security umbrella.

It exemplifies Washington’s transactional approach to alliances. Rather than fostering collective security, the US is willing to exploit its partners, diverting resources to confront China at the expense of European stability. This aligns with the recent efforts of the US to strengthen military ties with Japan and the Philippines — moves that are less about regional security and stability and more about encircling China as part of the US’ containment strategy.

The Pentagon memo underscores a troubling reality: US policymakers remain trapped in a zero-sum mindset, viewing China’s development as a threat rather than an opportunity for cooperation. The US intelligence community’s alarmist reports about China’s military capabilities only serve to drive Washington’s own militarization of the Asia-Pacific — a strategy that benefits US arms manufacturers rather than regional security.

Under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the Philippines, the US is building new facilities at five additional bases in the country, including near Taiwan and in the South China Sea, as well as conducting large-scale drills with Philippine forces, including simulated island retaking. It is also upgrading its military bases in Japan, including for a new Marine Littoral Regiment for island warfare.

In fact, the US is significantly expanding its military footprint in the Asia-Pacific region — with more carrier strike group patrols and more Virginia-class and Los Angeles-class subs operating near China — and reinforcing those of its allies with the deployment of missile systems, such as the Typhon Missile System in the Philippines, Aegis Ashore in Japan and THAAD in the Republic of Korea.

Nonetheless, for Taiwan’s secessionist Democratic Progressive Party authorities, the memo should be cause for caution, not celebration. The US “security guarantee” is unreliable, and the US has a long history of leveraging Taiwan as a pawn in its strategic competition with China, pressuring the island to increase defense spending on US weaponry — effectively turning it into a cash cow for the US.

The US’ military brinkmanship only runs counter to regional stability and economic interdependence and thus the interests of all people in the region. Instead of stoking tensions, the US should engage in constructive dialogue, respect China’s core interests and contribute to regional stability, which it can do in a number of ways. The alternative — escalating confrontation — will only lead to greater instability, with consequences the US can ill afford.

Unlike the US, which thrives on division and conflict to sustain its hegemony, China seeks regional stability and mutual development. The Chinese government’s stance is clear: the Taiwan question is China’s internal affair, not a bargaining chip for geopolitical games, and its commitment to peaceful reunification remains unwavering unless it is compelled to use force.

By abandoning its zero-sum competition with China, and adopting a less militarized, more economically inclusive, and climate-focused strategy, the US could play a constructive, rather than destructive, role in Asia by contributing to its stability, economic cooperation, and sustainable development.

## Myanmar earthquake tells partners apart

While “humanitarian assistance and disaster relief” is a key part of its partnership framework with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations that the United States has vowed to strengthen, little has been forthcoming for Myanmar after the ASEAN member was hit by a magnitude 7.9 earthquake on Friday.

“We’re gonna be helping. We’ve already alerted the people, yeah, it’s terrible what’s happened.” That was the US president’s throwaway reply to a question about the US’ response to the earthquake, whose epicenter was Mandalay, Myanmar’s second-largest city and home to about 1.2 million people.

Despite the US administration’s deep cuts in its foreign assistance through the US Agency for International Development, with dozens of major military bases in the Asia-Pacific, the US is in a good position to provide emergency disaster-relief for Myanmar. Not to mention that, as State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce admitted, despite the USAID cuts, “there has been no impact on our ability to perform those (disaster rescue and relief) duties”.

Yet, as of Monday evening, after the 72-hour golden period for rescue work had expired, no US assistance had materialized.

In a stark contrast, apart from providing Myanmar with 100 million yuan (\$13.9 million) in emergency humanitarian aid to support earthquake relief efforts shortly after the disaster struck, China’s first rescue team reached Myanmar on Saturday morning carrying emergency supplies such as full-function life detectors, earthquake early warning systems, portable satellite phones and drones. China’s first batch of disaster-relief materials arrived in the country on Monday noon, including tents, blankets, first-aid kits, food and drinking water.

With other Chinese rescue teams and disaster-relief materials on the way to Myanmar, China is among the first foreign countries to have delivered on its promise of help.

While the number of deaths in Myanmar had risen to around 2,000 as of Monday, with the death toll expected to rise sharply as the rescue work is still underway in the worst-hit areas, some of which remain inaccessible even three days after the disaster. The lack of professional rescue teams and equipment, and the frequent aftershocks, as strong as magnitude 6.4, markedly reduce the chances of survival for those buried under the rubble.

Meanwhile, the lack of food, medicines and necessary epidemic prevention and control resources make the situation worse for the survivors amid high temperatures of about 40 C in the daytime and subtropical humidity.

While regional countries and international bodies, including the United Nations, are racing against time to provide all necessary assistance to Myanmar, Bruce told the media that the US administration would use requests for assistance and reports from the region to shape its response to the quake.

While bragging about its upgraded relationship with ASEAN — “the United States has demonstrated that we are a reliable and enduring partner for our combined one billion people” — the US’ response to the Myanmar earthquake just serves to show what a selfish “partner” the US is.

China’s cooperation programs with the ASEAN members are all unconditional and open, and focus on win-win results and welcome third-party participation, promoting regional solidarity, connectivity, free trade and common development.

In contrast, the US’ projects in the region, with their meager input, are invariably conditional and tilting heavily in favor of security and defense deals that serve the US’ geopolitical interests, promote US “values”, and consolidate the US’ tariff barriers.

Who needs a friend like that in a time of need.

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Song Chen



## Opinion Line

## FBI heat on Chinese-origin minds while global competition heats up

The Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted a day-long raid at the house of Wang Xiaofeng, a Chinese-American professor at Indiana University Bloomington, and his wife, Ninali Ma, on Friday. Multiple items were seized during the search, but the FBI is yet to disclose reasons for the operation.

A glance at Wang’s résumé, however, offers some clues. Wang is one of the world’s foremost experts in computer security. He is a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers as well as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a member of the Association for Computing Machinery. He has also served as chairman of the Association for Computing Machinery’s Special Interest Group on Security, Audit, and Control. He is rated as a top author according to CSRankings, and he holds the record for having the most publications in the field’s top four conferences.

Yet, despite his solid academic credentials, Wang was subjected to an all-day FBI raid. With the FBI giving no reasons for the raid, one is forced to conclude it might have something to do with his Chinese roots.

Given the US Department of Justice’s history of prosecuting Chinese-American scholars — such as Feng Tao, a former tenured associate professor at the University of Kansas, who endured five years of legal battles before being found innocent in

July 2023 — this could be just the start of Wang’s ordeal.

The incident has reignited fears of the return of the China Initiative — something the first Donald Trump administration came up with in November 2018 to counter alleged Chinese espionage, drawing widespread allegations of racial profiling of scholars of Chinese descent.

The China Initiative required regional US attorney offices to file at least one or two China-related cases annually. The FBI used this mandate to fabricate baseless allegations of “academic espionage” against Chinese researchers.

A July 2024 report from Stanford University’s Center on China’s Economy and Institutions found that since the launch of the China Initiative in 2018, departures of Chinese-origin scientists increased by 75 percent, with two-thirds relocating to China.

The exodus has been accelerating. From 900 in 2010, the number of Chinese-descent scientists leaving the US surged to 2,621 in 2021. Many took with them expertise in cutting-edge AI and semiconductor technologies, which are precisely the fields the US is desperate to dominate.

As Fortune magazine has noted, “The US depends on immigrants for top AI talent. But many struggle to get visas that would allow them to do the work”. Despite weaponizing visa

denials, FBI interrogations, and funding blacklists over “national security” concerns, Washington has not found a single case of espionage.

By thus alienating these top minds, the US is betraying its professed values of racial equality, while weakening its own scientific and technological edge. This isn’t really about national security. It is institutionalized xenophobia masquerading as policy. The US refuses to admit that targeting researchers based on surnames and birthplaces fundamentally undermines the very culture of open collaboration and meritocracy that built its technological dominance in the first place.

