

Language of the future

AI to transform workforce but human skillsets retain value

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Self-driving cars enter fast lane of market readiness

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Middle East on fire

Israel strikes Gaza as violence flares in West Bank, Yemen

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CHINA DAILY

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Stocks swing wildly after US tariff increase

Investors across globe set to lower their risk appetite and adopt a wait-and-see stance

By SHI JING in Shanghai shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

While the Chinese stock market was not immune from Monday's global stock market meltdown after the United States announced wide-ranging tariffs, the A-share market will likely gain continued favor from investors, as China has plenty of policy room in the midterm to long run and its economy is resilient enough to offset the impact of the sweeping tariffs, said experts.

Although the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index and Shenzhen Component Index were down by 7.34 percent and 9.66 percent respectively on Monday, action was taken immediately. Central Huijin Investment, an arm of China's sovereign wealth fund, said during the late trading hours on Monday that it had increased its holdings in exchange-traded funds.

Fully acknowledging the A-share market's current investment value, Central Huijin said it would increase its exposure and firmly safeguard the stable operation of the capital market.

A sell-off swept the global market after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday to impose a 10 percent baseline tariff on all imports to the United States. The policy includes tariffs as high as 34 percent on imports from China and 20 percent from the European Union.

Japan's Nikkei 225 closed 7.83 percent lower on Monday, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index slumped 13.22 percent. The pan-European STOXX 600 was 6 percent lower shortly after the opening bell, and Germany's DAX index was more than 9.5 percent lower during early deals.

A false rumor spread on social media that US President Donald Trump was considering a 90-day pause on all tariffs except on China ignited a sharp reversal in the Dow Jones Industrial Average on Monday. The index went from 1,700 points down to 800 up after the White House denied the story.

For the day, the Dow closed down 349 points, and the S&P 500 was 12 points lower. The Nasdaq managed to finish in positive territory, up 15 points.

On Friday, the Nasdaq plunged 5.8 percent to end the week by losing over



A woman stands in front of boards displaying stock information on Monday at the Madrid stock exchange in Spain. SUSANA VERA / REUTERS

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10 percent, signaling the entry of a bear market for the first time since 2022, according to Dow Jones Market Data. The S&P 500 nosedived 9.08 percent over the past week, while the Dow Jones slumped 7.86 percent, with both reporting their biggest weekly losses since March 2020.

Zhang Bin, deputy director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the latest US tariff policies are "unprecedented" for this generation. Bringing harm both to the US and other economies, the chain effects are hard to predict. Under such circumstances, it is also difficult to foresee the bottom of the US economy and its capital market.

But most domestic and international

investors still have a relatively optimistic outlook with regard to China's economic growth and its capital market. China's development of new technologies and the upgrading of its traditional industries have buoyed economic activity and facilitated the recovery of the capital market, he said.

China has much room for more policies to expand domestic demand, facilitate industrial growth and stabilize exports. The current valuation of Chinese stocks is quite low when compared with historic levels. This indicates the greater appeal of the Chinese capital market, added Zhang.

In the near term, investors across the globe will lower their risk appetite and adopt a wait-and-see stance in anticipation of a recession due to the US tariffs, said Qiu Xiang, chief strategist of CITIC Securities. But A shares will show higher resilience than Hong Kong stocks or those listed on the US stock market, mainly due to the investor structure.

China's policies to offset the aggravated external impact may be

implemented earlier or to a greater extent, he said.

Yi Huan, chief macroeconomist at Huatai Securities, agreed that China may come up with stronger countercyclical policies, including boosting consumption and increasing government investment, as well as further energizing the capital market and the property sector.

In a report released on Sunday, Goldman Sachs, a US investment bank, expected Chinese policymakers to accelerate fiscal easing measures to offset the drag on growth from the higher tariffs announced by the US.

Mark Haefele, chief investment officer of UBS Global Wealth Management, said on Monday that it holds a "neutral" rating on A shares, given the negative impact of the US tariff policies and the potential retaliatory measures.

Investors are advised to look for opportunities in certain State-owned enterprises and high-dividend stocks from the finance, telecommunications,

public utility and energy sectors, as these can provide stable returns amid market fluctuations, he said.

In a survey released on Monday, HSBC said that 34 percent of respondents had a positive outlook on the Chinese stock market, higher than the emerging market average and 15 percentage points higher than the last survey conducted in December.

The A-share market is thus rated as the top choice among all emerging markets.

Meanwhile, these investors, mostly from financial institutions, believed that China's economic stimulus packages will help it to achieve its growth targets both in the short and long term.

Murat Ulgen, HSBC's global head of emerging markets research, said that such optimism has reflected investors' confidence in a rebound in China's economic activity, expectations of further stimulus and upbeat sentiment toward the technology sector.

Zhou Lanau contributed to this story.

Chinese aid to Pacific Island nations expands amid policy volatility

By KARL WILSON and XIN XIN in Sydney

When China officially delivered Tonga's National Sports Complex in the capital Nuku'alofa in March, it was another example of Beijing extending the hand of friendship to a region heavily reliant on foreign aid.

Built by China, the multimillion-dollar complex includes the Tonga High School Indoor Stadium, an international-standard rugby field,

Inside

netball and tennis courts, and an aquatic center.

To many nations scattered over the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, foreign aid is a lifeline. This has become even more apparent now that the United States government has decided to dismantle the US Agency for International Development, or USAID, effectively cutting much-needed assistance to a region fighting the impact of climate change

along with poor health and economic development.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretary-General Baron Waqa said in March that aid to "some agencies" will be impacted. "We need to work together to look for alternatives," he told newsmen.

He said pledges made by former US president Joe Biden at a summit of Pacific Island leaders in Washington, DC, in September 2023, are "on hold."

According to documents seen by Reuters at the time, Biden pledged

to work with Congress to provide an additional \$200 million in funding for projects in the region aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change, spurring economic growth, countering illegal fishing and improving public health.

Waqa said they want to "look at all aid to the Pacific."

Jason Young, director of the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre at the Victoria University of Wellington, said it is hard to predict what policy the administra-

tion of US President Donald Trump will adopt toward aid provision.

"As in other parts of the world, many countries in the Pacific benefit greatly from aid programs from the US and other countries, so any drop in these will be a concern," he told China Daily.

Constrained by geography and fluctuating domestic political cycles, the region is exposed to policy volatility it has no control over.

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Flood woes



Residents waded through murky floodwaters on Sunday following heavy rains in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The overnight rains from Friday to Saturday have killed around 30 people so far. HARDY BOPE / AFP See story, page 8

IMMERSIVE THEATER OPENS NEW WORLDS FOR AUDIENCES, INDUSTRY

Shift toward 'experience economy' creating exciting opportunities, expert says

By ZHENG ZHENG in Shanghai zhengzheng@chinadaily.com.cn

The distant echo of jazz music fills the air as Yang Shuhui, with her face hidden behind a white mask, stands in a dimly lit room. Inches away, a dancer in a gown performs a haunting sequence as Lady Macbeth's descent into madness unfolds in silent movements.

In-depth

This isn't traditional theater. This is *Sleep No More Shanghai*, a local adaptation of a pioneering immersive production based on Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* and told through a darkly cinematic lens.

"Each visit reveals something new," said Yang, a repeat attendee and participant in the play. "The first time, I was completely lost. By my third visit, I had discovered hidden rooms and other storylines I never knew existed. It is like being inside a film where you are both audience and participant."

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WORLD WATCH

By Daniel Barenblatt

Attempts to choke chip supply to China backfiring

The United States has a small problem with China. In fact, it's smaller than small — a tiny matter a mere 2 billionths of a meter long or 2 nanometers — to be exact. That is the width of each of the billions of transistors packed into the centimeter-sized "next generation" of microchips that are already being produced on a limited basis in the US and China's Taiwan region.

For the administrations of US President Donald Trump and his predecessor Joe Biden, these have been a persistent source of immense anxiety, relating as they do to China's desire to manufacture its own such ultra-diminutive circuitry.

In December 2024, the Biden administration's Department of Commerce slapped the latest round of US semiconductor export restrictions on China.

Now, the new US administration's Department of Commerce has expanded Biden's bans to include dozens of new companies, claiming, as usual, national security concerns. The sanctions regime has also been deepened to block chip trade with firms that are simply affiliated with blacklisted Chinese entities.

US semiconductor giant Nvidia and other Silicon Valley chipmakers — their profits already eroded from Biden-era lockouts of chip trade with China — immediately complained of the further losses in revenue awaiting them.

Previous US volleys have included a 2019 ban on sales to China of extreme ultraviolet — or EUV — lithography machines, which are necessary for the creation of advanced chips.

That restriction extended beyond domestic licensing and selling, to apply to outfits in Japan and the Netherlands, where the Dutch ASML corporation maintains a monopoly on EUV tech.

The December restrictions increase the number of semiconductor-linked products that ASML is forbidden to offer to Chinese firms. ASML uses a patented system of lasers, tin plasma and extra-smooth mirrors from Germany's Zeiss optics to etch semiconductor circuits at the envelope-pushing scale of 7 nm, 5 nm, 3 nm, and, as of this year, down to 2 nm levels.

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Left: Two actors perform in the pioneering immersive production *Sleep No More Shanghai*. Right: A singer is seen in her dressing room in the immersive performance *SAGA City of Light*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shows: Shanghai takes center stage in new art

From page 1

This fusion of art and the audience experience represents a cultural evolution. "Traditional theater frames stories through a director's vision, but here, the fourth wall dissolves. The audience can discover content themselves," said Ma Chencheng, president of SMG Live and the Chinese producer of *Sleep No More Shanghai*.

The form gained momentum in the 2000s when British immersive theater company Punchdrunk pioneered *Sleep No More* in London and New York, redefining the possibilities of the art form. Since 2016, Punchdrunk International and SMG Live have coproduced a re-imagined version of the original production set in Shanghai in the 1930s.

Since its debut nine years ago, the production has drawn over 620,000 visitors and grossed 550 million yuan (\$75.9 million), mirroring the explosive rise of China's immersive entertainment sector.

Use your illusions

According to the 2024 White Paper on the Development of China's Immersive Industry released in May, the sector's consumer market size in China reached 92.7 billion yuan by the end of 2023.

The immersive industry includes escape rooms, immersive performances, virtual reality shows, light and shadow art exhibitions, immersive indoor theme parks and various other entertainment ventures, according to the paper prepared by the Illusion International Immersive Industry Platform.

Immersive theater traces its roots to the 1960s and experimental site-specific, or environmental, performances. Pioneers like the United States theater director and innovator Richard Schechner emphasized audience integration into the performance narrative, challenging traditional theater conventions.

"Immersion describes a psychological state where individuals invest all their energy in an activity, forgetting the outside world and even themselves," said Wu Fan, an associate professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University's USC-SJTU Institute of Cultural and Creative Industry. "The key elements that create true immersion are presence, interactivity and imagination."

"We're witnessing a broader economic shift toward the experience economy," Wu added. "When experience becomes one of the dominant economic drivers, immersive entertainment naturally flourishes."

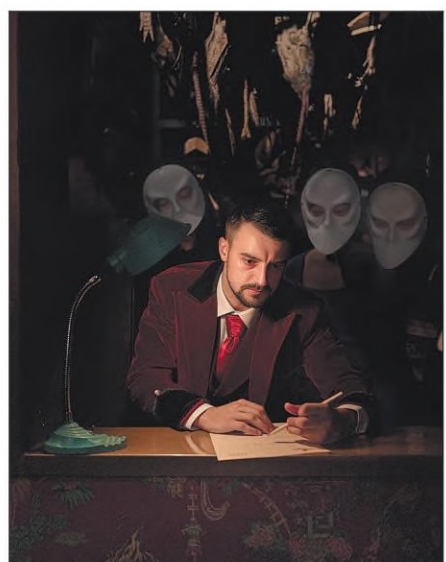
Ma, the SMG Live president, said Shanghai has fertile cultural ground to nurture new ideas.

"The audience here, and the city itself, are considered the most innovative and receptive to fresh concepts in China. New arts take root here first — if they resonate, they spread nationwide," he said.

Statistics support this observation. By 2023, China hosted 32,024 immersive projects, an 81.5 percent surge from 2019. Shanghai leads in performance numbers nationwide and, together with Beijing, commands a third of national immersive spending, according to the white paper.

City of light

Shanghai's embrace of cultural innovation has spawned ambitious productions. *SAGA City of Light*, a Sino-French collaboration with French production company Puy du Fou, transforms a 12,000-square-meter performance area into 1930s Shanghai. It features 100 actors, 50 movie-scale scenes, and 26,000 vintage props. "We aim to bring the audience as close to reality as



Audience members wearing masks watch a scene where a foreign actor writes a letter.



The view of the theater that houses *SAGA City of Light* in Xuhui district, Shanghai. The theater features a 12,000-square-meter performance area.



The vintage escalator set in *SAGA City of Light* inside the theater in Shanghai's Xuhui.

Unlike traditional narratives, immersive storytelling demands multilayered plots that accommodate audience agency while preserving mystery."

Wu Fan, an associate professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University's USC-SJTU Institute of Cultural and Creative Industry

possible," said Gilles Ledos, executive creative director at Puy du Fou Asia. "Our intention was not to conjure up a fictional world from scratch; instead, we wanted our guests to seamlessly immerse themselves in a genuine environment."

Ledos said that 1930s Shanghai was deliberately chosen for its rich cultural tapestry. "It was a very cosmopolitan place, and the Paris of the East," he explained.

The production blends Chinese artistry — with 80 percent of the creative team being local talent — and Western theater techniques. Audiences encounter traditional elements like martial arts and shadow puppetry alongside innovative staging that marries Puy du Fou's style with Chinese aesthetics, according to Ledos.

"The inclusiveness of Shanghai culture has created adaptability and integration of foreign cultures. As long as the content and form of the performance are good, Shanghai will embrace you with open arms," he said.

Human connections

At the *New World* immersive theater performance in Shanghai's Songjiang district, the audience follows more than 40 actors through "four mansions" over six hours to experience an anti-war story based on the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

"The first half's investigative part offers brilliant actor interactions, while the second half weaves 10 storylines across complex spaces," said Zhang Min, a 28-year-old audience member. "The climactic battle scene, with its synchronized lighting and fireworks, brought me to tears."

Technology enriches these experiences in novel ways.

At *Le Bal de Paris* (Paris Ball), virtual reality amplifies human connection as guests don motion-tracked gowns to waltz with hologram partners.

"If the audience feels present in a work, they will definitely feel immersed. We use VR technology specifically to enhance that sense of connection," said Weng Shihui, the show's Chinese producer.

While VR can sometimes feel isolating, *Le Bal de Paris* creates a warm, communal experience through technology, she said. Audiences see their own virtual bodies and those of other participants, select from haute couture virtual outfits and dance with real performers in a shared virtual space.

"Our audience ranges from eight years old to septuagenarians. They embrace this shared dreamscape. Shanghai audiences? They're insatiably curious," Weng added.

Wu, the associate professor, said immersive audiences aren't defined by age, but by curiosity. "They include digital natives seeking interaction, the new middle-income group pursuing spiritual enrichment, and culturally savvy retirees looking for new forms of engagement."

Dinner and a show

Creating immersive content, however, presents distinct challenges, Wu said.

"Unlike traditional narratives, immersive storytelling demands multilayered plots that accommodate audience agency while preserving mystery," she explained. "The content must reward repeated visits and diverse audience choices."

Moreover, the industry requires a complete ecosystem — upstream content creation, midstream technology

implementation and downstream distribution, she said.

Wu's research shows that roughly half of audiences combine shows with nearby dining, generating significant economic ripples. The McKinnon Hotel, *Sleep No More Shanghai's* performance venue, combines retail, dining and accommodation with theatrical experiences. The production drives cross-industry collaborations spanning fashion, real estate, e-commerce and more. The *New World* performance incorporates intangible cultural heritage cuisine during performances, while the *SAGA City of Light* project is expanding to include themed restaurants, boutiques and cafes.

Even dining has gone immersive. Gongyan, a themed restaurant recreating imperial court ceremonies, provides a dining experience that includes traditional performances and dynasty-spanning rotating menus. Ultraviolet, Shanghai's multisensory restaurant, combines dishes with 360-degree projections, music, and scents for a comprehensive sensory journey.

"When culture, tourism, and commerce converge, and people travel to a city for performances, it influences urban development," SMG Live president Ma said. "Within 5 to 10 years, as these cross-industry linkages mature, Shanghai could attract audiences from across Asia and globally."

International hub

Shanghai's cultural development extends beyond immersive theater, with the metropolis positioned as Asia's premier destination for international performances. The city has become a hub for "theater marathons" — enthusiasts watching multiple shows in quick succession over weekend visits.

"Shanghai is ahead of the curve when it comes to the cultural industry," Wu said. "Its performing arts market is particularly developed. This didn't happen overnight — it is the result of long-term cultivation of performance venues, audience development, and market maturity."

Statistics from the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism reveal that in 2024, the city hosted 57,238 commercial performances, attracting 25.45 million attendees and generating 5.17 billion yuan in ticket sales — both increasing by over 20 percent from 2023.

Of these, 11,463 shows were held in the city's 53 major theaters and 82 smaller venues in 2024 — averaging 31 daily performances — drawing 5.43 million spectators and generating 1.178 billion yuan in box office revenue, with attendance and revenue growing by 4.3 and 5.6 percent year-on-year respectively, according to the Shanghai Performing Arts Association.

Shanghai's appeal to global artists continues to grow. The 2024 China Shanghai International Arts Festival featured over 300 performances and nearly 1,000 exhibitions, bringing nearly 5,000 artists from more than 80 countries and regions to the city.

The 59-show residency of *The Phantom of the Opera* generated 80 million yuan, while the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's 2024 China debut saw 6,000 tickets for four symphony concerts sell out in 5 minutes — 40 percent to international visitors and people outside Shanghai. Looking ahead, the musical *Les Misérables: The Staged Concert Spectacular* will hold an exclusive eight-week residency in Shanghai later this year — its only Chinese mainland stop on the global tour.

For visitors like Yang, the allure is simple: "Here, every corner holds a story waiting to be lived."

In a world increasingly mediated by screens, the immersive revolution offers something rare: the thrill of being truly present.



Audiences interact with actors at a post office set from 1930s Shanghai in *SAGA City of Light*.

TOP NEWS

Services of China's medical teams praised

Nation helps developing countries reduce infant, maternal mortality rates, official says

By WANG XIAOYU
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China has deployed 117 obstetricians and pediatricians overseas to provide regular medical services for pregnant women and infants and help train local medical workers, the National Health Commission said on Monday.

Chinese medical aid teams delivered 63,800 babies abroad last year, according to data released by the commission during an event in Beijing marking World Health Day, which this year spotlights maternal and newborn health.

With four-fifths of deaths among children under age 5 occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, China has assisted in 100 campaigns related to maternal and child health in developing countries and worked with the United Nations Children's Fund to carry out health programs targeting pregnant women, newborns and children in eight African nations, Lei Haichao, head of the National Health Commission, said at the event.

China also proposed establishing an alliance of Chinese and African hospitals last year and jointly building medical centers with African partners to further support local healthcare, Lei said.

Amanda Bissex, UNICEF's deputy representative to China, said the annual number of children worldwide dying before age 5 has dropped by more than half since 2000, while the annual number of stillbirths has fallen by over a third. In 2022, the number of child deaths fell slightly below 5 million for the first time.

However, the pace of progress is slowing across the world, as the annual rate of reduction in the mortality of children under age 5 declined from 3.7 percent between 2000 and 2015 to 2.2 percent from 2015 to 2023, she said.

Bissex also noted that the children are particularly vulnerable to risks resulting from climate change, including extreme weather, water and food shortages, as well as rising

threats from infectious diseases such as dengue and Japanese encephalitis.

China has supported the establishment of a center for reproductive medicine in Mali, where the first test-tube baby born at a public hospital was delivered last year, according to the commission.

The country has also helped build a cervical disease screening center in South Sudan, which has served nearly 4,000 people so far. In Sierra Leone, Chinese medical aid teams have conducted human papillomavirus screening programs at local medical institutions.

Duo Lin, a physician at Fuwai Yunnan Hospital under the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, said that over the past seven years, he and other medical aid workers have screened children for congenital heart defects across 11 provincial-level regions in Cambodia.

"During our mission in Cambodia, we used to screen 2,000 children a day. By nightfall, our ears would feel painful, itchy and wet from constant use of stethoscopes," he said. "But it is our responsibility as Chinese doctors to listen to heartbeats, and nothing is more fulfilling than seeing a child regain health."

Chinese medical aid teams have also trained local medical staff and students and donated 40 mobile medical vehicles to Cambodia, Duo said.

Official data shows that China ranks among the top upper-middle-income countries in key maternal and child health indicators. The maternal mortality rate in China fell to 14.3 per 100,000 live births last year. The infant mortality rate dropped to four per 1,000 live births, while the mortality rate for children under age 5 declined to 5.6 per 1,000 live births, all historic lows.

During the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, China's maternal mortality rate maintained an average annual decrease of about 4 percent, the commission said.

China now has nearly 3,500 critical care centers for pregnant women and more than 3,200 for newborns.



Members of the Chinese Red Cross International Emergency Response Team arrive on Sunday at an airport in Kunming, Yunnan province. The team returned from Myanmar after taking part in earthquake relief efforts. CHEN JIAXIAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Chinese quake rescuers return to hero's welcome

By YAN DONGJIE in Yangon and XU NUO in Beijing

They risked their lives to pull out nine people trapped under the rubble of collapsed buildings and guided many others to safety, but that is not the count they keep.

For members of the Chinese teams that assisted in rescue and relief efforts in Myanmar, after a magnitude 7.9 earthquake struck the Southeast Asian country on March 28, it is the number of people they could not save, despite doing their best, that matters more.

As 54 Chinese rescuers returned as heroes on Sunday from Yangon, the largest city of Myanmar, to Kunming in Southwest China's Yunnan province, after a week of demonstrating extraordinary courage and endurance, their hearts still bleed for the victims of the quake.

