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CHINA DAILY

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Laurent Saint-Martin (left), the French minister for foreign trade, speaks with EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic on Monday before a meeting of European Union trade ministers in Luxembourg. The ministers met to debate the EU's response as the 27-nation bloc faces extensive US tariffs, including 25 percent duties on steel, aluminum and cars, plus 20 percent "reciprocal tariffs" on most other goods starting Wednesday. JEAN-CHRISTOPHE VERHAEGEN / AFP

China, EU committed to upholding free, open trade

By XU WEI
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China has ample policy tools to offset external adverse impacts this year, and the nation is "full of confidence in maintaining sustained and healthy economic development", Premier Li Qiang said on Tuesday as he slammed the sweeping tariff hikes by the United States on its trade partners.

The premier struck an upbeat note on the world's second-largest economy during a phone call with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, amid disruptions caused by tariffs imposed by Washington.

Li reiterated that Beijing's macroeconomic policies this year have taken into full account various uncertain factors, while reaffirming the commitment to expanding opening-up and fostering collaboration with economies worldwide, including the European Union, to share opportunities for development.

The talks followed an executive order signed by US President Donald Trump last week to impose tariffs as high as 34 percent on imports from China and 20 percent from the EU, with the US threatening to impose an additional 50 percent tariff on Chinese imports.

Washington's abuse of tariffs on all its trading partners under various pretexts is a blatant example of "unilateralism, protectionism and economic bullying", Li said.

He also said China's firm response was not only aimed at safeguarding its own sovereignty, security and development interests, but also at defending international trade rules and global fairness.

"Humanity lives in the same global village, and no country can thrive in isolation. Protectionism is a dead end; open cooperation is the only true path forward," Li said.

China and the EU, as strong advocates of economic globalization and free trade and strong supporters of the World Trade Organization, should bolster communication and coordination, expand mutual opening-up, safeguard free and open trade and investment, and ensure the stability of global supply chains, he added.

With this year marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and the EU, the premier also stressed China's readiness to enhance political mutual trust with the EU and expand pragmatic cooperation.

The two sides should persist in resolving respective concerns through dialogue and consultation, with the aim of continuously advancing bilateral ties, he added.

Von der Leyen emphasized the vital importance for the EU and China to maintain consistent and stable relations, while pointing out that the US tariffs pose a severe shock to international trade, both the EU and China, and vulnerable countries.

Both the EU and China remain committed to safeguarding the multilateral trading system, which is in alignment with the bilateral and common interests of the world, she said.

According to a statement released by her office, during the phone call von der Leyen also "stressed the responsibility of Europe and China, as two of the world's largest markets, to support a strong reformed trading system, free, fair and founded on a level playing field".

The conversation also covered EU-China cooperation on the international climate agenda and the clean industrial transition, the statement said.

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Beijing vows countermeasures

Signal sent on rejecting unilateralism after Washington's latest tariff threat

By WANG KEJU
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China has vowed to take firm and necessary countermeasures in response to the US' escalating tariff threats, reaffirming its commitment to defending national interests while upholding the stability of the global trade system.

Analysts said China's move sent a strong signal to the international community of rejecting unilateralism and joining efforts to safeguard multilateral trade rules.

They noted that Beijing retains ample policy tools to respond, including raising tariffs on US energy and agricultural imports, as well as further expanding export controls on critical minerals such as rare earths. These targeted actions are expected to increase pressure on Washington and could pave the way for a return to rational negotiations, they added.

"China will resolutely take countermeasures to safeguard its rights and interests, should the United States escalate its tariff measures," the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement on Tuesday, hours after the US threatened to impose a further 50 percent tariff on China if Beijing does not withdraw its 34 percent counter-tariff.

US President Donald Trump signed

an executive order on April 2 regarding the so-called "reciprocal tariffs", imposing a 10 percent "baseline tariff" and higher rates on certain trading partners. On Sunday, Beijing adopted an array of countermeasures, including an additional 34 percent tariff on US imports, following last week's decision by the US to impose a 34 percent tariff on Chinese imports.