The Joe Biden administration ended the China Initiative in February 2022 after an internal review pointed out its flaws. A Justice Department statement admitted that the program had “helped give rise to a harmful perception that the department applies a lower standard to investigate and prosecute criminal conduct related to that country — or that we in some way view people with racial, ethnic, or familial ties to China differently”.

Now, with the shadow of the China Initiative looming once again, the chilling effect on the US research community threatens to stifle innovation at the very moment global competition is intensifying.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Self-serving ‘location’ for dealmaking efforts

US President Donald Trump said he was “very angry” and “pissed off” when Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized the credibility of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s leadership, adding that the comments were “not going in the right location”.

“If Russia and I are unable to make a deal on stopping the bloodshed in Ukraine, and if I think it was Russia’s fault — which it might not be — but if I think it was Russia’s fault, I am going to put secondary tariffs on oil, on all oil coming out of Russia,” Trump said in an early-morning phone call with NBC News on Sunday.

“That would be that if you buy oil from Russia, you can’t do business in the United States,” Trump said. “There will be a 25 percent tariff on all oil, a 25- to 50-point tariff on all oil.”

Although Trump had previously criticized Zelenskyy as well, saying he was “sick” of his handling of the conflict, his rare criticizing of the Russian leader, with whom he has tried to maintain a stable relationship since his first term, indicates after securing some concessions from Kyiv, the US president might not have obtained what he hoped for from Russia. A country that is also good at maximizing its interest in dealmaking.

Trump’s threat of new steep levies on Russian oil demonstrates he is well aware that the most effective measure is to drag Moscow’s feet on the battlefield. The reason why neither the Trump administration nor

its predecessor has targeted Russian oil for real is both of them would like to exploit the Ukraine crisis to maximize the US’ interest.

The Joe Biden administration was intent on prolonging the conflict so that the US could continually benefit from selling weapons, strengthen its control of European allies, weaken Russia and smear China as the “enabler” of Moscow’s “special military operation”.

Trump’s policy doesn’t center on strengthening the US’ alliances against Russia or China but taking advantage of the resolution of the Ukraine crisis to offload the US’ burden as the prolonger of the costly conflict, and to explore ways to maximize the US’ gains in the process.

So although the US’ European allies still regard Russia as a threat to their security and “democracy”, the Trump administration only regards Russia as a party it can work with, even if only temporarily, to meet its own narrow ends under the excuse of striving for peace.

The haste with which the Trump administration is seeking to strike a deal with Russia on the Ukraine crisis is another factor that has aggravated its anxiety that its dealmaking might not be fruitful.

So the resolution of the Ukraine crisis Trump is hoping to broker is essentially a process of rebalancing the interests of the US and Russia on Ukraine. That explains why Trump is “pissed off” at the inflexibility of Russia, especially after he had seemingly brokered an agreement between

Ukraine and Russia on a 30-day moratorium on attacks on energy infrastructure and reopening grain export routes on the Black Sea.

Moscow has no reason to make concessions now since it has gained the upper hand on the battlefield.

Many observers believe that Trump’s threat of “secondary tariffs” on Russian oil is only a bluff to try and put pressure on Moscow.

But if the threat materializes — the major Russian importers, including China and India, will bear the brunt of it, further straining trade relations between them and the US — it will serve to spur Russia to further intensify its offensive campaigns on the battlefield.

And if the US does support Ukraine accordingly, Moscow will realize that it can get what it wants or even more on the battlefield than it could have on the negotiation table.

Since the Trump administration is not intent on increasing the US’ assistance to Ukraine, a country that the US is only interested in for its rare earth resources and some other mineral resources, to impose the steep duties on Russia’s oil means the US is shutting the door for a negotiated peace in Ukraine.

That being said, as long as the US continues to focus on its own interests, even if a peace deal is forthcoming, it will only prove a precarious compromise of different interests, heralding the beginning of a new crisis in the foreseeable future.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

## India, China must foster shared prosperity

**Editor's note:** On the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India, Sudheendra Kulkarni, an aide to India's former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, shares his views on the future of Sino-Indian ties with China Daily's Liu Jianna. Excerpts follow:

**Q: How should the two countries commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties?**

**A:** The 75th anniversary on April 1 should be used as an opportunity to launch bold new initiatives in various sectors, including education, culture, tourism, rural development and business cooperation. The past five years have been marked by tensions; now is the time to accelerate normalization and enhance people-to-people connections.

Despite diplomatic ups and downs, the relationship between Indian and Chinese people spans several thousand years. Strengthening these ties with a common global vision through security, strategic leadership dialogue, cultural exchanges, business collaborations, and increased bilateral travel will lay a more robust foundation for future relations.

**Q: Given the ongoing global geopolitical shifts, how do you see India-China relations evolving in the next decade, especially in the context of the growing influence of both countries in global affairs?**

**A:** The world is undergoing profound changes. The dominance of the West, particularly the United States, is diminishing, paving the way for a multipolar world. The center of global affairs has shifted toward Asia, placing a significant major responsibility on India and China. As two of the ancient civilizations, and largest and fastest-growing economies, both nations must work toward improving bilateral relations, fostering cooperation and contributing to a stable and peaceful world order. I believe these Sino-Indian differences will not escalate into major conflicts, as both countries recognize the mutual benefit of a cordial relationship.

**Q: What recent statements or developments indicate a positive shift in India-China ties?**

**A:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently made a series of warm and wise references to Sino-Indian relations, highlighting five key points:

One, he emphasized that for several thousand years, India and China have coexisted without conflicts, and our relations in future should be equally strong. Two, he advocated that differences should not turn into disputes and must be resolved through dialogue. Three, he likened India-China relations to a familial bond, reinforcing the idea that both nations are part of a larger Asian family with shared civilizational wisdom. Four, he acknowledged the setback in relations over the past five

years but expressed hope that our ties will regain trust, enthusiasm and energy. Five, he stated that while competition between India and China is natural, it should be healthy and constructive, fostering economic and regional stability rather than conflict.

China has responded equally positively to these remarks. This has set the tone for a renewed approach to friendly diplomacy and cooperation between the two nations.

**Q: What are the areas where India and China can find common ground?**

**A:** The most important common ground is mutual support for development. China is the world's second-largest economy, and India is on track to become the third-largest. Given their vast populations, both countries have a shared responsibility to improve their citizens' quality of life.

The second major area of common interest is peace and security. Sustainable development can only occur in an environment of peace and trust. So India and China must collaborate to ensure bilateral and regional security, preventing tension and conflicts that could hinder economic and social progress.

**Q: Could there be areas of cooperation that promote peace and safeguard security in the region?**

**A:** I propose a fresh approach to regional security. Asia needs a robust security framework. First, India and China should eliminate security concerns between them. Once mutual security is solidified, they can take a leading role in fostering a broader Asian security initiative.

President Xi Jinping's Global Security Initiative is a wise and commendable step, but we now need an "Asian Security Initiative", spearheaded by India and China in collaboration with other regional powers to ensure that Asian security remains primarily an Asian responsibility, free from destructive external interference.

**Q: How does India view China's advancements in technology and innovation?**

**A:** Indian youth and professionals hold great admiration for China's spectacular technological breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, electric vehicles and robotics and other new quality productive forces including DeepSeek and BYD. India is also making rapid advancements in high-

tech industries and services. Strengthening technological collaboration between the two nations can create a synergy that benefits both economies and contributes to inclusive global growth.

**Q: What steps should be taken to improve Sino-Indian business and investment relations?**

**A:** One critical step should be to ease travel restrictions. Last year, China issued over 200,000 visas to Indian nationals, while India granted fewer than 10,000 visas to Chinese citizens. India should immediately remove the unnecessary restrictions and welcome more Chinese tourists, and especially welcome Chinese investors and businesses in a non-discriminatory environment.