Chen Ying, a member of the Chinese Red Cross International Emergency Response Team, said her deepest regret was not being able to save a person trapped under the rubble of a building,

because an excavator needed for the rescue could not reach the site on time.

Chen was among the 17 Chinese Red Cross rescuers who arrived in Yangon on March 30. They engaged in search and rescue operations and provided medical aid and emotional support for earthquake survivors in Mandalay, the second-largest city in Myanmar.

"In this rescue mission, the most heartbreaking and regretful moment for me was at location 107. We went there three times, and had all our supplies ready. The team was determined to save one of the three individuals trapped under the building, because there were definite signs of life," she said.

Unfortunately, the Chinese rescuers failed to receive heavy equipment support on time, and it was too late by the time they did. "We felt a surge of pain when the body was brought out. It is a regret we will have to live with," she added.

Besides the Chinese Red Cross team, a 37-member rescue and

medical team from Yunnan also returned on Sunday. It was the first international rescue team to arrive in Myanmar within 18 hours of the earthquake. The team carried out rescue operations and actively assisted Myanmar in developing infectious disease prevention plans in the quake-hit areas.

Both teams were warmly welcomed upon their arrival in Kunming on Sunday afternoon. While the flight crew paid a special tribute to the heroes in a cabin broadcast, local people greeted them with rounds of applause.

In addition to these two teams, Chinese civil squads such as the Blue Sky Rescue Team — the largest nongovernmental humanitarian organization in China — played a key role in rescue and relief efforts in Myanmar.

"Our team members from across China volunteered to join the rescue operations. ... They arrived in Myanmar from places such as Beijing, Tianjin and Jiangsu province at their own expense,"

said Xu Jingxia, a member of the Blue Sky Rescue Team.

"We carried out the first round of search and rescue within the critical 72 hours, and continued for another two to three days under the scorching 40 C temperature," Xu said, adding that the whole team returned from Myanmar on Monday.

Myanmar's State Administration Council Chairman Min Aung Hlaing, who visited the camp of Chinese rescue teams in Mandalay on Sunday, said the prompt arrival of rescuers from China exemplified the profound fraternal friendship between the two countries.

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.

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Aid: Action plan establishes new model for relations

From page 1

In contrast, China has been playing an increasingly pivotal stabilizing role in the Pacific through equal and mutually beneficial cooperation. China has long offered help, from healthcare facilities in Papua New Guinea to infrastructure and development projects in the Cook Islands.

Chen Xiaochen, executive deputy director of the Center for Asia Pacific Studies at East China Normal University, said that USAID has long served as a key policy instrument for the US.

Climate change poses an existential threat to Pacific Island nations, he noted. "Subject to US geopoliti-

cal maneuvering and domestic political turmoil, Pacific Island countries are forced to grapple with extreme policy uncertainty — precisely what they can least afford."

Chen stressed that China is playing a crucial role in the international landscape, explaining that "as fellow Pacific nations, China and Pacific Island countries share broad common interests and vast cooperative potential."

The signing of the Action Plan 2025-2030 for the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Cook Islands and the People's Republic of China in February has established a new model for China-Pacific Island relations, with the first "five-year plan" of its kind

between the two sides, he said. "This fully demonstrates the medium-to-long-term consistency and stability of China's foreign cooperation," Chen added.

Xu Xiujun, senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' National Academy of Chinese Modernization, said that Washington's unpredictable policy adjustments in the Pacific are creating complex challenges for island nations.

"While most seek balanced relations with both China and the US, Washington's approach forces artificial binary alignment," he said.

China's consistent engagement with Pacific Island countries, in contrast, follows principles of noninter-

ference and mutual benefit. "Through practical collaboration, we're building a closer community with a shared future that genuinely supports sustainable development," he said.

After a series of agreements signed with Beijing in February covering infrastructure, maritime cooperation, tourism, agriculture, technology and education, among others, Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown said the agreements are based on "long-term interests" of the country, which is remote, resource-rich and vulnerable to climate change.

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Chips: Export controls mobilize nanoscale innovation

From page 1

Such next-generation chips markedly improve processing ability and speed, while reducing energy consumption. They bestow a competitive advantage on smartphone, tablet and laptop makers that are allowed to obtain them, and to the creators of top-notch artificial intelligence software.

The world's primary manufacturer of the elite chips is Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company in China's Taiwan region, which has legal rights to use the coveted ASML machines and EUV process. Inside this tall walled trade labyrinth, tech giants Apple, Samsung, Nvidia, Sony, Intel and other US-blessed corporations enjoy a free and open path to domination over their rivals on the Chinese mainland, who are

iced out of international sales by the export sanctions. The US' geostrategic weaponization of Taiwan against the Chinese mainland is also reinforced, both economically and psychologically.

Or so it is hoped by Washington policymakers. As the situation develops, however, the plan is falling apart. It also appears to be profoundly backfiring on them.

In 2022, fearful as always of China's global economic ascent, the US enacted its first broad-based set of export restrictions against Chinese semiconductor firms, seeking to hobble them in a larger fashion than did previous, more target-specific bans.

That same year, the US Congress promised \$52.7 billion in taxpayer-funded subsidies to the domestic semiconductor industry through the CHIPS and Science Act, signed into law by Biden in 2022.

But in an unintended upshot, these measures served to inspire and mobilize China's government, microchip foundries and engineers to innovate in the high-end chips arena as never before; a defiant, strongly determined response that was quite predictable, given that China boasts many of the world's microchip experts, and that by 2022 it had already attained primacy among nations in global sales of the "legacy" above-28 nm level microchips.

These legacy chips, more powerful than their next-gen younger cousins, remain the standard, indispensable type for laptops, smartphones, home appliances, automobiles and many more items. Chinese semiconductor titans Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation and Shanghai Micro Electronics Equip-

ment have been steadily increasing their mass production levels for the past decade, with an eye toward national self-sufficiency in semiconductor materials.

For the last three years, China has been pouring tens of billions of dollars in State funds into focused efforts of its semiconductor industry to bridge the legacy-to-advanced chip gap. And China's nanoscale innovators have been eager to progress to the next level.

The result? In the past year, Chinese teams have managed to create their own 5 nm and 3 nm chips in tests, soon to reach the key 2 nm level, and in so doing they have innovated an entirely new method of EUV advanced-chip lithography.

In addition, the new process, called "laser-induced discharge plasma", or LDP, is poised to upend the entire semiconductor industry

and markets worldwide, as the LDP method and machinery consume less energy than the Dutch EUV system, making them cheaper to use.

The made-in-China lower price tag on advanced chips will make the ASML process obsolete, breaking the company's US-enforced chokehold on global sales. And as a semiconductor field maxim puts it, "today's next-generation chips are tomorrow's legacy chips."

The turn of events is reminiscent of how the US drive to outdo China in AI programs spurred on the creation of DeepSeek, but with far deeper implications for the world.

And so the next 10 years will likely see China enjoying a solid lead in market share for all types of semiconductor products, including next-gen chips specialized for advanced military applications, AI and machine learning, and the scientific holy grail of quantum computer processing.

China's Shanghai Micro Electron-

ics Equipment and smartphone makers Huawei and Xiaomi are speedily building LDP machines, with Huawei engaging legacy-chip producer Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation to install the LDP units at its fabrication plants.

All this is precisely the globe-impacting situation that Washington had been trying to avert. And Taiwan's \$781 billion TSMC cartel will probably get cratered in the process. Talk about a plan backfiring.

The US, as the superpower, is not only shoveling silicon-laden sand against the tide, it is pushing its prettiest sandcastles into the lapping, oceanic waves.

The author is an independent historian specializing in Northeast Asia. His book *A Plague Upon Humanity: The Secret Genocide of Axis Japan's Germ Warfare Operation* has been featured in major US media outlets. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Xinjiang art



A visitor takes a photo of an oil painting at the Fifth Xinjiang Oil Painting Exhibition during the Third Xinjiang Cultural Arts Festival that opened in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Monday. The curated display of 136 works celebrates the region's diverse cultural heritage and breathtaking landscapes through vivid brushstrokes. LIU XIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Briefly

Party expels former anti-graft official

Li Gang, a former senior anti-graft official, has been expelled from the Communist Party of China and dismissed from public office for seriously violating Party disciplines and national laws, according to an official statement released on Monday. Li was previously head of the discipline inspection and supervision team that was sent to work at the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee by the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Commission of Supervision. The decision followed an investigation by the CPC CCDI and the NCS. Li was found to have violated the Party's frugality rules, sought benefits for others in the selection and appointment of officials and engaged in profit-making activities illegally. He also abused his power to seek undue benefits for others in business operations, project contracting and job adjustments, and received large sums of money and valuables in return. His illicit gains will be confiscated, and the case will be transferred to the procuratorial authorities for examination and prosecution, according to the statement.

Ex-volleyball chief sentenced to prison

Li Quanqiang, former head of the volleyball administrative center under the State General Administration of Sport, was sentenced to 10 years and three months in prison for bribery, a court in Jiangsu province announced on Monday. The verdict was announced by the Yangzhou Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu. Li was also fined 800,000 yuan (\$109,404). The illegal gains from his bribery crimes were confiscated and turned over to the national treasury, the court said. Public information showed that Li, a 62-year-old native of Liaoning province, had worked for the country's sports bodies for about four decades. From February 2017 to August 2022, he served as head of the volleyball administrative center.

Cross-border travel surges during holiday

China saw 2.07 million inbound and outbound trips per day during the Qingming Festival holiday, an increase of 19.7 percent year-on-year, the National Immigration Administration said on Monday. During the three-day holiday that began on Friday, China's border inspection agencies recorded 6.21 million cross-border trips, according to the administration. The number of such trips made by foreigners reached 697,000, up 39.5 percent compared with 2024, the NIA said.

XINHUA

Parents divided on new policy for high schools

Some fear effort to give senior students weekends off will affect their studies

By PENG CHAO in Chengdu
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A high school student's parent in Huili county in Panzhihua, Sichuan province, recently raised concerns on a local e-government platform over a planned two-day weekend policy that will be introduced in regular senior high schools, drawing widespread attention and debate.

Currently, students enrolled in regular high schools in the county generally attend classes at least six days a week.

The parent said their child is in the second year of senior high school, a crucial period with a heavy academic workload, and expressed worry that the policy might negatively impact their child's chances of getting into a good university.

The national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, is the most critical exam in a Chinese student's academic life. It determines university admission and, by extension, future career prospects.

Fierce competition for limited spots in elite universities means rigorous preparation — often starting years in advance — is necessary, with students dedicating nearly all their time to studying.

In response to the parent's concern, Panzhihua's education and sports bureau said the Sichuan provincial education department issued

measures in February strictly prohibiting schools from organizing group tutoring or new courses on weekends, holidays or during winter and summer vacations.

While Sichuan has not yet released official guidelines on extended weekend services for senior high schools, some regions have begun piloting the two-day weekend policy, the bureau said.

However, to address parents' concerns, the bureau suggested all senior high schools in the city provide services based on students' and parents' needs.

In October, the Ministry of Education and other central government departments issued implementation guidelines for the two-day weekend policy to reduce students' academic burdens and promote comprehensive development. The guidelines require all regular senior high schools nationwide to implement the policy starting in the autumn semester this year.

Since the start of this year, many regions across China have gradually rolled out the policy. In Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, first- and second-year senior high school students are no longer required to attend school on weekends. In Yangzhou and Nantong, Jiangsu province, first- and second-year students now have two-day weekends, while third-year students receive a one-day break. In Chang-

sha, Hunan province, some senior high schools have issued notices for weekend breaks.

The policy has sparked mixed reactions from parents, leading to heated discussions online.

A parent surnamed Li from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan, said the policy is widely welcomed by her child and his classmates, who now have more time to rest.

"Studying depends more on self-discipline. Even if you keep your child at school on weekends, it may not necessarily be effective," she said.

But Chen Junlong, a parent from Gongxian county in Sichuan, worries that if the policy is fully implemented, his child may fall behind if others use weekends for extra classes.

Chu Zhaohui, a researcher at the China National Academy of Educational Sciences, said the two-day weekend policy aims to curb excessive academic competition and reduce students' burdens.

The 2023 Blue Book of Mental Health in China found that the detection rate of depression among high school students exceeds 40 percent.

Chu said many parents mistakenly believe that the longer their children stay in school, the higher their test scores will be. However, excessive study time may not improve scores and could instead leave students exhausted, reducing learning efficiency. He said the new policy will allow students to participate in social activities, develop hobbies and engage in physical exercise, giving them breathing room for growth.

CNNC recruitment drive sparks debate

By LIANG SHUANG
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China National Nuclear Corporation, a State-owned nuclear energy giant, became a window reflecting the employment pressures faced by graduating students after announcing that its spring campus recruitment drive this year attracted nearly 1.2 million applications for jobs in 1,730 categories, highlighting the fierce competition for coveted jobs within State-owned enterprises.

The initial announcement, posted on Saturday on CNNC's recruitment WeChat account, was later deleted, sparking public debate.

According to a screenshot of the post, entitled "We Received 1,196,273 Applications" alongside a starry-eyed emoji, CNNC's recruitment drive spanned 10 cities and 14 top universities. The conglomerate announced "1,730 core position needs" involving over 100 subsidiaries, adding that more than 3,100 students attended on-site events, while

425,284 candidates submitted applications.

According to CNNC's website, the conglomerate has assets of around 1.4 trillion yuan (\$191 billion) and employs some 180,000 people, including 14 academicians. A previous recruitment advertisement said this year's hires will work in areas such as nuclear science, construction and engineering, geology and minerals, and environment and chemicals.

Some argued that emphasizing the numbers was inconsiderate and failed to take applicants' feelings into account.

Hubei province-based Jimu News said in a comment that the conglomerate had used a stark contrast by selecting the biggest and the smallest numbers to glorify its attractiveness, yet such selections were not necessarily scientific and could mislead the applicants. Bragging about its "performance" in attracting resumes ignored applicants' feelings and lacks the warmth a giant con-

glomerate should have, it said.

On Sunday, CNNC Recruitment clarified that the number 1,730 actually referred to job categories, with approximately 8,000 anticipated hires. Each applicant may apply for up to 20 positions to facilitate better job matching, it said.

Nonetheless, that still only translates to a low rate of provisional hires, hinting at a nerve-racking situation for China's massive number of graduates who seek to enter similar State-owned enterprises, which are perceived as more stable against the backdrop of a world filled with uncertainties.

China's employment market remains stable but is under pressure. On March 9, Wang Xiaoping, minister of human resources and social security, acknowledged during a news conference at the 14th National People's Congress that job expansion remains a challenge. The country expects 12.22 million college graduates this year, intensifying competition for positions.

Telescope elevates China's polar research

WUHAN — China has unveiled the "Three Gorges Antarctic Eye," a 3.2-meter aperture radio/millimeter-wave telescope, at a scientific research station in Antarctica.

Officially launched at the country's Zhongshan Station in Antarctica on April 3, the telescope, co-developed by China Three Gorges University and Shanghai Normal University, further cemented China's advancements in Antarctic astronomy.

The Three Gorges Antarctic Eye has officially begun scientific observations of the Milky Way's neutral hydrogen and ammonia molecular spectral lines, providing vital data to help unravel the dynamics of interstellar gas and the processes of star formation, CTGU told Xinhua on Monday.

"This telescope has broken through key technical bottlenecks in Antarctic observatory construction, laying the foundation for future submillimeter-wave telescopes in Antarctica," said Zhang Yi, an associate professor at SHNU and a member of China's Antarctic expedition team currently working on the continent.

He added that the device will expand observations across radio to low-frequency millimeter-wave bands, driving technological advancements for next-generation Antarctic astronomy tools.

Zeng Xiangyun, an associate professor at CTGU, noted that Antarctica is the coldest continent on Earth, and the extreme cold and strong winds pose significant challenges for the development and installation of radio telescopes.

Since 2023, CTGU has actively collaborated with SHNU to tackle the challenges of conducting astronomy in extreme environments. Over the past two years, researchers have overcome key technical hurdles, such as adapting equipment to withstand Antarctica's harsh sub-zero temperatures and hurricane-

"This telescope has broken through key technical bottlenecks in Antarctic observatory construction, laying the foundation for future submillimeter-wave telescopes in Antarctica."

Zhang Yi, associate professor at Shanghai Normal University

force winds, Zeng said.

He Weijun, Party chief of CTGU, emphasized the significance of the project. "The successful operation of the Three Gorges Antarctic Eye showcases our university's achievements in polar research equipment," he said.

"It reflects the spirit of Chinese scientists scaling new heights in science and technology, as well as the vital role of universities in national innovation," he added.

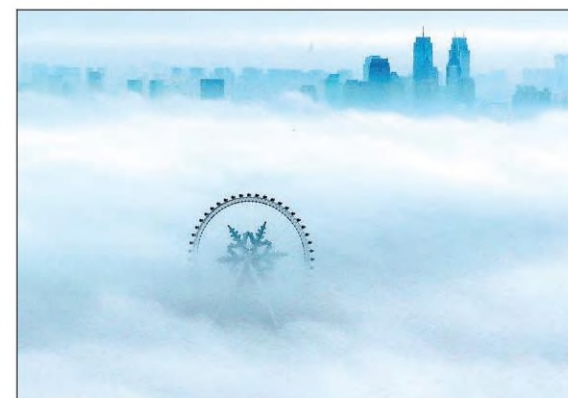
Once the telescope enters stable operation, CTGU plans to send researchers to Zhongshan Station for on-site scientific expeditions.

China has been steadily expanding its astronomical capabilities in Antarctica, leveraging the continent's pristine atmospheric conditions for infrared and millimeter-wave observations.

The deployment of the Three Gorges Antarctic Eye builds on China's earlier initiatives, including the Antarctic Survey Telescopes AST3 and other astronomical instruments, further strengthening global efforts to study cosmic phenomena from one of Earth's most remote locations.

XINHUA

Haze in Harbin



The Snowflake Ferris Wheel at Harbin Ice and Snow World is partially visible through thick fog on Monday morning in Harbin, Heilongjiang province. Visibility in the city dropped below 500 meters due to rising temperatures saturating surface humidity combined with significant nighttime cooling, causing near-ground water vapor to condense into fog. ZHANG SHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Postgrad who killed his roommate given death

By GUO YANQI
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A postgraduate student in Hunan province was sentenced to death on Monday for poisoning his roommates' food and causing the death of one, the Xiangtan Intermediate People's Court said.

Zhou Liren, a student at Xiangtan University, was also deprived of his political rights for life. The court determined that Zhou and the victims surnamed Zhang and Zhou (another roommate with the same family name), were all postgraduate students admitted in 2022.

Zhou Liren moved into the same dormitory of the two victims in June 2023, and frequent disputes erupted over minor issues between them, leading to growing resentment.

In January last year, Zhou Liren researched and purchased colchicine, a toxic substance, and kept it hidden in his dormitory wardrobe. In the meantime, tensions between him and his roommates escalated with several heated arguments in March and April the same year.

On April 3, after learning that his roommates had asked the university to relocate him to a different room, Zhou Liren mixed colchicine powder into a can of oatmeal shared by Zhang and the other Zhou. Zhang consumed the poisoned oatmeal and was rushed to the hospital after experiencing vomiting on April 7.

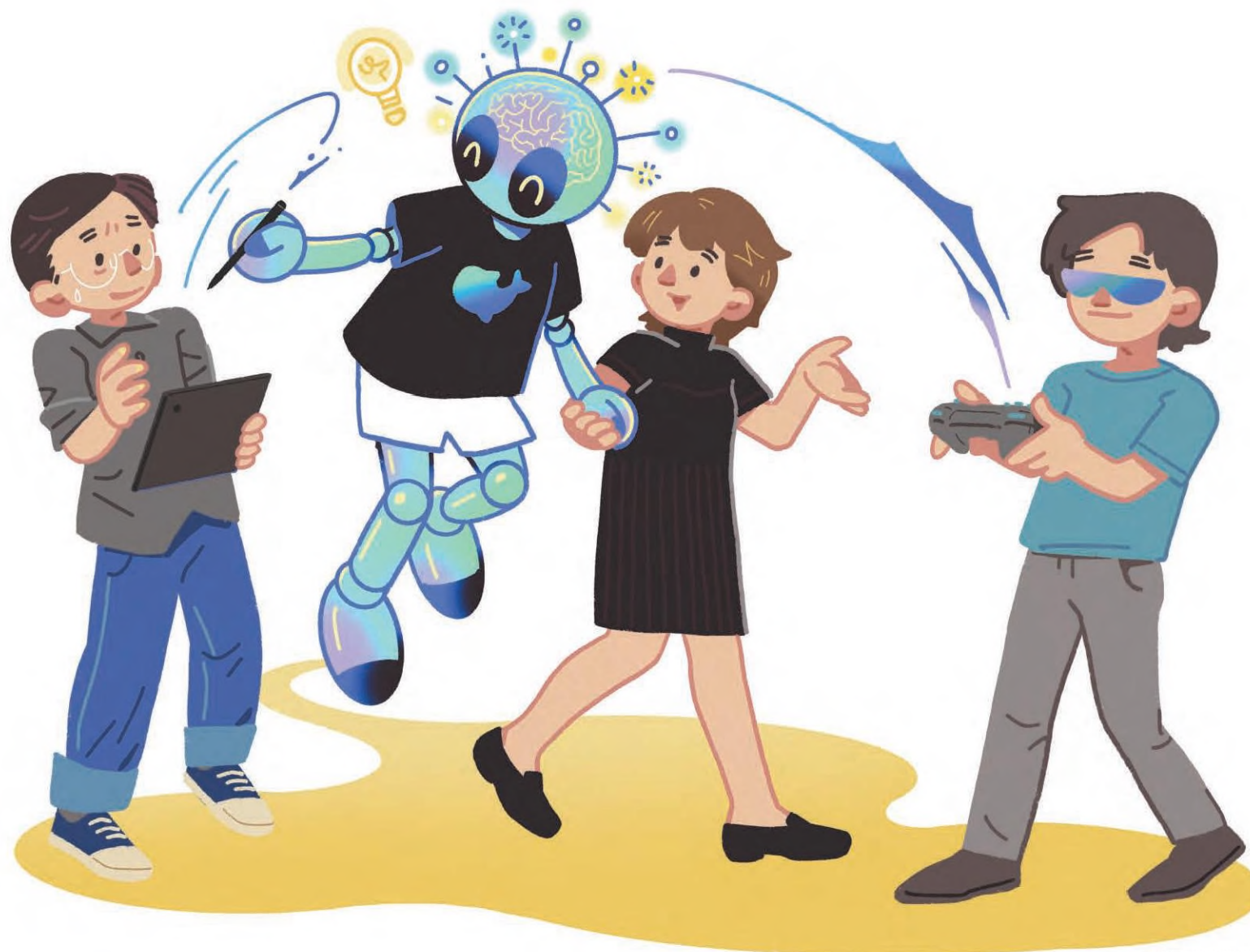
Despite medical intervention, he died six days later. An autopsy confirmed the cause of death as acute colchicine poisoning leading to multi-organ failure.