"The US tariff escalation threat against China compounds its mistake and further exposes its nature of blackmail, which China will never accept," the ministry said. "China will fight till the end if the US is bent on going down the wrong path."

Analysts believe that the set of forceful and targeted countermeasures that Beijing has taken showed that it has ample tools at its disposal, especially against sectors and companies that are priorities for the Trump administration, and where China's dependence is not significant.

The energy and agricultural sectors that Trump hopes to bolster are also the primary industries in some US states. Intensifying sanctions on these sectors would therefore heighten domestic pressure on the Trump administration, said Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities.

Luo also noted that China can con-

sider extending export restrictions beyond the current focus on medium and heavy rare earth elements, such as samarium, gadolinium and terbium, to potentially include lighter rare earths like lanthanum and cerium, as the US is highly dependent on such Chinese imports.

"The trade war this time is not one that can easily be settled through concessions," Luo said. "China must take firm and resolute countermeasures to defend its interests, which will then compel the US to come back to the negotiating table."

The US saw widespread protests over the weekend that in part opposed the Trump administration's aggressive tariff policies, which are seen as inflicting real economic pain on households and businesses across the country.

Steve Lamar, president and CEO of the American Apparel & Footwear Association, said in a statement last week, "To be clear, tariffs are taxes borne by the American companies that import the goods and the hardworking American families that buy those goods."

"Tariffs will significantly increase the cost of manufacturing in the US, and, when paired with the retaliatory tariffs that will surely come, will undermine US export opportunities as well," Lamar said.

China's potent countermeasures don't mean that a trade war is the only way forward, as Beijing stands ready to talk with Washington. China

urges the US to immediately correct its wrongdoing, cancel all unilateral tariff measures against China, stop its economic and trade suppression, and settle differences with China properly through dialogue on an equal footing and on the basis of mutual respect, the Commerce Ministry said.

Beijing is not alone in facing the Trump administration's "Liberation Day" tariffs. The White House has dragged its own long-standing allies into the fray, including additional tariffs of as high as 20 percent on imports from the European Union, 25 percent from South Korea and 24 percent from Japan.

"By placing massive and disproportionate tariffs on our friends and our enemies alike and thereby launching a global economic war against the whole world at once, we are in the process of destroying confidence in our country as a trading partner, as a place to do business, and as a market to invest capital," said Bill Ackman, a hedge fund titan who endorsed Trump's run for president.

"We will severely damage our reputation with the rest of the world that will take years and potentially decades to rehabilitate," Ackman said in a post on social media platform X.

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Levies sow uncertainty in automotive industry

As of midnight on April 2, the United States' tariff of 2.5 percent on imported vehicles rose to a blanket 25 percent on all imported cars. Now, US President Donald Trump's "Liberation Day" speech in the Rose Garden of the White House may not feel very "liberating" to ordinary US citizens who face higher car prices and prices for car parts brought about by these tariffs or to US automotive manufacturers who are feeling the sting of the Trump administration's steel and aluminum tariffs impacting their supply chains.

The car tariffs were accompa-

WORLD WATCH
By Simon Sutcliffe

nied by announcements of new tariffs on "other goods", specifically aimed at countries with which the US feels that there is an unfair trade deficit and a tariff rate imbalance on reciprocal duty rates.

The US president dubbed the 15 percent of nations that have persistent trade imbalances with the US as the "Dirty 15".

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Sign of confidence



An electronic board displays market information on a street in Shanghai on Tuesday. Chinese stocks bounced back on Tuesday with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rising 1.58 percent to 3,145.55 points and the Shenzhen Component Index closing 0.64 percent higher at 9,424.68 points. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
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GUARDIANS OF ANCIENT TREES BRIDGE PAST AND FUTURE

Preserved natural wonders enhance villagers' wealth, cultural connections

By WU YANBO in Dengfeng, Henan
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Tree healer Jin Hongjun, 55, vividly recalls the painstaking efforts to save China's beloved 4,500-year-old "General Cypress" two decades ago.