Trade imbalance is another concern. India faces a trade deficit of more than \$100 billion with China. China should import more high-value goods from India.

**Q: Can strategic communication between leaders strengthen bilateral ties?**

**A:** The most urgent need is high-level strategic communication. Before 2020, Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping met several times. However, the past five years have seen a gap. It is imperative that they engage in direct discussions with a forward-looking approach. By leaving behind past grievances and focusing on long-term cooperation on bilateral, regional and global matters, India and China can set an example on how major powers can coexist peacefully, prosper together and create a new and better world order.

**Q: Any final thoughts on the future of India-China relations?**

**A:** Both nations have strong leadership capable of making bold and visionary decisions, including resolution of the long-pending boundary question to mutual satisfaction. India should pledge support to "One China" policy and peaceful reunification of Taiwan without external interference and China should support India's major concerns. Hence there is a real opportunity to transform India-China relations for the better. This opportunity must not be missed. The world is watching, and it is time for India and China to step up as responsible global leaders, and foster a future based on equality, mutual respect, shared prosperity and Asian security.

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



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Chetan Ahya

## US tariffs invites reciprocal action, creating uncertainty

The United States appears to be using tariffs to seek reciprocity in its trade relations, in a bid to reduce its trade deficit. In our (Morgan Stanley's) view, this poses challenges for Asia, given that seven of the top 10 economies with the largest trade surpluses against the US are in Asia.

It also adds uncertainty to the business cycle, as we expect trade tensions to weigh on corporate confidence, affecting capex and trade.

In efforts to guess what exactly US President Donald Trump will announce on Wednesday in the form of global reciprocal tariffs, some details have emerged about what he could seek from the US' trade partners to reduce its trade deficit.

First, the US could ask its trade partners to increase purchases in a bid to reduce their trade surplus. This may be possible for some economies, but for others the size of their trade surpluses with the US as a percentage of their respective GDP will pose a challenge. For instance, Thailand's trade surplus with the US is 10 percent of its GDP, while Vietnam's is 25 percent of its GDP.

Meanwhile, other Asian economies like India and the Republic of Korea, whose surpluses are smaller as a percent of their GDP, have already indicated plans to increase purchases of oil and gas, civilian aircraft and defense equipment from the US.

Second, the US administration has been asking economies with trade surplus to hike their defense spending. In a way, this is related to the first, as a higher defense budget is a channel through which some Asian economies can reduce their trade



**There is room for both monetary and fiscal policy to respond as the growth drag materializes. Fiscal easing will be more effective against this backdrop because it directly supports aggregate demand.**

surplus with the US. Given Japan and the ROK are already importing 90 percent or more of their arms from the US, an increase in defense spending will likely result in more arms imports from the US.

For other Asian economies, the share of the US' military-industrial complex in their defense imports is much lower. As such, they can consider increasing their defense purchase from the US. As for some Asian economies that already planned to raise their defense spending, the US may ask them to further hike their defense budget. Some countries may find it extremely challenging to fulfill the US' new requirements, because their public debt ratios are higher now and they've already encountered domestic political pushback against increasing their defense spending.

Third, some countries can reduce their trade surplus by lowering tariffs on US imports, but the World Trade Organization's most-favored-nation principle prevents economies with higher tariffs on US imports from doing so without extending the "lowering tariffs" to other WTO member economies, unless it is done under a free-trade agreement. And negotiating free trade agreements will take time — it is unlikely to be completed before the US raises tariffs. India, for instance, is negotiating a trade deal with the US, but the first tranche is expected to be completed only in the fall.

And fourth, the administration could ask Asian economies to match US tariffs on China as one of the conditions for granting concessions in any trade deal. With the exception of India, the US tariffs on other Asian economies are not as high as those imposed on China (about 30.9 percent following the imposition of an additional 20 percent tariffs). Given this fact, matching the US in tariffs on China will imply significant tariff increases.

In our view, such conditions will pose significant challenges to other Asian economies given China's deeply embedded role in the manufacturing global value chain. China accounts for 41 percent of the world's global value chain-related output in the manufacturing sector (defined as manufacturing output of a country that directly or indirectly crosses more than one border), highlighting its high global value chain participation.

Moreover, Asia has a large cross-border production network with deep trade linkages among economies. From a practical standpoint, most of the economies in the

region are either dependent on China as a key source of end demand or China is a key supplier to them.

The bigger challenge that Asia faces is that, tariffs or no tariffs, we have now entered a period where uncertainty is weighing on corporate confidence. The persistence of trade tensions will weigh on corporate confidence, capex and trade, and this will be the dominant channel through which the growth effects will transmit. Against that backdrop, we continue to believe that the economies most affected will be those with a higher trade orientation.

There is room for both monetary and fiscal policy to respond as the growth drag materializes. Fiscal easing will be more effective against this backdrop because it directly supports aggregate demand. But high levels of public debt at the starting point along with political issues may constrain the extent of fiscal stimulus.

The heavy lifting would therefore have to be done through monetary easing. Indeed, compared with 2018-19 when trade tensions emerged, we expect central banks to cut rates more this time around. We also expect the mix of easing to be tilted more toward monetary than fiscal, unlike fiscal over monetary back in 2018-19. Overall, however, we don't expect policy easing to be able to fully offset the growth drag that emerges from trade tensions.

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Kang Bing

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## Improved public transportation can help address parking problem

Last year Beijing announced that it would create more than 17,000 parking lots and turned another 10,000 institutionally owned parking lots into shared ones. The news generated such enthusiasm that a local newspaper devoted an entire page to explain how the work was done and what it signified.

To keep its promise of adding more parking lots, the Beijing municipal government added its districts and sub-districts to the plan, turning idle plots and more roadsides spaces into parking lots and persuading government institutions to share their parking lots with neighborhood residents at night, and on weekends and holidays.

The efforts of the municipal government should be applauded, especially because we know it is a mission impossible for most of the municipalities in the country to solve the parking problem.

Rapid economic development over the past decades led to the expansion of the urban population and a dramatic increase in the number of cars. Beijing, for instance, has more than 20 million residents and over 7 million vehicles, with over 5 million of them being privately owned cars.

**Officials are welcome to turn vacant land into parking lots to benefit the public and make cities more environment-friendly.**

Difficult as it is to find a parking space, I'm sure most car owners have somehow found a fixed parking space in their residential compounds or nearby roadsides. The real nightmare begins when one drives out of one's comfort zone for shopping or to go to office. Although Beijing is reported to have 700,000 paid public parking spaces, most of the affordable ones have been rented out on a long-term basis and the few still available are relatively expensive. When an employee is late for office, his/her most likely reason is "driving around for half an hour to find a parking space".

Even when one is lucky enough to find a vacant parking space, the cost is relatively high. Parking along the roadside 10 kilometers away from the city center costs between 6-10 yuan (82 US cents-\$1.37) per hour. The cost shoots up if you choose to park under a roof or when the parking space is closer to the city center. The parking fee at the parking lot of Beijing West Railway Station, for instance, is 5 yuan for a quarter of an hour and 360 yuan per day. A day's fee is equivalent to a Beijing worker's average income for two days.

Beijing's woes are shared by many other Chinese cities. China had an estimated 440 million motor vehicles, with 345 million of them being cars, by the end of June last year. With 26 cities having more than 3 million cars each, many city administrations are under tremendous pressure to build more roads and parking lots. To control the increasing number of cars, some cities have taken measures such as drawing of lots or auctions for license plates, while quite a few have built multi-story parking lots so they can use every available square foot of land for parking.

But city administrations risk infringing on citizens' civic rights if they turn public spaces into parking spaces to address the parking problem. Officials are welcome to turn vacant land into parking lots to benefit the public and make cities more environment-friendly.

But when they turn roadsides into parking spaces, they infringe on the right of cyclists to use the service lanes along thoroughfares. Many smaller cities, by allowing cars to park on pedestrian-only sidewalks, make life difficult for humble pedestrians like me.