His friend survived as he did not consume the poisoned oatmeal.

Zhou Liren was arrested on April 17. Investigations revealed his undergraduate studies included coursework involving colchicine.

The court said he acted out of personal resentment, misused his specialized knowledge and intentionally poisoned food shared by his roommates. During Zhang's treatment, Zhou Liren intentionally withheld crucial information, delaying efforts to save his life. He also attempted to hide and destroy evidence after the incident.

CHINA



LIANG LUWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

AI impact to change future workforce

Nature of employment across various fields likely to be disrupted due to influence of technology

By LI SHANGYI
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As artificial intelligence-generated anchors deliver broadcasts and large language models excel in simultaneous translation, the rapid advancement of AI continues to fuel uncertainty about its impact on the human workforce.

From ChatGPT-4o and DeepSeek R1 to a range of generative AI models tailored for specific tasks, these innovations are expected to replace an increasing number of jobs.

Some have dubbed this period "the eve of the AI era" to describe the current technological transformation. According to the Future of Jobs Report 2025 published by the World Economic Forum, over the next decade approximately 92 million jobs worldwide are projected to be disrupted due to technology, economy, demographics and the green transition.

Despite a net 78 million jobs being created in this same period, many people will be forced out of work, having to retrain and shift careers to match the global trends.

Clerical and secretarial roles are anticipated to experience the steepest decline.

Gong Yuqing, a junior financial analyst in Beijing, said AI has already changed her work.

"Approximately 30 percent of my current workload can be handled by AI models today," she said. "AI is not replacing us. Instead, it allows us to focus on more valuable tasks."

In her role, AI assists with routine tasks such as information collection and data entry, while she reviews and verifies the AI-generated output.

Gong primarily relies on Kimi, a chatbot developed by Chinese company Moonshot AI. Her daily responsibilities include summarizing and composing industry analysis reports. AI helps her convert graphics from original reports into data with high accuracy and facilitates content translation.

"Since I don't have to input this data manually, it saves a lot of time," Gong said.

AI has also become her go-to

research tool. Recently, when tasked with gathering information on economic statistics, she asked Kimi to generate a reference list with source links.

"It is incredibly convenient to get what I need within seconds," she added.

Gong views AI as a collaborative partner in her work. "I am still the final gatekeeper," she stressed.

According to a report released by the China Internet Network Information Center in January, China had over 1.1 billion internet users last year, with 249 million using generative AI products. Of these users, 77.6 percent used AI to answer questions, while 45.5 percent employed AI models as office assistants.

Based on Gong's experience, for now, AI adoption in the workplace depends heavily on workers' willingness to explore its capabilities.

Sun, 25, who asked to be identified only by her surname, joined a top-tier accounting firm in Beijing last year. She is currently in charge of tax affairs.

As a newcomer whose academic background does not directly align with her current role, she initially relied on senior colleagues or extensive internet searches when faced with challenges.

"As someone unfamiliar with tax affairs, the process of searching used to be time-consuming and complicated," she said.

AI has since transformed her workflow.

"With AI's assistance, I can first understand the issue and receive a logically structured answer," Sun said. "It summarizes relevant tax laws and provides me with a solution framework."

When encountering unfamiliar terminology, she turns to AI for definitions and examples.

"I can even ask AI to elaborate on specific points, something traditional search engines can't do," she noted.

Nevertheless, Sun acknowledges AI's limitations.

"Some AI-generated information is inaccurate and requires further verification," she said.

She also observed that though AI's deep thinking process is thought-provoking, it often yields



An engineer debugs a humanoid robot serving as a bank assistant in Shanghai in July. TANG YANJUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Large language models affecting jobs

The impact of large language models on the job market in China is becoming increasingly apparent, as the recruitment scale for occupations most affected by these models declined between 2022 and 2024.

According to a report jointly released by the National School of Development at Peking University and recruitment platform Zhaopin last year, the Work Activity-based LLM Exposure Index reached 0.89 in 2024 for the editing and translation category, and 0.68 for the category covering human resources, administration, finance and legal professions — an increase of 0.09 and 0.04, respectively, compared to 2022.

The report also indicates a negative correlation between the LLM Exposure Index and job postings: the higher the index score, the greater the

only a few useful insights.

"Experience matters in most situations. Senior staff can quickly identify key points, but for newcomers like me, it's harder to distinguish what is truly important," she said.

Beyond information retrieval,

decline in job postings in China between 2022 and 2024.

For example, in fields with a higher index score, such as sales and business development, the proportion of job postings in the first half of 2024 decreased by more than five percentage points compared to 2022.

Similarly, job shares in software and hardware development, operations, testing, human resources, administration, finance and legal professions declined by over one percentage point during the same period.

The report suggests that this reduction in job postings may have also been influenced by multiple factors, including industrial restructuring and advancements in large AI model technology.

LI SHANGYI

another significant feature of large language models is translation. Sun relies heavily on AI for this task.

"AI translation is especially helpful when I communicate with foreign clients via email," she said.

Despite projections, the integra-

tion of AI tools into the workplace has not yet triggered widespread job displacement. Many professionals like Gong and Sun in these at-risk fields remain optimistic about the potential for human-AI collaboration.

They embrace AI as a tool to enhance productivity.

"AI can inspire me, but it won't replace humans," Sun concluded.

The growing sophistication of AI models also poses a threat to occupations once considered secure, such as graphic designers and legal secretaries, the WEF report suggests.

In 2023, a pivotal moment occurred when ChatGPT-4 passed the Uniform Bar Exam, the standard qualification for lawyers in the United States. This achievement raised concerns within the legal community.

Chen, an assistant lawyer at a Beijing-based law firm who asked to be identified only by his surname, uses AI models to search for legal clauses and cases.

"AI can identify related keywords and compile comprehensive search results," he said.

Specialized large language models for the legal profession provide useful references, but Chen remains cautious.

"AI-generated outputs sometimes contain fabricated information, making manual fact-checking essential," he said.

Given these limitations, Chen believes junior lawyers are unlikely to be replaced soon.

"AI hallucination" — when models produce false information — poses a significant risk. Fabricated cases or clauses could lead to serious consequences, which is why human oversight is indispensable," he said.

In his work, Chen also uses AI for repetitive tasks such as drafting and translating contracts.

"We prioritize privacy and data security when using AI," he added.

Both domestic and international companies are encouraging employees to integrate AI into their workflows. Many firms have already incorporated generative AI models into their office systems and offer AI training programs.

Generative AI's potential is not

limited to text-based work. Upgraded models can even perform design tasks. For instance, tools like Midjourney can generate illustrations from text descriptions.

Li Sanlu, who majors in environmental art design at the Academy of Arts & Design at Tsinghua University, said, "Rather than using AI to create final designs, I treat it as a source of inspiration."

Recently, social media platforms have been flooded with AI-generated images. With simple prompts, large language models can produce detailed textual descriptions, which image-generation models then transform into visuals.

"Many people are experimenting with ways to control AI output for consistent image generation," Li said. "However, due to the randomness inherent in AI models, achieving stable results remains challenging."

According to Li, AI models broaden designers' perspectives by uncovering overlooked details.

"Design always starts with reality — we conduct field surveys and analyze real-world conditions," he explained. "When I develop an idea, I consult DeepSeek or ChatGPT to explore how it can be translated into a design concept."

These AI models provide Li with a range of plans and detailed feedback. "Although they cannot replace original design work, their suggestions offer new perspectives. The images they generate also contain subtle details that inspire me," he said.

For Li, AI models function as collaborative assistants who continually challenge his thinking and help him stay focused on the core problems of design.

The WEF report concluded that AI will enable humans to perform more valuable and complex tasks.

Zhao Xin, a professor from the Gaoling School of Artificial Intelligence at Renmin University of China, remarked at a DeepSeek forum in February: "In the future, using AI might become as basic as using office software in our daily work today. Considering AI's limitations, it may replace certain jobs — but not humans themselves."

CHINA

Martyr's grave maintained by family through generations

Tending to tomb has evolved into monthly tradition of respect, honor

By ZHAO RUINAN in Nanchang
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Before this year's Qingming Festival, or Tomb-Sweeping Day, on Friday, Xie Nanjing methodically cleared away weeds and fallen leaves from a grave in a small village in Ganzhou city, Jiangxi province.

Nestled among green bamboo and cypress trees in Shihan village, the grave belongs to Deng Yigang, a former commander of the Red Army.

After carefully tidying the site, Xie sat in front of the tombstone and said in a hushed tone, "Commander Deng, I've come to visit you again."

It is a ritual he repeats almost every month. As a result, it has become a familiar sight for the villagers.

Xie is the third-generation guardian of Deng's grave. For 93 years, his family has passed down the tradition from his grandfather to his father, and now to him.

The story dates back to February in 1932, when Deng was shot and critically wounded on the front line while leading an attack on a fortress near Ruijin city in Ganzhou.

"After the battle, my grandfather, Xie Shiyan, found Deng hiding in a small mountain hollow in Shihan village and brought him home under cover of darkness. Unfortunately, Deng succumbed to his injuries and passed away half a month later," Xie Nanjing said.

Deng died at the age of 28 due to excessive blood loss. After Deng's burial, Xie Shiyan told his son Xie Benrong: "The Red Army fought for the people and the country without fear of sacrifice. Our duty is to take good care of the martyrs' graves."



Xie Nanjing puts flowers on Deng Yigang's tomb in Shihan village in Ganzhou city, Jiangxi province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Since then, Deng's grave and those of nearly 20 other unnamed martyrs have remained undisturbed. In the 1970s, Xie Nanjing and his father, concerned about potential mudslides, moved Deng's grave to a nearby location. Due to limited resources, they could not erect a tombstone at the time.

In 1981, after saving money originally intended for building a house, Xie Benrong and Xie Nanjing decided to commission proper tombstones. They erected a separate one for Deng and four tombstones for the 22 unnamed martyrs, combining them into a large tomb.

"Xie Nanjing lived a frugal life. He wouldn't even buy himself new clothes or shoes, yet he spared no expense in refurbishing Commander Deng's grave," said Feng Liangming, a member of the Kuantian

Township Party Committee.

In 2009, Xie Nanjing invested over 3,000 yuan (\$413) to have a marble tombstone made for Deng, and constructed a drainage system, making the entire grave site solemn, clean and tidy.

In 2001, Xie Benrong suffered a sudden cerebral hemorrhage. Before he died, he repeatedly told his children and grandchildren that they must "take care of Deng as you would do for your ancestors and visit his grave every year."

This tradition has since become a family rule. Every Qingming Festival, all members of the Xie family gather to clean Deng's grave.

"The family has taken care of Deng's grave, rain or shine. From the grandfather's generation, guarding for more than 90 years, it has already reached five generations,"

said Zhu Dongsheng, the village's Party secretary.

Deng's great-grandson and others initially planned to move his remains to their ancestral home in Hunan province. However, moved by the grave's pristine condition and the Xie family's reverence, they chose to leave the remains undisturbed. At the graveside, Xie brushed dirt from his calloused hands, shouldered his hoe, and said: "In the past, you (Commander Deng) suffered without medical care or even a hot meal. My grandfather carried that guilt. Now, with paved roads at our doorstep, we live in comfort and prosperity."

In November, Xie Nanjing was recognized as one of the Good Samaritans of China for his family's commitment to protecting Red Army martyrs' tombs.

Colorful sticky rice wakes the taste buds of spring

By ZHANG LI in Nanning
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In the serene Jingxi village in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Liang Sizhen immerses herself in crafting a dish of vibrant five-color sticky rice, a traditional food cherished by the Zhuang ethnic group.

Clad in an apron, Liang meticulously selected glutinous rice on a weathered yet pristine wooden table within her flower-filled courtyard.

She was exceptionally busy for the peak season of the Sanyuesan Festival, which is celebrated by Zhuang people on the third day of the third month of the Chinese calendar. This year the festival fell on March 31.

"Colorful sticky rice holds a special place in my heart, encapsulating the happiest memories of my childhood," Liang said.

Growing up in a mountainous village of Liucheng county, Guangxi, the 41-year-old said she cherished all the moments spent with her grandmother, from whom she fostered a deep love for the food and learned some basic traditional practices of making it.

The techniques of making the dish were listed among the third batch of the region's intangible cultural heritage in 2010.

Realizing its growing value, Liang started to focus on studying the techniques.

With over two years dedicated to the craft, Liang not only mastered the skills, but also developed her own creations.

Using local flowers and herbs, she made more than 10 natural dyes that added more colors and styles to the dish.

"To make exceptionally delicious colorful sticky rice, the grains must be plump, glossy and possess a substantial feel," Liang said.

However, it is the dyeing process that forms the soul of the food, she added.

Liang grasped a handful of maple leaves and placed them in an iron pot. As she pounded them vigorously with a wooden mallet, a delightful fragrance filled the air.

"Maple leaves can display the purest black hue, accompanied by a distinct aroma," Liang said.

When she finally lifted the steamer lid and unveiled a treasure trove of colorful sticky rice, the vibrant hues and enticing smell were captivating.

Typically, Liang's workday starts at 6 am and sometimes lasts until 2 am the following day.

"Compared with other products, my handmade colorful sticky rice with plant-based dyes are not only healthier but also more eco-friendly. I also choose a wood fire to steam the rice to keep the natural flavor," she said.

Liang has made videos showcasing her creation process, which have garnered widespread acclaim online. She receives orders for more than 600 kilograms of colorful sticky rice a year, which are not only sold in Guangxi, but also to Guangdong and Jiangsu provinces.

In the future, Liang wants to launch her own unique brand.

"Nature and the countryside harbor boundless treasures. My aspiration is to furnish everyone with authentic culinary delights and enable them to savor nature's marvels with every bite," Liang said.



Liang Sizhen makes colorful sticky rice in her home in Liucheng county, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. LI HANCHI FOR CHINA DAILY

Tourism takes flight over blossoming countryside

As spring sweeps across most of China, temperatures are rising and people are eager to embark on journeys to witness stunning floral spectacles.

The growing popularity of flower-viewing tourism has given a vibrant boost to the springtime economy, with modern technology playing an important role in driving this trend.

Adding vibrancy

From late March to April, vast fields across China's countryside are carpeted in dazzling yellow rapeseed flowers, creating breathtaking landscapes.

Social media comes alive with photos of people adorned with flower garlands, celebrating the season's charm. However, the yellow blossoms in Jiangxi province are part of a colorful display, with cherry pink, peach red, snow white and light purple blooms coming as a painting from nature's palette.

These multicolored flowers are the result of 11 years of research by Fu Donghui, a professor at Jiangxi Agricultural University. His team has cultivated a wide range of species in 75 colors. The widespread popularity of "bloom chasing" photos online years ago made Fu realize that the sea of rapeseed flowers had the potential to become a signature tourism attraction. However, the single yellow color could lead to aesthetic fatigue, limiting the industry's growth.

Since 2014, Fu has used genetic engineering and hybrid breeding to create new colors, such as introducing the purple gene from radishes into rapeseed flowers.

The tech-enhanced blooms have revitalized local tourism, transforming scenic spots featuring the colorful rapeseed flowers into popular photography destinations. Visitors flock to these vibrant landscapes, feeling as if they have stepped into a Chinese version of Monet's Garden.

Fu's team has forged cooperation with over 100 scenic spots for scientific demonstration planting, boosting rapeseed flower-themed tourism in over 20 provinces.

These genetically engineered flowers offer more than just a visual feast.



From top: Helicopter club Flight Now offers tourists helicopter rides to admire the floral landscapes in Chengdu, Sichuan province. TAO KE / FOR CHINA DAILY Tourists enjoy colorful rapeseed flowers in Wuyuan county, Jiangxi province, on March 21. WAN XIANG / XINHUA

They make real contributions to the industrial economy, as they have been proven to yield higher rapeseed production as well as oil output.

Rapeseed is one of China's primary oilseed crops, with its annual planting area and total production ranking among the highest globally.

Aerial adventure

This year's peak flower season is being blended with the latest tech trends. In addition to the traditional flower-viewing walks, visitors to Chengdu, Sichuan province, can board fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters, soaring just a few hundred meters above the ground to take in sweeping views of the vast floral landscapes.

Despite waiting five hours due to

airspace restrictions, a tourist sur-named Zhao said her 10-minute helicopter ride last week at helicopter club Flight Now was still a "worthwhile experience".

The club said that on weekends, the number of daily flights can reach 30 to 40. Beyond aerial sightseeing, there is also a growing demand from tourists for hands-on aircraft flying experiences.

Data from e-commerce platform Meituan showed that the number of merchants launching "helicopter ride" and "sky-high tour" services on the platform has doubled year-on-year, and the number of group bookings for such low-altitude flight services has nearly quadrupled.

Airports in cities such as Chengdu and Shenzhen, Guangdong province,

have also tapped into the flower-themed tourism market, launching a growing number of routes for flying over blossoms since March.

The low-altitude flower phenomenon provides more than a fresh lens to appreciate nature. It is a trend of modern tourism that integrates cutting-edge aviation with scenic exploration. Fancy flying vehicles, such as electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and future-oriented aircraft are poised to open new air routes across China, pioneering the next chapter of aerial tourism.

In the city of Tianshui in Gansu province, visitors can board a vertical take-off and landing aircraft and enjoy a low-altitude flight at 300 meters to view the 1,600-year-old Majijishan Grottoes.

Hefei-based Zero Gravity Aircraft Industry has designed a spacecraft-like unmanned electric flying vehicle called the ZG-ONE, a star product that consistently attracts attention at exhibitions across China. It is specifically aimed at low-altitude tourism and short-distance travel.

State-owned enterprises such as the Aviation Industry Corporation of China are also entering the market, developing civil airships such as the AS700 for scenic tours.

China recently made public a plan on special initiatives to increase consumption, highlighting the orderly development of low-altitude consumption sectors, including low-altitude tourism, aviation sports and consumer-grade drones.

Zhao Deli, founder of the Chinese flying car company Xpeng Aeroht, said that the policy will infuse new vitality into the development of the market. "This includes accelerating infrastructure construction, attracting greater capital investment and encouraging increased consumer participation," Zhao said.

State-owned giants such as the Aviation Industry Corporation of China are also entering the market, developing civil airships such as the AS700 for scenic tours.

XINHUA

Xizang residents using cleaner fuel for heating

LHASA — In Nyanrong, a county with an average altitude of over 4,700 meters in Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region, clean energy projects are transforming winter heating for residents.

The temperature in Nyanrong can still fall below zero toward the end of March, but the home of village Sangtso was warm.

"No more collecting cow dung for months ahead of winter. Our village's solar-powered heating keeps us cozy," Sangtso said.

Cao Lin, a local official, said, "The photovoltaic heating system is operating well, generating over 2,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity daily." He added that Xizang boasts abundant solar energy resources, ideal for solar heating.

Meanwhile, in Dingri county's Yeijing village, quake-affected families like Sangye Chosphe's are burning smoke-free biomass pellets made from processed livestock dung. "This fuel burns cleaner than regular dung and lasts much longer. One bag of the fuel keeps us warm for days," said the 58-year-old.

On Jan 7, an earthquake struck the county. Many houses collapsed or were severely damaged. Within days, temporary housing was erected while electricity and water supplies were fully restored, with biomass pellets neatly stacked by the stoves.

These pellets, donated by Shenzhen's One Foundation, can reduce emissions and produce almost no sulfur dioxide.

200,000 residents

will benefit from clean heating pilot projects in the Xizang autonomous region.

The biomass fuel utilizes solid fuel combustion technology, converting agricultural and livestock waste into clean energy. The foundation has distributed 465 metric tons of the pellets, ensuring locals stay warm through the long winter.

Backed by 3.78 billion yuan (\$522 million) in social investment, Xizang's clean heating pilot projects expanded to seven counties and districts last year.

As of May, an additional 6.2 square kilometers of heating coverage will have been completed, benefiting over 200,000 residents, according to the regional department of housing and urban-rural development.

The region has also introduced policies to achieve clean heating in areas above 5,000 meters in altitude. Last year, 1,553 households across 25 high-altitude villages transitioned from dung-burning to clean heating.

"The heat pumps work fast and cut costs," said Gungdrak, a resident of Pumaqangtang, China's highest township, in Nakarze county, Xizang. "My knees don't hurt like they used to."

XINHUA

WORLD

'Questions' remain on Ukraine truce idea: Kremlin

MOSCOW — The Kremlin said on Monday that Russian President Vladimir Putin still supported the idea of a truce in Ukraine, but many questions remained about how it would work.

United States President Donald Trump has been pushing for a ceasefire between Moscow and Kyiv since taking office in January, but his administration has failed to make a breakthrough despite talks with both sides.

"Putin does support the idea that a ceasefire is needed, but before that a whole range of questions have to be answered," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday.

"These questions are hanging in the air, so far no one has given an answer to them," he added, blaming the lack of progress on "the Kyiv regime's uncontrollability".

Meanwhile, Trump has voiced frustration at the slow pace of talks, telling NBC news last month that he was "pissed off" with Putin.

On Sunday, he told reporters: "We're talking to Russia. We'd like them to stop. I don't like the bombing. The bombing goes on and on."