Located in the Center of Heaven and Earth historical building complex in Dengfeng, Henan province, the country's oldest cypress tree had suffered from improper care and management over the years.

Jin, from the Dengfeng Cultural Relics Bureau, served as General Cypress' dedicated caretaker from 2004 to 2007, and talks about the



ancient tree like an old friend. In 2004, under the guidance of Professor Cong Sheng, a renowned ancient tree conservation expert, Dengfeng authorities launched a comprehensive rescue mission for the ailing cypress. The project, costing hundreds of thousands of yuan, included removal of decaying parts of the tree, sterilization, structural reinforcement and soil rehabilitation. "The challenges were immense,"

Jin said. Centuries of construction debris and buried pedestals of tablets had choked the tree's roots. Workers relocated tons of stone pedestals, removed rubble, replaced soil with nutrient-rich substitutes, and installed drainage and aeration systems — a labor-intensive process requiring meticulous attention.

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PAGE TWO

Trees: Roots in history, branches in progress

The 4,500-year-old "General Cypress" in Dengfeng, Henan province.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From page 1

"Conservation isn't a one-time fix. Trees are living beings, they need sustained attention," Jin said.

Impressed emperor

The tree's historical significance dates back to 110 BC when Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (206 BC — AD 220) visited Songshan Mountain on an imperial inspection tour. Impressed by its majestic stature, he bestowed upon the tree the title of "General Cypress".

Centuries later, in 1750, Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) created his renowned ink painting *Han Dynasty Cypress at Songyang*, which fetched over 87 million yuan (\$12 million) at an auction in 2010.

Though local officials began protecting ancient trees as early as 1936 — when the then-magistrate Mao Rucai numbered them and installed enamel plaques — the 2004 campaign marked Dengfeng's first major investment in arboreal heritage.

Bolstered by training from the professor, Jin expanded his arboreal conservation work. By 2008, he led the protection of 878 ancient trees at the Center of Heaven and Earth's eight historic building sites, in preparation for its UNESCO World Heritage application. The center was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010.

With tight deadlines and some trees in remote mountainous terrain, Jin and his team hauled equipment uphill, camped on-site, and endured nights in tents that had collapsed under heavy rain.

At Songshan Mountain's Zhongyue Temple, where there are over 330 ancient cypresses, Jin faced labor shortages. Despite battling a fever, he recruited 50 laborers and personally trained them, climbing scaffolding repeatedly to demonstrate conservation techniques. He worked through the day, and was given IV drips at night.

Wandering among the ancient cypresses, Jin's voice softened as he recalled the dry clay, which was "hard like stone." "We couldn't use machinery near the roots," he said, describing efforts to dig rejuvenation trenches by hand. "Two workers took a full day to carve out one meter."

During one Spring Festival holiday, he saw three tourists preparing to burn incense next to an ancient cypress to pray for good luck. He changed their minds by telling them "the best worship for ancient trees is to pour a few buckets of water in the dry season."

Jin said in such a harsh environment ancient cypresses grow extremely slowly. Due to previous methods of determining tree ages being less accurate than today, some trees thought to be about 1,000 years old may actually be over 3,000 or 4,000 years old, he said.

"Ancient architecture valued the natural environment and *feng shui*, so temples were often built where there were ancient trees. Therefore, the ages of many ancient trees in Zhongyue Temple are likely to be seriously underestimated," he said.

In 2024, Jin's 20-year dedication to conservation earned him a spot on the National Forestry and Grassland Administration's panel of experts. He has now "healed" more than 20,000 ancient trees in provinces across the country, from Shanxi's arid plains to Fujian's humid subtropics.

His phone rings like an emergency hotline, and once his services are requested he rushes to help restore old trees.

Jin believes tree preservation is a multidisciplinary science. Besides anti-erosion treatment and structural reinforcements for hollowed trunks, Jin emphasizes microhabitat management including breathable fences to prevent soil compaction, annual flowers to enrich biodiversity, and strict bans on invasive grasses that starve roots.