In a country which is similar in land area to the United States but has over four times the population, it is difficult to find enough parking spaces for all the cars and/or build enough roads for them to drive without being caught in jams.

Therefore, instead of building more parking lots and turning public spaces into parking spaces, the authorities should make efforts to improve the public transportation systems. When people can travel anywhere in the city more comfortably and at a lower cost using public transport, their urge to buy or drive a car will diminish.

I am looking forward to the day when sidewalks are returned to cyclists and pavements to pedestrians, and public spaces are canopied by trees and city administrations are no longer frustrated by the parking problem.

## GLOBAL VIEWS

YU MIAOJIE AND LU WEIXIAO

## No zero-sum game

China and Japan can synergize their respective strengths to deepen their cooperation in third-party markets

Since China and Japan normalized diplomatic relations with the signing of the 1972 China-Japan Joint Statement, bilateral cooperation has experienced ups and downs, but the overall trend has always been moving forward.

In the long run, Japan and China will remain interdependent and deeply integrated in trade, and the Japanese economy is unable to "decouple" from China. But in the short term, their trade exchanges are slowing down as Japan follows the United States in imposing sanctions on Chinese enterprises.



Yu Miaojie



Lu Weixiao

Under the framework of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, China and Japan reached a tariff reduction arrangement for the first time and pledged to expand the zero-tariff policy coverage for their traded goods and facilitate the implementation of the RCEP's rules of origin. The agreement highlights the commitment of both countries to free trade and multilateralism, and signifies that they will rely on it to form a deeply integrated production network. China and Japan should seize the opportunity of the RCEP's entry into force, the 53rd anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations and the 47th anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship to eliminate political interference and trade frictions and deepen their mutually beneficial trade relationship.

In addition, China can continue to increase its sister cities relations with Japan, expand the coverage of China-Japan cooperation demonstration zones in Chengdu and Qingdao, fully leverage these zones' leading role and exemplary effect, and encourage diverse interactions between twin cities to enhance mutual understanding and trust. By connecting the two peoples' hearts and minds, the external environment for bilateral trade can be stabilized.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Japan should cancel its End User List featuring "catch-all" control, and remove Chinese entities from the list. It should also abolish unreasonable export controls on high-performance semiconductor manufacturing equipment to China, and reject the influence of the US' unreasonable "long-arm jurisdiction". China is Japan's largest trading partner and export destination and a huge dynamic market. Building "small yards with high fences" and "decoupling" will only create a lose-lose situation. Instead, closer trade cooperation will help Japan realize economic recovery and stable growth.

Since China overtook Japan to become the world's second-largest economy in 2010, its domestic advanced manufacturing

has kept improving. Thanks to the advantages of its super-large market, complete industrial system and strengths in digital and emerging industries, China has been steadily climbing up the global industrial chain. The "R&D in Japan+Made in China" model is no longer sustainable and gradually declining. Currently, Chinese and Japanese industries highly overlap, with their high-end manufacturing sectors competing with each other. Some of Japan's right-wing forces have begun to hype up the "China threat theory", leading to occasional trade frictions between the two neighbors.

Facing this new phenomenon, both sides should fully recognize that upgrading labor-intensive to capital-intensive, and then to knowledge-intensive sectors is a

common economic law for all countries. The two countries should follow this objective law and understand the changes in their trade structure. Long-term technological competition among major powers will continue, but the global labor division is an unstoppable trend. The Sino-Japanese network-based composite structure, which includes both vertical and horizontal division, can still promote efficient resource allocation within the region. The non-homogeneity of the Chinese and Japanese industrial structures and the complementarity in high-tech fields still exist, offering a solid foundation and broad space for cooperation.

China and Japan can establish mutually beneficial norms and rules, continuously optimize the Asia-Pacific industrial and supply chain layout, explore diversified cooperation opportunities, and strive to seek more converging points of interest. Japan is one of the world's key sources of high-end photoresists. The two sides can jointly develop more advanced industries such as semiconductors, upgrade industries, and stabilize the global industrial and value chains. In addition to their trade in goods, they should also optimize their trade structure, strengthen cooperation in frontier areas, enhance industrial upgrading and cross-border integration through new technologies, expand their trade in services, and develop new trade forms.

Meanwhile, they should innovate trading methods. By strengthening institutional cooperation in areas such as local currency settlement, they can reduce trade costs and uncertainties. China could approve more Japanese enterprises in its comprehensive bonded zones — the highest form of special customs supervision zones in the country, and grant them the status of general taxpayers therein, thus enabling them to enjoy preferential tax policies. Regarding emerging trade trends such as digital trade, China and Japan could pilot a preferential system that exempts small amount goods from consumption tax and tariffs. They could also promote mutual recognition of digital certificates and electronic signatures, gradual shift from a positive list to a negative

one, deepen the construction of comprehensive pilot zones for cross-border e-commerce, guide multiple entities to accelerate the layout of overseas warehouses, and create a favorable environment for e-commerce, thereby further boosting bilateral trade.

By effectively combining China's production capacity advantages, Japan's technological strengths and the development needs of third countries, China and Japan can not only enable their enterprises to avoid homogeneous competition and share development achievements, but also bring greater benefits to third-party markets, creating a win-win spillover effect for all parties involved.

Chinese enterprises should explore new ways to implement the memorandum of understanding on third-party market collaboration with Japan and push for the progress of some confirmed projects. They should also explore and share new opportunities for cooperation in RCEP third-party markets through the China-ASEAN Expo. Financial institutions could provide diversified financing channels for projects in third-party markets that both sides jointly invest in. Additionally, they could utilize channels such as the China-Europe freight train service to expand cooperation in Central Asia and Europe, bid for projects with joint investment, and share third-party market information.

The two countries hold tremendous development potential. By coordinating and aligning technical standards, promoting mutual recognition of legislation, and building market access mechanisms, China and Japan can integrate their strengths to deepen cooperation in third-party markets. This approach can improve their competition and cooperation structure, avoid zero-sum games and enhance mutual trust by building mechanisms that meet their development needs in the new era.

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ZHANG YUN

## Confidence builder

Northeast Asia should draw on ASEAN's successful experience in forging regional cooperation

The 11th China-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Tokyo on March 22 was another important diplomatic event in Northeast Asia following the trilateral summit held in May last year, which convened after a four-and-a-half-year hiatus. The top diplomats of the three countries reached consensus on advancing practical cooperation in "six key areas" in a comprehensive and balanced manner, and laid the groundwork for the upcoming 10th China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting.



However, whenever progress is made in the cooperation among the three neighbors, pessimistic voices about regional cooperation will surface. Some argue that the three countries lack shared values and their cooperation is, at best, a marriage of convenience formed in response to the uncertainties created by Donald Trump's second term as US president. Some go so far as to say that Northeast Asia is inherent an anti-region — a region without the DNA for collaboration.

China-Japan-ROK cooperation must first dismantle these misleading perceptions and build new standards and principles for regional collaboration based on objective, comprehensive and historical perspectives.

The roots of pessimism about China-Japan-ROK cooperation and Northeast Asian regionalism lie in using NATO and the European Union as benchmarks. Europe — particularly Western Europe — has long been regarded as the model of regional cooperation, with its dual engines of security (NATO) and economic integration (the EU) serving as the reference by which other regional collaboration is measured.

Northeast Asia lacks a collective defense mechanism such as NATO, and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat pales in comparison to the colossal EU headquarters in Brussels.

However, it is misleading to label Northeast Asian cooperation as "backward"

based on the supposedly "advanced" model of European regionalism. East Asian cooperation emerged in the context of post-World War II decolonization and nation-building, which is fundamentally different from Europe's process of regional integration through centuries of warfare, including two world wars and the Cold War. Such simplistic comparisons are untenable.

Moreover, the Ukraine crisis has demonstrated that relying on regional military alliances to deter imagined enemies fails to deliver collective security — instead, it undermines the security of the region. Northeast Asia should not repeat this mistake by creating an East Asian version of NATO.

