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CHINA DAILY

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People rally on Saturday near the Washington Monument in Washington, DC, to protest against the policies of US President Donald Trump's administration. The protest was part of the "Hands Off" campaign, which mobilized rallies in all 50 US states and in cities abroad, including in Canada, Mexico and parts of Europe. JOSE LUIS MAGANA / AP

Demonstrations against govt policies sweep US

Domestic measures, tariff announcement draw widespread concern

Protests were held in dozens of cities across the United States on Saturday over the policies unveiled by US President Donald Trump's administration since January.

The protests came as the world has been hit by sweeping new US tariffs introduced last week, sending shock waves through global financial markets and upsetting nations around the globe.

The protesters in the US opposed the Trump administration's policies regarding the economy, immigration and human rights.

Organized by a coalition of more than 150 groups, including civil rights organizations, labor unions and veterans' associations, the coordinated move led to over 1,400 protests nationwide, according to organizers.

Demonstrators gathered at state capitols, federal buildings, congressional offices, Social Security Administration headquarters, city halls and public parks.

The demonstrations featured a wide array of protest signs and slogans, such as "End Oligarchy," "Let Gaza Live" and "Save Social Security".

Some elected officials joined as well. Boston Mayor Michelle Wu said she doesn't want her children and others to live in a world where threats and intimidation are the means of government and values such as diversity are under attack.

Since taking office, the Trump administration has faced criticism as well as support for sweeping policy changes, including mass layoffs in



Protesters hold up signs while marching during Saturday's rally in Los Angeles, in the US state of California. MARIO TAMA / GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

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federal agencies, deportation of immigrants, steep budget cuts and the imposition of tariffs on multiple countries.

Similar protests also took place over the weekend in Canada and Mexico, and in European cities, including Berlin, Paris and London, as hundreds of people took to the streets, where demonstrators voiced opposition to US trade policies.

Widespread concerns

Besides domestic policies, the US' sweeping tariff measures have also triggered widespread concerns.

Global trade will be influenced, as US tariffs will affect trading routes, energy demand and prices, and, by extension, the budgets of oil-producing countries, Al Joundy said, adding that "if the world enters into a full-scale trade war, the global economy could face a recession".

The White House's tariff announcement on Wednesday shook global stock markets, wiping out \$5 trillion in value for S&P 500 Index companies by Friday's close, a record two-day decline.

In the face of the new round of tariffs, some countries hoped to strike a deal with the US and avert economic fallout, while others weighed countermeasures.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was seeking a telephone conversation with Trump, according to media reports, as Japan faces a 24 percent levy.

Vietnam agreed on Friday to discuss a deal with the US after the US announced a 46 percent tariff on Vietnamese imports.

Meanwhile, European Union countries will seek to present a united front in the coming days against the tariffs, likely approving the first set of targeted countermeasures on up to \$28 billion of US imports, ranging from dental floss to diamonds.

The European Commission, which coordinates EU trade policy, was expected to propose to members late on Monday a list of US products to hit with extra duties in response to the Trump administration's steel and aluminum tariffs, rather than the broader reciprocal levies. It is set to include US meat, cereals, wine, wood and clothing as well as chewing gum, dental floss, vacuum cleaners and toilet paper.

Cui Haipei in Dubai, UAE, and Shao Xinying in Beijing contributed to this story.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

CRACKDOWN ON EXCESS RESHAPES CHINA

Campaign launched to bolster compliance with Party's eight-point code of conduct

By XINHUA

The Communist Party of China has launched a four-month campaign to urge its around 100 million members to bolster compliance with a code of conduct that has strengthened the Party over the past 12 years.

This education campaign on the eight-point rules was planned by none other than China's top leader Xi Jinping. During his inspection tour to Southwest China in March, Xi urged Party organs at all levels to meticulously organize and implement the campaign.

He called for fighting misconduct and corruption as a whole, and making relentless efforts to root out the underlying conditions for corruption.

Exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance has been a signature and cornerstone of Xi's leadership. In his first media appearance as the newly

elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee in November 2012, he candidly acknowledged that the Party faced "numerous severe challenges," with corruption being a primary concern.

He immediately started addressing the issue by tackling the deteriorating conduct of officials — some had indulged in extravagance, grown content with empty formalities, or put on an air of bureaucracy.

"The Party's conduct is crucial to winning the people's support and is a matter concerning the Party's survival or demise," Xi said.

In less than 20 days, the eight-point rules were introduced by the CPC central leadership. Spelled out in just over 600 words, the eight-point rules established regulations for Party leaders regarding research tours, meetings, documentation, and other official duties, cracking down on lavish banquets, red carpet events, pomp, entourages, unnecessary meetings, and luxury perks that had once been regarded by

some as typical symbols of power.

According to the eight-point rules, when conducting grassroots field studies, officials should learn from the people on the ground. Ceremonial formalities such as banners and floral arrangements are not allowed. Official meetings and events must be streamlined. Security protocols such as traffic control and road or venue closures should be minimized.

The code of conduct started off with a bang, yielding immediate and remarkable results.

"Few anticipated that the persistent issues of official extravagance plaguing China's political circles would undergo such a striking transformation," Singapore's Lianhe Zaobao newspaper observed.

Over the past decade, the eight-point rules have continuously evolved and today remain a defining hallmark of Xi and the CPC's efforts to ensure good and clean governance.



A long-hed tradition

Son of revolutionary leader Xi Zhongxun, Xi Jinping learned from his father's rigorous and disciplined approach to life and work from a young age.

Four children of the family studied at a boarding school, and every weekend, they took the bus home. The elder Xi had never picked them up with his official car.

He taught his children to live frugally and always maintain a humble and modest attitude.

Over the years, a frugal lifestyle, strict self-discipline, and strong ties with the masses remained with Xi Jinping.

In the late 1980s, when he served as the Party chief of Ningde, a poor prefecture in Fujian Province, Xi Jinping refused to take a new imported car as his vehicle for official use, and insisted on using an old one left by his predecessor.

See *Anti-graft*, page 2

Barring talent undermines Washington's research edge

WORLD WATCH
By Denis Simon

ship in innovation, it cannot afford to alienate or drive away the very talent that fuels its progress.

The universities targeted by the committee include Stanford University, Carnegie Mellon University, Purdue University, the University of Illinois, the University of Maryland, and the University of Southern California. These institutions are renowned for their cutting-edge research and have historically attracted top talent from around the world, including China.

See *Brain drain*, page 3

A US House committee's recent demand for detailed information on Chinese students and scholars from six prominent universities in the United States is a chilling echo of McCarthy-era paranoia.

This action not only defies common sense but also threatens the US' long-term interests, particularly in science and technology. If the US is serious about maintaining its global leader-

Rescue efforts continue in Myanmar despite storms, heavy rainfall

By YAN DONGJIE in Yangon and XU NUO in Beijing

Myanmar's State Administration Council Chairman Min Aung Hlaing visited the camp of Chinese rescue teams in Mandalay on Sunday to express his gratitude to all members of the China Search and Rescue Team, the China International Search and Rescue Team and a rescue team from China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for their full-force disaster response following the magnitude 7.9 earthquake that struck on March 28.

The arrival of Chinese rescue teams to provide support from afar exemplified the profound "Pauk-

phaw" (fraternal) friendship between the two countries, Min Aung Hlaing said.

Chinese rescue teams have extensive experience in cross-border search and rescue operations, and Myanmar looks forward to strengthening communication with China to expand cooperation in emergency response, disaster prevention and mitigation efforts, he added.

As of Sunday night, the earthquake has killed 3,564 people and injured 5,012 in Myanmar, and 210 were still missing, China Central Television quoted local authorities as saying. Chinese rescue teams had successfully rescued nine survivors.

On Saturday night, heavy rain and strong winds battered Mandalay, but China's rescue teams persisted on the front line of earthquake relief efforts.

At around 8 pm on Saturday, the Mandalay and Sagaing regions, which were hit hardest by the earthquake, experienced severe rainfall and strong winds.

With the ongoing threat of aftershocks and the safety hazards posed by damaged buildings, a large number of local residents had to set up temporary shelters in open spaces and along main roads, according to Myanmar media.

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Chinese medical workers check a child's condition in quake-hit Mandalay, Myanmar, on Saturday. TAO RAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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PAGE TWO

Anti-graft: Public trust restored as Xi sets example

From page 1

"We are in a poverty-stricken area, and we should not flaunt wealth or indulge in extravagance," Xi told his staff.

As he once explained, issues of official misconduct often stemmed from the improper handling of private and public interests, along with the abuse of power.

In 1989, Ningde introduced a set of 12 rules promoting clean governance and self-discipline among officials. These straightforward guidelines prohibited misconduct such as excessive wining and dining during inspection tours and the use of official vehicles for personal purposes.

"The power of us Communists, regardless of its extent, is granted by the people and is mandated solely to work for their benefit," Xi said.

In the early 2000s, after Xi was appointed as Zhejiang's provincial Party chief, Sun Guangming served on his staff, overseeing the planning of Xi's inspections.

He recalled that during these inspections, Xi consistently demanded corrections whenever local officials arranged lavish receptions featuring expensive dishes, fine liquor, or gifts of local specialties.

Sun said that based on Xi's instructions, the general office of the provincial Party committee imposed strict standards for official receptions, giving a heads-up along with Xi's itinerary to local authorities before each inspection tour. These requirements, typically consisting of seven or eight points, resembled the eight-point rules now in effect.

Sun believes the rules, adopted at the Political Bureau meeting chaired by Xi on Dec 4, 2012, signify that Xi has ushered in a new era of the Party's full and rigorous self-governance.

Leading by example

When the eight-point rules were established, some questioned whether the campaign was merely a passing fad or a political show. Xi knew enforcement was crucial.

"Promises made must be kept. In the Political Bureau, it (enforcement) starts with me," he said.

Three days after the rules were issued, Xi visited Guangdong Province. He declined the option of staying in a presidential suite, choosing instead to stay in a standard suite at a hotel.

"He told us not to upgrade anything in the room — no new purchases, no extra additions," recalled a manager of the hotel, surnamed Qu.

At the hotel, Xi opted for a simple buffet and finished his meal in less than 20 minutes. This surprised a catering manager surnamed Yang, who noted that the restaurant typically served more dishes even for standard corporate events.

That afternoon, Xi traveled in an unassuming convoy that blended into regular traffic, traveling alongside taxis and buses, following traffic lights. Everything proceeded as usual — no cleared paths, roadblocks, banners, or trailing entourage.

The next day, no red carpets were laid out when Xi attended an event at Lianhuashan Park either.

It was a tone-setting trip that defined the simple style of Xi's over 100 domestic inspections in the following decade. He has consistently eschewed special arrangements, instead opting to follow local customs and minimize disruption to residents.

In rural Shaanxi, he dined with locals on Loess Plateau staples like buckwheat noodles and fried dough. In Gansu, he had five meals on the train to ease the reception burden on local authorities.

As the top commander of the armed forces, Xi once queued up with sailors at a lunch buffet onboard a warship and ate with them.

During his recent inspection trip to Guizhou Province last week, Xi sat on a bench at a drum tower, chatting with folk song singers, batik artists, and college graduates in a mountainous village.

Netizens compared the scene to a series of similar encounters, noting that it reflected Xi's natural and comfortable way of connecting with the public, reinforcing his image as a man of the people — something that has remained unchanged since his teenage years working in the countryside and throughout his political career.

"I often remind myself that all fellow members within the Party have entrusted me to serve as general secretary, so I must hold myself to even stricter standards, leading by example in upholding the Party

Constitution and adhering to Party discipline and rules," Xi said.

He is strict with his family members, too. Xi said anyone who claims to be his friend or relative to seek favors should be firmly rejected and reported without delay.

"Communists don't play by the rules of favoritism in which someone gains power, and people connected to them receive special privileges," he has repeatedly said.

"Don't assume that being a cadre's child makes one immune to consequences. Anyone who violates Party discipline or state laws must be held accountable, and they must be dealt with even more strictly to set an example for the people," Xi said.

He demanded that the implementation of the eight-point rules begin with the 20-plus-member Political Bureau. For years, it has been a standard practice for Political Bureau members to report on their adherence to these rules during the annual criticism and self-criticism session.

Starting small to crack hard nuts

Fighting corruption is no easy task. By starting with officials' indulgence in lavish banquets — a visible symbol of excess and privilege — Xi made a strategic first strike that addresses public discontent.

Even mooncakes were put in the spotlight. A traditional treat during the Mid-Autumn Festival, mooncakes had, at the height of the bribe-giving culture, morphed into a convenient cover for bribery.

Xi applauded the graft-busters' attention to mooncakes. "Targeting mooncakes may seem trivial, but it's actually about tackling the corruption hidden behind such practices," he said.

Observers describe Xi's strategy as tackling issues one by one, making steady progress. By targeting seemingly small matters such as the misuse of public funds for mooncakes, greeting cards, fireworks and so on, the effort moved from simple to complex, gradually making breakthroughs.

To add more weight to the eight-point rules, the Party's top disciplinary watchdog regularly names and shames violators and announces the punishments they receive to deter others.

Such measures serve not only as punishment but also as a wake-up call, pulling offenders back before minor infractions spiral into more serious wrongdoing or even criminal acts.

In a decade, about 1.1 million people were reminded, reprimanded, or punished for violating the rules.

Xi's decision to target misconduct was a well-thought-out move. With misconduct and corruption stemming from the same root, the rules represented a decisive first blow at the heart of the problem.

After assuming the top position, Xi launched an unprecedented anti-corruption storm that has swept every corner of public office, netting both high-flying "tigers" and lower-level "flies." Some of the most senior officials — including former members of the Political Bureau and its Standing Committee, top military brass, and retirees who left their leading positions years ago — have been brought to justice.

Fully aware that corruption is an issue the people resent most, Xi said: "If we don't offend a few thousand corrupt officials, we'll fail 1.4 billion Chinese people."

An overwhelming victory had been achieved, but Xi warned that the fight against corruption and misconduct would never end.

Indeed, new forms of practices dodging the eight-point rules have continuously emerged. Some officials tried to bypass hotels and restaurants to indulge in luxury in private villas and secluded rural retreats. A few even sought extravagance abroad.

Xi used a metaphor to emphasize the long-term nature of improving conduct: "Just as a room needs regular cleaning, the dust in our minds must be cleared away regularly."

At times, he was more direct, saying that "if 10 years aren't enough, then 20 years; if 20 years aren't enough, then 30 years."

Profound transformations

The ban on extravagant official receptions, along with restrictions on expenses for official overseas visits and vehicle use, eased long-standing public frustration. Once-symbolic perks of officialdom — lavish banquets, wasteful junkets and personal use of official vehicles — have largely faded.

With the eight-point rules firmly in place, transparency has improved as gov-



LIMIN / CHINA DAILY

“We must show that we are not only capable of delivering results but also doing so with genuine dedication. Only then can we truly earn the trust of the people.”

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee

ernment departments and agencies continue to upgrade their practices for regularly disclosing expenses. The focus of the public has also shifted, from outrage over excess to scrutinizing how the money saved from curbing extravagance is being reinvested.

Wang Jixia, a former official overseeing vegetable cultivation in Laoling, Shandong Province, was all too familiar with the health problems commonly afflicting government officials: fatty liver, high blood pressure, and soaring cholesterol — all consequences of endless rounds of lavish banquets. "Social drinking twice a day seemed part of the job," he recalled.

But things are different now. The crackdown on extravagant receptions allowed Wang to refocus on his real work. He had more time to visit farmers to assess vegetable production. His health also improved.

Xi also noted such lifestyle changes among officials. "Instead of attending lavish events and downing drinks, many officials now feel a renewed sense of relief," he once said at a meeting.

And the impact of the eight-point rules goes beyond that. As civil servants enhanced their awareness to serve the populace, their push to streamline administration picked up pace, saving time and trouble for businesses and the public.

This transformation has reshaped social norms as well. Simplicity is now valued over extravagance. Restaurants have shifted to offering smaller portions, with diners readily packing up leftovers. Foods that were once overpriced have become affordable again.

Even weddings and funerals are reducing extravagant banquets, choosing simpler and more budget-friendly arrangements instead. Likewise, agencies and institutions now favor modest venues over luxury hotels or tourist resorts for conferences.

The eight-point rules have helped restore public trust. A recent poll revealed that 94.9 percent of respondents approved of the rules.

"We must show that we are not only capable of delivering results but also doing so with genuine dedication," Xi said. "Only then can we truly earn the trust of the people."

Hammering nails

Xi has transformed the Party and the country through the eight-point rules. Yet, he remains keenly aware that the mission is far from accomplished.

"Certain areas have grown lax, some blind spots remain unaddressed, and unhealthy practices have begun to resurge," Xi noted last week during his inspection tour.

One high-profile case in December 2022 underscored the persistence of misconduct.

Six senior officials in northwest China's Qinghai Province held a drinking spree in the dormitory of the provincial Party School, in a blatant violation of rules.

The hours-long drinking session led to severe consequences the next day. One of the officials was hospitalized due to a heart attack, while another died from alcohol intoxication.

Investigations revealed that these offi-

cialists had formed a clique over the years of socializing, leveraging their positions to exchange favors. They all received severe punishments.

Following the 20th CPC National Congress in late 2022, China's disciplinary agencies have handled 768,000 cases of malpractice and corruption at the grassroots level, imposing penalties on 628,000 officials.

In January this year alone, disciplinary agencies nationwide investigated and addressed 16,430 cases of violations of the eight-point rules.

"Conduct issues are recurrent and deeply entrenched; they cannot be resolved overnight or eradicated through a single decisive campaign. We must avoid superficial, short-lived efforts that fade like a passing gust of wind," Xi has warned.

At a top-level anti-corruption meeting in January, Xi identified the deeply intertwined nature of misconduct and corruption as a "prominent problem" and called for an integrated crackdown.

The latest education campaign marks Xi's renewed push to tackle the issue. During talks with local officials last week, he cautioned against mere surface-level compliance, stressing that such an approach runs counter to the eight-point rules themselves.

"Like hammering a nail, we must strike it a few more times," he said, "until the change becomes deeply ingrained in people's behavior and way of thinking."

(By Xinhua writers Zhou Xiaozheng, Xu Lingui, Wang Di, Cheng Zhuo, Yu Xiaohua, Cao Peixian, and Zhang Bowen)

TOP NEWS

Cooperation with China a wiser choice, scholar says

By WANG NING
wangning@chinadaily.com.cn

While competition may dominate China-US relations in the foreseeable future, cooperating with Beijing will be the wiser choice for Washington, said Kishore Mahbubani, distinguished fellow at the National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute.

Mahbubani said that there is no question that the China-US competition will intensify in the years to come, "because the United States, even though it is badly divided now as a country, is only united on one thing, that the United States must stop China." However, the US should work with China rather than seek to halt its development, the former Singaporean diplomat told China Daily in an exclusive interview during the recent Boao

Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025 in Hainan province.

Mahbubani highlighted the significance of China-US cooperation on artificial intelligence. "The United States thought that in the field of artificial intelligence, it was so far ahead," Mahbubani said. "It was confident that no other country could catch up with it and certainly not China, because it had imposed restrictions on the export of the most advanced chips to China." DeepSeek's rapid attainment of performance parity with the US AI models is particularly impressive, he said, warning that AI is poised to impact both domestic societies and international relations, underscoring the importance of constructive dialogue between China and the US on this critical technology.

Regarding US trade policy, Mahbubani pointed out that tariffs

implemented by President Donald Trump's administration will undoubtedly harm the global economy. "But at the same time, I think Trump is using these tariffs as a bargaining tool," he added. "It is possible that he will impose the tariffs on different countries and then withdraw them when he has reached a deal."

Trump last week signed an executive order to impose "reciprocal tariffs" on some trade partners, including a 10-percent "minimum baseline tariff" and higher rates on imports from countries such as China, Vietnam, Canada, Mexico and EU nations.

When asked about China's economic growth target of around 5 percent for 2025, Mahbubani refuted the idea that the Chinese economic growth story is over. He said that China has outpaced other

major economies in investing in "industries of the future", such as electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines and robotics. "It's a huge mistake to think that China's growth story is over," he said, adding that the world's second-largest economy is set to continue to grow, although it may not grow at 8 to 9 percent as it did before. "China will still become the world's largest economy."