Last month, Putin rejected a joint US-Ukrainian proposal for an unconditional and full ceasefire, while the Kremlin has made a US-proposed truce in the Black Sea dependent on the West lifting certain sanctions.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday lamented the lack of a US response to Russia's refusal to agree on the ceasefire.

"We are waiting for the United States to respond — so far there has been no response," he said.

French President Emmanuel Macron echoed Zelensky's calls for a stronger response to Russia.

"A ceasefire is needed as soon as possible. And strong action if Russia continues to try to buy time and refuse peace," Macron said on X on Sunday.

On the ground, Russia mounted a "massive" missile and drone attack on Ukraine that killed two people and wounded seven others, Zelensky said on Sunday.

"The number of Russian air



Firefighters work to control a blaze in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Sunday following a Russian missile attack.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE OF UKRAINE / AFP

attacks is increasing", which proved that "the pressure on Russia is still insufficient", he said.

In Kyiv, explosions were heard in the city on Sunday morning.

One person was killed and three people were wounded, the head of the city's military administration, Tymur Tkachenko, wrote on social media.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said "the body of a man killed in an enemy attack was discovered in Darnytsia district".

A missile strike partially destroyed a building housing state foreign-language broadcasters, the Russian-language Freedom television channel reported, saying that its newsroom had been destroyed.

Russia attacked Ukraine with 23 cruise and ballistic missiles and 109

drones during the night, the Ukrainian air force said on Sunday, adding it shot down 13 of the missiles and 40 drones while 54 others caused no damage.

In the southern Kherson region, a drone killed a 59-year-old man, while in the northeastern Kharkiv region, near the border with Russia, two people were wounded in an aerial bomb attack, regional officials said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said on Sunday that troops "liberated" a village in Ukraine's Sумы region, close to the border with Russia's Kursk region.

"A unit of the North group of forces, during offensive actions, liberated the village of Basovka in Sумы region," the ministry said.

Ukraine quickly rejected the report.

"The enemy continues its disinformation campaign regarding the seizure of settlements in Sумы region or the breakthrough of the border," Andriy Demchenko, spokesman for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, told AFP.

In Russia's southwest, a Ukrainian drone damaged railway tracks in the Krasnodar region, local authorities said on Monday.

"There were no casualties and no fire occurred," the administration for the region said on Telegram.

Separately, Ukrainian Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said on Monday that Kyiv is sending officials to Washington in the coming days for further talks on a deal giving the US preferential access to Ukrainian natural resources.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Canada-China trade ties seen at crossroads

By YANG GAO in Toronto
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As the United States imposes sweeping new tariffs, Canadian experts have different visions for the nation's economic relationship with China.

Jeff Mahon, former deputy director for Greater China at Global Affairs Canada, said the world is "on the cusp of undergoing profound change" and that those forces are already reshaping trade relations.

"Canada-China relations have historically been very friendly based on mutual trust and support for each other," Mahon told China Daily.

He noted Canada's early support for Chinese food security before the country's opening-up, and the nations' decades of "win-win cooperation" that followed.

However, he said relations began to sour during the first Trump administration, when China's growing global influence presented both "great opportunities and challenges" for Canada.

"Unfortunately, cooperation stalled, and Canada-China relations suffered from this," he said.

With the second administration of US President Donald Trump, Mahon said there are "new challenges to both Canada and China, and the world more generally".

But he said he believes the moment also presents a unique opportunity for the two countries to lead by example. "There is a great opportunity for Canada and China to demonstrate leadership to the world by designing a new approach for solving trade conflicts based on mutual respect for each other's development model and well-being for their citizens," Mahon said.

To move forward, Mahon highlighted the importance of addressing production and employment concerns in both countries.

Mahon pointed to areas where Canada can continue to support China, including food and energy security, and said China's leadership in innovation could also benefit Canada.

"Canada and China should work together to resolve the current trade tensions by avoiding megaphone diplomacy and engaging in candid consultations," he said.

"We should identify areas of mutual interest while also acknowledging that there are differences and sensitivities that need to be respected," he said.

Mahon said that approach would require rethinking international trade arrangements so that they reflect new and unique circumstances.

"If China and Canada can succeed, it will not only benefit Canada-China trade relations but the entire world," he said.

He noted Canada's historical friendship with China and status as a G7 nation could become an ideal test case for a new trade framework.

"Any successful outcome between Canada and China makes an attractive model for others to follow," Mahon said.

Julian Karaguesian, an economics professor at McGill University, said Canada must take a pragmatic approach to trade with China.

"The relationship between the two countries is not going away; it's simply

too significant," he told China Daily.

Karaguesian, who served as special adviser in the international trade and finance branch at the Canadian Ministry of Finance, highlighted China's manufacturing prowess and Canada's resources wealth as complementary.

"China's manufacturing sector is as big as the next nine countries combined. We're natural trading partners — we have critical minerals, energy, food. We could be a protein superpower," he said.

On April 2, Trump announced new tariffs on imports into the US from most trading partners — along with imposing the 25 percent levy on "all foreign-made" vehicles.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney then announced that Canada would impose the same tariffs on all vehicles imported from the United States that did not meet the standards of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).

Karaguesian framed the tension as an opportunity. "This gives us a chance to reshape our nation, be less dependent on the US, and trade more globally — with Europe, China, India."

Last October, Canada followed the US in imposing tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles.

Karaguesian said Canada's tariffs on Chinese EVs were unnecessary: "There was no reason for the tariff. We weren't even importing Chinese EVs."

Instead, he proposed that now is the time to resume dialogue. "We should sit down with China and talk trade. In return for lifting tariffs, China could ease restrictions on Canadian agricultural exports."

To reduce reliance on the US, Karaguesian called for a sweeping industrial strategy. "Today, we must recalibrate our economy toward global trade and infrastructure."

He pointed to automation's impact on jobs. "Every big country needs manufacturing. We should invite Chinese automakers to produce here. Why not partner with China to build affordable EVs?"

Karaguesian offers a vision grounded in pragmatism. "The US rift lets Canada chart a new course — one where we trade freely, think big, and reclaim sovereignty."

"We can either cling to a global status quo that is under attack by the very country that created it, or we can build a future in which China is a key partner and not a rival," he said.

Sui Sui, a professor at the Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto Metropolitan University, noted the risks and limitations of deeper collaboration — particularly as Canada looks to reduce its reliance on the US market.

Sui told China Daily that US trade policies under the Trump administration have forced Canada to reconsider its economic strategy.

"The traditional economic relationship with the US is over," she said, quoting Carney. "The US is saying, 'I'll take care of myself, you take care of yourself.'"

She said that shift has left Canada, a nation deeply integrated with the US economy, in a precarious position.

"Canada will be hit hard," Sui noted, adding that while diversification is necessary, aligning too closely with China risks provoking Washington.

UK PM Starmer vows to protect domestic businesses

By EARLE GALE in London
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British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has vowed to protect his country's businesses from the worst ravages of the United States' new import tariffs.

With the United Kingdom's exports to the US now subject to at least 10 percent baseline tariff, as declared by US President Donald Trump, Starmer said on Sunday that he will support his country's enterprises, while also working to secure a UK-US trade deal that could sweep most tariffs aside.

"We stand ready to use industrial policy to help shelter British business from the storm," he wrote in The Sunday Telegraph newspaper.

"Some people may feel uncomfortable about this — the idea the state should intervene directly to shape the market has often been derided. But we simply cannot cling to old sentiments when the world is turning this fast."

The UK will also work with other countries to maximize exports to new markets, he added.

Starmer made the comments as the Indian-owned, UK-based multinational carmaker Jaguar Land



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer (second from left) chairs a roundtable with business leaders at Downing Street in London on Thursday. BEN STANSALL / AFP

Rover said the 25 percent tariff the US has imposed on auto imports had prompted it to "pause" all shipments to the country, while it works on addressing "the new trading terms".

The US is the UK auto industry's second-largest export market, after the European Union, and a Jaguar Land Rover spokesperson told the BBC that the company had decided

to take "some short-term actions" while formulating "mid-to-longer-term plans".

The UK exported 8.3 billion pounds (\$10.7 billion) of automobiles to the US during the 12 months that ended after the third quarter of 2024, making the sector the largest — by value — of all the UK's exports to the US. In total, the UK exported around 60 billion

pounds of goods to the US last year, with machinery and pharmaceuticals also being major contributors.

The imposition of the 10 percent baseline tariff, which took effect on Saturday, and the impending 25 percent tariffs on auto parts, vehicles, steel and aluminum has spooked the UK stock exchange.

The FTSE 100 index, which measures the performance of the 100 leading enterprises listed on the London Stock Exchange, nose-dived by 4.9 percent on Friday, the steepest decline since 2020.

With many other markets around the world reacting similarly, analysts have warned against the possibility of a global recession.

Starmer said he does not want to make things worse by "jumping into a trade war" with Washington and instead plans to respond to Trump's tariffs calmly.

However, he also said "nothing should be off the table" and that he talked to French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday.

Starmer added that he was set to talk to several other European leaders in a bid to coordinate the continent's response to the huge changes the US has forced upon international trade.

Punitive levies prompt African push for diversification

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya
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After US President Donald Trump's announcement of a sweeping new tariff policy on Wednesday, African leaders and officials have warned that the move will severely affect the continent's exports to the United States.

They called for a strategic response that includes boosting intra-African trade, diversifying export markets and engaging in negotiations to correct the punitive tariffs.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa voiced deep concern over the decision, which includes a 30 percent import tariff on his country's goods.

In a statement on Thursday, Ramaphosa said the tariffs underscore the

urgent need to negotiate a new, mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement with the US to ensure long-term trade certainty.

"While South Africa remains committed to a mutually beneficial trade relationship with the US, unilaterally imposed and punitive tariffs are a concern and serve as a barrier to trade and shared prosperity."

Under the new policy, Trump's executive order introduces a tiered tariff system. A universal baseline tariff of 10 percent applies to all imports, but countries identified with larger trade deficits with the US faces higher duties.

Lee Kinyanjui, Kenya's Cabinet secretary for investments, trade and industry, said on Thursday that the major challenge posed by the US

"reciprocal tariff" is the increased cost burden on Kenyan exports.

While Kenya is subject to the baseline 10 percent tariff, lower than what some competitors face, it still raises costs for Kenyan businesses exporting to the US, he said.

"Supply chain adjustments will be necessary, such as expanding production to meet new demand. This will require investment in infrastructure, technology and skills development."

He highlighted the need to explore alternative markets in Asia and Europe and increase intra-African trade. "There is a great opportunity to diversify exports beyond our current exports," he said.

In addition, experts argued that the new tariffs could spell doom for

the African Growth and Opportunity Act, a trade initiative signed into law in 2000 by former US president Bill Clinton to expand ties with sub-Saharan African countries.

The act facilitates duty-free access to the US market for products from 35 African countries, and is due to expire in September. Analysts said it will unlikely be renewed under the Trump administration.

Julius Kones, a Kenyan statistician, said that as a continent, Africa should now be preoccupied more on how to survive in the new world economic order.

Uncertainty over the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act is already causing jitters among African countries as the deadline approaches, he said.



Workers use sewing machines at a textile factory in Maseru, Lesotho, on March 19. The southern African country feared the worst for its textile industry on Thursday after the United States imposed a 50 percent tariff on its imports. ROBERTA CIUCCIO / AFP

WORLD

Envoy stresses role of BRI in development

China, Ethiopia enjoy 'strong, deep' ties as countries mark 55 years of friendship

By SHAO XINYING and WANG HAORAN

The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative aligns closely with Ethiopia's development plan, underscoring "strong and deep" relations as the two countries mark 55 years of diplomatic ties this year, Ethiopia's ambassador to China has said.

Reflecting on his two years in China, Ambassador Tefera Derbew Yimam said he had traveled extensively across the country, exploring nearly every province of China.

Shanghai, a financial hub with digitized ports, and Shenzhen, a technologically advanced city, stood out. "The way a (Shanghai) port operates impressed me the most as loading and unloading are handled without human intervention," he told China Daily, highlighting China's thriving economy and its potential for trade.

Ethiopia is tapping into this opportunity through the online Ethiopian National Pavilion, launched in January on a Chinese e-commerce site to boost agricultural exports.

Ethiopian coffee, renowned for its organic and high-quality beans, remains vital to exports, with growing demand from China's younger generation, Tefera said.

Ethiopia's coffee exports to China have grown at an average rate of 27 percent annually over the past three years or so, according to the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority. Online sales of Ethiopian coffee surged 300 percent during the sixth China International Import Expo, in which Ethiopia is a frequent participant.

Bilateral trade volume reached \$3.55 billion in 2024, an increase of 17.5 percent year-on-year, according to China's General Administration of Customs.

China is Ethiopia's largest trading partner and largest source of investment, and Ethiopia is China's key trading partner in Africa.

This growing trade is fueled by enhanced connectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative, proposed by China more than a decade ago, Tefera said. "This would for sure boost our exports of agricultural commodities, coffee included, and other products."

The electrified transnational railway from Addis Ababa to Djibouti, a flagship project of BRI cooperation, is facilitating trade, the ambassador said. He added that BRI aligns well with the 10-Year Development Plan of Ethiopia (2021-30), which outlines Ethiopia's vision and objectives for sustainable development.

Tefera said China has been supporting Ethiopia's energy sector, notably through hydropower dams evidenced by the Genale Dawa III project and wind projects like Adama Wind Farm.

"We are pursuing a green economic development path and encouraging electric vehicle usage in Ethiopia," he said, adding that his country's abundant green energy resources, along with a population



Tefera Derbew Yimam

of about 120 million and a growing middle class, create strong potential for the EV market, bolstered by China's expertise.

Over more than five decades, the bilateral relationship has evolved into an all-weather strategic partnership. "Our people have benefited from this strong and deep partnership. Many job opportunities have been created through (China's) trade and investment," Tefera said.

These gains, he noted, stem from critical transportation and connectivity projects that help modernize Ethiopia, which require significant financing.

Baseless accusation

He dismissed the "debt trap" narrative pushed by some Western media as baseless, saying that Chinese loans have funded critical infrastructure undertakings, which promise long-term advantages.

"When developing countries access finance, it's based on their own decision. No one is coercing them to take loans," he said. "China has been flexible in addressing the repayment issues through restructuring some terms when it's necessary, unlike others which have a rigid modality."

The New Development Bank, a key financial institution within the BRICS framework, has become a vital source of funding for developing countries, Tefera said. Ethiopia officially joined the BRICS grouping at the start of 2024.

"The BRICS platform serves to advocate the voice of Global South and developing countries in restructuring the global governance and the world economic order," he said, expressing optimism to draw on the momentum brought by this "appealing" mechanism.

Beyond economic cooperation, cultural and educational exchanges remain a cornerstone of bilateral relations, Tefera said. Ethiopian students continue to study in China, and entities such as the Confucius Institutes and the Luban Workshop in Ethiopia facilitate knowledge-sharing and people-to-people exchanges.

As China and Ethiopia mark 55 years of diplomatic ties this year, Tefera expressed confidence in the future of the partnership. "Our relationship is built on mutual trust and mutual benefit," the ambassador said, vowing continued cooperation to further strengthen economic, cultural and technological ties between the two countries.

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Ethiopians experience Chinese paper-cutting in Addis Ababa during a celebration marking the 55th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and Ethiopia on Jan 12. LIU FANGQIANG / XINHUA



Search and rescue operations are being conducted in the areas targeted by Israeli forces in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on Sunday. ABDALHKEM ABU RIASH VIA GETTY IMAGES

Israel strikes Gaza after Hamas fires rockets

JERUSALEM/GAZA — Israeli airstrikes killed at least 44 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, according to Gaza's Civil Defense Agency, following a rocket barrage fired from the enclave by Hamas.

Separately, Palestinian authorities reported that a 14-year-old Palestinian-American boy was fatally shot by Israeli forces during clashes in the occupied West Bank.

The violence escalated after Hamas's armed wing, the Al-Qasam Brigades, launched rockets into southern Israel earlier on Sunday, which the group described as retaliation for Israeli "massacres" of Palestinian civilians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the rocket fire as "unacceptable" and vowed a "forceful response".

The Israeli military said it intercepted most of the projectiles, though one rocket struck the city of Ashkelon, lightly wounding three people. In response, the Israel Defense Forces, or IDF, conducted airstrikes targeting suspected rocket launch sites in central Gaza, including Deir al-Balah. Witnesses reported sustained explosions overnight as strikes rocked the area. Gaza's Civil Defense Agency reported at least

12 people killed on Monday in Israeli strikes.

Israel resumed large-scale air and ground operations in Gaza on March 18. Gaza's health authorities said earlier on Sunday that these renewed offensives have killed at least 1,335 Palestinians and injured 3,297 others.

'Unprovoked shooting'

In the occupied West Bank, Palestinian officials said a 14-year-old Palestinian-American,

Omar Mohammad Rabea, was fatally shot on Sunday during clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians in the West Bank. The IDF claimed troops engaged "terrorists" throwing stones at civilians, resulting in one death and two injuries. Palestinian officials, however, denounced the shooting as unprovoked.

The West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967, has experienced intensified military raids since January, which Israel describes as counterterrorism operations. Palestinian leaders and residents accuse Israeli forces and settlers of escalating violence, exacerbating instability in the territory.

The latest attacks came as Netanyahu headed to the United States to meet with President Donald Trump on the conflict and

other issues including new tariffs.

The US, a mediator in ceasefire efforts along with Egypt and Qatar, had expressed support for Israel's resumption of the fighting last month.

Meanwhile in Yemen, suspected US airstrikes over the weekend targeting the Houthis killed at least six people, the group said on Sunday, while a bombing video posted by Trump suggested casualties in the overall campaign may be higher than the rebels acknowledge.

A strike on Sunday night in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, hit a house, killing at least four people and wounding 16 others, the Houthi said. Their al-Masirah satellite news channel showed images of the damaged home and people receiving care in a hospital.

The strike on the house in Sanaa's Shu'ub district allegedly targeted a Houthi leader, part of a wider decapitation campaign launched by the Trump administration to kill the group's leaders. The intense US airstrikes targeting the group over their attacks on shipping in Middle East waters — related to the Israel-Hamas conflict — have killed at least 73 people, according to figures released by the Houthis.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Festive joy

Girls celebrate the Hindu festival of Ram Navami, in Kolkata, India, on Sunday. The festival is celebrated to remember the birthday of Lord Rama, a Hindu deity.

SUDIPTA DAS VIA GETTY IMAGES



Torrential rains kill dozens in DR Congo

KINSHASA — Heavy downpours in the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital Kinshasa have killed around 30 people while wreaking havoc across the central African megacity, an official told AFP on Sunday.

After the rain poured overnight from Friday to Saturday, rising waters devastated several outlying and impoverished suburbs of the metropolis of some 17 million people, with some residents forced to navigate the streets by canoe.

"There are many wounded who have been evacuated and for the moment we are in the 30s (as) for the number of dead," Patricien Gongo Abakazi, Kinshasa's provincial minister of public health, told AFP.

The victims either drowned or were killed when the walls of their homes collapsed, the minister added.

The rising waters have paralyzed much of the capital, cutting off traffic on National Road 1, Kinshasa's main thoroughfare, which leads

from the city center to the airport.

"At around 2 pm, we suddenly noticed that the water was rising in the plot, and it just kept getting higher. As a precaution, we took the children to flee, as it was difficult to get through," said Online, a resident of the Masina commune in the east.

In the eastern Debonhomme district, waters swallowed up dozens of cars, forcing some residents to swim or paddle in dug-out canoes, AFP journalists saw.

Some victims were trapped in the upper levels of their homes after water invaded their ground floors.

"The water has reached 1.5 meters high. We have just managed to save ourselves, the rest is trapped in our homes," said Christophe Bola, a resident of the Ndanu quarter in Limete commune.

Flooding caused huge traffic jams in a city where chronic congestion is the norm.

Several residents told AFP journalists they were angry at what they saw as a tardy and inadequate

reaction by the authorities.

Neighboring Kongo Central Province was also hit by the deluge.

Flooding frequently proves deadly in Kinshasa, which sits on the banks of the Congo River, Africa's second-largest river, after the Nile.

Poor maintenance and inadequate sewerage systems have left drainage pipes blocked by rubbish in many poorer neighborhoods.

Those living in makeshift shacks and quarters with unpaved streets are especially at risk.

In 2022, at least 120 people were found dead in the capital after downpours caused landslides and flooding.

In November 2019, the rains killed around 40 people in Kinshasa in a similar fashion.

Central Africa has been grappling with extreme downpours and thunderstorms since Thursday, notably in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Business leaders in UK hail openness

By ZHENG WANYIN in London zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Business leaders in the United Kingdom have expressed optimism about China's environment for foreign investors and applauded its commitment to opening-up, especially amid the turbulent geopolitical landscape challenging trade and investment.

Many commented on the situation on Friday at the UK session of the 2025 "Invest in China" promotional conference, hosted by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

The event in London brought together more than 300 representatives of corporations including HSBC, Smith & Nephew, Haleon and AstraZeneca.

Peter Burnett, chief executive of the China-Britain Business Council, said: "Today's conference is really significant. It's a beacon of light, frankly, in an otherwise very difficult landscape for trade and investment."

Burnett said that "tariffs and protectionism have gained favor" in a world "that has otherwise done so well from free and fair trade and from commercial investment decisions".

Business had previously been "allowed to get on with what business does best, which is to meet customer needs with products that serve a purpose at a fair and reasonable price point, and the interference is not needed to control that process", he added.

Burnett highlighted a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and representatives of the international business community in late March, which he praised as a "clear outreach" that shows China is a welcoming economy committed to its reform and opening-up policy.

Inspiring confidence

"It inspires confidence for businesses to continue growing in China and to make more investment," he said. "International businesses make a net profit margin of 8 to 9 percent in China, which is probably better than they do in many, many other locations around the world, and we should be grateful for that opportunity."

Jack Perry, chairman of the 48 Group, a London-based organization dedicated to promoting Sino-British economic cooperation, echoed Burnett, saying the synergy at the event was a "live demonstration" of high-quality development and high-level opening-up, terms that he said "perfectly describe what China is implementing and what forward-thinking UK businesses are ready for".