Northeast Asian cooperation has fared rather well when viewed through a historical lens. Japan and the ROK normalized their relations in 1965. China and Japan restored diplomatic ties in 1972. China and the ROK established formal relations in 1992. And the trilateral summit mechanism was launched in 2008.

In 2014, a China-Japan-ROK trilateral investment agreement came into force, and in 2022, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership took effect — effectively achieving a de facto trilateral free trade agreement by indirect means.

If European integration represents a form of de jure regionalism — a regionalism built on an extensive foundation of legal treaties and documents — then Northeast Asia exemplifies de facto regionalism.

The trade volume among China, Japan and the ROK has reached \$800 billion, the three nations account for about 25 percent of global GDP, and their industrial and supply chains are deeply intertwined. How can anyone claim Northeast Asia has made no progress in regional integration? In reality, Northeast Asia has already become an interconnected economic and social community.

Northeast Asia should draw on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' successful experience in forging shared regional values amid diversity, rather than uncritically adopting the Western model based on

so-called universal values.

Intertwined interests alone are insufficient to build a cohesive region. Instead, it requires the cultivation of identities, values and norms shared by regional members. Washington has sought to strengthen the US-Japan-ROK cooperation framework through two strands: common security threats and so-called democratic values.

And both Japan and the ROK have invoked "shared values" to mend bilateral ties. But when relations soured, Japan removed the phrase stating that Japan and the ROK are neighbors that "share fundamental values" from its Diplomatic Bluebook, which raised the question: how could the universal values vanish overnight due to political frictions?

Some believe it is unrealistic, if not naive, to build regionalism in Northeast Asia because the region is plagued by formidable security challenges, territorial disputes and historical issues. However, the shared values in the region can be built upon real and well-intended interactions among neighbors.

Southeast Asia was once viewed as the "Balkans of Asia" after World War II, and when ASEAN was first established, it was widely predicted to be a failed attempt at regional integration because member states had vastly different political systems, levels of economic development, religious and cultural backgrounds and territorial disputes left over from former colonial rulers.

Despite all the odds, ASEAN has maintained peace among its member states since its establishment in 1967, and has proved to be the most successful regional bloc in the developing world. The success of ASEAN can be attributed to the fact that regional countries have forged shared values that suit the needs of the region. The stability of ASEAN stems from the political and social stability and economic growth of member states; and relations among regional countries are based on genuine multilateralism that is non-discriminatory and inclusive.

The essence of the "ASEAN Way" is to



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

cultivate shared values among regional countries.

For Southeast Asian nations, the top priority is to address domestic challenges — economic development, improving people's livelihoods and achieving ethnic unity — none of which could be solved through military means. If they get dragged into bloc confrontations between external powers, their precious resources would be wasted.

To preserve regional stability, ASEAN has further expanded multilateral cooperation frameworks with other major countries with ASEAN at the core, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the "ASEAN+3" and the East Asia Summit.

The key to overcoming pessimism about Northeast Asian cooperation is to build

confidence. First, regional countries should not compare Northeast Asian regionalism with the models of other regions. Second, they should cultivate shared values and improve mutual recognition.

Neither overestimating its achievements nor underestimating its resilience, Northeast Asia can chart a viable path forward — forging a distinctive regionalism through positive interactions among neighboring countries.

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# CULTURAL HERITAGE



Exquisite bronze artifacts, ranging from tall, slender wine vessels to large, ornate wine containers, along with their elaborate production illustrations, give visitors a chance to appreciate the intricate patterns and technical mastery of ancient Chinese artisans.

About 20 of those ancient relics highlight the Marvel of Bronze section of the ongoing *Technological Archaeology and Heritage Protection Exhibition* that will last through to June 2 at the Chinese Archaeological Museum in Beijing. The section vividly showcases how those works of art were made, beginning with ore processing to metal and then casting with piece-molds.

"Modern tools like X-ray imaging and metallographic analysis have helped us study bronze artifacts in detail," says Liu Yu, a researcher of the technological archaeology and cultural heritage protection lab, of the Chinese Academy of History.

Traditional and modern methods were then applied to restore the bronzes, ensuring they retain their historical integrity, she adds.

This unit provides a comprehensive look at the entire life cycle of ancient Chinese bronze production, from mining and alloying to casting, as well as modern restoration, Liu says.

Visitors can appreciate the sophistication of ancient Chinese metallurgy, such as intricate patterns and artisans' precision.

"One of the most distinctive features of Chinese bronze craftsmanship is the use of piece-mold casting. Unlike Western traditions, which relied on forging and lost-wax casting, ancient Chinese artisans used clay molds to create intricate ritual vessels," Liu explains.

Piece-mold casting allowed for the creation of highly detailed and complex ritual vessels, which played a central role in Chinese ceremonial and political life, she adds.

A model of the vessel was made, and clay molds were pressed around it. These molds were assembled into a whole before molten bronze was poured in. Once cooled, the mold was broken away, and the vessel was cleaned and polished.

"The ancient craft was so extraordinary that you can barely find the traces of assembly, such as pouring gates and risers (a reservoir built into a metal casting mold to prevent cavities), or mold lines on the surface," Liu adds.

The domination of the complex bronze production in ancient China, especially during the Shang (c.16th century-11th century BC) and Zhou (c.11th century-256 BC) dynasties, was due to the fact that bronze vessels weren't just functional but came to symbolize political power and were used in rituals, she explains.

Bronze is among the five thematic sections, along with ancient pottery, jade artifacts, textile and modern lab restoration, at the exhibition hosted by the Chinese Academy of History with inputs from archaeological facilities in Gansu, Jiangxi and Henan provinces, as well as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

A small but extraordinary piece of pottery, unearthed from the Xianren Cave site in Wannian county, Jiangxi province, took center stage



Left: Visitors check out the bronze section of the *Technological Archaeology and Heritage Protection Exhibition*. Right: A lab demonstration of relics restoration is a highlight at the exhibition. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY



## A tribute to craftsmanship

Exhibition highlights exquisite skills and technical knowledge of ancient artifacts, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



The ongoing exhibition shows jade objects of fine workmanship including a deer (above left) and one crafted to resemble *yue* (above right and top right), a type of axe-like weapon, both from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC).

at the exhibition. Dating back 20,000 to 19,000 years, this fragment is not only the oldest known pottery in China but also the earliest evidence of pottery used for cooking food in the world.

According to Liu Guoxiang, director of the Chinese Archaeological Museum, the age of the pottery was determined through stratigraphic analysis and carbon-14 dating. "In recent years, the integration of technology into archaeology — from excavation and preservation to interpretation and display — has become increasingly vital," he says.

The Xianren Cave pottery fragment reveals that ancient Chinese communities were already crafting and using pottery. Over the following millennia, Chinese ceramics evolved through remarkable technological advancements, artistic diversity, and continuous production, becoming a unique phenomenon in ceramic history worldwide.

Painted pottery includes double-handled pots and jars that were

rooted in the Majiayao culture, which boasts more than 5,000 years of history and is based in the upper reaches of the Yellow River and its tributaries.

Despite the passage of thousands of years, the intricate and unique patterns on these artifacts remain strikingly vivid.

Painted pottery fragments dating back around 9,000 years have been unearthed at the Shangshan site in Pujiang county, Zhejiang province. It suggests prehistoric potters had mastered the technique of painting mineral pigments onto pottery surfaces before firing, experts say.

This innovation gave rise to painted pottery, where vibrant designs contrasted beautifully with the unadorned clay, creating a distinct aesthetic, they add.

Another treasure showcased at the exhibition is a remarkable painted pottery jar unearthed from the Dadianzi site in Aohan Banner, Inner Mongolia. This artifact is a stunning example of the Lower Xiajiadian culture, which

dates back between 4,000 and 3,400 years.