Mahbubani, who once served as Singapore's permanent representative to the United Nations, urged the international community to work together to persuade the US that negotiation can lead to more favorable economic outcomes. "Other countries are prepared to negotiate, because we want the United States to be part of the global solution to the challenges of resetting world economic growth," he said.

Abuse of tariff measures likely to backfire

US' move may quicken de-dollarization trend, prompting Treasury sell-offs by trade partners

By ZHOU LANXU
and WANG KEJU

The United States' new tariff push is likely to backfire by accelerating the de-dollarization trend and potentially prompting sell-offs of US Treasuries by major foreign debt holders, leading economists and currency experts said.

"With the abuse of tariff measures, the US is changing itself from a 'maker and defender' of international rules to a 'destroyer and coercer,'" Zhao Zhongxiu, president of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

The US "reciprocal tariffs", which were announced on Wednesday and include a 10 percent "minimum baseline tariff" and higher rates on certain trading partners, are expected to deal a heavy blow to the multilateral trade system and global commercial practices, while leading to greater economic isolation of the US, Zhao said.

All of this will erode US credibility, further dampen the world's confidence in the dollar and push more countries to settle trade in alternative currencies, said Zhao, a professor of international economics.

Furthermore, some trade partners of the US may see reduced dollar income as exports to the US drop, and they may have to sell US Treasuries to obtain the dollar liquidity needed for international payments, Zhao said.

For China, selling US Treasuries could even be considered a possible countermeasure, if necessary, he added.

As of the end of January, foreign holdings of US Treasury securities stood at \$8.53 trillion, with Japan and China being the top two holders at \$1.08 trillion and \$760.8 billion, respectively, according to the US Department of the Treasury.

The Chinese government will continue to take resolute measures to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests, according to a statement released by Xinhua News Agency on Saturday on China's position on opposing US abuse of tariffs.

"We don't make trouble, but we have no fear of trouble," the statement said, adding that the US tariff push is sacrificing the legitimate interests of countries worldwide to serve the US' own hegemonic agenda.

As severe turbulence is set to

unfold in global trade, the UIBE president said China's commitment to fostering a more open, stable market environment and creating more opportunities for mutual benefit will be crucial in avoiding a drastic global economic recession.

Following the US tariff announcement, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the secretary-general of the United Nations, expressed concern over the "rise in economic protectionism" and its impact on the global economy.

Guan Tao, global chief economist at investment bank BOCI China, told China Daily that the "reciprocal tariffs" may increase the risk of a deep global recession, drawing parallels to the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which triggered retaliatory measures, collapsed global trade and deepened the Great Depression.

The recession fears have affected the greenback, as anticipation of US interest rate cuts to counter slower growth weakened the US dollar index, which gauges the greenback's value relative to a basket of currencies, to 102.85 as of Friday's close — down 5.13 percent since the beginning of the year, according to market tracker Wind Info.

In the long run, the US "reciprocal tariffs" are bound to undermine its own currency's global role, said Guan, who is also a former head of the Balance of Payments Department at the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

"To supply global dollar liquidity, the US must run trade deficits. As Washington seeks to reduce deficits through tariffs, global dollar liquidity will tighten, weakening the dollar's international standing," Guan said.

Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, called for Washington to aim for a world in which prosperity is widely shared, rather than one in which only the US thrives while others remain poor.

Chen Wenling, former chief economist at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said that China's vast economic scale will serve as a strong buffer against external pressures, especially as the country prioritizes domestic demand to build a more stable growth model that is less exposed to global trade volatility.

Contact the writers at
zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Racing on snow

A reindeer sled race in progress on Saturday as part of Reindeer Breeder Day festivities in far north Russia's Taymyr Peninsula.
DENIS KOZHEVNIKOV / TASS



Brain drain: Severing academic ties stifles innovation

From page 1

The committee alleges that Chinese researchers are embedding in US institutions to access sensitive technologies with potential military applications.

Once the largest source of international students in the US, with over 370,000 Chinese nationals studying at US universities before the COVID-19 pandemic, China has now fallen to the second spot for the first time in 10 years with more than 270,000 students. Many of these students go on to earn advanced degrees in critical fields, such as artificial intelligence, semiconductor engineering and biotechnology — areas where the US faces stiff competition from China and other global powers.

According to the National Science Foundation, nearly 40 percent of US doctoral degrees in engineering and computer science are awarded to Chinese nationals. The overwhelming majority of these graduates choose to stay in the US, contributing to research and innovation, launching startups and strengthening the US' technological base.

By casting aspersions on Chinese students and scholars, the US Congress risks disrupting this invaluable pipeline. Already, the chilling effect of heightened scrutiny has led to declining applications from Chinese students to US universities, with many opting for the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia instead. The House committee's latest action will only accelerate this trend, pushing more of the world's brightest minds toward competing nations.

If there is one arena in which the US cannot afford to fall behind, it is science and technology. While policymakers focus on restricting Chinese talent, China is rapidly investing in its own research and development. The US, by contrast, is

shooting itself in the foot. Instead of tightening the flow of talent, the US should be doubling down on attracting and retaining the world's best minds — wherever they come from.

Consider the semiconductor industry, where US companies such as Nvidia, Intel and Qualcomm depend on international talent to maintain their edge. Many of these companies rely heavily on Chinese engineers and researchers, many of whom first arrived as students at US universities. Rather than vilifying these individuals, the US should be actively ensuring that they stay, work and innovate in the US rather than taking their expertise and discarding it.

Beyond the immediate damage to the US research ecosystem, the broader push to delink from China in academic and technological exchanges is deeply misguided. Scientific progress does not happen in isolation; it is the result of collaboration, cross-pollination of ideas and global partnerships. US research institutions and corporations have long benefited from their connections to Chinese universities and laboratories. Cutting off these ties in the name of national security would slow innovation on both sides, but it would especially hurt the US, which thrives on an open exchange of knowledge.

Moreover, the notion that severing academic ties with China will somehow enhance US security is flawed. True national security comes not from paranoia, but from maintaining an undeniable lead in technology and innovation. That means fostering an environment that welcomes global talent, supports cutting-edge research, and ensures that the US remains the most attractive place in the world for scientists and engineers.

If history has taught us anything, it is that fear-driven policies often do more harm than good.

During the Cold War, anti-communist hysteria led to the unjust persecution of academics, artists and government officials. Some of the brightest minds of that era — including Nobel laureates — faced scrutiny simply for their alleged political beliefs or national origins. The result? A brain drain that weakened, rather than strengthened, US intellectual and scientific progress.

The parallels today are unmistakable. Singling out Chinese students and scholars based on nationality is not just ethically wrong; it is strategically foolish. It signals to the world that the US is retreating into fear rather than embracing its traditional role as the world's leader in education, research and technological progress.

Different approach

If the US Congress truly wants to safeguard innovation and security, it should take a different approach. First, it should strengthen retention policies instead of making life more difficult for international students. It should expand visa opportunities, fast-track green cards for STEM graduates, and provide incentives for top-tier talent to stay.

Second, it should focus on research integrity, not nationality. National security concerns in research should be addressed through rigorous institutional safeguards, ethical guidelines and stronger cybersecurity measures — not by singling out individuals based on their country of origin.

Third, it should enhance collaboration, not isolation. The US should actively engage in collaborative research with China in areas of mutual interest, such as climate science, public health and space exploration. Scientific engagement is not a weakness — it is a strategic asset.

Fourth, it should promote US research leadership instead of

scapegoating Chinese students. Congress should focus on making US institutions more competitive. Increased federal funding for research, expanded partnerships with the private sector and improvements in STEM education would go much further in strengthening national security than draconian measures targeting foreign scholars. Ironically, we seem to be pointed in the opposite direction.

Last but not least, it should ensure fair and transparent investigations. If there are legitimate concerns about intellectual property theft or espionage, investigations should be conducted with due process, transparency and a focus on actual wrongdoing, rather than broad-based suspicion. Punishing innocent researchers will only weaken US scientific leadership in the long run by destroying the levels of transparency that have allowed us to become an innovation leader.

The US became a global superpower in science and technology because it was open, not closed. It thrived by attracting the best and brightest minds from around the world, not by driving them away. The House committee's approach to Chinese students is not just reminiscent of McCarthyism; it is a direct threat to US' ability to compete in the 21st century. Instead of repeating the mistakes of the past, Congress must chart a smarter course — one that embraces global talent rather than alienating it.

If the US truly wants to win the innovation race, it must recognize that its greatest strength has always been its openness, not its fear.

The author is a nonresident fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a think tank based in Washington, DC, the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Extreme weather



A fallen tree lies on one of the main overpasses on Saturday as firefighters work to remove it during a storm in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Temperatures began to drop on Friday in the region, prompting authorities to issue an extreme weather alert for the city for the first time this year. PABLO PORCIUNCUA / AFP

Quake: 'Unity, strength' of Chinese people inject confidence

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A Chinese rescue team member in Mandalay said on early Sunday that the rain had stopped, but the roads were flooded. The wind had been fierce before the rain, blowing over many of the temporary tents.

A video from Chinese rescue workers in Mandalay showed the heavy rainfall and strong winds

causing tents to sway dangerously before quickly collapsing in the powerful wind. People were seen rushing for cover in the pouring rain, with a Chinese man urgently shouting: "Evacuate immediately, do not try to secure the tents!"

The extreme weather has also caused power outages in several areas where electricity had just been restored.

Despite the stormy conditions, Chinese rescue teams carried on their work.

Xu Jingxia, a member of the Blue Sky Rescue Team from China, who had arranged buses for Chinese rescue teams in Yangon soon after the earthquake, traveled to Mandalay with fellow rescuers on Saturday upon hearing of the storm.

Chinese rescue teams braved the

rain to set up tents for local residents, said Xu. "The situation here is still OK — at least everyone is safe. I hope everyone will rest assured."

Yu Birong, a resident in Mandalay who volunteered to work with the Chinese Red Cross International Emergency Response Team after the quake, expressed gratitude that the team had set up tents in the relocation area, which allowed people to

stay safe amid Saturday's storm.

Zhu Hongzhan, a member of the Mandalay branch of the Myanmar Yunnan (China) Chamber of Commerce and a volunteer with the Chinese Red Cross response team, said, "The unity and strength of the Chinese people have provided great help and encouragement to everyone, giving us the confidence to overcome this difficult situation."

The Myanmar Department of Meteorology and Hydrology issued a warning for potential heavy rainfall nationwide on Sunday and Monday,

advising the public to remain vigilant for extreme weather conditions such as strong winds, thunderstorms and hail.

Chinese rescue and medical teams in Mandalay have also warned local people to be cautious of the risk of the transmission and outbreak of infectious diseases including dengue fever, a mosquito-borne illness.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at
xuniao@chinadaily.com.cn

CHINA

Initiative to help workers improve

Over 3 million industrial laborers will receive financial support for education

By LI SHANGYI
lishangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

More than 3 million industrial workers in China will receive financial support for continuing education by 2030 under a nationwide initiative aimed at improving workforce skills, according to a guideline released on Thursday.

The document, jointly issued by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, and the All-China Federation of Industry and

Commerce, lays out plans to help industrial workers pursue further education and enhance their qualifications.

At least 300 programs will be established to help workers boost their academic credentials and vocational skills, the guideline said. More than 3 million eligible workers, including at least 2 million migrant workers, will receive financial aid for continuing and non-degree education.

The initiative seeks to promote lifelong learning among industrial workers and encourage them to

upgrade their capabilities, contributing to the development of a world-class workforce, according to the guideline.

China has about 402 million workers, with industrial workers accounting for about half the total workforce, according to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

The initiative was officially launched on Wednesday in Beijing. Since 2016, the trade union federation and the Ministry of Education have implemented a program to improve the educational levels of migrant workers, which has produced notable results.

As of June 2024, trade unions nationwide had invested a total of 1.12 billion yuan (\$154 million) to

help more than 2.4 million migrant workers upgrade their educational qualifications and skills.

The newly released guideline expands the initiative to include all industrial workers and outlines five key objectives: innovating talent training models, enhancing learning platforms, expanding educational resources, improving the recognition and transfer of learning outcomes, and encouraging greater enterprise involvement.

The document calls for collaboration among government bodies, trade unions, businesses, educational institutions and society to strengthen workforce training.

Schools and companies are encouraged to jointly establish off-campus teaching or training centers for continuing education.

"Specialized programs and projects tailored to industrial workers that are closely aligned with industrial, supply and innovation chains should be developed. Existing platforms, such as the national smart vocational education platform and the Workers' Home app, should be leveraged to build a national smart learning platform for industrial skills," the guideline said.

Enterprises are also encouraged to increase investment in worker education and support paid learning opportunities, it said.

New plant species discovered in Jiangxi

By ZHAO RUINAN in Nanchang
zhaorunan@chinadaily.com.cn

Researchers have discovered a new plant species in Jiangxi province, expanding scientific knowledge of the plant kingdom and boosting biodiversity conservation efforts in the country.

The findings were published on March 14 in the international botanical journal *PhytoKeys*, marking the first scientific record of the species.

The newly identified plant, *Sedum orientalinense*, belongs to the *Sedum* genus within the *Crassulaceae* family. It is a perennial herbaceous plant that grows 6 to 18 centimeters tall, featuring semi-erect stems with four to eight nodes and yellow petals. It blooms from June to July.

"This discovery challenges the long-held misconception that this group of plants belonged to a species unique to Japan," said Xiong Yu, a researcher at the nature reserve and co-author of the research paper.

Xiong said the discovery highlights Jiangxi's rich biodiversity and provides essential data for conservation and taxonomic research.

Last year, a team from Sun Yat-sen University and Zhejiang University conducted a biodiversity survey in the Matou Mountain National Nature Reserve in Jiangxi and discovered a new type of fleshy herbaceous plant. After two years of tracking and investigation, the team collected living specimens and molecular materials, comparing them with 278 historical specimens. They confirmed that it was an unreported species.



Sedum orientalinense is found in Jiangxi province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"Previously, this species had been found in Jiangxi, but researchers mistakenly believed that *Sedum orientalinense* and *Sedum makinoi* in Japan were the same species. However, our research uncovered significant differences, confirming that the species in Jiangxi is indeed new," Xiong said.

"Also, *Sedum makinoi* is not exclusive to Japan. It was first discovered there but is also found in China in places such as Anhui and Zhejiang provinces," he added.

Wild populations of *Sedum orientalinense* have been located in limestone habitats in Matou Mountain in Jiangxi and in some areas of Zhejiang province. The research team named the species *Sedum orientalinense* to reflect its geographical origins.

The plant has specific habitat requirements, thriving in biodiversity regions and primarily growing on rock walls surrounded by mosses and lichens, researchers said.

Sedum orientalinense is mainly used as ornamental vegetation and for rock greening, said Xiong, adding that it has no known medicinal value yet.

The Matou Mountain National Nature Reserve in Jiangxi is a crucial biodiversity conservation area within the Wuyi Mountains. It is home to 2,934 species of higher plants and 445 species of terrestrial vertebrates, earning it the reputation of a "rare gene bank for flora and fauna."

China is an important distribution area for *Crassulaceae* plants, with about 240 native species across 10 genera. These plants play key roles in ecological restoration, urban greening and the horticultural industry.

Unnamed martyr reburied after 76 years in Yichang

By LI SHANGYI in Beijing and LIU KUN in Wuhan

An unnamed fallen soldier whose grave had been guarded by local villagers for 76 years was reburied at the martyrs' cemetery in Yichang, Hubei province.

Feng Jiajing, a 74-year-old villager and former head of the local militia, had been looking after the martyr's grave in Lianfeng village in Yichang's Wujiagang district.

"I have heard the hero's story since I was little," he said.

In July 1949, during the battle to liberate Yichang, a People's Liberation Army unit was led by a tall, bulky man in his early 30s with a Henan province accent. The unit was attacked during a reconnaissance mission aided by a local guide, Liu Guojun.

As the attack unfolded, the officer shielded Liu with his body. His thigh was blown apart in an explosion, and he later succumbed to blood loss. The next day, villagers bought a coffin and buried him. Since then, the grave has been guarded by the community, and the story has been passed down through generations.

"The grave was moved to the mountain under my care. I feel it is my responsibility to protect it," Feng said. His home is less than a kilometer away, and he visited the site regularly.

The village frequently organized efforts to clear weeds and branches around the grave.

"When I was in elementary school, every Qingming Festival, we would come to the grave to pay our respects, and our teacher would tell us about the heroic deeds of the unnamed man," said Feng Qing, Par-

ty secretary of Lianfeng.

"Everyone in the village knows that here lies a hero who sacrificed his life for the liberation of Yichang and the protection of the villagers," he said. "Taking care of the martyr's grave is an unspoken agreement shared by the entire village."

Jiang Jinping, director of the veteran affairs department of Wujiagang, said the grave came to the department's attention during a routine patrol last year.

On March 21, at a ceremony honoring revolutionary martyrs in Yichang, the remains of three martyrs, including the unknown soldier, were reburied in the cemetery.

"Some of the martyr's personal items were transferred to the municipal museum for preservation," Jiang said. "We also invited Zhang Qun, an associate professor in the archaeology department at Wuhan University's School of History, to clean the remains and extract DNA samples to help identify the martyr's family."

Zhang said his team used forensic archaeology and interdisciplinary techniques to analyze the remains, determine gender, estimate age and examine trauma patterns. The findings were cross-referenced with historical records to support identification efforts.

In recent years, Yichang has worked to protect and manage martyrs' memorials, improve the cemetery and consolidate scattered graves. The city is also running a project to trace the families of fallen soldiers, with relatives of five martyrs identified so far, according to Jiang.

Contact the writers at
lishangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

Eight heroes returned by South Korea identified

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

China has identified eight more Chinese People's Volunteers martyrs among the remains returned from South Korea, bringing the total number of identified heroes to 28, according to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

The newly identified martyrs — Cao Yunchang, Xu Siyuan, Chen Shubin, Xi Genxiang, Fang Jinyao, Zhang Zhiming, Liao Tianliang and Yin Shuqin — died during the battles in Cheorwon county in South Korea's Gangwon province, shortly before the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement in July 1953, the ministry said in a news release.

While two of the fallen warriors — Chen and Xi — were identified through personal seals found with their remains, the other six were confirmed through comprehensive analysis combining historical records of their units, forensic anthropology examinations and relic investigations.

Liu Liwen, an official at the ministry's martyr remains search and identification center, explained that his workers cross-referenced excavation site data, personal effects and military archives to reach preliminary conclusions, and then gave the information to local authorities to find potential relatives and collect DNA samples from them. Final confirmation came through DNA

matching between remains and relatives, and the results were verified by experts.

He said that significant technological breakthroughs have enabled such identifications. The national DNA laboratory for martyrs has developed genetic analysis methods such as domestically produced high-throughput sequencing reagents. Meanwhile, researchers selected and tested hundreds of formulations, and now they can extract viable DNA from degraded remains.

The ministry has also established dual DNA databases containing genetic profiles from both remains and probable family members, Liu said.

In another development, the ministry has recently released information about 10 unidentified CPV martyrs returned from South Korea. The public is encouraged to provide tips to veteran affairs authorities.

Led by Peng Dehuai, commander in chief of the CPV, nearly 2.9 million Chinese soldiers fought in the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53). More than 197,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians recruited by the CPV died in combat.

South Korea began recovering the remains of the fallen Chinese soldiers in 2000 and started returning them to China in 2014. Since then, it has returned the remains of 981 Chinese soldiers.

Flavors of spring



Workers use a large pot with a diameter of 3 meters to cook 10 types of seafood, including swimming crabs, razor clams, abalone and mantis shrimp, at a seafood festival in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, attracting many tourists to taste the "freshness of spring" on Saturday. WANG JIANMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Mourners rely on AI to reconnect with lost relatives during Qingming Festival

TIANJIN — In the days surrounding Qingming Festival, when Chinese people pay tribute to the dead, Zhang Ming (pseudonym) found himself able to speak again with his late grandfather — through an AI-generated digital avatar.

"How are you doing over there, Grandpa?" Zhang asked. The response was made in a familiar voice: "I'm doing well, playing chess and chatting with old friends. Make sure you take care of yourself!"