"We're doing this at a time when global winds aren't exactly common," he said. "Recent tariffs and escalation in the United States have sent ripples through the global economy ... but one nation's anxiety doesn't rewrite the global script."

"The world doesn't stop moving forward because one person wants it to go back. Long-term partnerships built over decades do not vanish with the headline, which is why this moment matters."

Nathan McNally, co-founder and CEO of P4 Precision Medicine Accelerator, a program that supports precision medicine startups in scaling up, said his on-the-ground experience suggests China is "very open and very welcoming".

The scale of the resources and capabilities there attracted him to set up an innovation center in Beijing, which began operation last year and aims to promote China-UK cooperation in precision medicine.

Amer Sayed, founder and CEO of Aviation Education Pathways, an aviation consultancy, told China Daily he is considering establishing a presence in China because he believes the market that connects aviation talents with training courses and industry opportunities is largely untapped.

BUSINESS

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A realty agent (right) explains the details of a property project to a potential homebuyer in Beijing.
JIANG QIMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Residential property market showing signs of stabilization

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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An evident improvement in home transactions in first-tier Chinese cities suggests that the residential property market is stabilizing in major cities, paving the way for a bottoming out of the overall housing market in line with government policies, industry experts said.

"As home prices are gradually advancing despite a downward curve, the first half (of the year) may possibly present the best time for homebuyers to make a decision, as an upward trend may appear with market activities continuing to improve," said Yan Yuejin, deputy head of the Shanghai-based E-House China R&D Institute.

While the property market performance of smaller Chinese cities has been relatively flat, new home transactions in the nation's four benchmark cities — Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province's Guangzhou and Shenzhen — reported an up to 95 percent surge month-on-month and an 18 percent increase year-on-year, in March.

Specifically, commercial housing transactions in Beijing and Shanghai both doubled in terms of area from a month ago, according to data collected by market information provider Wind Info.

In Shenzhen, new home spaces traded across the city increased 30.56 percent year-on-year in March, outperforming the four first-tier cities' average of 18.4 percent, and the average 1.34 percent increase seen among 30 key cities, the data from Wind Info showed.

Driven by first-tier cities, new home transactions in the key 30 cities rose 0.89 percent year-on-year in

the first quarter, marking a second consecutive quarter of increase in the price gauge, according to Li Yujia, a researcher on residential policy in Guangdong province.

"Such enhanced performance is attributed to multiple factors, including guidance from the annual Central Economic Work Conference in December and the national two sessions in March, as well as various supportive measures launched at the local and central government levels, which helped the home market to continue its recovery momentum in the first quarter," said Li.

30.56 percent

year-on-year growth of new home spaces traded across the city of Shenzhen in March

"For the first time, the Government Work Report included stabilizing the property market into its content, and stressed that efforts will continue to be made to stabilize the property market, which indicate that more measures will be implemented in accordance with the spirit of the two sessions," said Cao Jingjing, general manager of the index research department at the China Index Academy.

Cao said the speedy implementation of various measures, along with an increase in the supply of high-quality housing, will drive first-tier and core second-tier cities to take the lead in stabilizing the housing market in the second quarter.

According to data from various sources, there has been an apparent recovery in the housing market of the biggest cities.

In terms of home transaction prices, new homes in the country's 100 major cities registered an accumulated growth of 0.52 percent in the first quarter, with that of the first and second-tier cities rising 1.14 percent and 0.37 percent, respectively, against a decline of 0.10 percent in third- and fourth-tier cities, according to data from the China Index Academy.

Shanghai's property market continued its stable performance from January to March, with supply and demand remaining active for both land as well as new home transactions, said Cheng Yu, executive deputy general manager of the Shanghai corporation division of the China Index Academy.

"A total of 1.24 million square meters of commercial housing, or 10,096 apartment units, were traded between Jan 1 and March 28 in the East China cosmopolis, showing resilient supply and demand for new homes," said Cheng.

"In the secondary market, transaction activities maintained a high level amid an overall price drop of 1.51 percent in the first quarter. Particularly in the 20 key cities, there were 342,000 units of used homes traded, a year-on-year growth of 29 percent," said Cao.

As many as 19,234 units of pre-owned apartments changed hands in March across Beijing, an increase of about 62 percent month-on-month and 34.7 percent higher compared with the same period last year, according to the Beijing Municipal Commission of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.

The sharp increase is also a reflection and continuation of the market warming up after Chinese New Year, Leng added.

spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

US tariffs may trigger supply chain turmoil

Auto industry association says move severely violates WTO rules

By LIU YUKUN
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The United States' "reciprocal tariff" policy may trigger disruptions to global industrial and supply chains, said industry associations, adding that such actions will harm the interests of businesses and consumers — including in the US itself.

Hildegard Muller, president of the German Association of the Automotive Industry, said that the new US tariffs represent Washington's departure from a rules-based global trading order, and thus a departure from the foundation for global value creation and corresponding growth and prosperity in many regions of the world.

"This is not America first, this is America alone," Muller said in a written statement.

She said consumers in the US will be particularly affected, as they will directly feel the effects of the additional tariffs through rising inflation and reduced product selection.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers expressed similar concerns. The association said that the US move severely violates WTO rules, disrupts trade order, and significantly impacts the stability of the global

automotive industry supply chain. The association said that this move will further raise auto prices, burdening consumers in countries including the US, and negatively affecting global economic recovery.

The China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products asserted that this unilateral and protectionist trading behavior not only violates international trade rules, but also disrupts the global economic and trade order, harming the interests of businesses and consumers and destabilizing global supply chains. The China Chamber of Commerce of Import and Export of Foodstuffs, Native Produce and Animal By-Products said it firmly supports all countermeasures taken by the Chinese government, adding that Washington's actions will not only fail to bring economic benefits to itself, but will also have a serious negative impact on global industrial and supply chains.

The China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Medicines and Health Products said that the US actions will significantly affect the stability of pharmaceutical industry chains, particularly impacting medical coverage for low and middle-income groups. The statements followed US Pres-

ident Donald Trump signing an executive order on the so-called "reciprocal tariffs" last week, imposing a 10-percent minimum baseline tariff and higher rates on certain trading partners.

On Friday, China announced a series of countermeasures, including ones starting from April 10, with a 34 percent tariff to be imposed on all imported goods originating from the US. Moreover, export controls will be strengthened on certain rare earth-related items, among many others.

"The imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the US is more of a negotiating strategy to gain more benefit from global trade. While the move may negatively impact China's automotive exports to the US, it could open up opportunities in other regions. China should focus on protecting core technologies and expanding its presence in markets outside the US," said Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association.

BloombergNEF solar analyst Tan Youru predicts a shift in the global photovoltaic supply chain due to trade restrictions, leading to a more diverse and decentralized market.

"Even considering generous US subsidies for local manufacturing and trade protection measures, establishing upstream silicon wafer and polycrystalline silicon manufacturing in the US is still quite challenging," he said.

Tesla plant makes first Megapack exports

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Lin-gang Special Area, launched in 2019 as part of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone to better connect domestic and overseas markets, has deepened its two-way opening-up in a bid to address companies' development needs and facilitate the area's high-quality economic growth.

One major step can be seen with Tesla's energy storage facility in Lin-gang. The Megafactory, the first of its kind that the US electric vehicle maker has built overseas, shipped its Megapack energy storage systems to Australia on March 21, reported Xinhua News Agency.

This shipment marked the first batch of such products manufactured by the Lin-gang plant and shipped overseas.

Megapacks, advanced battery systems designed for large-scale energy projects, can store more than 3,900 kilowatt-hours of electricity in a single unit, enough capacity to power a Tesla Model 3 rear-wheel drive version for 39,000 kilometers.

Subsequent Megapack energy storage systems produced at the Lin-gang factory will be supplied to the Chinese domestic and Asia-Pacific markets, Xinhua said.

Tesla's new energy storage Megafactory in Lin-gang launched operations on Feb 11 as the factory's first Megapack battery system rolled off the production line.

Covering about 200,000 square meters, the new energy storage

project involved a total investment of 1.45 billion yuan (\$200 million). Up to 10,000 Megapack storage units are scheduled to be produced there annually.

The Megafactory is the second of its kind for the EV maker, and the Lin-gang plant only took nine months from groundbreaking, stretching from May 2024 to its official launch.

Tesla's founder Elon Musk said in a conference call in late January that it is building a third Megafactory to produce more Megapacks, just as competition in the energy storage sector heats up.

Waller County, Texas, in the United States, approved in early March a tax deal for Tesla to build and operate its Megapack factory in a local industrial park.

Progress has been made in Lin-gang to facilitate Chinese companies' outreach, with the Lin-gang Special Area Foreign Affairs Center launched recently as evidence of this campaign.

A total of 20 companies, including industry leaders such as SPD Bank (Shanghai Pudong Development Bank) and Yingke Law Firm, have become early participants by already setting up operations in the center.

Lin-gang also unveiled recently some 13 national service centers and 24 overseas liaison stations to better facilitate companies' attempts to explore overseas markets.

Chen Jinshan, director of the Lin-gang Special Area Administration, said during the launch ceremony

that Chinese companies' overseas forays have grown from initial exploitation to higher-level international mapping at present.

Given Lin-gang's strength in integrated circuits, intelligent vehicles, civil aviation, high-end equipment and digital economy, the local authorities will provide stronger support for companies along the same industrial chain to go overseas together, said Chen.

Therefore, Lin-gang will conduct greater stress tests in cross-border finance, cross-border data and high-capacity shipping so that the comprehensive platform serving companies' foreign outreaches can provide better services concerning laws and regulations, investment, financing and insurance, he added.

Over the past five years, companies registered in Lin-gang have launched 412 foreign direct investment projects, with the total investment value amounting to \$6.56 billion.

Zhou Hanmin, head of Shanghai Public Diplomacy Association, said Lin-gang has served as an important strategic fulcrum of China's reform and opening-up. The area plays a pivotal role in helping Chinese companies better tap overseas markets while introducing more multinational companies. Exchanges and cooperation among companies across the globe are crucial to enhance companies' competitiveness, which is conducive to the country's high-quality economic development, he said.

Briefly

Forex reserves above \$3.2 trln for 16 months

China's foreign exchange reserves have remained higher than \$3.2 trillion for 16 straight months, official data showed on Monday. These reserves amounted to \$3.2407 trillion at the end of March 2025, up by \$13.4 billion, a 0.42 percent rise, from the previous month, according to the State

Administration of Foreign Exchange.

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 91 pips to 7.1980 against the US dollar on Monday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's

Qingming Festival boosts travel numbers

By ZHU WENQIAN
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This year's Qingming Festival (Tomb Sweeping Day) holiday, which concluded on Sunday, brought about a surge in travel numbers, despite April being a traditional off-season for travel.

The elderly continue to show a strong demand for travel, and young people took advantage of the break by taking days off work to enjoy longer vacations.

Over the holiday, flight booking volumes to popular domestic cities grew by 10 percent year-on-year, while hotel bookings in hot domestic tourist destinations saw double-

digit growth, according to Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

Specifically, hotel booking volumes by elderly travelers jumped by 30 percent year-on-year, making them the group that recorded the highest growth, Qunar found.

"Qingming has not been a peak travel period in previous years, but this year's tourism market has been more active. All kinds of data indicate that tourism consumption is more dynamic this year," said Xiao Peng, a Qunar researcher.

In addition to millions of Chinese participating in ancient rituals and cleaning tombs to pay tribute to their family ancestors, the festival has seen urbanites setting out for

activities such as kite flying and family outings. In particular, the trend of enjoying seasonal sights such as flower blossoms has continued to heat up, driving the growth of local cultural and tourism markets, Qunar said.

For hotel bookings, Luoyang, Henan province ranked among the top 10 most popular destinations in China. Kunming, Yunnan province; Bijie, Guizhou province and Wuyuan, Jiangxi province, also saw their hotel booking volumes jump 30 percent year-on-year, thanks, in part, to the different kinds of flowers blooming in those locations, Qunar said.

Chinese travelers have also been traveling abroad for the Qingming

Festival, with booking volumes of hotels in the Japanese cities of Osaka and Tokyo jumping 78 percent and 44 percent year-on-year, respectively, according to Trip.com Group, China's largest online travel agency.

Meanwhile, domestic carriers have launched new flights and added frequencies on some popular routes to cater to the growing travel demand, as the domestic air travel market started its summer and fall flying season on March 30 this year and will last until Oct 25, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

For instance, State-owned China Southern Airlines plans to add more frequencies on routes that connect Beijing Daxing International Airport with Altay, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, and Beijing Daxing with Jiayang, Guangdong province.

In addition, the carrier will



Tourists look at blossoming flowers at a scenic spot in Wuhan, Hubei province, during the Qingming Festival holiday.

YANG HAIYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

launch more international flights to connect cities involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. These include flights that connect Beijing Daxing

with Urumqi, Xinjiang and Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia, as well as Beijing Daxing with Xi'an, Shaanxi province and Doha, Qatar.

BUSINESSFOCUS

Self-driving cars speeding toward market

Chinese automakers plan to roll out new vehicles equipped with Level 3 autonomous driving capabilities this year

By FAN FEIFEI

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The large-scale commercial application of autonomous driving vehicles will likely become a reality sooner than expected, with cutting-edge intelligent driving technology having the potential to revolutionize future urban transportation due to its greater efficiency and declining costs, experts said.

They highlighted that 2025 marks a pivotal member for the commercialization of intelligent connected vehicles fueled by technological innovation and advancements in artificial intelligence, which has emerged as a critical strategic opportunity for the automotive industry.

Heightened efforts are needed to improve the laws and regulations to clarify liabilities about autonomous vehicles and speed up the construction of an intelligent transportation infrastructure, so as to bolster the deployment and popularization of self-driving vehicles and the robust growth of an intelligent driving sector, they added.

Global consultancy McKinsey & Company expects China will become the world's largest market for self-driving vehicles, with revenue from such vehicles and mobility services exceeding \$500 billion by 2030.

The nation has been at the forefront of autonomous driving development and has introduced a series of policies to promote the commercial use of self-driving technology. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said, the country supports the commercial application of Level 3 and above autonomous driving systems.

Autonomous driving is categorized from Level 0 to Level 5. The higher the level, the more intelligent the technology and the lesser the involvement of humans.

Level 3 refers to conditional automation, which allows vehicles to perform autonomous driving tasks under certain conditions. Such vehicles have "environmental detection" capabilities and can make some informed decisions, but are still subject to human override.

Level 4 vehicles can intervene if there is a system failure and do not require human assistance in most circumstances. However, a manual override option is still available.

Chinese technology companies have been striving to advance the technology and accelerate the commercialization of robotaxi services based on L4 autonomy.

Tech heavyweight Baidu Inc has invested heavily in developing self-driving technology. Its autonomous ride-hailing service Apollo Go is currently operational across 11 cities nationwide, while fully driverless robotaxis are running in designated areas of Beijing; Chongqing; Wuhan, Hubei province; and Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

Robin Li, co-founder and CEO of Baidu, said 2025 will be a pivotal



year for Apollo Go's growth and it plans to expand its fleet size and ride volumes. Li said the company is actively seeking partnerships with mobility service providers, local taxi companies and third-party fleet operators to scale up efficiently through an asset-light model.

Apollo Go provided over 1.1 million rides in the fourth quarter of last year, up 36 percent year-on-year. In November 2024, it was granted permits to conduct autonomous driving tests on public roads in Hong Kong, becoming the first and only service in the region authorized for robotaxi testing.

Self-driving company Pony.ai recently became the first company authorized to operate paid fully driverless robotaxis in Shenzhen's Nanshan district, marking a milestone as the city's inaugural permit for paid autonomous ride-hailing services within its city centers.

The company plans to expand the number of its robotaxi fleet to about 1,000 this year, and increase investment in R&D. It has already obtained licenses for fully driverless robotaxi services in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong provinces.

Zhang Ning, vice-president of Pony.ai, said the company will be able to break even in operations when its robotaxi fleet exceeds 1,000 and begins to move toward large-scale commercialization this year. "When we cross over that 1,000-level, the cost of running additional robotaxis will be reduced, while the gross profit margin will be higher," Zhang said.

Pony.ai has established joint ven-



Top: Some 200 driverless cars cross the Third Yangtze River Bridge in Wuhu, Anhui province, on March 18.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Above: A BYD YangWang U7 electric car is on display in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on April 1. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

tures with Japanese carmaker Toyota and its Chinese JV, GAC Toyota, to bolster the commercial operation of robotaxis, and inked strategic partnerships with Chinese automakers such as BAIC and GAC Aion to operate its seventh-generation robotaxi vehicles.

Local government support is critical for promoting the commercial operation of autonomous vehicles. Currently, over 50 cities nationwide have released autonomous driving pilot demonstration policies and stepped up efforts to expand the application scenarios of self-driving technology, laying solid cornerstones for the future operation of driverless vehicles.

In December 2024, Beijing approved new regulations on auton-

omous vehicles, marking significant progress in advancing self-driving technology in the capital. These regulations, which took effect on April 1, encourage and support policies and measures for technological innovation and industrial development of autonomous vehicles.

The guidelines cover areas such as infrastructure planning and construction, on-road traffic management and safety assurance, providing a clear regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles equipped with Level 3 and higher systems.

Wuhan has already implemented regulations to promote the development of intelligent connected vehicles and support the commercial application of self-driving vehi-

cles with Level 3 capabilities.

Moreover, Chinese authorities have selected 20 cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Shenzhen, as participants in a pilot program for the application of "vehicle-road-cloud integration", with aims to link intelligent vehicles with roadside perception and cloud-based control, paving the way for enhanced safety and efficiency in self-driving technology.

Wang Xianjin, vice-president and chief engineer of the China Academy of Transportation Sciences, said the testing and operation of self-driving vehicles have accelerated significantly in China, laying a good foundation for the commercialization of autonomous driving, a tech frontier in which all major economies are scrambling to establish a beachhead.

Wang called for efforts to speed up formulation and revision of policies and regulations concerning the commercial application of self-driving technology, and continuously expand the scale of pilot operations of autonomous vehicles in more scenarios on the premise of ensuring safety and stability of such vehicles.

Meanwhile, a slew of Chinese automakers have announced plans to roll out new vehicles equipped with Level 3 autonomous driving capabilities this year.

He Xiaopeng, chairman and CEO of Chinese EV maker Xpeng Motors, said the company is planning to roll out its Level 3 capabilities in the second half, adding that by 2026 it aims to explore Level 4 capabilities, including fully driverless parking.

A transformative AI era is approaching, and AI will accelerate

the arrival of self-driving vehicles and even driverless vehicles, said He.

He said he believes that this year will be a significant turning point in intelligent driving. With the continuous advancements and breakthroughs in core technologies such as algorithms, sensors and computing platforms, it might be appropriate to bolster the mass production of Level 3 autonomous driving technology, he added.

Chinese automobile manufacturer GAC Group plans to mass produce and sell autonomous vehicles equipped with Level 3 systems in the fourth quarter, and launch more such types of vehicles next year.

It will provide private car buyers with Level 4 self-driving vehicles in 2027. GAC was among the first batch of carmakers obtaining approval from authorities to test Level 3 autonomous vehicles on public roads last year.

Feng Xingya, chairman of GAC Group, said intelligent driving capabilities will be an undeniable trend for the automotive industry. Feng added that autonomous driving serves as the core technology of intelligent connected vehicles and a vital link in intelligent transportation systems.

The advancements in AI technology are becoming the core driving force bolstering the development of intelligent connected vehicles, and the application of AI will help reshape the automotive industry, he added.

Changan Automobile said it hopes to achieve full-scenario Level 3 autonomous driving in 2026, with plans to reach Level 4 capabilities in 2028.

Zhang Xiang, a visiting professor at the engineering department of Huanghe Science and Technology University, said Level 3 autonomous driving vehicles can replace human drivers in certain situations, sense changes in the surrounding environment in real time and make more accurate decisions, further improving the safety of driving.

Zhang noted that the commercialization of autonomous driving is expected to be first realized in specific application scenarios like mines, ports, some designated areas and fixed routes, where traffic conditions are relatively simple. Moreover, along with the technical maturity and mass production of lidar sensors, the costs of intelligent driving systems have fallen significantly.

He said ensuring the safety and stability of self-driving vehicles remains a top priority, adding that more efforts are needed to enhance self-driving testing and application scenarios, continuously optimize algorithms, as well as reduce the manufacturing costs of driverless vehicle components.

Li Xinbo, an automotive industry expert at China Auto Information Technology (Tianjin) Co Ltd, stressed the need to strengthen construction of an intelligent transportation infrastructure, including the 5G-enabled vehicle-to-everything system, which supports the transfer of information from a vehicle to moving parts of the traffic system to improve efficiency.

Unmanned vehicles to boost last-mile delivery efficiency

By FAN FEIFEI

Chinese technology companies are accelerating steps to use autonomous delivery vehicles in the logistics and distribution sector, as part of a broader push to boost efficiency and address challenges from rising labor costs and a shortage of couriers.

Cainiao Group, the logistics arm of Chinese technology heavyweight Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, recently launched its latest Level 4 autonomous vehicles to facilitate parcel deliveries between delivery and pick-up stations on public roads.

The vehicles have significant improvements in terms of appearance, algorithm optimization and interactive experience compared with previous versions. Level 4 autonomy means vehicles can drive themselves in most conditions without a human backup driver.

Cainiao has invested heavily in the research, development and operation of unmanned delivery vehicles since 2016, aiming to boost last-mile delivery efficiency and cut opera-

tional costs for courier stations.

"In the next three to five years, we expect over 200,000 unmanned vehicles to be deployed in the logistics industry, which will further drive technological advancement and cost reduction across the sector," said Li Qiang, chief technology officer of Cainiao, adding that autonomous vehicles have achieved commercialization and large-scale application in the logistics sector.

Li said, Cainiao is optimistic about the unmanned vehicle market and aims to bolster the development and transformation of the logistics industry by leveraging its strengths in intelligent technologies covering artificial intelligence and autonomous driving.