"Painted pottery is one of the most representative inventions of the Lower Xiajiadian culture," Liu Guoxiang says.

At the Dadianzi cemetery, a total of 420 painted pottery pieces have been discovered, accounting for about 25 percent of the burial pottery. Analysis shows that these painted pottery pieces used carbon-infused black or dark gray surfaces as the base, adorned with patterns in white, red, and orange-yellow, Liu notes.

The clay surface was polished to a smooth finish, which, after firing, proved ideal for painting, while the dark base enhanced the visibility and aesthetic appeal of the brightly colored designs, he explains.

Experts highlight that the invention of painted pottery marked a groundbreaking innovation that spread from the East to the West, serving as a primary channel for early cultural exchanges between East and West and is considered a

precursor to the Silk Road.

The jade unit features 70 artifacts, tracing nearly 10,000 years of craftsmanship in China. Highlights include a set of three hooks from different eras, including the late Neolithic Hongshan culture, around 6,500 to 4,900 years ago, marked by its use of delicate jade ware.

They illustrate the evolution and cultural exchange of jade artifacts across millennia.

The Splendor of Textiles section presents five artifacts, focusing on ancient textile craftsmanship, featuring advanced braiding, twisting, and weaving skills of textile artisans.

Toward the end of the exhibition is the laboratory archaeology display area, where a glass-enclosed workspace offers visitors a rare opportunity to witness the meticulous process of artifact restoration up close.

Inside, Fan Rongnan is focusing on the virtual 3D reconstruction of a Tang Dynasty (618-907) dragon head, unearthed from the ancient city of

Xiongzhou, located in what is today's Xiong'an New Area, Hebei province. Fragments of the dragon head are carefully arranged on the table, showcasing the painstaking effort required to piece together history.

"The dragon head artifact we're showcasing is a classic example of laboratory archaeology," says Fan, a second-year graduate student under the researcher Liu Yong from the archaeological science and cultural heritage protection lab, at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"Based on stratigraphic and typological analysis, we've determined that it dates back to the Tang Dynasty. This artifact is a ceramic architectural component, originally placed on a roof," Fan explains.

The dragon head isn't just a dull gray — it retains traces of colorful paint. For example, the left eye is black, surrounded by a faint green eyeliner, Fan adds.

Archaeologists have employed a variety of advanced techniques to study the dragon head, including 3D laser scanning, multi-angle 3D imaging, and surface fluorescence analysis, which captured detailed information about the fragments' morphology and painted components.

The data collected provided a scientific foundation for the preservation and restoration of the dragon head, Fan says.

She has been demonstrating the piecing together of fragments at the exhibition. "The numbered fragments in the tray show the initial condition of the artifact. These pieces have already been cleaned and desalinated, and now the task is to assemble them," Fan explains.

Liu Yu says the exhibition not only celebrates "the ingenuity of our ancestors" but also highlights the transformative role of technology in "preserving and understanding our shared heritage."

"Through the power of technological archaeology and cultural heritage preservation, we can decode the fragments of the past, unlocking the secrets of the past and bringing their brilliance back to life," Liu says.

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## Museum unveils million-year legacy of Nihewan

By **WANG QIAN**  
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During the ongoing exhibition, *Radiance of the East: Million-Year Human Imprint in Nihewan*, at the Natural History Museum of China in Beijing, visitors can follow fossil evidence to trace the earliest presence of humans in northeast Asia.

Opened on March 8 and running through to May 11, the event highlights the rich archaeological significance of the Nihewan site in North China's Hebei province. Jointly organized by the museum, the Hebei Nihewan Site Protection Committee, and the Zhangjiakou Association for Science and Technology, it aims to enhance public understanding of the region's geological and anthropological history.

Showcasing more than 200 artifacts, including stone tools, fossils and reconstructed site models, alongside multimedia presentations, the curators try to present the scientific knowledge of Nihewan's archaeology and paleontology, according to Wei Yi, an associate researcher at the Natural History Museum of China.

Divided into four sections, visitors can follow the timeline to explore the

themes of human origins, ancient ecosystems, Paleolithic culture and the archaeological development of the site.

Located in Yangyuan county, Zhangjiakou, Hebei, Nihewan Basin is one of the country's earliest systematically excavated Paleolithic sites. The strata contains abundant fossils of ancient mammals, such as three-toed horses, woolly rhinoceroses, saber-toothed cats, giant deer and steppe mammoths, providing invaluable materials for studying the evolution of Cenozoic fauna in northern China. Nearly 400 sites have been identified, constructing a cultural sequence of ancient human evolution spanning nearly 2 million to 10,000 years.

Discovered in the early 1920s, the site contains well-known mammalian fauna and stone-tool artifacts in long sequences of sediments, making the region an attractive setting for geological, paleontological and archaeological exploration and research, according to the Geological Society of Hebei Province.

It has not only the earliest Majuangu site in northern China dating to 2 million years before the present, but also the Xujiayao site of the late Paleolithic period where human

skulls and many forged spheroids were unearthed, as well as the Yujiaogou site of the Paleolithic-Neolithic transition period where the earliest pottery fragments and many micro-liths were discovered.

A standout exhibit is the reconstructed scene from the Majuangu site, where evidence of human activity dating back 1.66 million years was discovered.

"This is where the 'first meal of Eastern humans' took place," Wei explains.

"One scraper was found in direct contact with a rib fossil, bearing clear signs of impact and scraping, reflecting scenes of ancient humans hunting, dismembering and sharing mammoth meat," she adds.

The exhibition also introduces the fossilized remains from the Houjiayao-Xujiayao site, representing 16 individuals across various life stages, from children to the elderly. Nearby, three round stone balls are exhibited. "Stone balls are the most distinctive tools from this site, with thousands discovered," Wei says.

The site yielded more than 4,000 horse tooth fossils, leading experts to speculate that the stone balls were specialized tools for hunting wild horses.

"Ancient humans likely tied ropes around the stone balls to create bolas, which they threw to strike animals' bodies or heads," she explains.

Another groundbreaking discovery that Wei doesn't want visitors to miss is the evidence of a culture that processed ochre, which is used to make pigments, discovered at the Xiamabei, a 40,000-year-old archaeological site in Nihewan.

Small pieces of hematite and grinding tools are displayed together in the exhibition.

"This discovery pushes the history of hematite pigment use in East Asia back to 40,000 years ago. Since pigments were likely used for body decoration, it suggests that humans had developed a sense of aesthetics by this period," Wei says.

Additionally, experts found plant fiber traces on the surfaces of some stone flakes, indicating that ancient humans may have bound small stone flakes to create composite tools, reflecting the increasing complexity of their technology and behavior.

Over the past century, archaeological discoveries at Nihewan have pushed the timeline of human origins in China and East Asia back to approximately 1.7 million years ago.



Top: Restored animal skeletons from Nihewan on show. WANG QIAN / CHINA DAILY Above: Three stone spheroids (left) and two stone cores discovered at Nihewan also on show. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

With the launch of the project of chasing the human origins in Hebei, further archaeological revelations are anticipated.



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## LIFE

# Village as a ceramic canvas

NPC deputy combines his passion for *sancai* craft with development zeal to transform rural economy, **Wang Ru and Shi Baoyin** report.



A giant art installation made of thousands of ceramic vats by Guo Aihe and his team at the Huashuwa village, Luoning county, Henan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

**H**uashuwa village, in Luoning county, Luoyang, Henan province, has transformed from an impoverished village deep in the mountains into a buzzing tourist destination thanks to the tireless efforts of a ceramic artist.

Guo Aihe, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, who is also a master of Chinese arts and crafts specializing in *sancai*, or tricolor glazed ceramic art, is the brain behind the metamorphosis.

The story stems from Guo's passion for *sancai* art. To him, painted ceramic art is not limited to three colors, but the whole gamut. Although Tang Dynasty (618-907) *sancai* came to be popular as a type of painted ceramic and thrived during the era, the art went relatively unnoticed in the subsequent dynasties. But its existence was never in question.