Zhang, a resident of Tianjin, used an app called Lingyu, or "Spiritual Encounter", to create a digital clone of his grandfather by uploading photos, voice recordings and some background information. The AI processed the data to generate a lifelike avatar capable of voice and even video conversations in a regional dialect.

"It feels like I'm talking to him again," Zhang said. "My family finds comfort in it."

Recent advances in AI allow users to recreate deceased loved ones with startling realism. Some platforms generate short memorial videos, while others offer interactive avatars capable of mimicking speech patterns and personas of the deceased.

The trend gained public attention after a Chinese variety show featured a celebrity using AI to simulate a conversation with his late-in-laws, moving his wife to tears. The show vividly presented the

once fictional "digital resurrection" to audiences, bringing the topic into the public domain. The topic has gained greater relevance this year against the backdrop of AI's turbocharged development.

For many, these digital recreations offer a new form of emotional solace. E-commerce platforms in China now host a growing market for such services, ranging from basic voice replication to real-time "video calls" with AI versions of the dead.

Gao Wei, founder of Lingyu, said the app uses cutting-edge AI to simulate humanlike conversations and emotional recognition. Though only launched two months ago, it has already attracted nearly 10,000 users, with hundreds signed up with the paid service "Digital Life" featured by the app.

"As AI evolves, emotional interactions with multimodal generative AI will become even more immersive," Gao predicts.

But this AI application is not without controversy. While some see the technology as a healing tool, others warn of potential risks.

"If people become trapped in digital grief, it may distort their perception of real-world relationships and emotional health," said Gui Mumei, a sociologist at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences.

Legal experts also cited privacy concerns. Wang Bin, a law professor at Nankai University, noted

that "AI resurrection" involves sensitive personal data, which includes biometric details such as voices and images, as well as biographical information. If misused, surviving relatives could encounter privacy violations or defamation.

China's law regarding protection of personal data stipulates that citizens can access, copy, correct and delete the personal data of their deceased close relatives, provided such actions serve their lawful and legitimate interests.

There were instances where businesses or individuals "digitally revived" deceased celebrities for commercial interests, which is not only off-putting but also likely illegal, Wang said.

To govern AI-generated content, China has introduced regulations such as provisions on the administration of the deep synthesis of internet-based information services and the interim regulation of the management of generative AI services.

With AI resurrection related services in their infancy, supervision over the industry needs to be constantly reformed to fend off technical and ethical risks.

"The challenge is to ensure that this technology serves the emotional needs of people without crossing ethical boundaries," said Lin Xiao, an AI researcher at Shanghai Normal University.

XINHUA



Holiday ends

Passengers arrive at the Shanghai Hongqiao Railway Station in Shanghai on Sunday, the last day of the Qingming Festival holiday. Railways were expected to transport about 20 million passenger trips on that day. CHEN MENGZE / FOR CHINA DAILY

CHINA



Visitors line up and take turns to wash their hands in the water gushing out of one of the fountainheads of Nanlao Spring at Jinci Temple in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, on March 24. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Improved water management brings old spring back to life

30 years after Nanlao dried up, waters of ancient well flow once more

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and CHEN LIANG

Over 1,200 years ago, renowned poet Li Bai wrote of Nanlao Spring at Jinci Temple: "The flowing water of Jinci is clean like jade."

Sadly, this flowing water dried up some 31 years ago due to the falling water table.

However, recently, several fountainheads of Nanlao Spring in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, have come back to life and the jade-like waters are flowing again, attracting numerous visitors.

Zhai Tianhu, 82, who has lived near Jinci Temple since childhood, welcomed the resurgence of the spring.

"The water flow is very strong this time," Zhai said.

"Seeing this water makes me very happy, so I often come back to take a look."

Excessive extraction of groundwater and the overdevelopment of coal mines in the surrounding areas led to the drying up of the spring in the 1990s.

After decades of persistent management and protection efforts, the spring finally began flowing again in May 2023, over three decades after it had stopped.

The groundwater level at Nanlao



A senior visitor washes his hands in spring water at Jinci Temple on March 24.

Spring, also known as the Never Aging Spring, is now over a meter over the height of several of the spring's fountainheads.

Also known as "the first spring of the Shanxi region", the spring has been used and admired for over 2,400 years.

It is located within Jinci, the earliest existing royal ancestral temple in China, established in the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-771 BC) to honor the founding marquis of the Jin State, Shuyu of Tang, and his mother, Yi Jiang.

At the end of last year, the Jinci Temple and Tianlong Mountain scenic area was designated a national 5A-level tourist attraction

by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

"The resurgence of Nanlao Spring is a matter of great joy for the people of Shanxi," said Wang Runmei, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and Party secretary of the Taiyuan Public Facilities Construction and Management Center's No 2 Road and Drainage Maintenance Station.

"This is a new achievement in ecological environment protection in the Yellow River Basin by Shanxi, and a significant milestone in groundwater management and spring protection in North China. It reflects the further improvement of Shanxi's ecologi-

cal environment," Wang said.

She explained that following the spring drying up, Shanxi shut down nearby coal mines and enterprises that consume a lot of water, and carried out water resource replacement projects.

These efforts ultimately led to the resurgence of the spring.

Entrepreneur Zheng Weihua, on his first visit to Jinci, was deeply impressed by the spring's splendor. He said he was not only attracted by the spring but also greatly appreciated the ancient architecture and millennia-old cypress trees surviving at the site.

He said that the fresh air and rich cultural heritage make the area ideal for developing the healthcare industry.

Guo Baoping, director at the Jinci Museum, said, "We actively cooperate with the water conservancy department to monitor the water flow of the spring every day, while also monitoring the water temperature and quality."

Shanxi, known as the "water tower of North China", serves as a water source conservation area for Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province.

The project to revive Nanlao Spring embodies Shanxi's efforts in water management and water conservation, said Liu Yuwei, director of the Taiyuan Culture Relics Bureau. "Nanlao Spring carries deep cultural emotions and beautiful memories for the people of Shanxi," Liu said.

Contact the writers at zhuwxingxin@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese surgeon gives expertise to Zimbabwe healthcare workers

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

Zhang Yueming, a surgeon at the Third Hospital of Changsha, Hunan province, embarked on his first mission to Africa in March last year.

Initially planning a one-year stint, he voluntarily extended his service until March 2026, driven by the urgent need to bridge gaps in Zimbabwe's healthcare system and his commitment to fostering Sino-African solidarity.

The 42-year-old is a member of the 21st Chinese (Hunan) Medical Aid Team to Zimbabwe.

The 11-person team recently received the Medal for Meritorious Service, the nation's highest honor for meritorious service to Zimbabwe.

Upon arriving at Parirenyatwa Hospital, Zimbabwe's largest public hospital, Zhang observed outdated surgical practices.

Determined to elevate standards, he emphasized reduced trauma and faster recovery. His first demonstration, a high-stakes surgery on a 43-year-old woman weighing over 100 kilograms, became a turning point.

The patient's gallbladder was severely inflamed and adhered to surrounding tissues, complicating the procedure.

With antiquated equipment and unfamiliar staff, Zhang meticulously navigated the challenges, completing the surgery in under 30 minutes, earning admiration from local colleagues.

"My goal is to share China's advanced medical expertise so Zimbabwean people can benefit," he said.

The team has faced logistical nightmares: borrowing ultrasonic scalpels from private hospitals, improvising with scarce surgical supplies and navigating delays caused by patients' inability to afford treatment, he said.

Beyond surgeries, Zhang has prioritized capacity-building. During his first year, he conducted over 100 procedures, trained local surgeons through hands-on work-

shops and organized virtual academic forums to introduce cutting-edge techniques.

The surgeon's contributions have extended beyond hospital walls, with him leading medical outreach to remote regions, braving arduous 10-hour drives to treat over 400 patients, often in makeshift clinics overwhelmed by crowds.

"Chinese doctors are trusted here," he said, reflecting on the gratitude of locals who line up for free consultations and minor surgeries.

The decision to extend his service stemmed from professional and personal convictions.

Life in Zimbabwe tested his resilience. Frequent power outages, water shortages and the omnipresent risk of HIV exposure demanded constant vigilance.

"Protective gear is stifling, but necessary," he said.

Despite these hardships, Zhang has found warmth in Zimbabwe's temperate climate, the professionalism of local medical workers and the profound appreciation of communities he has served in.

"Zimbabwe's beauty — rolling highlands reminiscent of China's Yunnan province — and the warmth of its people offered solace," he said.

Personal sacrifices weighed heavily. Video calls with his 9-year-old son in Changsha were intermittent due to spotty Wi-Fi, yet his son's pride in his father's work fueled Zhang's resolve.

Zhang said he feels very happy that his son understands his career and his choice to leave home and go to Africa, but he is not sure that he wants his son to follow his path, because he worries about the toll this career takes.

The surgeon said he's seeing the great work of the medical teams being passed on. "We aim to leave behind a 'permanent medical team' — a skilled local workforce," he said.

Zhou Youfang contributed to this story.



Zhang Yueming checks the condition of a patient at Parirenyatwa Hospital in Zimbabwe. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Sanyuesan Festival blends heritage with modernity in Guangxi

NANNING — Just days ahead of Sanyuesan, a traditional ethnic festival in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, a unique musical endeavor unfolded at a kindergarten in the heart of the regional capital Nanning.

Inside the brightly lit auditorium, Huang Shaozheng, a retired English professor in his 60s and a Zhuang culture advocate, along with Jake Philip Tucker, a 28-year-old English teacher and trained musician from the United Kingdom, were on a quest to blend the timeless folk songs of Liu Sanjie, the legendary "Song Fairy" and a cultural icon of the local Zhuang culture, with contemporary flair, bridging heritage and modernity.

Sanyuesan Festival is the perfect platform for this cultural fusion. Held annually on the third day of the third month of the Chinese calendar, this beloved event, which fell on March 31 this year, transformed the region into a kaleidoscope of music, dance and tradition, drawing together China's rich array of ethnic groups.



Children play drums and gongs during a Sanyuesan Festival celebration held at a public square in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on April 1. LIU ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

The pupils, in the distinctly colored costumes of the Zhuang, Han, Yao and Hui ethnic groups, turned the campus into a lively parade of Guangxi's rich cultural tapestry.

"Throwing red embroidered balls is a Sanyuesan tradition," explained Sherry Zeng, the principal of the kindergarten. "Historically thrown as tokens of affection, here they

remind the children of the culture of the place where they live."

In the midst of this festive ambience, Huang and Tucker collaborated to breathe new life into Liu Sanjie's songs.

"Try this: 'Follow me all the way. On both banks of the river, we are singing along,'" suggested Huang with a patient tone.

With a ukulele slung casually over his shoulder, Tucker adjusted the rhythm and responded.

"How about this? I put a little Western spin onto it," Tucker added.

Their partnership was a seamless blend of tradition and innovation as Huang's profound knowledge of Zhuang culture and Liu Sanjie's legacy guided Tucker's contemporary musical flair.

The session crescendoed as the kindergarten students joined in. Clad in colorful attire, the children joined Huang and Tucker in a joyful chorus: "By the mountains, under the stars, we sing as one," they sang, accompanied by Tucker's ukulele and the melodies they have known since infancy.

Their voices resonated with a cultural essence at the heart of Sanyuesan Festival.

"It's about giving them a sense of pride," said Huang as he gazed with friendly happiness at the engaged faces of the children. "They're the future of this culture."

Zeng said these young voices, each a small part of Guangxi's ethnic

mosaic, gain the dual experience of a celebration and a lesson in heritage.

Liu Sanjie is more than just a figure of the distant past. Her legend, tracing back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907), tells of a young woman who taps into the wellspring of music to face down oppression, earning her a place as an immortal symbol of freedom among the Zhuang ethnic group.

During Sanyuesan, her songs, steeped in romance and reverence for Guangxi's breathtaking landscapes, echo across the festival, threading tradition through the pulsating festivities.

Huang's ambitious project to translate these melodies into English is no small feat.

"It's particularly demanding to preserve the thematic and poetic integrity of the originals while making them easily accessible to those who don't even speak a word of Mandarin," he said.

Yet, his efforts are paying off, as Liu Sanjie's voice begins to echo far beyond her native mountains with the publication of *Liu Sanjie and*

Her Free Mountain Songs in 2021, which renders the scripts of Liu Sanjie opera and other popular Liu Sanjie ballads into modern English with singable lyrics and musical notation.

Australian writer Mark Tredinnick, in the preface to a book of Liu's folk tunes that Huang translated, wrote of allowing one to "hear the heartbeat of the earth — how the earth loves us and how it would be loved in return."

The kindergarten event was a microcosm of Sanyuesan and Huang's broader vision: to bridge Guangxi's ethnic heritage with international appreciation.

As the session ended, the children's cheers mingled with the fading notes of the ukulele.

"It brings people together," Huang said. "Through these songs, we're not just preserving our past, we're inviting others to join us. That's what culture is all about."

Tucker said: "This kind of cross-language exchange is super fun and important. It helps introduce the authentic Zhuang culture to new audiences like me and other expats, and hints at its potential to go global."

XINHUA

Editor's note: China Daily is publishing a series illustrating the country's efforts to achieve its carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals.

CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

By HOU LIQIANG

houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

National legislators and environmental experts have called for streamlined policies to promote secondhand exports — particularly smartphones — to meet a surge in global demand, a rise in domestic trade-in programs, and the climate benefits of the reuse of goods.

In addition to tax incentives, they emphasized the need to accelerate the development of standards for secondhand exports to ensure product quality and market credibility.

They made suggestions on the issue to the National People's Congress against the backdrop of the country's large-scale consumer goods trade-in initiative, which is expected to result in oversupply in the country's burgeoning secondhand market.

China this year announced a raft of extra measures to promote the consumer goods trade-in program amid a broader push to boost consumption and spur economic growth.

According to a guideline released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance in January, China will expand the number of home appliance categories eligible for subsidies to 12 this year, from eight last year.

In March, the State Council unveiled an action plan to spur the large-scale trade-in and upgrade of consumer goods.

Wang Yi, a member of the NPC Standing Committee and the NPC Committee of Environmental Protection and Resources Conservation, expects a sharp surge in the number of secondhand smartphones on the market.

The stockpile of discarded mobile phones in China already exceeds 2 billion phones, and it is expected to keep growing by 400 million annually, according to Wang.

"As 5G becomes universal and the trade-in program gains further momentum, China is bracing for a dramatic rise in discarded mobile phones," he said.

Liu Rui, an environmental expert with the Yangtze Delta Region Institute at Tsinghua University, Zhejiang, expects to see an oversupply of many products with high reuse value.

The initiative significantly expanded the secondhand market last year, according to Liu, head of the institute's Department of Ecological Environment, who is also an NPC deputy.

Last year, over 6.8 million vehicles, more than 62 million home appliances, and over 1.38 million electric bicycles were involved in the trade-in initiative, she noted.

She emphasized that the surge in discarded secondhand goods has overwhelmed domestic recycling and resale networks, straining their capacity.

End-of-life vehicle recycling, for example, hit 8.46 million vehicles last year, jumping year-on-year by 64 percent, she said.

"While the trade-in policy has unlocked domestic demand potential, it has also accelerated the saturation of the secondhand market, creating new opportunities for



Customers browse a store that recycles used smartphones in Beijing in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Used smartphones to answer calls to action

Secondhand goods export markets to be expanded to make up for oversupply

emerging business models such as cross-border exports of used products," she said.

Wang agreed. "Promoting the export of secondhand mobile phones can alleviate China from its disposal burden, unlock idle resources and increase revenue," he said.

He noted the potential of such exports in contributing to the domestic and international endeavor to reach carbon neutrality.

By extending the lifespan of mobile devices and reducing resource consumption and environmental pollution, the use of secondhand phones can significantly improve resource efficiency, he said.

Quoting an estimate from Paris-based telecom company Orange, formerly known as France Telecom, Wang said reuse is a powerful driver for promoting green consumption and a crucial pathway toward green and low-carbon transformation.

The estimate shows that, compared to new products, the recycling of secondhand products can reduce carbon emissions by 90 percent.

Wang said there is a huge demand for secondhand phones from the international market.

"Driven by targets in carbon reduction, the European market is rapidly shaping a new landscape for secondhand electronics consumption," he said.



Visitors learn about household appliances at an exhibition on products involved in the ongoing national trade-in program in Qingdao, Shandong province, in May. LI ZIHEG / XINHUA



A worker introduces a machine that evaluates used smartphones for recycling at a shopping mall in Chongqing in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Orange, for instance, has set goals to cut emissions by 45 percent by 2030 and to reach net-zero emissions by 2040. To realize the goals, the company is aggressively expanding its refurbished cell-phone business, aiming to source 10 percent of its total sales from secondhand devices this year.

This means that Orange alone will create an annual demand for over a million high-quality refurbished cellphones. "As global climate action intensifies, such demand is expected to grow further," Wang said.

He also noted the massive demand for secondhand cellphones in Southeast Asia and Africa. "Consumers in these areas prioritize cost-effective communication devices to meet basic needs. China's refurbished cellphones, with their functional reliability and competitive pricing, perfectly align with the requirements in these markets," Wang said.

Some developed economies such as Europe, the United States and Japan have introduced policies to support the export of secondhand mobile phones, he said. The US, for example, has developed guidelines for the export of secondhand equipment to systematically address export challenges.

The International Data Corporation has estimated that worldwide shipments of used smartphones,

including officially refurbished and used smartphones, reached 309.4 million units in 2023, up by 9.5 percent from 2022.

It projects that used smartphone shipments will reach 431.1 million units in 2027, with a compound annual growth rate of 8.8 percent from 2022 to 2027.

Research by the China Association of Circular Economy indicates that approximately 80 million secondhand mobile phones were recovered through formal channels in China last year. With an average unit price of 2,000 yuan, the market size of secondhand mobile phones in China could reach 160 billion yuan, it said.

However, China still needs to overcome a series of obstacles to fully tap into the vast international market for secondhand mobile phones.

China currently lacks a comprehensive system of unified national standards for secondhand mobile phones, covering key areas such as device testing and valuation, requirements for sales platform's after-sales service, and export quality certification, Wang said.

The domestic standards have yet to align effectively with internationally recognized certification systems, resulting in higher compliance costs for businesses, he added.

Currently, exporters have to grapple with heavy tax liabilities at home and abroad, eroding profitability.

The combined tax rates for such exports are 30 to 50 percent in China, including 13 percent value-added tax, said Wang. Meanwhile, some countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative impose 10 to 25 percent tariffs on secondhand phones, which far exceed those in Europe and the US.

Liu recommended that national authorities, including the State Taxation Administration and the ministries of finance and commerce, formulate policies to progressively extend the preferential 0.5-percent VAT rate, currently applicable to used cars, to all secondhand goods.

She also suggested that the ministries of foreign affairs and commerce negotiate bilateral or multilateral agreements with BRI countries to lower tariffs and consumption taxes on secondhand goods.

Another priority is to optimize customs clearance processes for secondhand products, drawing on the export policies for used cars, she said.

Relevant authorities should reference the used car export policy to appropriately reduce or waive the requirement for submitting historical VAT invoices for secondhand goods during customs declaration, she noted.

Liu recommended the establishment of a green channel for secondhand goods exports to enhance clearance efficiency and bring costs down for businesses.

Pilot programs in regions with strong business ecosystems and mature markets for secondhand goods — such as Shanghai, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Beijing — can be used as models to gain practical insights into the process of exporting used products, she added.

China, Iraq establish joint research lab to ensure energy stability

By HOU LIQIANG in Beijing and LIU KUN in Wuhan

Despite having the world's fourth-largest oil reserves and abundant solar energy resources, Iraq struggles with frequent power cuts. A new partnership between China and Iraq, however, is hoping to address the problem.

Wuhan University in Hubei provincial capital Wuhan and the University of Baghdad in Iraq have joined hands to tap the potential of solar power and smart technology in tackling the Middle East state's electricity crisis.

The two education institutions will establish a joint laboratory for smart microgrids and energy storage.

Approved by China's Ministry of Science and Technology late last year, the joint laboratory is supported by Wuhan University's School of Electrical Engineering and Auto-

mation on its Chinese side.