"In the north, focus on hydration and aeration. In the south, drainage is key," he said. "But consistent care — judicious watering and loosening soil — is essential."

Jin stresses public awareness about arboreal care to minimize human impact on the growth of ancient trees.

"As long as people avoid harming trunks or roots, reverence for trees — expressed through rituals or worship — is a sacred tradition worthy of respect," he said.

Old growth, new wealth

The veteran arborist has acquired much of his knowledge about trees and their cultural significance from grassroots people. "By listening to villagers' stories, I learn to protect these giants in harmony with local ecosystems," he said.

Several years ago, Jin visited Leijiagou village near the Shaolin Temple to undertake protection work on several ancient *Quercus baronii* (a type of oak) trees growing in the crevices of rocky slopes. A small stone temple from the Qing Dynasty's Qianlong period was beneath the trees.

A shepherd aged over 80 told Jin he remembered the trees from when he was a child. The current poor state of the trees was likely due to years of soil erosion near the roots, the shepherd said.

When a sheep approached one of the ancient trees, the herder quickly shooed it away, and said to Jin: "The old tree is sacred. I don't allow sheep near it, or to even graze on its fallen leaves."

Leijiagou is at the foot of Songshan Mountain, considered sacred by many, and is home to more than 10 ancient trees, including *Quercus baronii*, sala trees and big leaf poplars.

Since 2015, the village has pivoted from stone mining to ecological restoration and provided accommodations for visitors. It has constructed an ecological park for the *Quercus baronii* trees, expanded a small pond into Mirror Heart Lake, and upgraded old cave dwellings into boutique homestays. It is now a model picturesque village in Zhengzhou city and a national forest village.

"These trees are both our historians and main attraction," said Liu Xiaohui, 33, a Leijiagou Village Committee mem-



Emperor Qianlong's ink painting *Han Dynasty Cypress at Songyang*.
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Jin Hongjun explains tree protection under an ancient cypress at Zhongyue Temple in Dengfeng. WU YANBO / CHINA DAILY



A visitor touches an ancient cypress tree at Zhongyue Temple. WU YANBO / CHINA DAILY

ber, and owner of Songshan Windmill Farm.

The village's annual tourist numbers now exceed 100,000, drawn by the Shaolin Temple and nature's wonders. "The village history museum undergoing construction will highlight the trees' role in local historical heritage, and attract more visitors to explore the profound culture of Songshan Mountain," Liu said.

In January, staff from the Henan Provincial Forestry Bureau visited Leijiagou and took 3D digital images of the old trees to establish a pilot ancient tree cloud museum.

As a county-level city within Zhengzhou, Dengfeng has over 7,400 registered ancient trees.

In 2021, the local forestry bureau organized teams to visit rural towns. The teams produced a mini documentary series the *Sacred Charm of Ancient Trees* that had 52 episodes. Authorities have also staged exhibitions and painting activities to raise awareness about protection of ancient trees.

A real family tree

Villages and temples also preserve Huai, or Chinese scholar trees, planted by Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) migrants from Hongtong county in Shanxi, said Zhao Xiaoli, director of the Dengfeng Greening Service Center.

The scholar tree is highly regarded as a symbol of ancestral roots and a witness and marker of an area's history, Zhao said.

One such tree stands in Yuanqiao village, 10 kilometers southwest of Dengfeng. The thriving tree, over 500 years, stands more than 14 meters high and spreads an 80-square-meter canopy of leaves. Historical records show Yuanqiao was founded during the reign of Emperor Hongwu (1368-1398) in the Ming Dynasty by migrant Yuan Kecheng, who had nine children and planted nine scholar trees to remind his descendants of their Shanxi roots.

The sole surviving tree is near a small bridge, built by the Yuan family who Yuanqiao village derives its name from. Almost every family in the village has the surname Yuan.

The tree's legacy also intertwines with philanthropy.