At Luoyang Normal University, Guo chose to make a *sancai* glazed painting, which means applying the painted ceramic techniques to make a painting, his graduation project in 1986. It won applause from Ye Peng, then head of the university, who encouraged him to continue with his creations and study the art form.

Since then, the 61-year-old started his now four-decade bond with the old art and created outstanding artistic works, many of which have been displayed at art institutes at home and abroad. However, this ambitious artist decided that personal accomplishments and milestones were not enough, he wanted to draw more people to this art.

In 2013, Guo chanced upon the mountain village of Huashuwa during a trip, and was amazed by its breathtaking natural beauty. But economically backward, the village had neither tap water, electricity, nor good roads.

The village is only 62 kilometers from Neolithic Yangshao Site in Sanmenxia, Henan, dating back over 5,000 years, which had yielded many pottery artifacts. It is also not far from Ru Kiln and Jun Kiln,

both prominent kilns during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Therefore, Guo believed the place was the cradle of ceramic art and wanted to reshape it with this cultural feature.

And there the idea of building a ceramic art village was born. Two years later, he signed an agreement with the local government to renovate this village with his artist's eyes.

"It was a natural space covering 3,000 *mu* (2 square kilometers). I wanted to integrate the charm of *sancai* art with the natural environment," he says.

His team collected a great number of ceramic vats from local people of Luoning and made a giant art installation out of them. From a bird's-eye view, the installation looked like a young woman, as if to say "ceramic is the daughter of the soil".

"As early as the Yangshao cultural period (a Neolithic culture dating back 4,600 to 7,000 years), people made pottery vats for storage and cooking. Now with the passage of time, they are no longer daily necessities for people. But in this village, they are now endowed with new life, becoming artistic works which are testimonies to history and also reviving memories," says Guo.

The rest of the vats were also put to good use as they were turned into flowerpots, dust bins, guideposts and winding footpaths from where visitors can see well-spaced terraced fields and valleys in full bloom.

Artists also made glazed paintings with *sancai* techniques and used them to decorate old houses, rammed-earth walls and traditional cave dwellings, keeping the village's old-world vibe while adding new breath to it.

"We want to take the ground as the painting canvas, turn mountains into parks and decorate the village by adding to its rustic charms. The village, after renovation, retains its natural beauty and shows the beauty of *sancai* art," he says.

Now, the village attracts more



**Top:** Guo guides students to visit the village in 2022. **Left:** He instructs Luoning students to sketch the village in 2022. **Right:** Being a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, Guo is seen at this year's two sessions in March. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

than 100,000 visits annually, and even nearby villages can benefit from this tourist spot since people can supplement their income by selling agricultural products.

During the process, Guo has also worked to improve rural children's aesthetic education in Luoning by donating fine art tools to schools, subsidizing fees of art majors and

organizing activities to collect money for rural fine arts education. When he was sketching at the village in 2015, he was surrounded by curious children who asked

questions about his painting board, brushes and pigment, which were strange to them.

"Looking into their eyes, I felt rural children yearned to appreciate and comprehend beauty, but lacked effective means to do so," says Guo.

"I know our country has put in a lot of hard work and efforts to alleviate extreme poverty, but I pondered how I could help the villagers transcend emotional poverty. Therefore, we initiated our efforts with children, focusing on their artistic education to guide them to discover, understand and pursue beauty, thereby nurturing a beautiful mind and establishing a solid foundation for life," he adds.

"I really love drawing because it makes me relaxed. Things that don't occur in life can be captured by brushstrokes on paper," says Shang Jiale, a middle school student in Luoning.

A highlight of Guo's effort is an annual art activity which invites 100 artists a year to make creations at the village, donate their works at an auction, and offer the money for rural aesthetic education. All steps of the activity are completed in one day, showing the urgency of improving rural art education.

As of now, 650 artists have created 813 works in the activities, donating over 2 million yuan (\$275,528) through sales.

"Before Guo's arrival, we had a shortage of fine arts teachers. Even when one was appointed to work in our school, they left in a short time. We had no incentives for them to stay. (Though we have art lessons on the curriculum,) we didn't even have the concept of aesthetic education," says Li Wanjun, headmaster of a junior high school at Luoning.

"It was Guo who made us realize its importance. As a matter of fact, rural vitalization and all other aspects of life require an aesthetic perspective to discover and create," Li adds.

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## Science fiction industry steadily gains momentum

By YANG YANG  
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The four-day 2025 China Science Fiction Convention wrapped up on Monday in Beijing, where the China Science Fiction Research Center released the 2025 China Science Fiction Industry Report.

In 2024, the industry raked in total revenue of 108.96 billion yuan (\$15 billion), showcasing notable capabilities in science fiction literature, derivatives and cultural tourism.

Established in 2020 by the China Research Institute for Science Popularization and the Chinese Science Writers Association, the China Science Fiction Research Center focuses on policy consultation and academic research within the sci-fi industry. The China Science Fiction Industry Report is published annually.

The comprehensive report explores five core sectors — sci-fi lit-

erature, film and television, gaming, derivatives, and cultural tourism. It delves into development trends and future trajectories of the Chinese sci-fi industry each year.

The report highlights the sci-fi reading sector's steady growth from 2017 to 2024, with a 10.7 percent year-on-year revenue increase in 2024 totaling 3.51 billion yuan. Notably, the contribution of new sci-fi titles surged, while digital and audio works accelerated development.

In 2024, the sci-fi film and television industry recorded a total revenue of 6.71 billion yuan. Despite a dip in science fiction box-office earnings, micro-short films and short videos in the genre gained momentum, and the stature of sci-fi film festivals rose steadily.

The sci-fi gaming industry saw a total revenue of 71.81 billion yuan, with enhanced growth in computer and console-based games, and a



A journalist interacts with a humanoid robot at the 2025 China Science Fiction Convention, which was held from Friday to Monday in Beijing. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

marked improvement in game production standards.

Additionally, the sci-fi derivatives industry saw a revenue of 2.53 billion yuan, marking an 11 percent year-on-year increase. The market displayed signs of recovery, with domestic original IPs taking the lead.

The sci-fi cultural tourism sector achieved 24.4 billion yuan in revenue, with local theme park projects gaining a larger revenue share from the previous year. Sci-fi stage plays and scripts are transitioning toward refined content and elevated operations.

According to the report, the Chinese sci-fi industry is entering a pivotal phase characterized by format integration and innovation-driven growth, solidifying its position as a key player in the global sci-fi landscape.

With technological advance-

ments, policy support, and increasing market demand, various segments of the Chinese sci-fi industry are poised to accelerate collaborative innovation and continually enhance the industrial ecosystem.

He Junke, Party secretary of China Association for Science and Technology, said in a speech at the opening ceremony that the convention has become an important platform where technology intertwines with humanities and science fiction merges with economy.

With its enlightening essence, sci-fi can also help to nurture talents, and spark the curiosity and passion of young minds for scientific exploration, he added.

"We should fully utilize the power of science fiction — the most enriching, vivid, and imaginative part of popular science — to inspire, foresee, and provoke reflection on technological innovation," he said.

## LIFE



# Grand Canal stars in hit TV show

Adapted from prizewinning novel, series zooms in on those whose lives are influenced by the legendary waterway, **Xu Fan** reports.



More than 700 years ago, Italian merchant and explorer Marco Polo trekked to China, leaving a deep impression of the Grand Canal — the country's major waterway artery — and providing the detailed portrayal in the famous book, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, that stirred Europeans' curiosity about the Eastern world.

This also became the inspiration for writer Xu Zechen's best-selling novel *Northward*, which won the 10th Mao Dun Literature Award thanks to its epic recounting of the canal and riverside people over a turbulent span of more than one century.