The lab will leverage the school's advanced experimental facilities — including those for power system dynamic simulation, electricity equipment and system safety, and power grid environmental protection — to provide optimal research conditions in China, according to a statement from the school, responding to questions from China Daily.

The University of Baghdad plans to allocate 1,000 square meters of dedicated research and office space for the joint laboratory, the statement said. Meanwhile, its existing scientific facilities and equipment will also be made available to the joint lab.

As an Iraqi, Ghamgeen Izat Rashed, an associate professor at the University of Baghdad, expressed his high hopes that the joint lab will help address the electricity crisis and reduce carbon

dioxide emissions in his motherland.

Due to its weak power grid infrastructure, Iraq struggles to balance electricity generation and consumption, he said. The country faces electricity shortages during peak consumption hours, largely attributed to low electricity prices, while significant amounts of electricity are wasted during off-peak periods.

"Iraq is plagued by high carbon dioxide emissions and increasingly severe environmental pollution because it is heavily dependent on fossil fuels for power generation," he added.

The joint lab envisions a three-step approach to addressing the problem.

Fang Hualiang, an associate professor at Wuhan University, said the first step aims to install solar and electricity storage systems for each Iraqi household to leverage abun-

dant solar resources.

He emphasized the initiative's economic feasibility, noting that the cost for a 10-kilowatt household solar photovoltaic system accompanied by a power storage battery with a capacity of 10 kilowatt-hours is about \$7,000, compared to the average Iraqi household's annual income of \$6,000 to \$10,000.

Despite its cheap electricity prices, Iraq's severe power shortages force most Iraqi households to rely on their own power generators to meet their needs, Fang said.

This results in average monthly expenses of \$35 to \$100, with some families spending up to \$300 per month, he added.

The second step involves smarter grids that can better balance supply and demand, he said. In this step, electricity waste will be minimized and the power grid will be significantly stabilized with the deployment of smart technologies such as

a micro-grid balancing mechanism.

With the low-carbon transition and carbon neutrality as its goal, the third step envisions precisely balancing supply and demand for renewable energy.

Using blockchain technology, this step will see a carbon credit-based incentive mechanism introduced, rewarding families that conduct energy-saving actions with tradable "digital assets", Fang added.

He said that two companies — one registered in Iraq and the other in China — are authorized to utilize all intellectual property from the joint laboratory for industrial applications, as agreed by the two universities.

With in-depth knowledge of the Iraqi market, the two companies can provide front-line market insights to the R&D team.

"This ensures potential technological innovations from the lab align closely with Iraq's market

demands, and can facilitate the precise matching needed to industrialize its research outcomes," Fang said.

The two companies will also be expected to promote the export of products and services from China's photovoltaic and energy storage industries.

Leveraging Wuhan University's expertise in remote sensing, the research team of the joint lab will employ satellite and drone monitoring to track carbon emissions in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, as they work to help with renewable energy deployment planning.

"We will also strive to come up with replicable green development solutions that can facilitate energy transitions in countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative," Fang said.

Contact the writers at houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

WORLD

Zelensky slams 'weak' US reaction to Russian strike on his hometown

KYIV — Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky slammed the US embassy on Saturday for what he called a "weak" statement that did not blame Russia for a missile strike on his hometown that killed 19 people, including nine children.

In one of the deadliest strikes in recent weeks, a Russian missile on Friday evening struck a residential area near a children's playground in the central Ukrainian town of Kryvyi Rih.

Seventy-five people were wounded, at least 12 of them children, Dnipropetrovsk Governor Serhiy Lysak said after the end of emergency operations overnight, with city officials declaring three days of mourning.

Zelensky, in an emotional statement on social media, named each of the children killed in the attack, accusing the United States embassy of avoiding referring to Russia as the aggressor.

"Unfortunately, the reaction of the American Embassy is unpleasantly surprising: such a strong country, such a strong people — and such a weak reaction," he wrote.

"They are even afraid to say the word 'Russian' when talking about the missile that killed the children."

Zelensky singled out the US for criticism at a time when US President Donald Trump is pushing for a partial ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine while seeking a thaw in ties with Moscow.

The Ukrainian president took aim at US Ambassador Bridget Brink after she posted a message on X on Friday evening that said, "Horrible that tonight a ballistic missile struck near a playground and restaurant."

Brink added that "this is why the war must end."

Zelensky wrote on Saturday: "Yes, the war must end. But in order to end it, we must not be afraid to call a spade a spade."

The Ukrainian leader was born

in the industrial city of Kryvyi Rih, which had a population of about 600,000 people before the conflict broke out.

Located in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region, it is about 60 kilometers from the front line, and has regularly been targeted by Russian drones and missiles.

Oleksandr Vilkul, head of Kryvyi Rih's military administration, said three days of mourning had been declared starting Monday.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it "delivered a precision strike" in the city "where commanders of formations and Western instructors were meeting".

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces retorted that Moscow was "trying to cover up its cynical crime" and "spreading false information". It accused Russia of "war crimes".

Attack on Kyiv

In Kyiv, a Russian missile attack killed one man and injured three other people early on Sunday, city officials said, as missile and drone strikes across the country left at least one more person dead.

Explosions were heard overnight and a dark plume of smoke rose up from the capital early on Sunday morning, Agence France-Presse journalists saw.

Meanwhile, Zelensky hailed "tangible progress" after meeting British and French military chiefs in Kyiv on Friday to discuss a plan by London and Paris to send a "reassurance" force to Ukraine if and when a deal on ending the conflict is reached.

Zelensky wrote on social media that the meeting with British Chief of the Defence Staff Tony Radakin and French counterpart Thierry Burkhard agreed on "the first details on how the security contingent of partners can be deployed", without giving details.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Post-Ramadan rush



Passengers arrive at Pasar Senen railway station in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sunday, as millions return to big cities after celebrating Eid al-Fitr with family. The postholiday migration marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan and the beginning of the workweek bustle. AGOES RUDIANTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

Sino-African tech ties expected to deepen

Experts highlight broader cooperation as three-year action plan gets rolling

By EDITH MUTETHYA

in Nairobi, Kenya
edithmutethya@chinadaily.com.cn

With the implementation of the 2025-27 action plan unveiled at last year's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Summit now underway, experts are projecting deeper China-Africa collaboration in science and technology, focusing on digital infrastructure, digital economy and agricultural modernization.

This is in addition to partnerships in education, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as well as digital skills and vocational training — aimed at strengthening Africa's talent pools and promoting innovation.

Dennis Munene, executive director of the China-Africa Center at the Africa Policy Institute in Kenya, said China is churning out unique technologies that could help Africa address pressing challenges such as climate change.

"We are going to experience a lot of technologies that will help deal with climate change issues," he said. "This is by having seeds or mechanisms to enhance drought resistance (for the affected) arid and semiarid areas in Africa."

For Africa to benefit from the high-tech investment from China in line with last year's FOCAC summit partnership agenda, Munene said skill development will be key, calling on higher learning institutions to equip young people with the skills to develop homegrown artificial

intelligence models and solutions.

"Through Luban Workshops, a China-assisted vocational training program, the continent will be able to train many young people on how to develop homegrown AI tools that are going to solve some of the challenges that the continent is grappling with," Munene said.

He urged young people to take advantage of the available scholarship opportunities and visit China for firsthand experience with artificial intelligence tools.

China boasts a burgeoning AI industry — with prominent startups such as DeepSeek, Moonshot AI and Baichuan, alongside established tech giants including ByteDance and Alibaba — which are developing cutting-edge AI tools and models.

Low cost

Noting that DeepSeek has demystified the narrative that developing AI models is costly, Munene urged AI developers in Africa to learn how China managed to build a platform that has transformed the world at a low cost, and use that knowledge for homegrown AI developments.

Xn Iraki, an associate professor at the University of Nairobi's Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, said China has gone through a steep learning curve, becoming a global leader in electronics, AI and electric cars.

"China invested in research and development, but learned from the West. We too can learn from China, with more focus on science, technology, engineering and mathe-

matics, from kindergarten to university," he said.

Iraki suggested an arrangement where students from Africa could further their studies in China, challenging them to first learn the Chinese language so as to be able to access the vast knowledge on science and technology that is yet to be translated into English.

Through digital superhighways, China and Africa can exchange latest advances in science and technology, he said, adding that the information exchange should be symmetrical with each partner learning about and from each other.

James Shikwati, director of the think tank Inter Region Economic Network in Kenya, said Africa, being a youthful continent, should borrow a leaf from China on structuring its education system to align with modern standards.

"Africa should rethink its education system so as to make sure that we give our youth proper education that can align with the unfolding new world order," he said.

Shikwati suggested partnerships between the Chinese private sector and their African counterparts in promoting science and technology through exchange of ideas and knowledge.

New technologies will help Africa utilize and add value to its vast mineral resources, improving competitiveness of its products in the global market, he said.

"If we can have a partnership that brings Chinese technology into Africa and enables African people to co-create their own solutions in their own context, (then) that is really going to greatly benefit the continent."

Kenya keen to borrow a leaf out of China's book

By EDITH MUTETHYA
in Nairobi, Kenya

As Kenya makes efforts toward advancing modernization, the government looks forward to learning from China's best practices, says a senior Kenyan government official.

Korir Sing'Oei, principal secretary at Kenya's Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, said the areas covered by the Kenya-China strategic partnership will greatly contribute to advancing modernization and bringing Kenya closer to China, with the ultimate goal of finding a place and playing a role in global affairs.

The two countries have been working together on infrastructure development, security, information and telecommunications technology, financial services, education and capacity building, agriculture, research, health, manufacturing, as well as tourism and culture, he said.

Sing'Oei, who spoke at a forum themed China-Africa Dialogue on the Path to Modernization and organized by Xinhua News Agency's Africa bureau on Wednesday, said Kenya and China signed and institutionalized the joint vision on building a closer community for a shared future last year.

"Following the outcome of 2024 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Summit, the joint vision will advance modernization. These bilateral cooperation frameworks and measures are based on the dialogue."

The FOCAC summit, held in September, brought together senior government officials, scholars, media representatives and company executives from China and African countries.

Sing'Oei said that through the Belt and Road Initiative, Kenya has attracted foreign direct investment and financing from China for infrastructure development, which has significantly transformed the economy, created jobs and opened up more investment opportunities.

"Kenya fully aligns to China-Africa dialogue on the path to modernization and will continue to work very closely with China to implement such programs and projects aimed at enhancing the dialogue, which is people-centered and win-win situation," he said.

Chinese Ambassador to Kenya Guo Haiyan said the recently concluded two sessions — annual gatherings of China's top legislature and political advisory body — offered a critical window into Chinese modernization, showing the world the solid strides made by China as well as the confidence and open-mindedness of the country.

Reliable friends

China and Kenya are reliable friends who trust each other and are good partners on the path to modernization, Guo said.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations more than 60 years ago, China and Kenya have learned from each other on governance and achieved fruitful results in practical cooperation in infrastructure, industry, agriculture, science and education, as well as people-to-people exchanges, she said.

China stands ready to work with Kenya to effectively remain each other's sincere partners who trust each other and carry on their friendship, she added. This is in addition to being partners for mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation. They are also strategic partners in safeguarding international fairness and justice.

"Our two countries should work together to strengthen high-level exchanges, enhance the exchange of ideas on governance, and improve the capacity and level of governance."

The two countries should also consolidate cooperation in traditional sectors and at the same time foster growth drivers in emerging fields such as digital economy, green economy, artificial intelligence and healthcare, she said.

"We need to enhance exchanges and cooperation in fields such as science and technology, innovation, education, vocational training and people-to-people exchanges — in order to train more professional and technical talents for both countries."

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

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WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108
529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900, San Francisco,
CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8286

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2866

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-461-5706

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Briefly

UNITED STATES

At least 16 dead in flooding, tornadoes

Another round of torrential rain and flash flooding hit parts of the US South and Midwest on Saturday. Overnight into Sunday, there were new tornado warnings issued in Alabama and Mississippi, with flash flood warnings in Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee. Relentless rains have swelled waterways and prompted flash flood emergencies from Texas to Ohio. At least 16 deaths have been reported since the start of the storms.

SOUTH KOREA

Firefighting chopper crashes, pilot dead

A firefighting helicopter in South Korea crashed on Sunday, killing its pilot, Yonhap News Agency reported. The chopper was helping extinguish a wildfire in the southeastern city of Daegu, Yonhap said. The country recently experienced its worst wildfire disaster that left at least 30 people dead and destroyed homes and buildings.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Video challenges Israel's account of medics' deaths

UNITED NATIONS — Phone video from one of 15 Palestinian medics killed by Israeli forces last month appears to contradict Israeli claims that the medics' vehicles did not have emergency signals on when troops opened fire on them in southern Gaza.

The footage shows the Red Crescent and Civil Defense teams driving slowly with their emergency lights flashing, logos visible, as they pull up to help an ambulance that had come under fire earlier. The teams do not appear to be acting unusually or in a threatening manner as three medics emerge and head toward the stricken ambulance.

Their vehicles immediately come under a barrage of gunfire, which goes on for more than five minutes with brief pauses. The owner of the phone can be heard praying.

Eight Red Crescent personnel, six Civil Defense workers and a United Nations staffer were killed in the shooting before dawn on March 23 by Israeli troops conducting operations in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Troops then bulldozed over the bodies with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. UN and rescue workers were only

able to reach the site a week later to dig out the bodies.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society's vice-president, Marwan Jilani, said the phone with the footage was found in the pocket of one of its slain staffers.

Asked about the video, the Israeli military said on Saturday that the incident was "under thorough examination".

The Israeli military earlier said it opened fire on the vehicles because they were "advancing suspiciously" on nearby troops without headlights or emergency signals.

The initial account of the vehicles not having emergency lights on was mistaken, an Israeli military official told journalists on Saturday evening. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Israel has accused Hamas of moving and hiding its fighters inside ambulances and emergency vehicles, as well as in hospitals and other civilian infrastructure — arguing this justifies strikes on them. Medical personnel largely deny the accusations.

Jonathan Whittall, interim head in Gaza of the UN humanitarian



Mourners gather around the bodies of eight Red Crescent medics as they are transported for burial from a hospital in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on March 31. ABDEL KAREEM HANA / AP

office, dismissed allegations that the slain medics were Hamas militants, saying staff members had worked with the same medics previously in evacuating patients from hospitals.

Separately, United States President Donald Trump plans to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday in what would be their second White House sit-down since Trump's return to office.

The visit, confirmed by a White House official and Netanyahu's office on Saturday, comes as Israel deploys troops in a new security corridor across Gaza to pressure the Hamas militant group.

Netanyahu's defense minister has said Israel will seize large areas of the territory and add them to its so-called security zones.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLDUS



Customers push carts stacked with groceries at a Costco store on Friday in Hawthorne, California. Consumers are rushing to stock up before prices go up with new US tariffs. JAY L. CLENDENIN / GETTY IMAGES

Expert: Tariffs violate WTO rules

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

The latest tariffs announced by the US administration are unlikely to achieve stated goals, pose a significant risk to the global economy, and violate international trade commitments, according to US trade experts.

"In the WTO (World Trade Organization), the US agreed on a detailed schedule of 'bound' — meaning upper limit — tariffs on virtually all merchandise imports. Trump's tariffs completely violate this basic commitment made to other countries through the WTO," Gary Hufbauer, a nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), told China Daily.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday unveiled new tariffs, citing an "economic emergency". He introduced a 10 percent baseline tariff on goods imported from nearly all trading partners, excluding Canada and Mexico, and individualized tariffs targeting around 60 countries for what he called unfair trade practices.

Trump said the tariffs aim to address long-standing trade imbalances and boost domestic manufacturing.

Hufbauer criticized the administration's decision to impose broad new taxes on imports, saying that the underlying reasoning is flawed. He dismissed the stated objectives of reducing the US trade deficit, protecting domestic industries and encouraging the reshoring of manufacturing.

"The reasoning is faulty," said Hufbauer. "Back in the 1970s, many countries tried 'import substitution' policies to become manufacturing powers, Brazil, India, for example, and they all failed. High US tariffs will not revive US manufacturing."

Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-American

Studies, told China Daily: "Trump's claimed reasoning will not bear fruit. The cause of the trade deficit ranges much beyond the level of foreign tariffs and is intimately connected with domestic savings and consumption rates."

Hufbauer criticized the methodology for setting specific tariff rates, which target countries that have large trade surpluses with the US with much higher penalties, including China.

"The method of calculation has nothing to do with tariff and nontariff barriers imposed by foreign countries on US exports," said Hufbauer. "The rates above 10 percent are all driven by the US bilateral merchandise trade deficit with the foreign partner."

Gupta also criticized that approach, saying, "It is a silly concoction to use the US' bilateral trade deficit with a partner country as a proxy for supposed unfair practices" and that it "ignores basic Trade Policy 101 lessons."

Among the 60 or so countries targeted by additional tariffs, China faces a particularly high combined rate, though not the highest, potentially reaching 54 percent on many goods. Hufbauer predicted that would have severe consequences for the bilateral relationship.

"Trump's tariffs, plus Chinese retaliation, will sharply reduce bilateral US-China trade. Both countries will lose," he said. "My guess is that two-way trade will be cut by 60 percent or more."

Gupta said that with the combined tariffs potentially reaching 54 percent on many Chinese goods, plus existing tariffs and the removal of exemptions, "China's exports to the US will decline steeply."

"China's countermeasures mean that US exports too will take a material hit," he said. "Both sides will suffer, with concentrated groups of Chinese

exporters and a wide swath of American consumers bearing much of the brunt."

Hufbauer noted the significant risk of broader international retaliation and potential escalation. But he outlined a scenario where a full global trade war, like that of the 1930s, might be averted.

"Hopefully, other countries will confine their responses to retaliation against the US, and not against other countries in the world trading system," he said. "If other countries are sensible, there will not be a global trade war as occurred in the 1930s."

China has already announced plans to impose 34 percent tariffs on certain US products in response to the new measures.

"This will be a global trade war that is not fought globally but is fought against just one country — the US — by most other countries," Gupta said. He also said that while there is a window for negotiation, it is narrow due to the underlying motivation related to the trade deficit.

Hufbauer said that while the US actions damage America's own role in the global economy, they don't necessarily signal the end of globalization itself, provided other major players respond strategically.

"Trump's tariffs will bring down US participation in globalization, much to the disadvantage of the US," he said. "But they need not bring an end to globalization if other major countries, like the EU, China and Japan, are sensible."

Gupta had a similar view. "The US may be stepping out of the globalization dance. But for most other countries, such as China, Japan, South Korea, and economic areas, such as the EU and Mercosur, ties of interdependence and globalization continue to deepen in most contexts — despite the imperatives of national economic security," he said.

US rounds of tariffs to disrupt free trade

New duties set to bring about negative effects for economies, observers say

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong and CUI HAIPEI in Dubai, UAE

The latest tariffs imposed by the United States against its trade partners could disrupt the international economic order and plunge free trade mechanisms into uncertainty while bringing about multidimensional negative effects for economies and consumers, analysts have said.

The key question for now is whether the United States intends to put an end to the free trade order or simply change the rules, said Rasha Al Joundy, a senior researcher at the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre.

The White House on Wednesday announced a universal 10 percent tariff on imports to the US from over 180 countries and territories, and higher tariffs targeting specific countries.

The policy includes tariffs as high as 50 percent on imports from Lesotho, 49 percent from Cambodia, 46 percent from Vietnam, 20 percent from the European Union, and 10 percent for Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

"If the goal is to change the rules, this dilemma could be resolved through negotiation, without fundamentally altering the system. However, if the intention is to dismantle the system and build a new one, the uncertainty could be even more harmful to everyone," Al Joundy told China Daily.

Anis Khayati, an economics professor at the College of Business Administration at the University of Bahrain, told China Daily that the trade tensions and tariffs between

the US and major powers will "have multidimensional negative effects on Middle Eastern economies and consumers."

Khayati said imposing tariffs will increase prices for importers — including in the Middle East — and they may ultimately be forced to pass these costs to consumers, increasing their financial burden.

Another area of impact is labor, as many countries in the Middle East employ workers from overseas.