Yuan Zhanguo, 73, chairman of Dengfeng's Dengcao Group and a native of the village, wrote in an article that he recalled childhood rituals honoring the tree as a "guardian deity".

His childhood home in front of the tree now houses Henan's first village-level charity station, established in 2015 by Yuan Zhanguo and his two brothers. It provides seniors with monthly payments of 300 to 1,000 yuan and supports scholarships. "My parents refuse my money now, the station supports them," said 55-year-old village official Yuan Jinyi.

Yuanqiao's heritage extends beyond the tree.

A 6,000-year-old neolithic site, large-scale 300-year-old courtyard houses, and a 440-year-old fortified tower coexist with Red culture sites like the first

Dengfeng Communist Party of China Congress venue.

In 2017, the Yuan brothers founded the Yuanqiao Ancient Village Conservation Company. They have invested 300 million yuan to restore the old buildings, improve the ecological and living environment, build village history museums, tourism facilities, and unique rural guesthouses.

Yuanqiao was recognized as a National 3A Scenic Area and traditional village in 2022, attracting 1 million annual visitors. "Protecting and inheriting Yuanqiao's historical culture is our biggest wish," Yuan Zhanguo's younger brother Yuan Zhanxin wrote in the 2023 book, *The Story of Yuanqiao*. "This isn't a quick-profit industrial project, but a legacy that will benefit generations a century from now," he wrote.

Rural gems

On Jan 25, the State Council, China's Cabinet, released the Regulations on Ancient and Notable Tree Protection, to take effect on March 15. The policy aims to safeguard these natural treasures, integrate their cultural value into festival culture and historic villages, and boost eco-tourism — a vision already realized in Leijiagou and Yuanqiao villages.

However, Dengfeng's rural gems hold untapped potential.

Donghua Town was a trade hub during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) and is nestled between the Funiu Mountains and the Yinghe River, the biggest branch of the Huaihe River.

Today, the town is home to 84 ancient trees and a dozen heritage sites like the tomb of Xu You (a sage who lived over 4,000 years ago), the Cheng Kiln site (neolithic to Bronze Age relics), and the Zhouzhuang village's temple stone carvings.

The latter features seven Ming-Qing stone tablets detailing the Buddhist-Taoist Zhuyuan Temple's expansions since the 16th century and its close ties to Shaolin Temple. A scholar tree more than 500 years old stands nearby.

Zhouzhuang blends its ancient temple with bamboo groves, old watchtowers and reservoirs, railway tracks and pastoral landscapes. In spring, its rapeseed blooms and temple fairs draw crowds, while the restored temple and improved transportation and infrastructure reflect the grassroots efforts to improve the village's amenities.

Village Party secretary Zhang Haoran, 27, is a former military member-turned rural revitalizer. His plans include upgrading waste management and transforming abandoned traditional dwellings near the ancient scholar tree into boutique homestays.

"The tree witnessed my growth and the village's centuries of history. I passed by it daily as a child," Zhang said.

"Several entrepreneurs have come to inspect the construction of waterslides and sightseeing trains. We welcome investors to develop eco-cultural tourism projects, our goal is to preserve heritage while ensuring investors are satisfied."

TOP NEWS

Swift response ensures stable capital market

Measures played a vital role in restoring investors' confidence, experts say

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai and **ZHOU LANXU** in Beijing

China took swift and decisive measures to stabilize its capital market on Tuesday amid global stock market turmoil following sweeping tariffs announced by the United States, demonstrating its strong policy reserves and commitment to safeguarding financial stability.

Industry experts said the measures, including increased holding of shares by sovereign wealth funds and major listed companies, as well as supportive monetary policies, have played a vital role in restoring investor confidence and anchoring market expectations. They also expressed positive outlook on Chinese stocks in anticipation of more stimulative policies.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rebounded 1.58 percent on Tuesday, reclaiming the 3,100-point level. The Shenzhen Component Index rose 0.64 percent, while the tech-heavy ChiNext gained 1.83 percent.