In the novel, an Italian explorer who regards Polo as his idol ventures to China during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to search for his missing younger brother, embarking on a fate-intertwining journey with several Chinese individuals. Narrated in two parallel lines that switch between ancient and modern times, the skillfully structured tale also recounts the stories of their descendants.

For director Yao Xiaofeng, a native of Jiangsu province — where 687 kilometers of the canal flow through eight cities — the novel captivated him in 2018. The veteran had previously spent years searching for a proper story about the water and people residing along its banks.

With award-winning scriptwriter Zhao Dongling on board to pen the tale, the novel was adapted into a 38-episode, eponymous TV series that began airing on China Central Television's CCTV-1 and streaming site iQiyi earlier last month.

Starring actress Bai Lu and actor Ou Hao, the series — which is set between 2000 and 2014 — has attracted audiences, as evidenced by its related topics garnering 2.26 billion views on the social platform Weibo.

Centering on six neighboring families residing near one section of the canal in Hua'an, Jiangsu province, the drama chronicles their ups and downs, following their children as they move to Beijing to seek education or startup opportunities, riding the wave of the country's unprecedented internet business expansion.

"It's like a destined encounter that led me to helm this drama. The canal was part of my childhood memories. I was a self-taught swimmer, and many of the mischievous acts by the children in the drama are inspired by my own experiences," Yao told China Daily during a telephone interview.

In 2014, the Grand Canal was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, inspiring Yao to read



**Top left:** *Northward* features actor Ou Hao as an ambitious man leaving his hometown to pursue his dreams in Beijing. **Top right:** A still image features actress Bai Lu as a determined woman pursuing her startup business. **Middle:** All the main characters reside in a neighborhood in Huajie (Flower Street) along the bank of a section of the Grand Canal. **Above left:** The two protagonists celebrate the successful inscription of the canal on UNESCO's World Heritage List. **Above right:** A barge operator and his wife, the parents of Ou's character, have dinner at home. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A poster of the popular TV series *Northward*.

several books and watch documentaries about the world's longest artificial waterway.

Delving deeper into Xu's canal-centered novels, such as *Stories of Beijing Western Suburbs* and *Jerusalem*, Yao gained a profound understanding of how the canal — which stretches nearly 3,200 km and flows through 35 cities — serves as an economic and cultural artery for the country, influencing the livelihoods of numerous local residents.

Captivated by the spiritual core of Xu's tales, which depict themes of homesickness and destiny, Yao, alongside major creators, including screenwriter Zhao and chief producer Zhang Shuwei, took a road trip along the section of the canal in Jiangsu province. They collected firsthand information by interviewing nearly 100 boatmen

who live and work on barges.

"The journey took around half a month. Many boatmen's families, consisting of parents and one or two children, live, sleep, and entertain themselves on their boats. They rarely go ashore, unless they need to purchase daily necessities from supermarkets," Yao recalls.

However, what has touched Yao the most is the boatmen who had to leave the water due to the fishing ban in certain sections to protect the local ecosystem. "On the boat, they are like fish in water. But when they are relocated to life on land, you can sense their deep sense of loss, even though their new life is more comfortable and stable," Yao remarks.

Having to leave the environment they know best due to societal changes, many boatmen struggle with feelings of uselessness and a

loss of confidence. These experiences inspired the character played by actor Hu Jun — a once-successful barge operator who faces a personal crisis after the decline of his water transportation business.

Zhang, the chief producer, tells China Daily that she also feels impressed by how boatmen take the boats as their "moving houses".

"The core of their lives revolves around boats, and when they discuss buying a boat, the gravity is akin to how we city dwellers talk about buying an apartment," says Zhang.

During their survey journey through cities such as Hua'an and Yangzhou, Zhao recalls meeting young people who had graduated from foreign colleges and returned to their hometowns to start small businesses, such as opening bookstores.

"We heard many interesting

stories and incorporated some of their elements into the drama," Zhang adds.

The series' major scenes are set in Huajie (Flower Street), a riverside community home to 18 characters from six families. To find the perfect filming location, the crew surveyed multiple sites before selecting Bacheng Old Street in Kunshan — a 200-meter-long, narrow street lined with densely packed, gray-tiled houses.

"Although filming on a soundstage makes it easier to control lighting and the surrounding environment — such as avoiding onlookers — we chose to embrace the challenges of shooting on location and built the characters' homes directly on the street," says Zhang.

This also makes the filming feel more authentic, and full of everyday life. In some long takes, the scenes capture lively children joyfully running from their own courtyards to their neighbors', a bustling wonton stall opening for breakfast and residents sitting on small stools, enjoying their morning meals.

Interestingly, the construction work was kept on to ensure that the props and room decorations updated according to economic and societal development of the times, especially as local families' lives improved following the canal's successful bid for UNESCO's list, which has boosted local tourism and cultural businesses, according to Zhang.

The drama also explores the theme of root-seeking, according to the director.

Ma Siyi, one of six children living in Huajie, is a descendant of the Italian explorer's brother and his Chinese wife. After years of struggling with her appearance and background, she embarks on a journey to Italy in one episode to trace her roots. Raised by her Chinese grandmother after losing her father at a young age, her story highlights the quest for identity.

Similarly, in the final episodes, her five close friends, who mostly move to Beijing after growing up, return to their hometown, symbolizing their own journeys to reconnect with their roots.

"It has been a timeless literary theme revolving around 'who I am' and 'where I come from'. Until the end of the drama, the audience will see how all the characters' fates are bound to their ancestors from over 100 years ago," says Yao.

"Personally, this is the most captivating part of the tale and the reason it has drawn me to adapt it into a TV drama," he adds.

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## A rom-com that makes it worthwhile to spend an evening at home

I found the apt antidote to brain-dead *Friends* on China TV.



**A. Thomas Pasek**  
Second Thoughts

split-second service and cradle-to-crypt digital deep-tissue

metallic massages.

After all, if not for AI, how could I concoct this concoction so fast? Wait, what! Ignore that obvious computer malfunction dear reader!

Anyway, the days when we toiled day and night over washboards, vacuum cleaners and chicken coops are distant memories. Now many of us have fuzzy tech washers, autonomous Room-bas reconnoitering our rugs and Eleme (Hungry?) apps leaving a baker's dozen eggs outside our door.

The upside of all this laborsaving tech is we now somehow have more time to watch high-quality TV, and less time to communicate with loved ones. Mayhap that's why tech drives many of us to rom-com series, to overcompensate for psycho-spiritual deficiencies in our interpersonal lives and skills.

So I recently discovered a genuine gem of a rom-com show that was shot mainly in Beijing in 2017 and began airing the following year.

There are a whopping large 45

episodes, but each installment is simply called E1, E2, etc, without reference to an S, so I'm safely guessing it ran weekly for more than 10 straight months, in that magical last full pre-pandemic year — an era perhaps not too unlike the near century of peace during the "Five Good Emperors" (96-180) in Rome.

Mind you, this series I found hypnotically and addictively must watch. Think Scylla the Sea Siren, seductively perched above the treacherous Aegean shoal. Go ahead, sailor Simon, try not to

look. Thought so!

The series is *Mr Right* (*lianai xiansheng* in Chinese) and stars a high-end dentist/relationship consultant Cheng Hao (Jin Dong) and hotel manager Luo Yue (Maggie Jiang).

The very first scene has Luo bashing Cheng unconscious with a wine bottle after mistakenly thinking he was taking advantage of a tipsy swimmer. Turns out he was merely giving her CPR after she passed out, with of' sawbones ending up cooling his heels in the clink. And their romance only

gets more fraught and star-crossed as time goes on.

But don't fret, lovebirds, the intensity of their ardor has 45 episodes to work itself out. I hated the IQ-point shaving show *Friends* of a few moons ago.

Worry not, *Mr Right* is the anti-*Friends* antidote to sitcom mediocrity. I truly recommend this captivating Chinese rom-com for its stellar dialogue, twists, turns, tears and titters.

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