Labor impact

According to the International Labour Organization's 2024 estimates on international migrant workers, there were more than 22 million migrants in the labor force in the Arab states in 2022, comprising 13.5 percent of the total 167.7 million globally.

Khayati said a decline in sales among importers may force companies to take cost-cutting measures, such as wage cuts or workforce reductions, to maintain market sustainability amid lower revenues.

Economically, governments will be forced to allocate resources to support jobseekers through rehabilitation and training programs or unemployment benefits, Khayati said, adding that this required concerted efforts to ensure market stability.

Both experts noted that Washington has excluded oil, gas and refined products from the tariffs, which cushions the burden on these resource exporters in the Middle East.

David Gibson-Moore, president and CEO of Gulf Analytica, a busi-

ness consultancy to international firms and family offices in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, said in the longer term, GCC countries could experience indirect repercussions although the direct effect of the new tariffs on them "is expected to be limited".

There are concerns that global trade tensions may dampen demand for crude oil, and oil price reductions will push most Gulf countries into a budgetary deficit, he said.

A slowdown in major economies may lead to decreased demand for oil, affecting the oil-dependent revenues of GCC countries. The breakeven point for Saudi Arabia's budget is about \$70 a barrel, while it is higher for other Gulf countries such as Bahrain and Oman.

Middle East economies rely primarily on imports, which include equipment and machinery for medical, military, industrial and agricultural sectors, Khayati said.

Disruptions caused by trade tensions may prompt producers to change their sourcing of raw materials due to the increased costs caused by the tariffs.

"This could lead to production disruptions and a shortage of goods. As demand continues, the price of the final products will rise, increasing the financial burden on importers and, consequently, leading to higher prices for consumers in the region," said Khayati.

Deniz Istikbal, an economics researcher with Istanbul Medipol University in Turkey, said: "The trade tensions with the US may push China to seek alternative markets, which would strengthen its relations with the Middle East."

Contact the writers at
jan@chinadailyjapac.com.

Levies to hit Canada's job market hard

By YANG GAO in Toronto
gaoyang@chinadailyusa.com

With the United States raising trade barriers, Canada's manufacturing sector faces mounting pressure, which economists said could lead to job losses and a broader economic fallout.

Canada's labor market and key industries could face significant disruption if the US moves forward with new tariffs, said Mario Seccareccia, an economist and professor emeritus at the University of Ottawa.

He noted that the economic fallout could be particularly severe for sectors heavily tied to cross-border trade.

"If the US imposes broad tariffs, this will have a direct effect on Canada because of the high degree of trade integration," Seccareccia told China Daily.

"We are not just trading partners; it's a structural relationship you can't just pick up and move," he said.

One of the most affected industries would be manufacturing, particularly in Ontario and Quebec, where many firms rely on exporting components to US factories, Seccareccia said.

He mentioned the tariffs will drive up costs, reduce competitiveness and ultimately lead to job losses.

"It's the knock-on effects that are important. If you close an auto plant, even the restaurant next to it might disappear," he said.

He said previous US tariff policies have demonstrated how interconnected the two economies are.

"Some companies were able to adapt, but many suffered, and jobs were lost. If similar tariffs return, we could see that scenario, but with even broader consequences," he said.

At a news conference on Wednesday, Canadian Labour Congress President Bea Bruske called on the federal government to deliver urgent and robust support for affected workers, industries and communities.

"Over 1 million jobs — that's what's on the line. These reckless and unjustified tariffs from President Trump are a direct attack on Canadian workers, our industries and our economy," said Bruske.

She said 123,000 jobs in Canada's steel and aluminum industries and more than 587,000 auto and supply chain jobs are at risk.

Widespread repercussions

Seccareccia said the labor market repercussions could be widespread, affecting not just factory workers but also businesses that support trade-dependent sectors.

"It's not just the big manufacturers. Small and medium enterprises that provide services and supplies to these industries will also feel the squeeze," he said.

"Tariffs are often justified as a way to protect domestic jobs, but in real-

ity, they lead to inefficiencies and higher costs for consumers," he said.

"Tariffs are like shooting themselves in the foot. It's insane, and I can't see this lasting long," he said. "Higher tariffs create what we call stagflation — simultaneously rising prices and unemployment."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Thursday that Canada will retaliate against US President Donald Trump's 25 percent auto tariffs by imposing matching duties on vehicles imported from the US.

At a news conference on Parliament Hill, Carney said Canada's counter-tariffs will hit all vehicles that do not comply with the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, along with any non-Canadian content in compliant vehicles.

Seccareccia urged long-term solutions. "Diversify trade partners — not just bilaterally with the US. We're vulnerable because we built north-south links, not global ones."

He noted the best response is not to engage in a tit-for-tat trade war but to push for cooperative economic policies that benefit both sides.

He also mentioned the potential long-term consequences for North American trade relations.

"If these tariffs persist, companies will eventually start to rethink their supply chains, and some may shift production elsewhere," he said. "That could mean job losses not just in Canada but in the US as well."



BUSINESS

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Proactive policy helps woo foreign investors

Major intl firms expected to step up investment in China's high-tech and supply chain sectors on strong reform efforts

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Despite operating in different industry sectors, several multinational corporations — such as Germany's Siemens AG, Tapestry Inc of the United States and Japan's Takeda Pharmaceutical Co — share a common goal of stepping up investment in China's high-tech and supply chain sectors to stay competitive.

Their top executives, who attended the China Development Forum 2025 in Beijing in March, noted that the Chinese government's proactive efforts — from expanding domestic demand to fostering emerging and future industries, and deepening international cooperation through greater openness — are sending out strong signals and continuously boosting the confidence of foreign businesses in the Chinese market, despite rising global trade protectionism, unilateralism and geopolitical tensions.

One such company is Mercedes-Benz.

The German automotive group will begin producing the long-wheelbase electric CLA, a compact luxury model, in China this year, followed by the long-wheelbase GLE SUV and an all-new electric van in the coming years.

Ola Kaellenius, chairman of the board of management at Mercedes-Benz, said the company has made significant strides in research and development in China. Powered by its innovation centers in Beijing and Shanghai and supported by 2,000 local experts, the group has advanced its development of connectivity, digitalization, autonomous driving features and electric vehicle transformation.

"Just like other European automotive companies, we have been among the biggest foreign beneficiaries of China's rapid economic growth," said Kaellenius.

"At the same time, our industry has been one of the largest recipients of foreign direct investment in China. There is a strong interdependence between China and the European Union. Both sides want to protect jobs in their home markets while reaping the benefits of free international trade," he added.

Noting that China's growing focus on boosting domestic consumption is giving global companies greater confidence to invest in the world's second-largest economy, Joanne Crevoiserat, CEO of Tapestry, said the company is keen to contribute to the country's consumption upgrade and expansion by bringing more innovative products to this market.

Tapestry is a New York-based luxury goods maker and the parent company of brands like Coach and Kate Spade. "China is our largest market outside the US, and it is a major source of inspiration for us globally. Many of the innovations we develop here — through partnerships with Chinese companies to serve Chinese consumers — are later introduced to other markets around the world," Crevoiserat said.

The company, she added, is on track to achieve its goal of opening 100 stores in China between 2022 and 2025, with the milestone set to



be reached by the end of this year.

"In addition to investing in physical stores, or brick-and-mortar retail, we will also invest in digital, particularly with the advancements in the Chinese market, as local consumers are fairly digitally engaged," she said. "So, we have been making investments into our digital capabilities and meeting the consumer demand in an omnichannel way."

Christophe Weber, president of Takeda and representative director of Takeda Pharmaceutical Co, expressed a similar opinion.

Takeda will make targeted investments in data and digital solutions in China to unleash the power of new technology for the future of healthcare, he said.

In January, the Japanese company announced the signing of an investment cooperation agreement to establish its China innovation center in Chengdu, Sichuan province. The new facility will focus on digital healthcare innovation and leverage big data and artificial intelligence technologies to develop solutions.

Eager to stabilize 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 fields 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 among upstream and downstream enterprises along industrial chains.

The report said national treatment will be ensured for foreign-funded enterprises in areas such as access to production factors, licensing, standards setting and government procurement.

Sang Baichuan, dean of the University of International Business and Economics' Institute of International Economy in Beijing, said that China enjoys a stable political, economic and social environment when compared to several other countries.

Amid mounting global economic headwinds, China's steadfast commitment to opening-up, backed by consistent government support and a more level playing field, is encouraging, Sang said.

As China's innovation capabilities grow, foreign investors are increasingly shifting from "a manufacturing-only focus to collaborative research and development", he added.

Top: Visitors watch a robot mixing drinks at Siemens' exhibition area during the 2024 China International Supply Chain Expo in Beijing on Nov 29.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Upper left: People get to know Cargill's products at its exhibition area during 2025 Food Ingredients China, a food additives and ingredients expo, in Shanghai on March 19.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Upper right: An employee organizes exhibits at Coach's exhibition area during China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan province, on April 10, 2023. Coach is a brand under Tapestry, the United States-based luxury goods maker.

SU BIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Noting that high-tech, high-efficiency and high-quality growth have become key drivers of China's economic transformation, aligning with its focus on new quality productive forces, Roland Busch, president and CEO of Siemens AG, said the country has made rapid advancements in artificial intelligence.

First introduced in 2023, new quality productive forces refer to advanced productivity freed from the traditional economic growth mode and productivity development paths.

Busch said innovations such as the open-source foundational model R1 by Chinese AI startup DeepSeek are examples of how "China surprises us with innovations".

This momentum is not limited to the private sector.

China's centrally administered State-owned enterprises, such as State Grid Corp of China and China Mobile Ltd, have deployed AI technologies across more than 500 scenarios in key sectors such as manufacturing, smart vehicles, energy and power, according to information released by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the

State Council, the country's top State assets regulator, in late March.

These solutions have significantly reduced costs for central SOEs and their partners as well as improved efficiency in research and development, production and customer service.

Seeing more opportunities in areas such as healthcare, consumption, advanced manufacturing and innovation-driven development, a total of 7,574 foreign-invested enterprises were newly established in China in the first two months of this year, representing a year-on-year growth of 5.8 percent, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Investment from the United Kingdom, Germany and South Korea climbed by 87.9 percent, 54.7 percent and 45.2 percent year-on-year, respectively, in the first two months, according to the ministry.

During separate meetings with several US business leaders, including Apple CEO Tim Cook and Wendell Weeks, chairman and CEO of Corning Inc, in Beijing in March, Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao said that China's economy continues to consolidate and expand its recovery momentum even though it faces growing external uncertainties.

Wang said ongoing policy measures will strongly support economic growth. China will continue to create favorable conditions for foreign companies to increase their investments within its market.

The minister stressed that trade wars produce no winners and protectionism offers no solutions. As the world's two largest economies, stronger China-US economic and trade cooperation is consistent with economic principles, while decoupling and supply chain disruptions would harm all parties involved, he said.

Miguel Lopez, CEO of German industrial conglomerate Thyssenkrupp AG, said China is not only one of the largest markets for many foreign companies, but also home to the world's most comprehensive industrial and supply chains, supported by a well-developed logistics system.

Thyssenkrupp will continue to strengthen supply chain management in China and establish closer relationships with local suppliers. This will not only improve risk resilience and lower costs, but also benefit its global markets, Lopez said.

"Looking ahead, only through open collaboration, technological innovation and sustainable development can we collectively build a more stable and efficient global supply chain," he said.

Antoine de Saint-Affrique, CEO of Danone SA, a French multinational food products company, said that given China's economic significance, a healthy and growing China benefits the entire world.

"Growth in China contributes to the expansion of the global economy, and a thriving global economy, in turn, supports shared prosperity and peace," he added.

Between January and February, foreign-invested businesses in China saw their export value grow 6.9 percent year-on-year to 1.08 trillion yuan (\$148.9 billion), according to the General Administration of Customs.

For MNCs, success requires clarity, commitment, agility

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhong Nan

During an interview at the guest room of a home appliances store in China World Mall in Beijing in mid-March, Hubert de Haan, senior vice-president for China of Germany's BSH Home Appliances Group, sipped his coffee thoughtfully, while stressing that China "is still worth it".

His words may sound simple, but they echo a sentiment that is far more nuanced.

After tracking China's economic policies for years, I have learned that

understanding this market takes more than just reading headlines — it requires diving into the details, including the numbers, the policies, and, perhaps most importantly, the momentum foreign business executives feel when they are actually here on the ground.

That momentum is driven by powerful fundamentals that continue to matter to global investors.

At the center is China's vast consumer market.

Its massive population powers a consumption engine that is constantly evolving. As the middle-income group expands, so does demand for better products, smarter services and improved experiences. Foreign businesses aligned with this shift are discovering more opportunities and more discerning customers.

Fueling this demand is a manufacturing ecosystem unmatched in scale and integration. From raw materials to finished goods, China's industrial chain enables end-to-end production. This efficiency lowers costs and boosts responsiveness, a critical advantage in today's volatile global environment.

Enabling it all is world-class infrastructure. High-speed railway networks, expressways, ports and airports form a logistics network built for speed and volume. For firms managing complex supply chains, China offers rare reliability and often outperforms global peers.

The talent pool is another strength.

Beyond sheer numbers, China's workforce is increasingly skilled. Advances in education and training

have elevated its human capital. Today, it is not just labor, its engineers, designers and digital specialists are ready to scale with demand.

Digitally, China has leapt ahead. From mobile payments to artificial intelligence labs, it is now one of the world's most dynamic digital economies. For companies in e-commerce and fintech, opportunity here is not abstract, it is immediate and immense.

Moreover, I can tell that the value proposition is evolving. It is no longer just about scale or speed. It is about strategic alignment with China's innovation agenda. As supply chains reconfigure and consumption matures, the country is prioritizing high-tech, knowledge-driven investment.

As foreign direct investment in

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As foreign direct investment in

China is shifting away from labor-intensive operations toward research and development hubs, innovation centers and green tech, it brings new opportunities and higher expectations. Market entry thresholds are rising, and success requires more than capital.

Today, investment means adaptability, foresight and trust. Only global players with the right products, services and market approaches have the capability and confidence to compete here.

These messages were not just confined to individual interviews. It echoed throughout the China Development Forum 2025, held in Beijing in late March. In a world facing rising protectionism and economic uncertainty, top executives of leading multinational corporations

believe openness and collaboration have never been more essential — for countries to keep markets accessible, and for businesses to work together toward shared solutions and sustainable growth.

Among them was Georges Elhedery, group chief executive of HSBC Group, who said his company expects China to remain an engine for global growth in 2025 and across this decade. In the long run, China will remain a thriving, sustainable economy, firmly at the center of global trade and investment, and at the forefront of innovation.

In this new landscape, it is no longer about which multinational corporations can enter. It is about who can last, and who can lead.

So yes, as de Haan from BSH China said, China is still worth it. But success here demands more than just showing up. It requires clarity, long-term commitment and the agility to grow with China, not just in it.

BUSINESSINSIGHT

Stable economic growth needs consumption

EAGLE EYE

By Liu Shijin

China is striving to cross the threshold of high-income countries. Thus, this year's Government Work Report set a GDP growth target of around 5 percent and prioritized stimulating consumption as its primary policy focus for 2025. This economic blueprint, reflecting China's aspirations, requires sustaining medium-rate growth alongside efforts to ensure the nominal growth rate outpaces the real growth rate.

China should pivot its economic growth model from investment and export reliance to innovation and domestic consumption-driven, to achieve the 5 percent annual growth target outlined in this year's Government Work Report. This shift may face headwinds from structural deviation of consumption, yet successful reforms would bring more support to the stable and medium-rate growth of China's economy.

In the past two years, the economic recovery process after the pandemic has shown an overall upward trend in China, but still faces the pressure of insufficient demand, which is not a lack of investment, but a lack of consumption.

From an international perspective, there is currently a gap of nearly 20 percentage points between China's consumption-to-GDP ratio and the global average level. In terms of purchasing power parity, compared with OECD countries at roughly the same stage of development as China, the household consumption, service consumption and final consumption in China are about one-quarter to one-third different from the former. These reflect a structural deviation in China's consumption patterns, influenced by several factors.

On the one hand, China's basic public services are facing problems such as low overall quality and large internal disparities. At present, the monthly pension of retirees from urban government organs and institutions versus other urban retired workers stands at about 6,000 yuan (\$826) and about 3,000 yuan, respectively.

However, the gap between urban and rural areas is significant. Unlike urban residents, rural residents — who make up 95 percent of participants in the urban and rural residents' pension insurance system — receive a monthly pension of just 220 yuan, which is just one-fifteenth of that received by urban retirees.

On the other hand, the level of urbanization is low. In the services consumption sector, demand for goods has largely reached saturation. Services consumption — closely linked to urbanization — such as medical care, education, social security, culture and entertainment, remains difficult to access in traditional rural areas or underdeveloped counties. Even if residents are willing to consume certain goods or services, they often cannot due to a



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lack of services or high costs. As urban areas provide a high-quality services consumption environment, China's population has increasingly migrated to urban centers, especially large first-tier cities in recent years. Therefore, enhancing urbanization is crucial for expanding services consumption.

A more essential reason for China's consumption challenges is its wide income gap. Currently, China's middle-income group consists of about 400 million people, but there are still about 900 million relatively low-income individuals. International experience shows that, if the middle-income group does not account for the majority of population, it is prone to confront insufficient demand in the second half of the medium-speed growth period.

At the same time, the Chinese government holds a high share of national assets, which has historically facilitated industrialization and investment-driven growth by prioritizing savings and investment over consumption. However, this imbalance has contributed to China's persistently low consumption rate.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said China's net social assets in 2022 totaled approximately 756 trillion yuan, of which government-held assets accounted for about 291 trillion yuan, or roughly 38 percent. In contrast, in the global context, especially in OECD countries, the proportion of government-held assets rarely exceeds 10 percent. Moving forward, more resources should be allocated to consumption, shifting from an investment-driven model to a consumption-driven model.

Economic growth consists of two dimensions — its height and breadth. The height of growth is primarily achieved through innovation, openness and reforms that enhance economic efficiency and expand opportunities. In China, the emergence of technologies such as DeepSeek and humanoid robots demonstrates great development potential and deserves recognition and focus.

However, the importance of the "breadth" of economic growth has been ignored at some extent. China's economy is facing a number of

problems now, including low prices, the gap between nominal and real growth, high debt, and overcapacity, all of which are rooted in insufficient end-use demand. Insufficient consumption reflects a lack of economic breadth and is closely tied to factors such as education, social security, human capital development and social mobility, which shape overall demand for productive capacity.

After subtracting productive investment from GDP, the sum of consumption and nonproductive investment — mainly real estate and infrastructure — represents final demand. Though real estate and infrastructure in China have expanded rapidly over the past few years, both sectors' growth momentum has significantly moderated these days, especially the real estate has confronted a sharp decline, exposing the problem of low consumption-to-GDP ratio.

To solve the problem of insufficient demand and achieve the growth target, this year's Government Work Report attaches great importance to consumption and

prioritizes stimulus of it as its primary policy focus. It is required to address structural deviations so that the low-income segment with the greatest consumption potential can increase their spending power.

China should take efforts to steadily expand domestic demand. Accelerating urbanization and narrowing the income gap — with a particular focus on social security — are crucial steps. One approach could involve reallocating part of the government's stimulus funds into the basic pension insurance fund for urban and rural residents, effectively doubling the monthly pension for 170 million rural participants, from about 200 yuan to 400 yuan.

Moving forward, State-owned capital should be transferred to the pension fund on a large scale, with priority given to the basic pension insurance fund for urban and rural residents. In cities with large numbers of migrant workers, it is essential to gradually enhance social security and pension payment mechanisms, where some progress has already been made. Furthermore, the government should liberate the social pro-

ductive forces in the integrated development of urban and rural areas, promote the two-way smooth flow of production factors such as people, land and capital between the two areas, and drive the second wave of urbanization in China.

Studies suggest that rural residents, as China's lowest-income group, have a higher propensity to consume. If 1 trillion yuan were allocated to them, their marginal propensity to consume is estimated at 0.8, meaning 800 billion yuan would be directly spent on consumption. From an academic perspective, given a consumption multiplier of approximately 1.5, this could drive GDP growth by about 1.2 trillion yuan, contributing roughly 1 percentage point to annual GDP expansion — an important step toward economic stability.