Notably, agricultural stocks surged 8.89 percent on average, while food and beverage shares advanced 6.46 percent, reflecting renewed optimism across sectors. Following the global equity sell-off sparked by the US' tariff imposition, Chinese regulators and major financial institutions acted promptly. Key to the rebound was the timely move by Central Huijin Investment, an arm of China's sovereign wealth fund, which announced late on Monday that it had increased holdings in exchange-traded funds.

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, followed up by pledging relending support to Central Huijin "when necessary", signaling a strong coordinated policy intent to maintain market order and stability.

Gao Ruidong, chief economist at Everbright Securities, said these actions represent an effective deployment of what some economists call a "Chinese version of a stabilization fund".

Such moves help to shape long-term investor expectations and shift the focus away from short-term market noise, Gao said.

"As investor sentiment improves, the A-share market is expected to gradually return to a rational track aligned with China's steady economic fundamentals," he added.

Meanwhile, multiple State-owned enterprises and sovereign institutions have also ramped up their exposure to A shares. China Chengtong Holdings and China Reform Holdings both announced increased investments in exchange-traded funds and State-owned enterprise stocks, underscoring their confidence in the market's long-term potential.

Tariffs: Economies could foster a shared marketplace

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Ma Guangyuan, a senior economist, said the era of the US calling the shots and forcing countries to choose sides is over, as the US-led trade system is falling apart. However, this does not mean the end of free trade itself, as the global community still recognizes the benefits of open economic cooperation, Ma said.

"Economics will triumph over politics, and free trade will overcome hegemony," Ma added. "China can seize this chance to broaden its circle of friends, and jointly foster a new trade framework on the foundation of equality, freedom and mutual benefits with other economies."

High-ranking officials from Italy, Portugal and France, as well as the European commissioner for trade

Leading SOEs, including China Huaneng Group, China Petrochemical Corp and China State Construction, announced their respective stock repurchase plans on Tuesday, which are rooted in their confidence in China's stable economic growth and the country's capital market.

Also on Tuesday, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council said that it will fully support the SOEs' initiatives in stepping up their share buybacks.

Dong Shaopeng, an advisory committee member of the Securities Association of China, said the SOEs making stock buybacks, or their major shareholders increasing their holdings at a time of market volatility, could stabilize and boost company prices.

Financial regulators have further supported this momentum by green-lighting expanded equity allocations from insurance and social security funds, unlocking hundreds of billions of yuan in potential market inflows.

The National Financial Regulatory Administration said on Tuesday that it has allowed more equity asset allocation by insurance funds, while the National Council for Social Security Fund said it has increased exposure to Chinese stocks and will continue taking such measures in the near future.

Meng Lei, China equity strategist at UBS Securities, said that insurers are expected to bring in about 1 trillion yuan (\$136 billion) of additional capital this year, while the capital from mutual funds and social security funds is estimated to be 590 billion yuan and 120 billion yuan, respectively.

This capital will help to stabilize the equity risk premium, thanks to its longer investment horizon, he said.

A report released on Monday by Swiss firm Pictet Asset Management said that China has considerable capacity to deliver monetary and fiscal stimulus, thanks to ample policy space, although the country faces steep import tariffs of over 50 percent.

China's reliance on US exports is often overstated, as it stands at just 3 percent of GDP, the report added.

Feng Jianlin, chief economist at Beijing FOST Economic Consulting, said that fundamentally stabilizing expectations on the real economy is crucial to stock market stability. He suggested accelerating bond issuance and the use of fiscal fund, while adjusting monetary policies.

Apart from lowering the reserve requirement ratio and interest rates, structural monetary tools to support foreign trade, consumption and technology innovation may be introduced at a faster pace, he said.

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and economic security, visited China in late March. Around the same time, South Korea and Japan agreed to accelerate negotiations with China on the stalled trilateral free trade agreement.