The company has accumulated more than 5 million kilometers of self-driving experience on closed, semi-closed and public roads, delivering over 40 million parcels using autonomous vehicles. Its Level 4 driverless delivery vehicles have been deployed in more than 30 counties and municipal-level regions.

For instance, in Yuhang district of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, a fleet of over 20 Cainiao unmanned vehicles handle last-mile deliveries. This is the largest fleet of its kind at a single station. These vehicles can deliver more than 30 percent of the depot's parcels, with each vehicle handling at least 1,500 packages daily.

JD Logistics, the logistics division of Chinese e-commerce giant JD, said over 600 logistics autonomous vehicles have been put into operation in 30 cities nationwide, covering a wide range of delivery scenarios including communities, shopping centers and office buildings.

Moreover, the Beijing-based company has used drones to reach consumers in some hard-to-reach remote areas for distribution purposes.

The drones can take off automatically from regional delivery stations, follow a predetermined route to villages or rural areas, land at designated drop-off points and present orders directly to customers, thus significantly shortening delivery

time and reducing logistics costs.

Lu Zhenwang, CEO of Shanghai-based Wanqing Consultancy, said compared with traditional practices, unmanned delivery vehicles feature lower delivery costs and greater safety records, and have been deployed in some designated areas and scenarios, considering the limitations of current autonomous driving technologies and complicated traffic situations.

Lu said Chinese tech companies have invested heavily in the intelligent logistics sector, including driverless vehicles, drones and robots, to gain the upper hand amid fierce competition. However, it will still take time for unmanned delivery services to become commercialized on a broad scale, he added.

Mo Daiqing, a senior analyst at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy, said the adoption of autonomous delivery vehicles can potentially reallocate couriers' working time by releasing them from parcel delivery and giving them a chance to spend more time on customer service



An unmanned logistics vehicle shuttles between dormitory buildings to deliver express packages for students at South-Central Minzu University in Wuhan, Hubei province. LI XI / FOR CHINA DAILY

and maintenance of vehicles.

Market consultancy iResearch said, Chinese consumers are increasingly embracing on-demand consumption and purchasing, with fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat and eggs figuring among the most commonly purchased categories.

Dada Group, one of China's largest on-demand delivery and retail platforms, has expanded its

unmanned delivery network in collaboration with JD Logistics and White Rhino, an autonomous delivery vehicle developer.

Its autonomous delivery open system has been adopted by 7Fresh, JD's supermarket chain, Yonghui Superstores and Sam's Club, as the company aims to normalize the scalable use of unmanned delivery vehicles in carrying out on-demand delivery services.

COMMENT

Editorials

Path to prosperity for US and the world lies in cooperation, not confrontation

Turning a deaf ear to the “hands off” cries of protesters not far from his golf course in West Palm Beach, Florida, where he played golf over the weekend, the US president said foreign governments would have to pay “a lot of money” to get tariff relief.

Making the remarks to reporters aboard Air Force One, the US leader said he was not concerned about market losses, which have already wiped out nearly \$6 trillion in value last week since the announcement of the so-called “reciprocal tariffs”.

In a bizarre move to try and help the US to shirk its responsibility for causing the market losses with its coercive tariff policy, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent blamed the stock market plunge on China's DeepSeek large language models in an interview aired on Saturday. “For everyone who thinks these market declines are all based on the president's economic policies, I can tell you that this market decline started with the Chinese AI announcement of DeepSeek,” the US treasury chief disingenuously said.

That comment and the US president's own giveaway about “we have to solve our trade deficit with China” point to why even penguins aren't immune to the United States' aggressive protectionism, as the allure of tariffs and “America First” policies are a siren song to the US president and his administration even as they destabilize markets, push the vulnerable over the financial cliff and alienate allies.

Which is why the US administration is sticking to its tariff guns, seemingly believing that the damage done by its bullying protectionism is worth jeopardizing a system that has long been rigged to favor the prosperity of the US. Whether the tariffs are intended to manipulate interest rates or impose sweeping trade barriers to break industry and supply chains and put the brake on China's development, the current policymaking circle of the incumbent administration is trying to reinforce the “small yards with high fences” approach handed down from its predecessor in a more aggressive way by targeting the rest of the world to get at China.

Yes challenges exist for the US, as they do for other countries. The global economy stands at a crossroad. A new industrial revolution — driven by AI, quantum computing, and green energy — is reshaping competition. At the same time, climate change and other common threats demand collective action. In this context, the zero-sum thinking that prevails in Washington is not just outdated; it is dangerous. As China's leadership has reiterated, the trade issues should be addressed not by shrinking the pie through tariffs or decoupling but by expanding it through dialogue and joint innovation.

Beijing's push to deepen reforms — opening sectors such as finance, biomanufacturing, and green technology — signals its readiness to collaborate. Even US businesses, despite the political headwinds, continue to invest in China, recognizing its driving role in global supply chains and consumer markets. Beijing's commitment to “institutional opening-up” — aligning with international standards in areas such as intellectual property and digital trade — reflects a pragmatic recognition that integration, not isolation, secures long-term growth.

China therefore remains committed to upholding multilateralism and is willing to work with all countries, including the US, to promote free trade and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results in an increasingly open, cooperative and consultative way.

For decades, China-US economic and trade cooperation has been a cornerstone of global prosperity. US companies have invested in China's growth, accessing its vast market and labor resources, while Chinese exports have helped sustain low inflation and consumer demand in the US. The cooperation based on their economies' structural complementarity has created jobs, spurred innovation, and lifted living standards in both nations. The fruits of this partnership — worth trillions of dollars in bilateral trade — must be cherished, not weaponized. This means forging agreements on emerging technologies, coordinating climate investments, and reforming multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization. It means rejecting the false choice between “winning” and “losing” and embracing mutual gains. Tariffs and financial repression are blunt tools. They offer political theater but will ultimately impoverish both nations and the rest of the world.

History offers a clear lesson: From the normalization of diplomatic ties in the 1970s to the economic symbiosis that fueled globalization, cooperation between China and the US has lifted millions out of poverty, driven technological innovation and stabilized global markets. Yet today, as geopolitical tensions rise, the US risks repeating the same mistakes of the past. No matter how emotionally resonant they are, tariffs risk catastrophic fallout. History offers a clear warning in the Smoot-Hawley tariffs of the 1930s, which deepened the Great Depression and fueled global instability.

Hypocrisy of some on Taiwan question laid bare

The G7 foreign ministers and the high representative of the European Union issued a statement on the weekend pointing an accusing finger at China, claiming that the joint exercises around Taiwan island conducted by the Chinese People's Liberation Army last week were “provocative” actions that raised cross-strait tensions.

Their remarks are hypocritical to say the least. They claimed they oppose any unilateral actions that threaten peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait yet it is their unjustifiable support of the separatists on the island that is fueling the rising tensions. The statement itself is proof of their willingness to meddle in the Taiwan question, which is no concern of theirs, being a strictly internal affair of China, as recognized by international law. The historical reality that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China remains immutable, regardless of attempts to distort this truth. Any efforts by the “Taiwan independence” factions or external anti-China elements to alter this actuality will be in vain.

Beijing has repeatedly had to remind the United States and its allies that they are skating on thin ice by skirting with its red line. The persistent provocations of the US and its G7 allies risk inflaming tensions in the region to a perilous extent. The misguided policy of utilizing the island as a geopolitical tool to constrain China is akin to looking for a gas leak in a coal mine by candlelight.

Despite their claim that their stance is against unilateral changes in the Taiwan Strait's status quo, it is the meddling of “Taiwan independence” proponents, bolstered by US interventions through policies and legislative measures, that has significantly destabilized the region.

While the US publicly upholds a one-China policy and claims opposition to “Taiwan independence”, its actions cast doubt on its commitment to these principles. The deliberate ambiguity in US policy, exemplified by the removal of crucial statements on “Taiwan independence” from official platforms, suggests a strategic duplicity in which Taiwan is nothing more than a useful part of the US' geostrategic calculations. This latest statement by the G7 foreign ministers and the high representative of the EU underscores the US' strategic aim of enmeshing its allies in its geopolitical maneuvers in relation to Taiwan, which only further imperils regional tranquility. The PLA's joint exercises last week were meant to be both a stern warning and a strong deterrence to the separatist forces and their foreign backers heedlessly seeking “Taiwan independence”.

Since taking office as the head of the island's Democratic Progressive Party authorities in May last year, Lai Ching-te has chosen to push further along the road of seeking “Taiwan independence” by openly promoting the “two states” lie. It is the diehard secessionist leader of the DPP authorities and his supporters who are recklessly undermining peace across the Taiwan Strait.

Beijing has made its position categorical: It is committed to peaceful reunification but will never give up the option of reunification by force if push comes to shove. No one and no forces can block the historical trend of the eventual reunification of the island with its motherland.

Still, lost in delusions of hegemony and trapped in a Cold War mindset, the US-led “gang of privilege” wants to use Taiwan as a pawn to undermine China's development and progress, and obstruct the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The G7 members and the EU should adhere to the legal obligation that they recognize the one-China principle, abide by their political commitments to China and immediately stop interfering in China's internal affairs over the Taiwan question.

The path to Taiwan's enduring stability and prosperity lies not in trying to ride on the coattails of the US' strategy in pursuit of “Taiwan independence”, but in prioritizing the island's long-term interests with prudence and foresight, and embracing peaceful national reunification.

If the G7 members and the EU are genuinely interested in the preservation of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, they should put an end to their provocative words and deeds, especially their aggressive military posturing that necessitates the PLA showing its capability to respond.

Song Chen



Opinion Line

Quake-hit Myanmar could do with aid much more than tariffs right now

Rescue teams from China, India, and other nations are mobilizing assistance to help quake-hit Myanmar, while the European Union has launched its Humanitarian Air Bridge program, delivering 80 metric tons of emergency supplies. In contrast, the United States Agency for International Development sent a three-member delegation to evaluate the devastation wrought by a magnitude 7.9 earthquake that hit Myanmar on March 28.

If that wasn't dismal enough, according to an April 5 Reuters report, the three USAID personnel received termination notices upon their arrival in Myanmar, following a decision taken during an April 4 all-hands meeting.

Though their formal termination won't take effect until maybe months later, the psychological toll this will have on the people working amid the rubble is immeasurable. As told by former senior USAID official Marcia Wong to Reuters, “This team is working incredibly hard, focused on getting humanitarian aid to those in need. To get news of your imminent termination — how can that not be demoralizing?”

This callous treatment, coupled with Washington's failure to channelize any substantive aid, reveals the US' disturbing indifference to international humanitarian obligations. For the US administration, assisting disaster victims clearly ranks lowest among its priorities.

Soon after the quake that claimed

more than 3,500 lives as of Monday, the US administration had pledged \$9 million in aid; which now remains conspicuously unfulfilled. Instead, the White House has stuck to and prioritized the draconian “reciprocal tariffs” it unleashed last week against over 180 economies, including some of the world's most vulnerable ones.

The policy's cruel irony is most starkly evident in Myanmar's case. At a time when search teams are still recovering bodies there, the US administration has imposed a crushing 44 percent tariff hike.

Worse still, Myanmar is on the UN-designated list of Least Developed Countries together with Cambodia and Laos, which have been slapped even steeper tariff rates of 49 percent and 48 percent respectively.

This punitive approach goes against established economic norms. Modern trade theory emphasizes mutual prosperity through complementary specialization, but the US administration has deliberately inverted this paradigm to follow a 19th century mercantilist worldview that treats developing nations not as partners, but as resources that can be exploited.

The people of Myanmar are in immediate need of health personnel and equipment, shelter and clean water systems, reconstruction funding and debt relief, and technical assistance for infrastructure repair. Instead, what it has received from the US is punitive tariffs and can-

celed aid programs. This dissonance between stated “American values” and actual policy reveals profound institutional hypocrisy.

The human cost of this regressive agenda is painfully clear in Myanmar today. While survivors dig through rubble with their bare hands, awaiting clean water and medical supplies, there are additional economic burdens to be borne. More than US policy failure, this amounts to moral abdication.

Geopolitical analysts recognize deeper stratagems at work. The tariff onslaught functions as a crude compliance mechanism, testing Southeast Asian nations' willingness to submit to Washington's economic and security dictates. This heavy-handed approach, reminiscent of colonial-era gunboat diplomacy, has no place in 21st century international relations.

The Myanmar earthquake is but only one of the challenges facing mankind today, besides which there is climate change and global instability. Employing a zero-sum game mentality while tackling these issues will only leave all nations poorer and less secure.

For now, the people of Myanmar continue their desperate struggle for survival. Their resilience deserves more than empty rhetoric and economic punishment. They have every right to expect substantive assistance from the international community, the US included.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Japan cannot have its cake and eat it

After Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi wrapped up a fruitful visit to Tokyo last month there was optimism that the two neighbors were on course to mend their relations.

Yet those anticipating it would be plain sailing will have to think again after what happened in the waters near China's Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea on the weekend.

After unlawfully entering into the territorial waters of the Chinese islands, a Japanese fishing vessel had to be forced to leave by the China Coast Guard, which took the necessary control measures in accordance with the law.

Emphasizing that the Diaoyu Islands are China's territory, CCG spokesperson Liu Dejun urged the Japanese side to immediately cease all illegal activities in these waters.

This marks the first major confrontation between the two countries over the Diaoyu Islands since China removed its buoy from the waters near the islands in February. Although the removal of the buoy that had been deployed for hydrometeorology observation was said to be “technical readjustment” as it had completed its task, it was widely seen as a show of China's goodwill to Japan and its willingness to ease the tensions.

With its resolute response to the Japanese side's latest provocative intrusion into its waters, Beijing has made it clear to Tokyo although it is

willing to work with the Japanese side to promote the healthy development of bilateral ties, it will never do so at the cost of China's core interests.

As a matter of fact, by showing that it is sticking to its previous stance on the Diaoyu Islands and the Taiwan question, the Japanese side has shown some worrying signs that it is actively responding to the bidding of visiting US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth late last month that Japan should enhance its cooperation with the United States to counter the “threats” from China.

In other words, the Shigeru Ishiba government is being pressured by the US and the ultraright forces at home to adopt a tough stance toward China at a time when there is an increasingly pressing need to revitalize the Japanese economy and cushion the impacts of the US' tariff war by resuming economic and trade cooperation with China.

That it can do both at the same time is only a wishful thinking. China will by no means tolerate a double-faced trading partner that feels no qualms about harming its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Ishiba government is well aware that it has no wriggle room over the Diaoyu Islands issue or the Taiwan question. China's sovereignty over both is a historical fact and clearly recorded in binding postwar documents, according to which these

islands that had been seized by the Japanese should have been returned to China.

The major reason they were not is that the US wanted to provide itself with leverage to drive a wedge between China and Japan to contain China's development.

The US, which occupied Japan after the war, arbitrarily included the Diaoyu Islands under its trusteeship in the 1950s and “returned” the “power of administration” of the Chinese islands to Japan in the 1970s. The backroom deals between the US and Japan concerning the Diaoyu Islands were illegal and invalid, and do not change the fact that the islands belong to China.

By warmly echoing Hegseth's smearing of China's justified moves to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity as “threatening”, “intimidating” and “coercive” during the US defense chief's visit, Tokyo has shown that it has never truly heeded its historical lessons.

As Beijing has stressed, correctly understanding and remedying its past misdeeds is an important prerequisite for Japan's postwar return to the international community, the political foundation for Japan to develop relations with its neighbors, and an important criterion for testing whether Japan can abide by its commitment to peaceful development.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

He Maochun and Xu Mingzhen

World requires fairer trade order, now

In this age of trade wars, tariffs and geopolitical posturing, the global economy seems to have become a chessboard, and the US and China the grandmasters. But with the pieces shifting and power play unfolding, one thing has become glaringly obvious: the old rules can no longer govern the game.

On April 2, US President Donald Trump announced sweeping tariffs, starting with a 10 percent baseline, on about 60 trade partners. The rates were even higher for several countries, including 34 percent on China.

The reality is that the US tariff war is here to stay. As such the issue isn't only about China; it's about the future of the entire global trade system.

Since 2016, the US has been acting as the WTO's troublesome big brother. It has vetoed WTO decisions, ignored its rulings, and even threatened to withdraw from the international trade body. The US has dealt the most devastating blow to the WTO by blocking appointment to its appellate body which handles trade disputes between member states, effectively paralyzing the system designed to keep global trade fair and transparent. If the world's largest economy can't even abide by its own trade agreements, what hope is there for global stability?

The issue has become a structural clash between the Washington Consensus — essentially the old world order — and the demands of a rapidly shifting global economy. It is therefore clear that the rules of global trade as we know them have been broken.

If there's one thing the world can agree on, it's that digital trade is here to stay. Yet as we move toward a digital-first global economy, the rules governing it are in disarray, and the US and China have become heavyweight players with different visions for the future.

While China advocates easing market access restrictions and promoting digital trade facilitation (without compromising consumer protection), the US is keen to continue its digital dominance by using domestic regulations and establishing high-standard data protection rules. It's a battle for control over data, markets and, ultimately, global leadership in the digital age. The US has even tried to lock China out through the so-called "poison pill" clause in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement that emphasizes data freedom and strong intellectual property

As the world's largest trading nation and second-largest economy, China's proposal is a road map for building a fairer and more equitable global trade order.

rights protection.

The US wants to dictate the rules, while China is calling for a more balanced approach to the rules, including listening to the voices of emerging economies.

Equally important, China continues to push for "cyber sovereignty" by championing data localization and cross-border regulatory cooperation.

However, the US accuses China of distorting the markets with its subsidies to

key industries, especially the semiconductor industry, while conveniently ignoring the massive amounts of subsidy it pays to the semiconductor industry through initiatives like the CHIPS Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. Double standards, anyone?

Thus the issue is not just about trade policy; it's about a high-stakes, strategic race for global technological dominance.

Over the past decade, global trade has undergone a seismic shift. The share of developing countries in global trade is growing. Yet a few Western countries continue to hold the decision-making powers.

While the US is busy rewriting the rulebook for its own benefit, China is calling for the reform of the global trade governance system, not only for its own benefit but also for the benefit of the entire developing world.

In fact, China has worked with India, South Africa and other countries to push for a "development-oriented digital agen-

da", and oppose the forced bundling of cross-border data flow with market access. In agriculture, China advocates for differentiating between small farmer subsidies, which help ensure their survival, and the massive support the developed countries provide for their agriculture sectors that distorts trade.

China's proposal is not to upend the system. It's about making it work better and balancing fairness with efficiency, openness with sovereignty, and growth with sustainability.

As the world's largest trading nation and second-largest economy, China's proposal is a road map for building a fairer and more equitable global trade order. China's reform proposal focuses on three core areas: strengthening special and differential treatment for developing nations, particularly by integrating technology capacity building into the rules; promoting inclusive digital trade rules that respect data sovereignty; and establishing a "development exception" mechanism in industrial policy, recognizing every country's right to choose its own path to industrialization.

China has already put these ideas into practice through initiatives such as the South-South technology cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, the BRICS New Development Bank's support for green infrastructure.

These are all examples of how a development-oriented rule system can help address global challenges such as climate change and debt crises while alleviating North-South tensions.

What China is offering is a vision of global governance that is more inclusive, sustainable and fair. It's a vision that will prompt the developed world to listen to the voices of developing nations and help shape the future.

As the world navigates this new era of trade and economic relations, China has provided a framework for cooperation, not competition — a blueprint that the world needs to build a more equitable global economy.

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LIMIN / CHINA DAILY

Digby James Wren

Australia needs China amid global tariff tensions

The 2025 Australian federal election occurs at a pivotal moment, as the country navigates the complexities of global alliances, economic resilience and domestic priorities. Amid escalating US-China tensions, resurgent protectionism, and climate crises, the election is sure to shape Australia's geopolitical alignment and policy trajectory.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's Labor Party government faces scrutiny over trade disputes and cost-of-living pressures, while opposition leader Peter Dutton's Coalition positions itself as a defender of economic security. Moreover, Australia's economic interdependence with China looms large, testing the political parties' strategies to ensure economic growth and improve the deteriorating living standards.

The reimposition of US tariffs on Australian steel and aluminium in 2024 has strained Canberra-Washington relations. After US President Donald Trump declared a US economic emergency and announced tariffs of at least 10 percent for all countries on April 2, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said that the decision to impose a 10 percent tariff on its ally was "not the act of a friend", but ruled out reciprocal tariffs against the US. In comments outside the White House, Trump singled out Australian beef, which saw a surge in exports to the United States last year, reaching A\$4 billion amid a slump in US beef production.

The US' move underscored the fragility of traditional alliances especially in light of Donald Trump's transactional approach during his first term as US president.

Dutton has claimed he could "change the (US) president's mind" if elected, but analysts have dismissed it as unrealistic. "If we couldn't secure an exemption for steel, what's next?" said political analyst Patricia Gellis.

Australia's attempt to leverage critical minerals such as lithium as bargaining chips faltered. Australian Resources Minister Madeleine King lamented, "We offered lithium and rare earths, but the US said we weren't offering anything new." Trade Minister Don Farrell framed



Whether through Labor's pragmatism, the Coalition's nationalism, or the Greens' idealism, the election result will shape Australia's pursuit of economic resilience in an era of major-power rivalry.

the dispute pragmatically: "Tariffs on Aussie beef will spike Big Mac prices. That's how you get Trump's attention."

Equally important, China's role as Australia's largest trading partner — accounting for 30 percent of exports which include iron ore, coal and education services — remains a linchpin of economic stability. Economic analyst John K has warned that, "Global market selloffs from Trump's trade wars hurt Australia more than direct tariffs. We're caught in a US-China crossfire."

The AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom-United States) pact remains contentious, with Greens leader Adam Bandt labeling it a "Trump-shaped target on Australia's back". Bandt criticized the \$368 billion submarine deal as "outsourcing defense to a volatile US", advocating instead for climate resilience and cyber defense investments.

However, Albanese defended AUKUS, saying it is "the bedrock of regional security". And Dutton claimed it is essential to deter Chinese aggression, asserting, "Without these submarines, we're defenceless."