The writer is vice-chairman of the China Development Research Foundation and deputy director of the Committee on Economic Affairs of the CPPCC National Committee. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

2025: America First falters, Europe-China in sight

MAIN STREET

By Patrick Zweifel

In the United States, policy choices are threatening growth and inflation, while Europe and China are betting on a revived fiscal-monetary tandem.

A few months ago as we were approaching 2025, the global economic landscape presented a contrasting picture of performance — China and Europe were posting disappointing results, while the US maintained a solid momentum.

At the time, in China, growth of 5 percent in 2024 remained fragile, the real estate market was still contracting and consumption was struggling to gain traction. In Europe, the quasi-recession that had persisted for a year and a half was partly explained by the weakness of Germany, whose activity had

been contracting since the third quarter of 2023.

The US, on the other hand, enjoyed nearly two years of above-potential growth, thanks to robust consumption (especially in services). In the stock markets, the difference was clear. In 2024, US equities climbed 23 percent, compared with only 8 percent for Europe and China (in US dollar terms).

However, we believe that the outlook for 2025 could reshuffle the cards. US "exceptionalism" could run out of steam, while Europe and China could surprise on the upside.

US resilience, long considered an established fact, is facing several challenges. The restrictive monetary policy of the US Federal Reserve — having set benchmark interest rates at above 4 percent for the past two years — is finally seeing its effects spread throughout the economy.

The lag is explained by the absence of excessive private debt and by the savings accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which have made households and

businesses less sensitive to rising prices and rates.

But these reserves have now been exhausted. Household residential investment is stagnating due to mortgage rates exceeding 7 percent and a significant inventory of unsold new homes.

Business investment spending is returning to a more moderate pace (around 4 percent compared to more than 6 percent in 2023). Household consumption remains solid but is beginning to slow in services, its most dynamic component.

In this context and with the determinants of services inflation still too strong (wage increases of 4 percent, above the 2.5-3 percent compatible with inflation at its target), the Fed should maintain its restrictive policy in 2025. This is in line with market expectations that only anticipate a limited fall in interest rates.

At the political level, the measures adopted by the new US administration are considered stagflationary, combining inflation-

ary pressures and a potential brake on growth. Two focal points — expansionary fiscal policy and deregulation — could support activity, but the strict migration policy and trade policy risks are slowing it down. Similarly, deregulation alone would not be enough to contain the inflation generated by the other three focal points.

To encourage growth without further fueling inflation, the US administration will have to limit the scope of tariff and migration measures. The first decrees show a firm stance on immigration, but a certain ambiguity on tariffs, suggesting that the US administration could use them as leverage in negotiations with its trading partners.

This cautious approach on trade tariffs is rather reassuring for Europe and China, which are already seeing encouraging signs. In Europe and especially in Germany, recent developments indicate a significant shift toward more expansive fiscal policies, marking a stark departure from the austerity measures anticipated weeks ago.

Germany's centrist parties have reached a landmark agreement to boost defense and public investment, including a constitutional amendment to exempt defense spending from the strict debt brake and a 500 billion euro (\$539 billion) special fund for public investment.

At the same time, European inflation is falling toward its target, suggesting several rate cuts by the European Central Bank in 2025. These factors would support the recovery of the manufacturing sector, which has been in recession since January 2023, as well as household consumption, which is benefiting from improved purchasing power and available savings, in the context of lower interest rates and a possible resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In China, growth could also surprise on the upside. While the performance in 2024 is largely due to an increase in exports of more than 11 percent, domestic demand is expected to take over. The government seems ready to maintain a policy of sustainable support, both fiscal and monetary.

The numerous measures aimed at stabilizing the real estate sector are

producing their first effects. The sector is no longer contracting and should no longer have a negative impact on growth. Household consumption has experienced a strong recovery, surging by over 15 percent on an annualized basis in the fourth quarter of 2024.

To sustain this momentum, the authorities are implementing a proactive fiscal stimulus, aiming for a budget deficit ratio of around 4 percent, the highest in over three decades. A key component of this fiscal package is the allocation of 300 billion yuan (\$41.3 billion) to a consumer goods trade-in program, which underscores the government's commitment to enhancing economic activity and addressing existing consumption weaknesses and local government fiscal challenges.

In conclusion, the year 2025 could mark a turning point. The US exceptionalism so visible until now, seems less guaranteed, while the prospects for Europe and China, long underestimated, look more favorable.

The writer is chief economist at Pictet Asset Management. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials

US already reaping the whirlwind of administration's ill-judged tariffs

In the mind of the current president of the United States, it seems that all that it takes to revitalize US manufacturing and its economy is to raise tariffs on countries so that they will come for talks on new deals.

Yet, after launching his weaponized tariff attacks on the US' trading partners on Wednesday, what the US leader has reaped are landslide falls in the US markets, a chaotic buying spree sweeping the country, and nationwide protests opposing his policy, along with resolute, prompt retaliatory measures from other countries and warnings from international organizations of an imminent US recession.

The so-called reciprocal tariffs are projected to increase the US inflation rate by 1.5 percentage points, making it more difficult for US economy to avoid a recession and dragging down global growth by at least 1 percentage point this year.

What made the fall of the US stock markets so dramatic was that the White House sent a news release after the bell celebrating the US president's "WEEK 11 WINS" on Friday and praising the president for unleashing "Economic Prosperity", which landed minutes after the routed markets marked the first time the Dow Jones Industrial Average has ever shed over 1,500 points two days in a row.

"It was another highly successful week for the American people as President Donald J. Trump continues his relentless pursuit of strength, prosperity, and peace — and lays the foundation for America to be the global powerhouse for generations to come," the White House said.

US markets closed with steep losses after trade tensions boiled over. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell over 2,200 points that day, and the two-day loss for the S&P 500 hit 10 percent. And as the brutally battered stock market limped toward the finish line that day, the US president delivered a defiant statement to his Truth Social followers: "ONLY THE WEAK WILL FAIL."

The rallying cry struck a similar chord to his earlier declaration on Friday morning that his policies will "NEVER CHANGE" — even as his tariff announcement on Wednesday sparked a massive sell-off, which clearly indicates the pessimism is universal and not exclusive to "the weak".

And that mood was further vented in the wide so-called Hands Off! protests on the weekend in the US, which were organized for more than 1,200 locations in all 50 states by more than 150 disparate groups. Although their appeals are much wider than the US administration stopping its weaponization of tariffs, it is the rocketing cost of living in such a short span of time, fueled by the US' tariff policy, that has prompted the demonstrations, which is a vivid reflection of the administration's oversimplified transactional views on and approaches to many complicated challenges.

That the US administration chooses to turn a blind eye to the US economy sailing on a doomed course following its own badly drawn charts has certainly worried not only ordinary citizens but also some core members of its top decision-making team. They are in a better position to know the administration's make-believe prescriptions are part of the US maladies, not a way to remedy them.

Among them is US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who is reportedly looking to leave the administration following the president's "reciprocal tariff" announcement. The former hedge fund manager, who warned the US' tariff policy could escalate global trade tensions, is reportedly increasingly isolated within the administration and may be seeking an exit to salvage his credibility.

Bessent, who had previously downplayed the negative effects of tariffs, suggesting they were merely price adjustments rather than inflationary, might have realized that the administration's wrecking ball will cause a lot more damage than that. His urging that other countries not retaliate is being widely interpreted as evidence proving the US administration is completely out of touch with the reality faced by its tariff victims who have no choice but to fight back, even though they remain open to talks.

Among which, China's resolute countermeasures were the first to be announced. Beijing announced on Friday that it will impose a 34 percent additional tax on all US imports this week, matching the rate that the US administration imposed on Chinese imports.

China's countermeasures also include more export controls on rare earth minerals, suspended imports of sorghum, poultry and bonemeal from six US companies, adding 27 US firms to lists of companies facing trade restrictions, an anti-monopoly investigation into DuPont China Group, and a lawsuit at the World Trade Organization over the US administration's "reciprocal tariffs".

The US leader's post on social media on Friday that China "played it wrong" only serves to expose China's countermeasures have caught the US administration unexpected. If China's previous responses were scalpels, this time it drew a sword. China's new tariffs stop short of a full-blown trade war, but they mark a clear escalation entailing more efforts to untangle the situation, as some US observers pointed out.

Although the lose-lose results will leave no party unscathed, it is the US itself that will primarily bear the brunt of its tariff policy.

TikTok holdup, unprincipled power play

Former US president Joe Biden signed a law last year that required TikTok's China-based parent company ByteDance to divest the app in the United States or be banned, ostensibly over "national security" concerns. The law was set to go into effect in January, but his successor said he would delay its enforcement in hopes of reaching a deal to keep the app "alive".

This delay was due to end on Saturday if ByteDance hadn't divested the platform's US operations to a US company. But in the latest chapter of the long-running saga, the US leader claims to be doing China a favor by "working very hard on a deal to save TikTok", which is used by about 170 million Americans, half the country's total population.

The deal would reportedly see a new company owned by a majority of US investors operate TikTok in the US, with ByteDance, the Chinese developer and owner of the popular short video app, maintaining a minority position of around 19 percent.

According to the US president, the proposed deal "has made tremendous progress" but it requires more work to ensure all necessary approvals are signed, "which is why I am signing an Executive Order to keep TikTok up and running for an additional 75 days".

Perhaps the US leader is trying to cast himself as the Easter Bunny delivering treats. In reality, he is engaging in highway robbery. His stand-and-deliver proposal to ByteDance is basically nothing more than the popular stick-up demand of "your money or your life". Or in this case, "your algorithms or the app's life".

Following China's retaliatory tariffs on US exports in response to his administration's "bonanza for the rich" so-called reciprocal tariffs on all the US' trading partners, the US president initially showboated feigned fury, accusing Beijing of "panicking". Then, in a typical twist, he extended an olive branch by suggesting a potential trade-off: easing tariffs in exchange for concessions on TikTok's US operations.

Despite claiming that "We do not want TikTok to go dark. We look forward to working with TikTok and China to close the Deal", the deal he envisions is being persuasively enforced via the barrel of his tariff gun.

On March 26, the US leader had already told reporters in the White House that he'd consider reducing tariffs on China if Beijing agreed to divestment. "Maybe I give them a little reduction in tariffs or something to get it done," he said. A representative of ByteDance said in a statement that it had been in "discussions with the US government regarding a potential solution for TikTok US", but there were still "key matters to be resolved". The statement also pointed out that under Chinese law, any deal will be subject to the central government's approval.

Despite the great lengths the US side has gone to in a bid to cover up its de facto robbery of TikTok, the Chinese authorities have made their opposition to the enforced takeover clear. In response to a question about the proposed lifeline being extended to TikTok's operations in the US, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said pointedly on March 27 that the "acquisition of businesses should be independently decided by companies in accordance with market principles".

The proposal to enforce a takeover of TikTok in the US serves to underscore the administration's principles are subservient to its geopolitical objectives. By linking TikTok's fate to broader trade discussions, the US leader has highlighted how his administration is leveraging tariffs to coercively gain advantages for the US.

As the two economic powerhouses play out their tug-of-war over the algorithms at the heart of TikTok, the world is watching closely what transpires. The implications of this power play by the US administration extend far beyond the realms of trade and investment as they will have significant implications for the tech industry and beyond, and impact market dynamics and the future of global commerce.

Amid the backdrop of escalating tensions and strategic maneuvers, the TikTok tariff saga serves as a potent reminder of the type of unprincipled power games the US likes to play.

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Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huxin Donglie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
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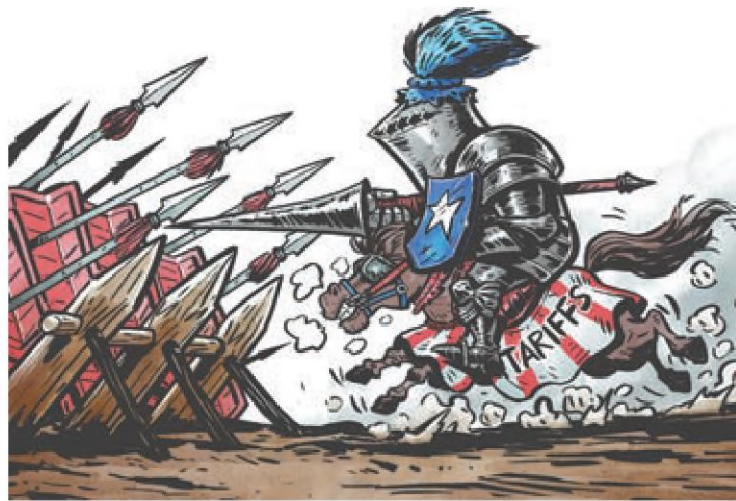
China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 70 436 2812 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Hannover Messe 2025 shows the potential of innovation

The five-day Hannover Messe 2025, the world's premier industrial technology exhibition, concluded on Friday, leaving an indelible mark on the global manufacturing landscape. This year's theme, "Shaping the Future with Technology", was most evident in the Chinese pavilions, where over 1,000 exhibitors from China demonstrated how the country is redefining industrial innovation amid the digital transformation and green transition.

The stars were pioneers in robotics from China, particularly Unitree Robotics from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. The company had brought a next-generation quadrupedal robot dog and a sophisticated humanoid robot to Hannover Messe 2025. While most exhibitors kept their robots safely behind barriers, Unitree's robot dog moved seamlessly through the packed exhibition halls without colliding with anyone, thanks to its advanced LiDAR and 3D vision systems. Many visitors found themselves unwittingly participating in an impromptu marketing campaign as they followed the robot back to Unitree's booth, where they were greeted by the company's humanoid robot assistant.

According to Unitree engineers, while current applications focus on industrial inspections and R&D, the technology is rapidly evolving toward household applications, with prototypes already capable of performing basic chores through voice commands.

In the healthcare sector, Nanjing-based Triastek's demonstration of 3D-printed drug delivery systems was the highlight. The centerpiece was an elegant blooming capsule design that unfolds like a flower in the stomach.

The Chinese companies at Hannover Messe 2025 represent a remarkable evolution from just two decades ago, when China was primarily seen as a manufacturing base for Western designs. The West is now seeing the maturation of China's innovation ecosystem, which has progressed from just manufacturing things to inventing and developing them.

This transformation mirrors the broader arc of industrial history. The British-led industrial revolution in the 18th century introduced mechanization, while the US-led industrial revolution, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, brought mass production. China has played a key role in the third industrial revolution, which was characterized by computer technology, and the country is now a driver of the latest industrial revolution characterized by new technologies such as artificial intelligence and cyber-physical systems.

What makes this era more unique is its collaborative nature, as demonstrated by the numerous Sino-European partnerships on display. Official statistics reveal the scale of China's participation, as Hannover Messe 2025 saw over

1,000 Chinese exhibitors, making China the largest foreign contingent, second only to the host country, Germany, a big increase in Chinese exhibition space compared to 2024. Also, a huge percentage of robotics-related exhibitors came from China. The event also saw a large number of major partnerships being announced between Chinese and European firms.

Hannover Messe 2025 has sent out a clear message: China has emerged as a major innovator capable of both breakthrough inventions and their practical industrial application. From robot dogs that could one day become household helps to pharmaceutical technologies that may redefine drug delivery, Chinese companies demonstrated they're not just participating in the latest industrial revolution but also leading it.

The Chinese delegation also underscored the importance of international collaboration in tackling global challenges like climate change and healthcare access. As the world moves toward finding increasingly complex technological solutions, events like Hannover Messe serve as crucial platform where ideas cross-pollinate across borders.

With Hannover Messe 2026 up next, industry watchers will be keen to see how China's industrial innovators build on this year's impressive showing and what new surprises they might unveil.

— ZHANG ZHOULIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

High-level opening-up continues to offer dividends

The Logistics Performance Index of China was 51.5 in March, up 2.2 percentage points from the previous month, returning to the expansion range above 50 with strong momentum, according to a release of the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing on Thursday.

The LPI is a composite index of the total business volume, new orders, employees, inventory turnover times, and equipment utilization rate. According to the CFLP, all of the LPI's subindices rose across the board in March reaching the expansion range, among which the total business volume index and the new order index rebounded significantly from the previous month.

The data reflect that on the basis of the expectation of a steady recovery of the market after the Chinese New Year holiday, the resumption of work and production of upstream and downstream supply chains has been carried out as scheduled; industrial demand has been released in an orderly manner; and the efficiency of supply chains has been improved.

Despite the rising uncertainties in the external environment, thanks to its broad space and strong resilience, China's economic operations remain stable, and the post-pandemic recovery trend is being further consolidated with the implementation of a series of effective macroeconomic policies that stress endogenous

impetus, innovation and diversifying trading partners. These policies have played an important role in overcoming the economic difficulties the country has faced and demonstrated the prospects and potential for the economy's medium- and long-term development.

The Chinese government will proactively implement more macroeconomic policies to expand domestic demand, stabilize foreign trade and foreign investment, promote the healthy development of the real estate industry and stock markets, effectively prevent and resolve risks in key areas, and strive to achieve annual economic growth of around 5 percent.

As a new round of technology revolution is gathering pace, China is gradually becoming a major player in many emerging industries, and artificial intelligence, biomanufacturing, quantum technology, and low-altitude economy are all expected to flourish.

The world's second-largest economy will steadily expand institutional opening-up, promote international economic and trade cooperation, continue to relax market access for foreign investment, and expand pilot opening-up in areas such as telecommunications, medical care, and education.

In the process, policymakers will carefully study and solve the problems faced by foreign-funded enter-

prises in terms of factor acquisition, qualification licensing, standard setting, and government procurement.

At a time when the United States is adopting isolationist and protectionist policies, China is expanding its high-level opening-up and optimizing the business environment to level the playing field for foreign companies. No matter how the external environment changes, China's door will only continue to open wider and it will continue to share with the world its development dividends and new opportunities.

Global instability and uncertainty are increasing significantly. In response, countries should work together to build a community with a shared future for mankind. Economic globalization is the only way to develop an inclusive human society.

The rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core has made important contributions to promoting global trade, economic growth and sustainable development. All major economies should thus consciously, jointly safeguard the free trade system, adhere to open regionalism, resolutely oppose trade and investment protectionism, promote regional economic integration and connectivity, and promote the construction of an open world economy through openness and integration.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Spring Economy

Editor's note: Consumption during spring has become a significant economic driver, with blooming flowers becoming major tourist attractions. With the "flower-viewing economy" and increasing domestic travel becoming seasonal trends, spring consumption is reshaping China's economic landscape. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Dai Bin

Spring in bloom, tourism on the rise

Spring has long been a cherished season of Chinese travelers. As China enters a new phase of mass tourism, the "seven holidays and two seasons" — New Year's Day, Spring Festival, Qingming Festival, Labor Day, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, National Day holidays, and the summer and winter travel seasons — have become the barometer of the tourism economy. With the introduction of new policies to boost consumption, increase supply of cultural and tourism products, and the push for granting paid leave, the time is ripe for cultivating a robust spring tourism season.



The author is the president of the China Tourism Academy.

Across China, tourism authorities are introducing time-sensitive and emotionally engaging concepts including "flower maps" and "green routes" to develop what's known as the "flower-viewing economy". As

plum and cherry blossom, magnolias, peonies spread their fragrance, and swaths of rapeseed flowers bloom in succession from south to north, local governments are unveiling special flower-viewing routes.

On March 26, the governments of Beijing and Tianjin municipalities and Hebei province jointly launched the "2025 Blossoms in Jing-Jin-Ji" (Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei) initiative. Beijing alone is offering 214 flower-viewing routes, including heritage-themed routes from Olympic Forest Park to Jingshan Park. On the same day, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism launched the 2025 national spring tourism promotion program in Huangshan Mountain in Anhui province, introducing 32 rural travel routes. Government initiatives and market dynamics together have given rise to a range of creative "flower plus" models, unleashing the full economic potential of spring travel.

From Tianjin's crabapple festival to Wuhan's cherry blossoms, and Chengdu's rapeseed flower marathon to Luoyang's hanfu-themed flower fair, springtime hotspots are drawing tourists across the country.

Tourism, for people today, is more than just a leisure activity. It has become a people-centered industry, an emerging pillar of China's economy. Spring travel brings peace of mind and injects new



MA XUJING / CHINA DAILY

vitality into cities and rural areas alike. Public spaces, from cultural districts and scenic zones to museums and lifestyle hubs, have come alive with a mix of tradition and the latest trends. People are rediscovering the poetic beauty of spring at music festivals, street dance

performances, pop-up markets, food fairs, and immersive storytelling sessions in theme parks. Tech-enhanced attractions like NPC-guided tours, acrobatics, interactive learning, and outdoor sports have added depth and flair to traveling during the season.

Chinese Tourism Academy data point to a new trend — about 10 percent people performing Qingming rituals also engage in folk activities. Putting on hanfu to visit museums or performing rituals has become a "spring practice" for many young travelers, while wellness-focused camping, "stress-relief" farming, and trying out seasonal foods have enriched the rural tourism experience.

China's expanding transport network, mobile connectivity, and public infrastructure have made spring travel faster, and more flexible and comfortable. "Tourist trains", self-driving tours and river cruises have added modern variety and flair to travel. Rental platforms, too, are witnessing a surge in demand for cars equipped with outdoor gear and child-safety seats, making "high-speed rail plus car rental" the new aspect of springtime activity.

But more needs to be done to unleash the full potential of spring tourism. For example, the authorities should further improve coordination between public policies and the infrastructure and service delivery sectors. Since consumption depends on income, time and desire, policies like optimizing holiday arrangements, granting paid leave, and piloting spring and autumn school breaks, as called for in recent government reports, are key to ensuring better travel experience.

With spring marketing campaigns, seasonal promotions, upgraded travel products and enhanced visitor experience, public confidence in the tourism sector is growing. Advances in weather science and information and communications technology are helping shift tourism away from its traditional dependency on good weather. With facilities like satellite-monitored cherry, peach and plum blossom forecasts for Jiangxi province's Wuyuan or the scenic climate maps for Shandong province's Qingdao, spring tourism is entering a new era powered by data and innovation. In Guizhou province, a cherry blossom viewing program even launched a limited-edition running gear line with Anta Sports, blending youth, fashion and nature.

As policy support expands, technology evolves and services improve, every blooming flower will become a portal promoting unique travel experiences, making every spring outing a step toward a richer, more joyful life.

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

Mario Cavolo

Smart spending accompanies healthy travel trends

As the weather gets warmer and spring breathes new life across China, especially in the chillier northeast region, optimism in the air and smiles on people's faces are for real. Families are stepping out more, appreciating the stability and safety that the country provides, especially because these two aspects seem sorely lacking in so many Western countries.

Chinese families are exploring, spending and indulging in some of life's pleasures without fear or worry. This trait of Chinese families I have come to increasingly appreciate.

On Chinese social media, there's a surge of posts about springtime activities and the destinations to visit. The Chinese people are using the internet to find travel and hiking companions, seek recommendations for spring outings, and share memories of picnics and trips to parks and rural areas with family and friends.

Social media platforms, among other things, are also recommending cafes where one can enjoy the spring scenery while sipping coffee. And netizens are updating sites with beautiful landscapes, highlighting spots ideal for taking photographs with blooming flowers against a green backdrop.



The author is a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization.

Living in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning province, I have been traveling more frequently of late to cities such as Shanghai, Qingdao and Hangzhou. But every time I board a flight or take a high-speed train, I surprisingly find it packed.

This to me is exactly the right type of anecdotal yet meaningful indicator of the pulse of the economy. The hospitality, retail and transportation sectors are humming along pretty well. But it's not just domestic travel that's thriving. Southeast Asian destinations have become increasingly popular among Chinese tourists, thanks to affordable airfare and visa-free policies in countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines. The ease of travel, combined with the chance of cultural interaction, makes these short overseas trips highly appealing.

Like people everywhere, Chinese citizens, too, enjoy experiencing new cultures, cuisines and landscapes beyond their own borders, with data indicating many are doing so.

Also, China is witnessing an influx of international tourists due to the government's visa-free transit policy, which was extended from the previous 72 hours and 144 hours to 240 hours (10 days) in December 2024. In 2024, foreign visitors made a total of over 20 million trips in China.

It is no secret that the global economy is not in a healthy growth phase. Yet the Chinese government's proactive measures to boost consumption are making a real difference. Take the government's household purchase rebate programs for example. Just in March, Chinese households received up to a 500-yuan (\$68) discount directly from the government-backed initiative for buying a new smartphone. Such policies encourage people to spend more on electronics, appliances and other products.

Beyond big-ticket products, dining out is a beloved habit of many Chinese households, ours included. We love to dine out a few times every week, and restaurants seem pretty busy overall to my curious eyes.

As we continue moving through 2025, I believe we will continue seeing these two main features — consumers spending more and spending smart, and Beijing keeping the pedal to the metal while rolling out various stimulus programs to boost consumption and further propel the economy.

Yet it is advisable to be cautiously confident. China's domestic consumption landscape tells a story of adaptation to the changes and cautious optimism with steady demand and measured but meaningful consumption growth.

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

Xu Hong

Turning flower-viewing into a growth driver

Spring is the season when nature celebrates itself, and so do businesses. Millions of people travel across the country to partake of the gifts of spring, from cherry blossom to rapeseed blossom, and from apricot blossom to peach blossom. Recent years have seen the emergence of some new business models such as drone photography, hanfu rentals and flower field camping.

Government directives are encouraging a move away from isolated events toward a model where the simple act of flower-viewing evolves into an immersive experience. This new approach invites cities to reimagine traditional seasonal celebrations as dynamic, interconnected platforms for urban-rural development. Through policies aimed at merging cultural tourism with different industries, the authorities are not only celebrating nature's beauty but also developing innovative, sustainable economic ecosystems.

Across China, a vivid reimaging of urban space is underway. In Wuhan, Hubei province, for instance, the cherry blossom season has become a metaphor for transformation. At Wuhan's Qingchuan Pavilion, cherry blossoms and red brick walls create a stunning landscape, while in Optics Valley, 3D projections bring cherry blossoms to life amid skyscrapers. The city uses flowers to attract investments of more than 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) during the cherry blossom season. Wuhan has integrated cutting-edge technology into traditional cherry blossom-viewing, creating the first "perceptible tech-cherry blossom narrative

chain" in China.

In another striking example, rural communities in Xiangxi, Hunan province, have embraced the "one city, one flower" model. In the province's Chenjiapo nature village, which has fewer than 100 residents, spring flowers attract more than 3,000 tourists a day. Local residents have developed an augmented reality flower-viewing app, generating over 1 million yuan in online pre-sales. And the Pear Blossom Valley in Huayuan county of Hunan has fostered a year-round industry, generating nearly 10 million yuan a year, while Longshan's lily industry, which offers products such as face masks and flower tea, contributes about 3 billion yuan a year to the agriculture sector.

Besides, former industrial zones are experiencing their own revitalization. Once a barren mining area, Wuning in Jiangxi province is now home to cherry trees across 600 acres which blossom in spring and provide employment for 50 farmers. Thanks to the "flower industry", Wuning's eco-tourism revenue surpassed 10 billion yuan in 2023.

Global examples offer compelling insights into how nature's beauty can be turned into cultural assets. Japan's iconic "Somei Yoshino" cherry blossoms, with their unique "flowers-without-leaves" beauty, embody the nation's *mono no aware* (the pathos of things) aesthetics. The Japanese government has factored in the cherry blossom season into its economy policy, not least because cherry blossom is Japan's national flower. With precise flowering forecasts and themed



The author is the dean of the College of Tourism and Service Management at Nankai University.

activities, cherry blossom-viewing in Japan has become an international event. In 2024, Japan attracted 3.73 million foreign visitors during the cherry blossom season, generating 1.14 trillion yen (\$8 billion) in revenue. Japan's success in transforming cultural tourism into a global phenomenon offers valuable lessons for other countries.

The Netherlands presents another fascinating example. Tulips, a symbol of the Netherlands since the 17th century "Tulip Mania", remain a major cultural and economic force, with the country controlling over 90 percent of the global tulip bulb trade. Keukenhof Park, the heart of this industry, offers a stunning view of about 7 million flowers and generates huge revenue. By integrating agriculture, tourism and finance, the park offers a unique "spring experience" that has become a model for economic success.

A simple field of flowers becomes far more compelling when infused with history, folklore and local traditions. Imagine a cherry blossom park where visitors can listen to ancient love stories, or a tulip festival where digital installations narrate the flower's journey from a 17th century craze to a global symbol of beauty. By bringing together historians, artists and

cultural activists, cities can turn their flower landscapes into living stories that captivate visitors.

Technology has the potential to extend the blossom season. For example, livestreaming can let people across the world see Japan's cherry blossoms or the Netherlands' tulip fields in real time.

Flowers aren't just for admiring; they're also commercial products. Smart farming and the internet of things-powered irrigation can boost per-acre flower yield, while flower-based products — perfumes, cosmetics, teas — can create new revenue streams, and themed offerings, such as flower-infused dining and wellness retreats, can elevate tourists' experiences.

A strong brand can potentially transform the local flower industry into a global phenomenon, and signature mascots, immersive festivals and even a catchy song can make a destination globally recognizable, while international certification, strategic partnerships, and marketing campaigns can ensure the brand remains relevant in the long run.

When culture breathes life into landscapes, technology breaks seasonal boundaries, industries work in harmony, and branding brings global recognition, flowers become more than a passing delight; they become a driver of development. In this new era, every city can take measures to ensure nature's beauty doesn't bloom to fade in a short while but to become a permanent part of our lives.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

MARCOS CORDEIRO PIRES

Backyard bully

Trump administration's advancing of US interests in Western Hemisphere relies on insults, pressure and tariffs

During his inauguration on Jan 20, US President Donald Trump was asked about relations with Latin America and Brazil. He replied: "should be great", but added: "They need us much more than we need them. We don't need them. They



ment policy.

On the same day, Trump announced the imposition of 25 percent tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada, threatened to retake the Panama Canal, voiced the intention of taking Greenland from Denmark, changed the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America", and began a relentless hunt for illegal immigrants, most of whom are of Latin American origin. Later, he announced the imposition of 25 percent tariffs on steel and aluminum, directly impacting Canada and Brazil, the two largest exporters to the United States.

The Trump administration considers Latin America and the Caribbean countries to be its backyard, and essential for strategic natural resources and security.

On Feb 13, Admiral Alvin Holsey, commander of the US Southern Command, testified before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, as part of the command's annual Posture Statement to Congress. Speaking about China's presence in Latin America, he highlighted:

"While the United States is looking to the Far East, China is plowing fertile ground to our south. The region is home to abundant natural resources, including 20 percent of the world's oil reserves, 25 percent of its strategic metals, 30 percent of its forest area, 31 percent of its fishing areas and 32 percent of its



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

renewable freshwater resources. Economics plays a central role in China's interest in the region. Understanding this, China has used its Belt and Road Initiative to become South America's largest trading partner and second-largest in Central America and the Caribbean."

On March 5, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations organized a hearing to discuss "Advancing American Interests in the Western Hemisphere". Two important scholars testified to the involvement of China with LAC countries. They mentioned investments in the BRI, the high-level interaction of trade, military consulting with the People's Liberation Army and the alleged fentanyl trafficking. Senators who attended the hearing highlighted a lot of prejudice

against China and showed how containing its development is a bipartisan consensus.

It is interesting to note that LAC countries are treated as "objects" by senior US leaders rather than as autonomous actors on the international stage with their own interests. There is an attempt to infantilize LAC countries on the pretense that they are naive and do not understand the threats of a hypothetical "big bad wolf".

Because of this perception, the relationship between Latin America, the Caribbean and China is being tested at every turn. The threats against the government of Panama, for example, are having an effect, as there is US pressure for the Hong Kong company CK Hutchison to sell its port assets in the Panama Canal to the fund man-

ager BlackRock. If it occurs, this sale should not be viewed from an economic perspective but from a geopolitical perspective, as the Trump administration has wrongly accused China of controlling the canal. It is worth remembering that when the Panamanian government took over the canal in 1999, one of the most critical clauses was maintaining neutrality and fairness in managing the canal for ships from all countries using the passage.

It's also worth mentioning that, during Trump's first term, several US government agencies pressured countries in the region to ban the telecommunications company Huawei from their 5G infrastructure, arguing that China could create a surveillance system and compromise the security of the countries

that hosted it. This pressure continued under the Joe Biden administration. However, most LAC countries did not give in to the US' coercion. In the end, as in the case of Brazil, the interest of companies and society in obtaining a reliable, robust, and much cheaper 5G system than the few competitors supported by the US prevailed.

There is currently pressure against the building of electric vehicle manufacturing plants in Mexico because, according to the US bias, the driving assistance systems of these vehicles could capture sensitive information about customers, roads and their surroundings, including military assets. Because of this, according to Reuters, on April 18, 2024, "Mexico's federal government, under pressure from the US, is keeping Chinese auto-

makers at arm's length by refusing to offer such incentives as low-cost public land or tax cuts for investment in EV production..." This situation continues a year later, with Trump's new term.

The appointment of Cuban-American Marco Rubio as US Secretary of State tends to intensify attacks on cooperation between LAC and China. As a senator, he actively worked to impose numerous sanctions against China. The current US administration has nothing positive to offer LAC countries. In the first Trump administration, the "América Crece" Initiative, or the Growth in the Americas Initiative, and the Development Finance Corporation were created to compete with Chinese productive investments in the region, but nothing substantial has happened. In 2022, Biden announced the creation of the "Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity", promising investments that could support the development of the region and address the root causes of illegal immigration, but this remained just a promise, as nothing substantive has been created for the "Western Hemisphere".

The only assets available to the US government today are insults, pressure, tariffs and threats of intervention. Meanwhile, cooperation with China offers opportunities for investment, technology transfer and a huge market in sectors where the US competes with LAC countries, such as soybeans, corn, cotton, meat and oil. These are challenging times, but the advance of history cannot be stopped.

The author is a professor of international political economy at Sao Paulo State University in Brazil. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

JORGE HEINE

Fast forward

China and countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region are looking to the next stage of their cooperation

Ten years after the first ministerial meeting of the Forum between China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States held in Beijing in January 2015, China's position in Latin America has been considerably bolstered.



Since 2017, four countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region, Panama, El Salvador, Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, have established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China; 22 countries have signed memorandums of understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative; eight countries have joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as full members; eight Latin American presidents visited China in 2023, the highest number ever; and in recent years, two countries in the region, Ecuador and Nicaragua, signed free trade agreements with China, which, added to Chile, Peru and Costa Rica, brings the total to five; eight Latin American nations have signed comprehensive strategic partnership agreements with China; and China has also signed close to 1,000 bilateral cooperation agreements with Latin American countries.

All this underlines one of the most significant developments in the region's international political economy in its two centuries of independent history. Until this century, Latin America had relied on two international reference points for its diplomacy, and its international trade and investment flows: one was the United States; the other was Europe. Suddenly, a third one has emerged: China. In

In today's turbulent international environment of rampant protectionism and the weaponization of tariffs and economic sanctions as instruments of statecraft, Latin America remains committed to free trade and to increasing its commerce and investment flows with the rest of the world.

the management of foreign relations — and this is especially true in today's globalized and interdependent economy — it is better for countries to have more, rather than fewer, alternatives at their disposal. It increases their options and makes it easier to manage the ups and downs of the international business cycle.

This is reflected in the growth of China-LAC links. After China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, its trade with Latin America skyrocketed, going from around \$12 billion in 2000 to nearly \$500 billion in 2024, a 40-fold increase. President Xi Jinping forecast at the first ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum in 2015 that the value of China-LAC trade over the next 10 years would increase to \$500 billion, which is exactly what happened. Projections

indicate this trade may reach \$700 billion by 2035.

During the golden decade of the commodities super cycle (2003-12), Latin America grew like it had not done in 30 years, a little under 5 percent a year. This made it possible to weather the 2008-09 global financial crisis in an unprecedented manner, disproving the old saying "when the United States sneezes, Latin America catches a cold". Not a single Latin American bank went belly up during the 2008-09 global financial crisis, largely due to the ongoing China boom and its demand for the region's rich variety of products. This fortified the region's coffers, allowed countries to pay down their foreign debt, increase their hard currency reserves and better deal with the international economic turbulence. None of this would have been possible in the absence of this vigorous trade with China.

Today, China is the largest trading partner of South America. Brazil's bilateral trade with China has reached \$180 billion, and Brazil exports more to China than it does to the US and the European Union combined. The same goes for Chile, 39 percent of whose exports go to China. China's foreign direct investment in the region has also increased considerably. Even countries that had lagged in Chinese foreign direct investment, such as Chile, have been making up for it, and in 2019 and 2021, China was one major originator of FDI in Chile. This investment has also expanded from the mining sector, on which it focused originally, to energy, infrastructure and transport. The state-of-the-art, \$3.6 billion deep-water port of Chancay in Peru, was inaugurated last November. Built by Chinese company COSCO, it is Exhibit A of this kind of



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

high impact investment.

In today's turbulent international environment of rampant protectionism and the weaponization of tariffs and economic sanctions as instruments of statecraft, Latin America remains committed to free trade and to increasing its commerce and investment flows with the rest of the world. In this, it finds a willing partner, China, a country that continues to open its economy and to work with countries from

the Global South. Given China's pioneering role in green energy sources and e-mobility, and Latin America's extensive reserves of copper and lithium, among other key minerals required by the green economy, joint ventures that contribute to further industrialize Latin America by marrying Chinese technology and capital with these natural resources and the region's ample labor force are a natural next step.

The author is a research professor at the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, interim director of the Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future at Boston University and the author of The Non-Aligned World: Striking Out in an Era of Great Power Competition. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CULTURE



Reviving the classics

Theater veterans bring glory back to historic stage works in the hope of speaking to the next generations, **Chen Nan** reports.



For veteran actor, director and president of the Beijing People's Art Theatre Feng Yuanzheng, when one takes a classic off the shelf and puts it under the spotlight again, the stakes are higher than ever. It's not only about bringing the glory of the past to the present but also daring it to speak to a new generation.

In January, the established theater announced its latest initiative, the Classic Revival Plan, to revive and adapt some of Chinese theater's most iconic works.

The initiative's first production to be staged is *Returning Home on a Snowy Night*, originally penned in 1942 by Chinese playwright Wu Zuguang (1917-2003). The play was first performed by the theater in the 1950s.

Featuring Feng as its artistic director and Yan Rui as director, the new adaptation of this classic play will premiere on April 25 at the Capital Theatre, home of the Beijing People's Art Theatre.

Revolving around famed Peking Opera actor Wei Liangsheng, the play portrays how Wei experiences the peak of fame and the depths of despair. Eventually, his tragic love affair with Yuchun, a concubine of a bureaucrat, costs them both their lives.

"Wu's script is well-known, and I've been intrigued by it since I was a young actor," recalls Feng, 62. "There have been many adaptations, from movies to TV dramas. We discussed the idea of restaging the play for more than a decade. This isn't just a revival, it is a reinvention."

"Behind the scenes, a new cast, a fresh vision, and a director with a bold vision will breathe new life into a play that has endured for decades," he adds.

In 2012, the theater's former president Ren Ming directed a rendition of the Chinese play by collaborating with the National Centre for the Performing Arts. Feng was one of the actors.

The theater delayed restaging the classic for years because of the challenges of finding the right leading actor to portray Wei. According to Feng, casting is critical to capturing the essence of the story. The role of Wei requires a unique blend of talent — acting techniques, life experience, charisma, and most importantly, naturally exuding the vibe of a traditional Chinese opera — that's not easy to find.

A few years ago, when Feng first saw Liu Heng, a Kunqu actor with The Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre, he immediately felt that Liu matched the image of Wei in his mind. Even though Liu had no experience performing in plays, Feng decided to train him to become this character.

In his transition from performing as a *wusheng* (martial male) in Kun-



Top: Creative members of the play pose at the news conference on March 25 in Beijing. The new adaptation will be staged at the Capital Theatre on April 25. Above from left: Character portraits of actress Liang Danni, actor Liu Heng, actor Li Hongtao and actress Lu Lu. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

qu Opera to playing a *nandan* (young male in the female role) in Peking Opera, Liu, 36, faced his first challenge — breaking away from the stylized performances typical of traditional Chinese opera.