Amid all this, internal dissent has emerged within the Labor Party, with former senator Doug Cameron asking why Australia should fund US naval pro-

jects while facing tariffs. The debate reflects broader tensions over balancing security ties with the US and economic benefits of trade with China. The debate prompted political analyst John Paul Jany to warn that, "Relying on Trump to defend Taiwan is a gamble. AUKUS exposes our dependence, but alienating China risks economic fallout."

Australia's economy remains deeply intertwined with China's, which absorbs 80 percent of its iron ore exports and sustains critical sectors such as education and tourism. Despite political friction over security concerns, bilateral trade hit A\$300 billion (US\$188.79 billion) in 2023. In fact, Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers has acknowledged that, "We can't decouple (with China) overnight. Diversification is a decade-long project."

However, vulnerabilities persist. China's 2020 trade sanctions on barley, wine and coal highlighted the risks of following the US to launch trade attacks against China.

As for the election, rising energy prices (forecast to increase by 9 percent in Australia's eastern states) dominate voter concerns. While the Greens push for renewables, China's advanced tech and manufacturing prowess in solar panel, electric vehicle and battery supply chains underpins Australia's green transition. However, Australian Energy Minister Chris Bowen has emphasized the importance of strengthening local manufacturing: "We need sovereign capabilities, not just Chinese imports."

In the education and tourism fields, Chinese students and tourists contributed about A\$40 billion a year to the Australian economy before the COVID-19 pandemic, but geopolitical tensions and slower visa approvals have hampered the recovery of the two sectors, which led to Universities Australia CEO Catriona Jackson warning, "We're losing market share to Canada and the UK. This isn't just about revenue — it's about soft power."

Albanese's Labor Party focuses on providing cost-of-living relief (energy rebates, childcare subsidies) for the people and taking climate action (43 percent emissions reduction by 2030). Labor's slogan,

"Steady Leadership in Uncertain Times", is aimed at reassuring voters of the ruling party's commitment to improving the overall situation amid rising US-China tensions.

On the other hand, Dutton's Coalition platform blends tax cuts, nuclear energy advocacy and hawkish rhetoric on China. The slogan, "Back to Basics: Economy and Security", targets regional voters reliant on mining exports to China, while promising to "stand up to Beijing" on security. Critics argue the Coalition's stance is contradictory, with Patricia Gellis saying: "You can't threaten sanctions on China while begging them to buy your iron ore."

Moreover, the Greens advocate reducing trade dependence on China through localized manufacturing and promoting renewables, while Teal independents are pushing for transparency in foreign investments. But both groups face scrutiny over the feasibility of decoupling.

The 2025 Australian election transcends party politics, serving as a referendum on Australia's economic strategy in a fragmented world. Albanese's critique of US tariffs and Dutton's "Trump-proof Australia" mantra underscore the precariousness of alliances, while economic benefits from trade ties with China remain an inescapable reality, providing both stability and growth opportunities.

Domestically, urgent investments are required to boost Australia's energy transition and education diversification. Externally, AUKUS and trade tensions are testing Australia's ability to balance sovereignty with interdependence. As John K said, "The world watches as Australia redefines its place." Whether through Labor's pragmatism, the Coalition's nationalism, or the Greens' idealism, the election result will shape Australia's pursuit of economic resilience in an era of major-power rivalry.

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Kang Bing

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A 'time bank' system can ease burden of eldercare

My wife and I stayed at a German friend's home in Karlsruhe several years ago. Our friend was in his late 70s and bed-ridden due to thrombosis, and therefore needed attentive care. During our weeklong stay, we noticed that each day between four to five visitors would come to help him take a shower and shave, feed him, massage his limbs or do the necessary exercise with the support of equipment.

In a country where labor is costly, it could cost the family a fortune to hire so many helping hands. "They are paid either by the medical insurance company or the 'time bank,'" his wife told us.

The time bank concept is said to have been proposed by a Japanese scholar nearly a century ago. The time bank model allows people who are young and capable to "deposit time in hours" in a virtual bank by providing voluntary services for community members, and use their "time deposit" when they grow old and need help.

This mutual-help model has been welcomed by elderly people in countries with fast increasing aging populations. A few dozen countries have set up time banks. Some Chinese communities, too, have introduced the model on a trial basis.

Some communities have installed emergency call buttons on the bedside tables of the elderly people so that those in need can get timely help.

By the end of 2024, there were over 310 million Chinese people aged above 60, making up 22 percent of the country's population. With eldercare becoming a big challenge for the Chinese society, the country has accorded the issue due priority on its working agenda. For instance, the government recently released a guideline to develop a solid service system for the elderly people by 2029.

Since it's not possible to accommodate all the elderly people in nursing homes, the government is developing a home-based care system, which allows community committees to set up day-care centers for the elderly people. The committees are also allowed to establish special bodies to provide necessary services for the elderly people who prefer living in their own home. The services range from sending meals and massaging to chatting with them and cleaning the rooms.

Some communities have installed emergency call buttons on the bedside tables of the elderly people so that those in need can get timely help. It's the community committees that pay for all these services.

When the government says it will put in place "a solid service system for the elderly people" in four years, I guess it means it will invest more to build more day-care centers, better organize and supervise the special service-providing bodies, and ensure that such services are accessible to all the people who need them.

As a retired man but in a relatively good physical condition, I am grateful to the government for its efforts. However, I would suggest that the departments involved seriously consider introducing the time bank system because it can supplement the already available eldercare services.

Many women in China still retire at the age of 50 and men at 60. Since many of them are still relatively healthy, they join square dancing and chorus singing groups and regularly meet with friends in community parks to play chess or cards. Such people can be incorporated into a time bank system, which will increase their sense of belonging as they extend help to others and "deposit time" that one day they can use to make their life better. Many people have special skills and, thanks to their rich experience, can provide company for ailing or bed-ridden elderly people.

The establishment of thousands of community committees should enable China to operate a large time bank system and mobilize millions of helping hands in the eldercare service system.

I will be more than happy to join the time bank and help those in need for my as well as the country's benefit.

GLOBAL VIEWS

DJOMART OTORBAEV

'Reciprocal tariffs' harmful to all

US scattergun assault might instigate trade wars and lead to a worldwide recession

The Donald Trump administration's tariff attacks on numerous US trading partners are likely to trigger a full-scale global trade war that threatens to increase inflation and plunge the global economy into recession.

Beijing promptly condemned the United States' attack and urged other countries to safeguard free global trade. On April 4, China's Finance Ministry announced it would impose additional retaliatory tariffs at the tit-for-tat rate of 34 percent on all US imports to China.

China has been the primary target of the Trump administration's tariff wrath because it is the leading exporter of goods to and leading economic competitor of the US. The US has a significant trade deficit with China, and the Trump administration waged a trade war against it during his first term as president. The initial trade war did not yield much success, and the new administration initiated a second one as soon as Trump returned to the White House in January. The new Trump administration has introduced new tariffs, and after the additional ones were announced on April 2, the total tax on imported Chinese goods to the US increased to 54 percent.

Furthermore, the Trump administration has scheduled another blow to Chinese goods for May 2. From this date, the Trump administration will eliminate the exemption for online stores, which allowed them to send parcels to the US valued under \$800 without taxes and customs checks. In the previous year alone, US citizens received nearly 1.4 billion such shipments. The cancellation of this concession will primarily impact Chinese

retailers, such as Shein and Temu.

It is anticipated that in the coming days, numerous countries will announce their own retaliatory measures, imposing tariffs on US goods.

President Trump has defended the imposition of tariffs. For instance, he previously said that the European Union was established to "cheat" the US. Therefore, it is not surprising that on April 2, the list of "worst trading partners" also included European countries.

It is not entirely clear who from the US economic team made the presented calculations, as many of the figures provided do not align with reality. For example, the Trump administration believes that the EU imposes a 39 percent tariff on US goods. In fact, more than 70 percent of imports to the EU are exempt from duty. According to the World Trade Organization, on a trade-weighted basis, EU tariffs average only 2.7 percent.

The sweeping sanctions announced on April 2 immediately triggered significant unrest in global markets and elicited condemna-



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tion from many nations. The decades of free trade that have shaped the current international order may be nearing their end. Consequently, global stock markets continued to decline, with S&P 500 companies collectively losing a total of \$5 trillion in market value over two days.

Investment bank JP Morgan now estimates a 60 percent likelihood that the global economy will enter recession by the end of the year, an increase from its previous estimate of 40 percent.

By its economic definition, a tariff is an internal tax levied on goods imported into a country based on their value. Notably, the cost of this tariff is ultimately incurred by the domestic company that imports the goods rather than the foreign company that exports them. Therefore, a tariff is a direct tax that domestic companies pay the government. Higher tariffs can be passed on to the final consumer or the importing company, leading to increased product prices or

reduced profits for importers.

It is essential to note that these tariff increases will affect the prices of goods and the costs of imported materials used in the production of other goods manufactured in the US. Consequently, the higher prices for goods and materials will eventually affect consumers.

The impact of these tariffs will be particularly significant for low-income households, which typically allocate a substantial portion of their income to affordable goods from China, such as household items and electronics. Many other professional studies have found similar results.

It is no surprise, then, that the tariff hikes have been implemented against the wishes of most people in the US. Recent polls indicate that the tariffs are widely unpopular, with support for them at a four-year low. Only 28 percent of respondents in a survey released on April 2 by Marquette University Law School believed the tariffs would benefit the economy.

The Trump administration's coercive reasons for implementing the tariffs are to limit the access of goods and services produced outside the country to the US market, thus assisting domestic companies in obtaining a larger share of the domestic market and incentivizing competitive foreign enterprises to establish themselves in the US.

When deciding to relocate their production to the US, foreign companies initially assess the productivity of labor in US enterprises compared to other jurisdictions. Here, a challenge arises regarding both the quality of management personnel and the workforce, as well as the levels of compensation that must be maintained.

One of the key factors contributing to the lack of competitiveness in the US economy is the high cost of labor. For example, in a recent ranking, the US ranked second overall in labor costs, only behind Switzerland. This is the primary reason why many companies are reluctant to establish production facilities in the US and why it will be extremely challenging to attract companies to the US.

The Trump administration's arbitrary actions have plunged the entire world into an unprecedented trade war, characterized by its enormous size and scope. This situation will not benefit any citizen of any country, particularly the US, which will endure the most significant economic and reputational losses.

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CAI CUIHONG AND WANG BIYE

Leading the tech revolution

Beijing can play an active role in global tech governance and champion a fair, open and sustainable international cooperation framework

China's rapid rise has intensified the relative decline of US hegemony. During the fourth industrial revolution, technology has become a critical factor in the global balance of power. Ever since Washington reinitiated its strategic competition with

Beijing in 2017, technology has emerged as the frontline of confrontation. The United States has shifted its tech policy toward China from limited engagement to outright suppression, steadily escalating toward what increasingly resembles a full-fledged tech war. The US' tech war with China stems from both the shifting balance

of power in the world order and the accelerating role of technology in reshaping that balance. As the fourth industrial revolution advances at breakneck speed, Washington's tech war against Beijing is taking on new characteristics.

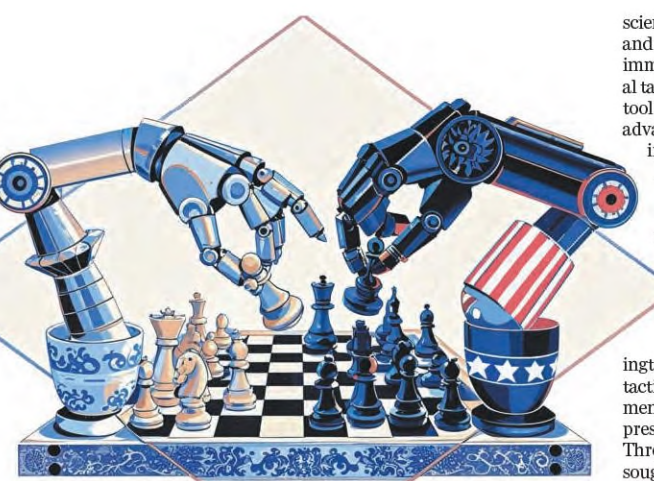
First, the scope of technological competition has expanded beyond cutting-edge technologies to encompass applied research and development. Both the first Donald Trump administration and the Joe Biden administration outlined their strategic priorities through the National Standards Strategy for Critical and Emerging Technology.

Initially proposed in 2020 in Trump's first term, this strategy identified key technologies deemed essential to US military, intelligence and economic security. The list was updated in 2022 and again in 2024, refining Washington's focus on technologies closely tied to China's rapid advancements. On the one hand, the US has adopted a broad competitive framework, prioritizing high-level technologies while reinforcing its position in mid-level and foundational tech sectors. On the other hand, unlike Report to the President by Vannevar Bush in 1945 "Science: The Endless Frontier"

that emphasized basic research, Washington's current approach places greater weight on applied technologies and their industrial applications. The focus of US tech policy has shifted toward high-end manufacturing while targeting strategic and productivity-enhancing service industries.

Second, the pursuit of national security has become the dominant underlying logic of the technological competition. From Washington's perspective, China's rapid technological progress threatens US dominance and national security. As the power gap between the two nations narrows, Washington's competition strategy has led to the increasing overstretching of security concepts in sci-tech development. On the one hand, Washington views China's strategy of military-civil fusion as an aggressive pursuit of technological, economic and military supremacy. On the other hand, the US perceives the nexus between the economy and technology primarily through the prism of security, thereby recasting US-China tech competition as a security threat rather than a market-driven contest. As a result, market dynamics have been subordinated to national security considerations. Under the pretext of protecting national security, Washington has sought to constrict the application space for Chinese technological advancements and limit market access for Chinese tech products. Administrative measures have even been used to push Chinese companies out of market competition.

Third, the core of the competition has shifted from a narrow emphasis on technological supremacy to a broader contest that includes the capacity to shape global technological norms and stan-



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dards. Since the end of the Cold War, control over international rule-making has become a central feature of strategic competition among major powers. In the digital era, this has evolved into a battle over setting global technology standards. Standard-setting is crucial because first-mover advantages allow dominant players to capture market share early, lock in technological pathways for competitors, and set up technical barriers to entry. As standards expand in scope and conversion costs rise, network effects and economies of scale reinforce the advantage of standard-setters, enabling a winner-takes-all outcome. To maintain the US' lead, Washington has increasingly intervened in global standardization bodies. However, inconsistent enforcement of global technology regulations and diverging national

interests on issues such as cross-border data flows, privacy, tech ethics and security risks have fueled mutual recriminations, intensifying the ideological divide in US-China tech competition.

As technology becomes a central battleground in the US-China strategic competition, Washington has combined its defensive and offensive strategies.

On the defensive front, Washington has focused on integrating policies, talent, and infrastructure to strengthen the US' technological innovation ecosystem and reinforce its competitive edge. Strategically, Washington has taken a government-led approach to tech policy, refining its national innovation system through industrial policies, legislative measures and regulatory safeguards. On talent, Washington has sought to boost education in

science, technology, engineering and mathematics while leveraging immigration policies to attract global talent, using naturalization as a tool to erode other nations' talent advantages. In terms of fiscal and industrial policies, Washington has increased funding for basic and applied research while offering targeted tax incentives to offset market shortfalls in long-term high-risk technology investments, facilitating the localization of advanced industries.

On the offensive front, Washington has implemented four major tactics — attrition, denial, punishment and risk escalation — to suppress China's technological rise. Through attrition, Washington sought to degrade China's access to global research collaboration and venture capital, weakening its capacity for tech R&D and industrialization. Denial has involved the systematic tightening of export controls to cut off China's access to critical technologies. This has been institutionalized through mechanisms such as the Entity List, the Unverified List and the Military End User List. Punishment has come in the form of market blockades, directly constraining the commercialization of Chinese technological breakthroughs and forcing Chinese companies out of global competition. Meanwhile, risk escalation has been used to internationalize Washington's unilateral tech war against China by forming technology alliances with major tech powers in an attempt to isolate China.

The new Trump administration is expected to escalate the US-China tech war even further, reinforcing both its defensive and offensive measures to preserve the US' technological hegemony. On the defensive side, the Trump administration

is likely to intensify domestic manufacturing incentives, expand research investments, and aggressively recruit top-tier global talent to shore up its competitive position. On the offensive side, it is expected to ramp up export controls, tighten market restrictions, escalate standards-based competition, and deepen technology alliances. As the administration doubles down on this hegemonic approach, the escalating tech war will not only deepen US-China tech decoupling but also disrupt global supply chains and hinder international scientific collaboration.

Faced with Washington's increasingly aggressive tech war, Beijing must enhance self-reliance in key technology sectors and secure strategic and comparative advantages in selected fields. Strengthening the governance of China's tech ecosystem and enhancing national security awareness will be critical to ensuring the independence and safety of the country's technological development. At the same time, China must continue to embrace globalization while carefully managing the systemic risks associated with full-scale decoupling from the US. A long-term strategy for tech stability should prioritize sustained industrial growth while mitigating geopolitical shocks. More importantly, Beijing must remain steadfast in its commitment to multilateralism, playing an active role in global technology governance and championing a fair, open and sustainable international tech cooperation framework. By pursuing these strategies, China can maximize the role of technology in improving public well-being, fostering global development, and leading the way for the healthy development of global tech revolution.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



Above and right: A bird's eye view of the Siwa site in Lintao county, Gansu province, and an illustration shows the three-layered moat system at the site. **Top left:** A tomb in a house foundation in the area encircled by the moats. **Top right:** An excavation area in a corner of the region encircled by the moats. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

When Italian President Sergio Mattarella had his state visit to China in November, he was invited by President Xi Jinping to appreciate some precious Chinese cultural relics that were put on display at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

These artifacts, which were illegally exported and seized in Italy, were returned from the European country to China in a gesture of international cooperation on cultural heritage protection. Eight painted pottery vessels were the highlights on that occasion. Their origins were traced to the Majiayao culture, a Neolithic archaeological culture in the upper reaches of the Yellow River dating back 4,000 to 5,000 years.

Widely believed to be a peak of prehistoric painted pottery art, the culture is marked by various pottery types decorated with intricate and exquisite patterns. Majiayao culture was first discovered in 1924. Even after a century of research, people still only had a rough understanding of its time and scope. Without evidence of any large-scale settlement, researchers did not know much about its residential form, or means of livelihood and social structure. This major stride was filled by archaeological efforts on the Siwa site in Lintao county, Northwest China's Gansu province from 2018 to 2024.

Located in the transitional zone between the Loess Plateau and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the site is on a flat platform in front of the Jiulong Mountain, with the Taohe River, a branch of the Yellow River in its upper reaches, flowing by.

Guo Zhiwei, a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, leads the archaeological team at Siwa. He says they discovered a high-level, probably central settlement of Majiayao culture in the north of the site. Inside the settlement there is a triple-layered moat system, nearly 100 residential foundations, many crypts and pits where ancient people dumped garbage and several tombs, spanning the early and middle stages of Majiayao culture.

Archaeologists had long hoped to find the central settlement of Majiayao culture in nearby sites but failed. "Finally, our dream comes true, marking a significant step to further unveil the culture," Guo says.

To their delight, they found an intricate moat system from the settlement, which has three layers parallel

with each other. They encircle a nearly square area covering almost 300,000 square meters. All are 8 to 9 meters away from each other, having a width of 9 to 10 meters.

After excavations on the three moats, archaeologists found the inner one has obvious differences from the other two, since it has much richer remaining evidence of habitation, including house foundations, pits and pottery kilns. The number of animal bones unearthed from this moat is also much more than the other two.

"Considering their time, layout and unearthed relics, we believe the three moats probably existed and functioned during the same time, but were different in their usage. The outer two were for defense and water drainage, but the inner one was a ditch-like production and living area," says Guo.

"The moat system was a major project accomplished after careful plan and measurement. It was mainly used during the early stage of

Majiayao culture, about 5,000 years ago as the country's earliest known multi-rectangular moat structure and may be a prototype of oblong (or square) cities (that appeared often in later dynasties)."

In the area encircled by the moats, they found multiple pottery-making areas and kilns and a large number of tools and semi-manufactured vessels. Moreover, stone-artifact processing workshops and sets of stone semi-manufactured goods were also found.

"Because pottery-making was of a large scale and spanned several hundred years, the artifacts show advanced skills, and the Taohe River Basin has been known as an area with the best painted pottery-making techniques, we believe the settlement was probably a regional pottery production center," says Guo.

Plant remains and animal bone analyses show ancient people at the site had millet and raised livestock, but the animal husbandry was not very mature. Based on the findings,

Guo says with limited agricultural resources and immature animal husbandry, handicraft production may have played a major role in the economy of Majiayao society, also driving it to a high level of development.

Focusing on the key period from 4,000 to 5,000 years ago in tracing the origins of Chinese civilization, archaeologists have made key discoveries in the lower and middle reaches of the Yangtze River and lower reaches of the Yellow River.

But the situation on the upper reaches of the Yellow River long remained unclear. As the Majiayao culture mainly spread in this region and was from that period, it may fill in that blank, Guo says.

Previous findings in the Neolithic sites of eastern area of China showed that they had rich agricultural resources, a strong religious atmosphere and obvious differences in social status.

"Compared to them, in the upper reaches of the Yellow River, ancient people also had agriculture as the

basis, but paid more attention to handicrafts and trade. They didn't have that strong religious atmosphere, nor obvious social or wealth differentiation, but civilization here also developed to a high level," says Guo.

Majiayao culture has been known as an extension of the Yangshao culture, a key Neolithic culture dating back 4,600 to 7,000 years across the northern part of China, as the result of its northwestern spread. Majiayao continued to extend its influence to various directions including the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and Sichuan Basin. Very similar painted pottery vessels have been found from Qujialing site in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River and Jiaojia site in East China's Shandong province.

"Going northwest, it could enter the Hexi Corridor (the main artery of the ancient Silk Road in Gansu) and communicate with culture from Central and West Asia. Therefore, during prehistoric times, the area Majiayao culture located was at the forefront of

early civilizational communication," he adds.