Kunqu Opera and Peking Opera are both influential forms of traditional Chinese theater, but they differ significantly in style, performance techniques, history, and regional influence. Kunqu Opera is one of the oldest and most refined forms of Chinese opera, known for its delicate

and lyrical musical style. Peking Opera, or *jingju*, features more energetic, fast-paced music often involving thrilling action scenes and large-scale spectacles.

"The director kept refining my lines," says Liu, who began studying Kunqu Opera at 11 and made his stage debut at 15. "In traditional Chinese opera, monologues have a certain rhythm and tone, but in modern theater, they need to be much more grounded and lifelike."

Actress Li Lu, 28, portrays Yuchun

and describes the love story as "fleetingly and delicate".

Her portrayal of Yuchun draws heavily from traditional Chinese opera elements.

"After watching Kunqu Opera, I realized how uniquely traditional Chinese opera presents emotional scenes. The subtlety in body language and eye contact — where the heart, eyes, hands, and movements all play a part — is remarkable. Every aspect of the performance reveals the character's inner world, whether

shy or bold. These small details speak volumes about the character's emotions," she says.

While the play features mostly young actors and actresses, the involvement of two seasoned performers, actor Li Hongtao and actress Liang Danni, helps uphold the theater's artistic identity, mentor the newcomers, and maintain overall performance quality, according to director Yan.

"The play not only depicts a tragic yet beautiful love story but also the



Top: Snapshots from the latest adaptation of *Returning Home on a Snowy Night*. Above: Feng Yuanzheng, president of the Beijing People's Art Theatre, is the play's artistic director.

turning wheels of fate and a yearning for a free life with dignity. This time, we aim to connect the past text with today's audience," says Yan, adding that the production will blend the aesthetics of traditional Chinese opera with modern theatrical techniques to create a poetic, rhythmic stage experience. "On stage, these living, vibrant characters must make the audience believe in them and step into their lives."

According to Feng, the second major revival will be Lao She's *Rickshaw Boy*, which will be restaged in July. This production will serve as a symbol of the theater's ability to maintain its classic works as dynamic and relevant for new generations. "We call plays like *Rickshaw Boy* 'museum plays', which refers to theatrical productions that are staged in a way that preserves their original form, without adaptation, reinterpretation, or modernization," says Feng, noting that the adaptation of *Rickshaw Boy* will be different from that of Wu's.

The revival will replicate the play directed by Mei Qian (1916-2002), which debuted in 1957 at the Beijing People's Art Theatre.

"Like a museum preserves historical artifacts, a 'museum play' treats the original production as an artifact of the past, keeping it intact for the sake of historical accuracy and authenticity," says Feng. "The production team will retain the original set design, costumes and makeup, preserving the most essential performance style of our theater. It aims to fully showcase the classic charm of the theater's establishing days. As soon as the curtain rises, the audience will feel as though they are watching a production from that era."

Contact the writer at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn

For Pritzker prize winner, each project is a love letter to homeland

CHENGDU — When asked about his favorite architectural form, Liu Jiakun, the newly crowned Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate, did not mention soaring skyscrapers or grand monuments, but said, "Wells".

"In a well, time loops and parallel universes exist. Wherever you are, you are both inside and outside yourself. If the stage is dark, you cultivate your own light and if the sky isn't vast, you dig deep," he tells Xinhua in an interview in Chengdu, Sichuan province, where he was born.

For over four decades, Liu has remained rooted in his homeland, proving that a deeply local practice can grow into something towering and universal.

Earlier in March, the Pritzker Architecture Prize committee

announced Liu as its 54th laureate.

"Liu creates public areas in populated cities where the luxury of space is largely absent, forging a positive relationship between density and open space. By multiplying typologies within one project, he innovates the role of civic spaces to support the breadth of requisites for a diverse society," the committee says.

Liu is the second Chinese citizen to receive this prize. He spent most of his life in Chengdu crafting buildings that respond to the land, the people and the culture that raised him.

One of his most emblematic works, West Village, is a five-story urban complex. Designed like a hotpot, where various ingredients come together in a bubbling and flavorful mix, it blurs the bounda-

ries between public and private, formal and informal. In this complex, elderly men walk with their birds, influencers pose for photos, and children chase soccer balls.

In 2016, a model of West Village was displayed at the Venice Biennale. Today, it stands as a defining reason for Liu's Pritzker win. "Liu Jiakun takes present realities and handles them to the point of offering sometimes a whole new scenario of daily life," the jury notes.

In the eyes of his friends, Liu is as much a man of letters as he is a man of bricks. He reads voraciously, drawing inspiration from literature, philosophy and history. These influences manifest in his work: not just in form, but in meaning.

In 2008, after a devastating earthquake hit Wenchuan in Sichuan, Liu rushed to the disaster zone



Liu Jiakun at an interview in March. XINHUA

to volunteer. "As a Sichuan resident, I felt the pain. As an architect, I had to do something I knew how to do." Liu repurposed rubble from the quake into bricks, which he used to rebuild homes and construct a memorial site. The bricks at the memorial site form courtyards that bear silent witness to loss and resilience. "They are more than materials. They carry memories," Liu explains.

One of his smallest yet most poignant works is a memorial hall dedicated to a 15-year-old girl who

perished in the quake. A lover of literature, she dreamed of becoming a writer. With her parents' consent, Liu designed a delicate, pink-walled sanctuary nestled in a grove with a circular skylight casting soft, shifting light.

"It wasn't a commission," Liu says. "It was something I had to do because I was there and I am an architect."

Liu's career path was far from predetermined. Before college, he had never even heard of architecture. When filling out university applications, he listed majors like warehouse management and leather processing, simply seeking a path to securing a stable job.

Notably, throughout the decade after graduating, Liu abandoned architecture almost entirely, pouring his energy into writing.

But, in 1993, a solo exhibition by a former classmate in Shanghai changed everything. "I realized architecture could be captivating. Architects could have exhibitions. China's architectural era was coming."

His foray into architecture coincided with China's construction industry boom when architects finally had space to innovate. Yet, while many chase monumental and high-profile projects, Liu opts for less glamorous quests.

To Liu, architecture is akin to literature and painting, disciplines of lifelong pursuit. "Both are endless labors, but the beauty is that they push you to keep growing," he says.

Each project, he adds, is a love letter to his homeland.

XINHUA

LIFE

Jeremy K Hon poses with a young reader during a book-signing session for *An Impossible Life Journey*, at a book fair in Hong Kong. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Xizang's winter sports star sets eyes on Olympics

LHASA — A new generation in the Xizang autonomous region is pursuing dreams across uncharted frontiers. One such trailblazer is 18-year-old Cidan Yuzhen, a rising star of ski mountaineering.

Born in 2006 in Luntse county, Lhokha city, she grew up in a family of farmers and herders. Her grandfather, once a serf in Changnang county, gained freedom after Xizang's democratic reform in 1959, and rebuilt his life in Luntse.

By the age of 7, Cidan Yuzhen was herding sheep and harvesting highland barley. On snow-draped grasslands over 3,800 meters above sea level, she traversed mountains, often scaling two peaks each day to graze livestock — unwittingly laying the foundation for her athletic future.

In 2016, she was selected for an amateur sports school in Lhokha, one of two from her elementary school. Though her parents questioned her path, she persevered. "I just wanted to try something new," she says.

Cidan Yuzhen began as a race walker, but her trajectory shifted when Xizang began prioritizing winter sports ahead of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Her exceptional fitness earned her a spot on the national ski mountaineering team in 2020.

Ski mountaineering — a blend of alpine climbing and skiing — makes its debut at the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics. Despite growing up surrounded by snow, skiing was entirely new to her.



Cidan Yuzhen at a competition during the Ski Mountaineering mixed relay final match at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Yabuli, Heilongjiang province, on Feb. 12, in which she and her teammate clinched the gold medal. XIE JIANFEI / XINHUA

"The first time I watched a race video, I thought, 'Wow, this is amazing!' But I had no idea how to even ski," she says.

Early training brought endless falls, but her high-altitude endurance proved an asset, allowing her to rival male athletes on climbs. She embraced the adrenaline: overtaking rivals on ascents and speeding downhill. To hone her skills, she trained with men's teams, enduring grueling drills that accelerated her growth.

In 2023, Cidan Yuzhen dominated the U18 individual cross-country and vertical races at the Ski Mountaineering Youth World Cup, adding two world championship golds that year. In 2025, she made history as the first Asian Winter Games ski mountaineering champion, winning the women's sprint.

"She's only 18," says Jordi Canals Fontan, secretary-general of the International Ski Mountaineering Federation. "Most athletes peak after 25, but she's already dominating the youth division."

Medals from global competitions adorn her home, yet Cidan Yuzhen still has her eyes on the prize. Having recently competed at the Ski Mountaineering ISMF Youth World Cup in France, she is looking toward her ultimate goal: a place on the Olympic podium.

XINHUA

Healing with culture, care and compassion

Retired oncologist reflects on values that shaped his career, reports **Xu Weiwei** in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong-born oncologist and hematologist Jeremy K Hon says that Chinese culture has had a lasting influence on him, and that he has a deep appreciation of Chinese literature, despite having spent half of his life in the United States.

He has particular respect for Confucius and Mencius, two ancient Chinese philosophers, and also enjoys reading historical literature, essays and poetry such as *Three Hundred Poems of the Tang Dynasty*, a compilation that dates to the 7th to the 10th centuries and which contains verses written by a number of different poets. "The language is very powerful," he says.

The cofounder of the Clearview Cancer Institute in Huntsville, Alabama, says that values are the most valuable part of Chinese culture, and they have helped him overcome the challenges of living and studying abroad, developing his career, and setting up his institute.

"I had the saying by Mencius, 'Born in adversity, die in comfort,' sitting on the front of my desk in the lab, and in the dormitory," says Hon, 74. "So whenever I returned after a hard day of work or study, or encountered any difficulty, I would read it a couple of times. It gave me strength, as I would think 'I'm suffering now, but maybe someday I will be a great man!'"

With over four decades in medicine, Hon has saved many lives. He says simply that this was his life's mission, and he is glad he was able to give back to the community, and have a positive impact.

Hon's strong Chinese cultural influence comes from his parents, as he had a primarily English-language education at school.

His father taught him poetry and the teachings of Confucius, which are "ingrained" in his mind and he had many conversations with his mother, who hoped he would become a scholar, about Chinese culture.

"I learned quite a lot of things from this, and I have thought about many aspects of Chinese culture," he says. "I don't follow things blindly, but I think at least 90 percent of the old wisdom still makes a lot of sense today."

He adds that whatever he does in life, he's been taught by his family and teachers to be like a lotus, emerging from the mud, clean and straight.

"I really appreciate this metaphor from an essay *Ode To the Lotus* written by the philosopher Zhou Dunyi during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) over 1,000 years ago. It was something my father would ask me to recite," he says.

Hon studied at the Tak Ming High School in Hong Kong, which was built in memory of Dr Sun Yat-sen, who was also known as 'Tak-ming'. He says that the school placed great emphasis on patriotism and traditional Chinese values. "I read a lot of history books, including about how the Chinese fought the Japanese during World War II when I was in middle school," he says.

A diligent, hardworking student, Hon was accepted by National Taiwan University as a pharmacy major in 1969. His academic journey took an unexpected turn in 1971 when he



Top: Hon worked as the director of stem cell transplant program at Alabama's Huntsville Hospital. **Above left:** Hon at a reading of his book. **Above right:** He poses with a patient he treated for an ailment.

was banned by the Taiwan authorities from the island over his patriotic beliefs.

Determined to finish his studies in pharmacy, he moved to the US, working part time to support himself at the School of Medicine at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. He remembers the days when he was financially constrained, and often had to work to be able to pay for his tuition in the US. In order to save on both tuition and time, he managed to complete three years of study only in two.

He earned his Bachelor of Science in pharmacy in 1976 and became a licensed pharmacist. Later obtaining his Doctor of Medicine in Alabama, he went on to complete his postgraduate studies in Texas.

Hon did an internal medicine residency at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston.

During this period, part of his clinical training was at the renowned MD Anderson Hospital, where he decided to become an oncologist. His fellowship in hematology/oncology was at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, then headquarters of the Southwest Oncology Group, which gave him exposure to clinical trials. The center is also known for its laboratory research and has as its goal the training of physician scientists.

Hon's first discovery was as a medical student at the UAB. His paper about a breakthrough in the treatment of metastatic malignant melanoma was published in the *Southern Medical Journal* and subsequently reported by *American Medical News* as an important finding. Other research was also published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, and

the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

He returned to Alabama to start a private practice, and as it evolved, he achieved a reputation among patients for being a caring and responsible doctor.

In 1988, he cofounded the Clearview Cancer Institute, and was one of the key figures in its growth and success. He and his colleagues also played pivotal roles in expanding clinical research and trials for different types of cancer. His contributions encompassed emerging therapies for pancreatic cancer, breast cancer, lung cancer and colorectal cancer. Later, he became the director of a stem cell program at Alabama's Huntsville Hospital.

Hon says that one of the greatest aspects of being a doctor is being able to improve a patient's health, and hopefully help them achieve a

long, healthy life. Perhaps unsurprisingly, doctors face difficult situations that may even seem to be impossible to solve, and Hon has addressed many such challenges over the course of his career.

He adds that medical oncology is particularly challenging because of the often life-threatening nature of cancer. It is demanding emotionally, but an oncologist has to keep a cool head when analyzing complicated and difficult situations.

Consequently, keeping abreast of research is even more vital. As oncology is a constantly evolving area, it is important to study intensely, read scientific journals, interact with peers, and attend conferences. Last but not least, an oncologist must have compassion and understanding for the patient and their needs.

He says that it is only by combining compassion, love, and care for patients with knowledge that can one become a good oncologist.

"I usually spend close to an hour on each new patient. That includes the review of the pathology, radiographic studies, as well as a thorough interview and physical examination. I believe that you have to treat your patient as if they are part of your family, or even yourself."

As a Chinese person working in the US, Hon is aware that the social and political environment has deteriorated in recent years. He says that US policy and rhetoric are having a negative effect on the Chinese community, and that it has become quite difficult for Chinese researchers to obtain federal grants. Chinese scientists have even been falsely accused by the government or institutions, and well documented cases have been reported by the news and social media. However, he adds that fortunately, this has not been his own experience.

"I would get referrals from patients, their families and most importantly, from other physicians. Ethnic origin is not a major issue, at least in our town," he says, adding that he worked closely with two American doctors when setting up the CCI.

After he retired in 2021, he began to write his autobiography, *An Impossible Life Journey*, which was published in English and Chinese last year. Hon sees his book as an important life achievement, and hopes it will have a positive impact on society in China and the US and be an inspiration to readers. "I think I was able to overcome adversity," he says. "I was at a dead end. I thought my life was done, my career was done, but I was able to find a way to survive. So I learned from my bad experiences, and they became part of what propelled me to achieve my goals."

Hon's younger sister Angel describes him as someone of great wisdom, but says he's so wrapped up in his work that he often overlooks his own needs.

"His knowledge is broad and his emotions deep, and his values and outlook on life are very much shaped by the traditions, philosophies and customs of China."

Contact the writer at vivienxu@chinadailyapac.com

CULTURE



Weaving cultural heritage into the fashion of today

Clockwise from left: HUI's Fall/Winter 2025 collection is unveiled on March 2 at the historic Clerici Palace in Milan, Italy during Milan Fashion Week; Miao embroidery inheritors Long Luying (left) and Long Ting weave red threads around fragments of ancient Chinese ceramics, combining handed-down craftsmanship with art therapy; Lifestyle goods by the Guizhou Textile Industry Development Group incorporate Miao esthetics into everyday household items. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Aurora, the Fall/Winter 2025 collection by Chinese designer Zhao Huizhou, draws on stunning Miao embroidery, **Zheng Wanyin** reports in London.



“The esthetics of intangible cultural heritage are not mere historical relics but a language of the future.”

Zhao Huizhou, founder of HUI



Miao embroidery is skillfully integrated into Zhao Huizhou's chic designs.

Back when humans were still far from knowing the science of cosmology, deities were seen as the rulers of the universe and imagining how and why the sun rises and sets was deeply rooted in many cultures.

In Roman mythology, Apollo was the sun god while in ancient China it was Xihe, the solar deity in Chinese mythology, who drove the carriage that transported the sun.

Whether in the East or the West, people all shared a reverence for the source of light, which is something that inspires Chinese designer Zhao Huizhou's Fall/Winter 2025 collection named Aurora, which was unveiled on March 2 during Milan Fashion Week.

Sunlight is a universal symbol of hope, of mending the broken, and cleaning the mist, Zhao said.

Embodying an image that resonates across cultural boundaries in its chic design is just one hallmark of her brand, HUI.

Something that has remained refreshing consistent throughout Zhao's 10 years of appearances at the "Big Four" global fashion weeks is her ongoing interest in China's time-honored cultural legacy, which this time means her work features Miao embroidery.

Miao embroidery is a national intangible cultural heritage in China. The Miao ethnic people, who live mainly in Southwest China's Guizhou province, are well-known for the exquisite embroidery on their costumes.

Working with needle and thread, embroiderers adorn clothes with designs of natural phenomena, mythical creatures, and even ethnic history, which all reflect the worldviews, values, and esthetics of the Miao people. Therefore, Miao embroidery is often known as "the Miao epic worn on the body".

For example, the Mother Butterfly pattern echoes the Miao legend in which one egg laid among 12 by a butterfly hatched into Jiangyang, the ancestor of the Miao people. Consequently, the Mother Butterfly is worshipped as the Miao's most venerated god.

For the new runway, Miao patterns featuring the sun, seas of clouds, and dragons have been woven into dark blue fabric, evoking the vastness of the universe, and the bold use of contrasting colors, such as vibrant orange, symbolizes the breaking dawn.

Because light takes on many shapes, in some ready-to-wear pieces, embroidery has been stitched into lightweight, translucent organza, which mimics the rippling effect of sunlight filtering through the clouds.

Another highlight this season is the special collaboration between HUI and Guizhou Textile Industry Development Group. A total of 11 jacquard dresses showcase the art of Miao brocade, which

employs a variety of interweaving techniques using warp and weft to create intricate designs.

The textile group, which was established last July, aims to lead the development of a competitive textile industry chain in Guizhou. It also seeks to explore opportunities for the global promotion of locally produced clothing, household items, wearable jewelry, and more, which all inherit the province's distinctive culture while embracing modernity.

"The redesign of our intangible cultural heritage is a concrete step in leveraging Guizhou's strengths in developing boutique manufacturing, rooted in its rich diversity of ethnic cultures, and ensuring the enduring legacy of China's traditional craftsmanship," said Min Jiangtao, vice-chairman and general manager of Guizhou Textile Industry Development Group.

Appreciating history

Yet, reinterpreting classics in a modern way is no easy feat.

"It needs wholehearted dedication to truly experience, understand, and uncover the stories behind the heritage — conducting field visits, engaging with local artisans, and looking for an appropriate way to present these cultural elements to the global market," Zhao once told the Chinese edition of a US fashion magazine.

During the development of the new seasonal collections, Zhao's team and colleagues from the Guizhou Textile Industry Development Group spent two years in Guizhou, immersing themselves in Miao history firsthand.

Alongside the runway show, a workshop that combines Miao embroidery with art therapy also captured attention. Miao embroidery inheritors Long Luying and Long Ting, together with Chinese artist Yuan Yuan and Le Scuire, a Milan-based social welfare group for elderly women, wove red threads onto fragments of ancient Chinese ceramics.

Broken pieces were given new life and transformed into artworks that embody collective memories and hopes.

"It is the moment when fashion brings us together," said Zhao.

The project is another attempt led by Zhao's Hui Foundation, which was founded in 2016 to back Chinese folk artisans in overcoming poverty and promoting handed-down craftsmanship.

All efforts have been made to revitalize time-honored traditions, said Zhao.

"As a designer from China, I have been thinking about the origin of my designs. I believe it's rooted in my culture, and I think this culture is more about inheritance," Zhao said. "The esthetics of intangible cultural heritage are not mere historical relics but a language of the future."

Contact the writer at zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com.



Runway models share HUI's Fall/Winter 2025 collection.