Similar pottery vessels have also been found from West and Central Asian sites, urging archaeologists to consider if there was an ancient "painted pottery road" that was a predecessor of the ancient Silk Road linking people on the Eurasian continent through pottery trade. "Majiayao culture was among the earliest to engage in cultural exchanges with Central Asia and other regions," says Han Jianye, an archaeology professor at Renmin University of China in Beijing.

He says: "We can say the development and growth of it laid the cultural foundation for China's western frontier area in the prehistoric era, paving the way for early cultural exchanges between the East and the West through the 'painted pottery road'. Therefore, Majiayao culture occupies a significant historical position in the early development of Chinese civilization."

Another highlight from recent studies is the find of a large-scale settlement from the middle period of the Majiayao culture, described by archaeologists as Banshan type.

Researchers had rarely discovered residential foundations of the Banshan type except for findings made by late archaeologist Yan Wenming in 1963 in Lanzhou, the provincial capital of Gansu. The newly-discovered Banshan settlement is expected to provide more materials for cultural communication, especially the introduction of metallurgy, sheep, cattle, barley and wheat to China.

Guo says these are widely believed to have originated from West Asia. From sites of early stage of the Qijia culture, a Neolithic culture in the upper reaches of the Yellow River — with its earliest period approximately contemporaneous with the late period of Majiayao culture — a large amount of such "exotica" has been discovered. Therefore, archaeologists guess during the middle Majiayao cultural period, such things may also be found, shedding light on their early travel to China.

"The latest discoveries demonstrate Siwa site was a large central settlement site of the Majiayao culture. ... They tell us the developed painted pottery handicraft, foreign trade and exchanges were probably key reasons why Majiayao culture could spread to and influence so many areas," Han says.

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On the trail of Majiayao

Discovery of large-scale settlement at Siwa site, in Gansu province, provides intriguing evidence of advanced society, **Wang Ru** and **Wang Kaihao** report.



The diverse pottery vessels found from recent archaeological efforts at the site.

Painted pottery provide glimpses of sophisticated civilization

By GUO ZHIWEI

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences announced in February six "New Archaeological Discoveries in China in 2024", of which the Majiayao culture settlement at the Siwa site in Lintao county, Gansu province, stood out.

The site offered up compelling evidence of the settlement's sophisticated planning, cultural richness, and advanced level of civilization. The settlement features three massive parallel rectangular moats with right-angle turns, forming an enclosed area of nearly 300,000 square meters. Constructed and primarily utilized around 5,000 years ago, this represents the earliest known multi-rectangular moat structure in China.

The pottery unearthed at the site, particularly the breathtaking painted ceramics, commands special attention. Adorned with graceful curves, dynamic water ripples, swimming fish, soaring birds, and lifelike faces, these vessels resemble vivid paintings glowing with artistic brilliance.

Majiayao painted pottery reached unparalleled heights in material selection, elegant forms, ingenious designs, resplendent decorations, and exquisite firing techniques, standing as the pinnacle of prehistoric Chinese painted pottery and representing the culmination of Neolithic ceramic art. These artifacts vividly recount the glorious achievements of the Majiayao people who thrived 5,000 years ago along the upper

Yellow River's Loess Plateau, navigating between the river's currents and the yellow earth.

Archaeological evidence reveals that the Majiayao communities, rooted in agricultural production while emphasizing handicrafts and commerce, distinguished themselves through specialized painted pottery production and trade networks.

Originating from the Yangshao cultural tradition, they expanded northward and southward during their development, nurturing various archaeological cultures in western China while pioneering early East-West communication corridors, thus emerging as pioneers of prehistoric social development in the upper Yellow River region.

The extraordinary accomplishments of Majiayao culture not only demonstrate the advanced social organization and civilizational maturity of China's western highland communities but also enrich the "diverse-yet-integrated" paradigm explaining the origins of Chinese civilization. These findings provide concrete evidence of Chinese civilization's profound depth and enduring continuity.

Interestingly, the glory of painted pottery craftsmanship was not exclusive to the Majiayao culture at the eastern end of Eurasia. Simultaneously, the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture spanning the northwestern Black Sea coast achieved comparable sophistication in ceramic art, representing



Guo Zhiwei during excavations at the Dobrovat site in Romania, in 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the zenith of prehistoric cultural development in that region.

Dating to the same period as the Miaodigou phase of Yangshao culture and the Majiayao culture, the stylistic similarities between their painted pottery had already drawn attention during Johan Gunnar Andersson's excavation of Yangshao sites over a century ago. While extensive archaeological evidence over the past 100 years has confirmed the indigenous origin and westward expansion of painted pottery traditions along China's Yellow River basin, the striking parallels between Eurasian terminal cultures remain an indisputable academic phenomenon.

Since 2019, Chinese archaeologists have extended their research beyond national borders to western Eurasia,

collaborating with Romanian counterparts at the Dobrovat site near Iasi — a Cucuteni cultural settlement. I am honored to be part of this precious opportunity of academic exchange.

Our excavations revealed numerous burnt clay house foundations, ash pits, and pottery kilns alongside abundant ceramic, stone, and bone artifacts, including exquisite painted pottery fragments displaying motifs remarkably similar to those from Yangshao and Majiayao cultures. Beyond ceramic parallels, Cucuteni-Trypillia culture shares multiple characteristics with Yangshao and Majiayao cultures: mixed economies prioritizing dryland agriculture supplemented by hunting-gathering; relatively egalitarian social structures lacking pronounced stratification;

and standardized settlement layouts featuring surrounding ditches and centripetal organization.

Current evidence identifies the Cucuteni-Trypillia people as Black Sea coastal dwellers who similarly built agricultural societies with exceptional emphasis on painted pottery craftsmanship, representing the developmental apex of western Eurasian prehistoric ceramic culture.

The synchronous sophistication and striking similarities between painted pottery cultures at opposite ends of Eurasia provoke profound contemplation. Moreover, as representatives of prehistoric agricultural civilizations in their respective regions, both cultural complexes experienced near-contemporaneous decline, followed by widespread population movements and social transformations that profoundly influenced subsequent regional development and cross-cultural interactions.

These parallels raise critical questions: Do they reflect convergent evolutionary paths where early humans in separate regions developed analogous survival strategies when confronting similar environmental conditions and agricultural resources? Do they suggest contacts and mutual influences between eastern and western Eurasian populations thousands of years ago? The answer may involve both factors. Prehistoric sheep, cattle, and wheat species found in China are generally recognized as originating from West Asia, while

recent discoveries of 3,500-year-old millet (a Chinese-domesticated crop) at Romania's Dobrovat site provide reciprocal evidence of early Eurasian cultural exchange.

In the 21st century, under the frameworks of the Belt and Road Initiative and the vision of "a community with a shared future for mankind", examining the universal natures and particularities of global civilizations while exploring historical processes of cultural interaction and mutual enrichment carries not only academic significance but profound contemporary relevance. The comparative study of Yangshao, Majiayao and Cucuteni-Trypillia cultures exemplifies how prehistoric populations across vast distances developed brilliant civilizations through both independent innovation and cross-cultural fertilization, offering historical wisdom for modern civilizational dialogues.

These archaeological revelations ultimately affirm that the diversity of human civilization constitutes our most precious shared heritage, while innovation, communication and mutual learning remain the fundamental drivers of social progress.

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

LIFE

La Pet

The 4th Petjoy Fashion Week was held at the Shanghai International Fashion Center in late March. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Pet industry spawns booming market in the form of clothing and travel accessories with big brands taking the lead, **He Qi** reports in Shanghai.

Straining at the leash for high fashion

Doggies in ancient Chinese costumes, internet-famous dog Niu Niu and robotic dog LOVOT as well as hundreds of furry friends in designer clothing shared the same stage during this year's pet fashion show in Shanghai, indicating a booming market for the pet industry.

Over 1 million pet dogs and more than 1.2 million cats attended the annual pet week with their owners, according to the rough estimate of the event organizer.

The 2025 Pet Fashion Trend report revealed during the fourth Petjoy Fashion Week held in Shanghai from March 28 to 30 that China's pet industry reached a scale of 701.3 billion yuan (\$96.6 billion) in 2024, with year-on-year growth of 18.3 percent. It is projected that the pet products market will reach 48.4 billion yuan in 2025.

Pet food and medical services still hold core positions, but pet products such as clothing, toys, and health supplements are expanding rapidly at a compound annual growth rate of 13.6 percent, according to the data jointly released by Shanghai Petjoy Fashion Week and China's fashion information platform POP Fashion.

In addition, traveling with pets is gaining ground. Data shows that the "pet travel" category has increased by 33 percent year-on-year, with a surge in demand for lightweight backpacks, windproof jackets, and leashes.

The four-corner insect-proof clothing launched by the South Korean brand Tailhigh at the fashion week, which uses microcapsule essential oil and physical barrier technology, triggered a buying frenzy in the South Korean market upon its release.

Reebok also made its debut at the Petjoy Fashion Week after launching a pet line in November. Qi Yan, the person in charge



Top: The show focuses on the symbiotic relationship between humans and pets, presenting a global pet-lover extravaganza blending fashion, technology, art and cultural tourism. Above: Pet dogs and robot dogs pose for photos after the show.



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of Reebok Pet, says that this time they brought a series of sports jerseys, including basketball and football jerseys, which were very popular among the pet owners who attended the fashion show.

"Clothing for pets has become necessary as some are very sensitive to the cold. Moreover, as more people like to take their pets outdoors, they hope their pets can also be dressed in a stylish and fashionable way," Qi says, adding

that in the future, the company will continue to focus on the sports sector and launch different types of pet clothing based on the sports that young people like.

Zhang Xin, director of the Petjoy Fashion Week, says that pet fashion is no longer just about clothing, it has now evolved into pet collars, shoes, accessories, backpacks, and various smart wearable products. Along with many emerging domestic independent designer brands participating, overseas brands also used Shanghai's fashion week for pets as a platform to test the Chinese market.

The event also attracted newcomers like Highoof, a brand under Shanghai Soap Co. Founded

in 1923, the century-honored company is renowned for its Flauhra shampoo and Shanghai Yaozao (medicine included) soap. With the rise of the pet economy, Highoof, launched in 2024, is applying the company's bacteriostatic expertise to pet care.

"As a century-old State-owned enterprise, we understand that innovation sustains classics. We merge traditional craftsmanship with modern pet needs, introducing pet care products such as our anti-mite soap and plant-based shampoo, providing care to pet-owning families," says Hou Songtao, general manager of Shanghai Soap Factory Co, during the news conference before the event.

The report also shows that the "child-rearing style" of pet keeping is driving consumption upgrades, with emotional value and social attributes on the rise. People aged 25 to 34 mostly own pets, accounting for 61.7 percent.

Emotional companionship and stress relief have become the main motivations for keeping pets, elevating the relation from basic needs to higher-level value.

"Pets are no longer just companions but very much a member of the core family with strong emotional connection," says Zhang from the Petjoy Fashion Week. "We are witnessing an industry evolution from functional satisfaction to emotional co-creation, which is not just a trend but a profound transformation in the way humans and pets coexist."

The fourth Petjoy Fashion Week kicked off at the Shanghai International Fashion Center, and has attracted brands from 18 countries and regions. It held 15 fashion shows, pet sports championships, coffee cross parties, and other diverse scenarios to build a consumption experience that integrates the virtual and the real.

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Vienna has sound ties to Chinese animated blockbuster

VIENNA — Just a few minutes' walk from Vienna's bustling Mariahilfer Street, moviegoers over a recent weekend were transported into a world of Chinese mythology as the animated epic *Ne Zha 2* lit up the screen at the Apollo Cinema in late March, bringing dazzling visuals and a rich cultural legacy.

The Chinese animated blockbuster is thrilling global audiences with its bold fusion of ancient myths and cutting-edge animation. The film holds a local connection in the capital of Austria, as some of the film's orchestral tracks were recorded at Vienna Synchron Stage, a landmark building known for its state-of-the-art facilities and superb acoustics.

"Let me express my deepest compliments to the makers of *Ne Zha 2*," says Alexander Sacken, chief operating officer for the studio.

"It's an amazing hit and a very



Alexander Sacken (left) talks about the Vienna Synchron Stage's (above) role in recording music for Chinese blockbusters. XINHUA

positive sign that there can be great movies shot outside the typical centers of movies like the United States. We are very happy and lucky to be part of its whopping success."

Sacken highlights the studio's unique features, noting that the main hall Stage A was purposefully built as a recording stage some 80 years ago without any 90-degree angles, which prevents sound reflections and enhances audio clarity. The equipment is state-of-the-art compared to other recording stages.

The venue's quiet air conditioning system and superior acoustics create optimal conditions for recording. The Vienna Synchron Orchestra, made up of musicians from the city's prestigious orchestras, provides

high-quality performances.

With *Ne Zha 2* continuing to earn international acclaim, Sacken sees growing momentum for collaboration with the Chinese film industry.

"I'm planning to go to China in the summer to meet some potential partners. We would be very happy to have more projects here and deepen the cooperation between Synchron Stage and Chinese movies and TV shows," he says.

In recent years, the studio has worked on several Chinese productions, including *Looking Up* and *Lost in Russia*.

Sacken believes there is more to come: "The Chinese movie industry is growing. It has a very distinct way of telling stories that work with our orchestra, so I see a lot of potential for future cooperation."

XINHUA

LIFE



Minnesotan returns, hoping to promote China-US ties

Goal is to attract more Americans to see the country for themselves, **Li Yingxue** reports.

When Evan Kail first visited China last year, he had no idea his 30-day trip would turn into a three-month journey of discovery and cultural exchange. He traveled across the country exploring various cities, and even found himself onstage at China Central Television's Spring Festival Gala on Chinese New Year's Eve.

Returning to China in March, he knew this visit would take him even further — more places to explore, more stories to uncover.

"I'm here to build a bridge between the United States and China," says the 36-year-old pawnshop owner from the US state of Minnesota.

Kail first received publicity on Chinese social media in 2022 when he donated a photo album that documented criminal acts by the Japanese army in China during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) to the Chinese Consulate in Chicago.

"My first trip was not only about introducing myself to China but also about showcasing the World War II history that I have helped educate the world about. I wanted to visit the historical sites myself and pay my respects to the people of Nanjing," Kail says.

During that visit, he realized how meaningful the experience was, sensing a greater purpose in his connection with China.

"I'm still going to be showcasing World War II history — I made a promise to the people of Nanjing that every Dec 13, I will be in that city to pay my respects," he says.

The Nanjing Massacre took place on Dec 13, 1937, when Japanese troops captured the then capital.

"But now, I'm also thinking about what else I can do here. How can I contribute to promoting tourism in China and encouraging more Americans to visit, so they can come and see for themselves and better understand the Chinese people?"

With this second visit, Kail sees a new chapter unfolding. "This trip is about turning the page — moving beyond just World War II history and focusing on China as a whole, exploring it, and sharing my experiences with the West."

In mid-March, Kail visited Dehua county, Fujian province, a town named a World Craft City for Porcelain by the World Crafts Council affiliated with UNESCO in 2015. When he donated the photo album in 2022, the Chinese Consulate in Chicago presented



Top: Evan Kail in the mud pit during his first Spartan race in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. **Middle:** Kail (center) celebrates finishing the Spartan 5 km race. **Above left:** Kail overcoming an obstacle during the race. **Above right:** He (right) carries weights during the race. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

him with a national gift — Xi Shang Mei Shao (a magpie on top of a plum blossom branch pattern) porcelain — along with a letter of appreciation. Dehua is the birthplace of this prestigious ceramic art.

Recalling the moment he received the gift, Kail was struck by its beauty. "I didn't know how it was made, but the craftsmanship must

be incredibly complex," he says.

During his visit, Kail immersed himself in the art of porcelain-making, trying his hand at traditional techniques such as hand-throwing pottery, lighting a dragon kiln, and witnessing the kiln opening process.

It was a wonderful and deeply meaningful experience. Touching and shaping the clay

with his own hands was both fascinating and challenging and it gave him a greater understanding and respect for Dehua's ceramic culture, he says.

The following weekend, Kail traveled to Shenzhen, Guangdong province, to take on a Spartan Race. He dove into his first-ever Spartan Race in Shenzhen with no hesitation — no

second thoughts, no preparation, just a simple request: "Bring me my shoes and shirt."

His trainer, 34-year-old Roman Dogush from Russia, who ran alongside him, was impressed. "This was Kail's first race. I know he does some sports, but he had never done an obstacle course race like Spartan," Dogush says. "And this one in China isn't easy — there are a lot of hills, which makes it much harder than running on a flat surface."

Despite the heat and exhaustion, Kail powered through the grueling two-hour, 5-kilometer race, tackling obstacles, wading through mud, and pushing his limits. Even when he couldn't complete an obstacle, he accepted the penalty burpees without complaint.

"He did very well. He didn't give up," Dogush says. "A true Spartan has to be disciplined, persistent, and supportive of others. Kail has all these qualities — he's a real Spartan."

Dogush, who has been coaching Spartan racers for four years and runs his own gym in Shenzhen, has witnessed the sport's growth in the city, attracting both locals and expatriates. Kail also noticed the enthusiasm for fitness, seeing similarities between China and the US.

"I know plenty of young people in America do this or similar activities. So, I saw a lot of young people participating, and honestly, it looked just like it would in America," Kail says. "There were also many international participants, which was great to see. It was an inclusive event — I wasn't the only American running today. It was a lot of fun."

Kail's endurance is no accident. He first took up running at age 15, spontaneously deciding to train one summer. At first, he struggled to complete a mile, but by the end of the season, he was running six. That determination has stayed with him ever since.

"Once you come to a Spartan Race, you're a Spartan," Kail says. "You've taken on the challenge, pushed yourself, and accomplished something meaningful. And maybe, when life throws challenges your way, you can look back at this moment and remind yourself — if you conquered this, you can do anything."

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Global dialogue essential for establishing trust, forum hears

By **CHEN BOWEN** in Boao, Hainan
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Strengthening dialogue among civilizations is essential to fostering global understanding and trust, Lin Shangli, president of Renmin University of China, said on March 28 during the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2025. The forum ran from March 25-28.

Despite humanity's technological leaps — from space exploration and artificial intelligence to gene reconstruction — Lin said at the "enhancing dialogue among civilizations and promoting understanding and trust" sub-forum that building lasting peace remains a challenge. "While the United Nations plays a crucial role in the world, global governance still falls short," he said.

However, Lin also expressed optimism. "Looking at the development of human civilization over the past 10,000 years, the time during which humans have known each other is only a few hundred years. In the future, I believe we can address issues of peaceful coexistence and lasting peace with dialogue, understanding and trust among civilizations being the way to resolve them," he added.

He further explained that history has proved that the exchange and mutual

learning of civilizations are key to the prosperity of various cultures. Whether it is Chinese civilization or other civilizations around the world, their brilliance has benefited from mutual learning and dialogue among different cultures.

"In today's world, the coexistence and dialogue of various civilizations are the foundation of human development. Transforming the truth of dialogue among civilizations into a real force requires the establishment of a global perspective and human consciousness," Lin said.

He emphasized that existing worldviews and nationalistic ideologies dominate human life, with the former being constructed by the global flow of capital and closely linked to capitalism.

He said that China's proposals for a global civilization initiative, global development initiative, global security initiative, and a community with a shared future for mankind pointed to a new direction for humanity's future.

"This direction involves establishing a global perspective on the basis of worldviews and cultivating human consciousness on the foundation of nationalistic ideologies," Lin said.

He noted that humanity is undergoing unprecedented changes, with technological advancements and global shifts



Lin Shangli, president of Renmin University of China. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

prompting a reassessment of self, the construction of order, and the resolution of common issues. These circumstances provide an excellent opportunity for dialogue among civilizations and mutual understanding.

Lin emphasized the pivotal role of universities in fostering cross-cultural understanding. "Without civilizational exchange, universities lose their essence," he said. Chinese institutions, he added, are undergoing transformative changes to integrate global wisdom into education. "The past was an era of knowledge; the future belongs to wisdom, and diverse civilizations are its greatest source."

In the realm of talent cultivation, shaping student minds, and reconstructing knowledge, Chinese universities are encouraged to integrate the wisdom of various civilizations and cultures into the education of young students, he said.

Renmin University has spearheaded initiatives like the School of Global Leadership, the School of Global Governance, the

Silk Road School, and trilateral degree programs with Italy and the US. It has also launched research centers focusing on Sino-European and Sino-African civilizational exchanges. "We aim to cultivate talent capable of navigating global challenges," Lin said.

Asia, as a crossroads of multiple civilizations, thrives on its diversity, Lin said. He warned against politicizing differences, calling instead for a spirit of "appreciating each other's beauty — harmony in diversity."

Regional cooperation, such as the China-ASEAN Science and Technology Partnership Program and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, also known as the RCEP trade pact, offers a blueprint for collaborative progress.

Asian nations must strengthen cooperation in technological innovation, overcome technological bottlenecks, establish governance rules, and propel Asia to become a leader in the technological revolution, Lin suggested.

He also said that there is a need to promote an interconnectedness of rules and standards, accelerate negotiations on digital trade rules, enhance regional financial safety nets, strengthen coordination on global governance issues, and elevate the voice of developing countries.

"Asia, as a growth engine and a hub of vibrant civilizations, must lead with solidarity and innovation," Lin said.

With this year marking the 80th anniversary of the UN and the 70th anniversary of the Bandung Conference, he hoped nations would "seek common ground while respecting differences" to advance a shared future.

"Historical lessons teach us that those who seek common ground while respecting differences progress, and those who engage in exchanges and mutual learning emerge victorious. Asia, as a vital engine of global economic growth and a vibrant hub of diverse coexisting civilizations, particularly needs to tackle common human challenges amid global transformations with a united stance, innovative thinking, and a forward-looking perspective," said Lin.

He called for seizing the opportunity presented by the Boao Forum for Asia to build a broad consensus, enhance dialogue among civilizations, and gather strong collective efforts. By seeking the "common" within inclusivity and striving for "unity" amid respecting "differences," "let us continue advancing toward the goal of building a community of shared future for mankind. Together, let us create a brighter future for Asia and the world", Lin said.