"Our championing of free trade is not just a response to US aggression, but a strategic initiative to guide the development of the multilateral system in a direction that benefits all," said Mei Xinyu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"The US' blanket, across-the-board imposition of high tariffs this time might end up uniting all the affected economies into a shared marketplace that could potentially dwarf the size of the US market," Mei said.



All in a day's work

Greenland's newly-elected Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen (center) and other officials walk on Monday to Nuuk Cathedral to attend a service held during the constituent meeting of the Greenlandic parliament in the capital Nuuk. The new parliament convened for the first time after a general election in March, amid US President Donald Trump's repeated utterances about taking control of the island.

EMIL STACH / RITZAU SCANPIX

China Pavilion to delight visitors at World Expo 2025

By **JIANG XUEQING** in Osaka, Japan
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A media day event at the China Pavilion of World Expo 2025 in the Japanese city of Osaka offered a preview of exhibitions centered on green development, cutting-edge technologies, and the vision of harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

Held on Monday, the China Media Day event showcased the pavilion's design and displays, all unified under the core theme: "Building a Community of Life for Man and Nature — Future Society of Green Development".

Li Qingshuang, deputy head of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and government representative for the China Pavilion, said: "The exhibitions at the China Pavilion closely align with the expo's theme and emphasize immersion, interactivity and experience. The presenta-

tion methods are diverse, blending tradition and modernity, and rich in cultural sentiment."

Covering an area of around 3,500 square meters, the China Pavilion stands as one of the largest foreign self-built pavilions at World Expo 2025, also known as the World Expo, which will open in Osaka on Sunday and run for six months.

During the expo, the Walker C humanoid robot, developed by UBTECH Robotics, will interact with visitors at the south plaza of the China Pavilion, offering intelligent tour guide services and human-robot interaction experiences.

The mythological figure Sun Wukong, also known as the Monkey King, will make an appearance at the China Pavilion. This version of Sun Wukong is powered by a next-generation cognitive intelligence model developed by Chinese information technology company iFlytek. It integrates cutting-edge technologies such as robust noise-resistant speech recognition, multi-



The exhibitions at the China Pavilion closely align with the expo's theme and emphasize immersion, interactivity and experience."

Li Qingshuang, a government representative for the China Pavilion

emotion voice synthesis and multimodal interaction.

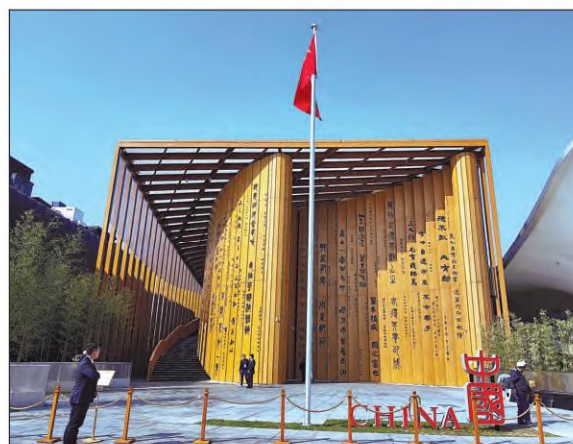
Visitors will be able to engage in interactive Q&A sessions with Sun Wukong in Chinese, Japanese and English.

One of the highlights at the China Pavilion will be samples brought back from the moon by the Chang'e 5 and Chang'e 6 lunar probes.

"This will be the most precious exhibit the China Pavilion presents to global visitors during World Expo 2025. It will also be the world's first side-by-side, close-up display of samples from both the near and far sides of the moon," Li said.

She emphasized that visitors will have the opportunity to observe the distinct structures of the lunar samples and the subtle differences between both sides of the moon through a specially designed lens installation. Nearby, a video message from three Chinese astronauts aboard the space station will offer greetings to visitors at the China Pavilion.

According to Liu Shuo, deputy director of the China Pavilion, its design was inspired by traditional bamboo slips, incorporating cultural elements such as bamboo and Chinese characters.



The China Pavilion at the World Expo 2025 stands ready on Monday, in Osaka, Japan. The exterior design of the pavilion resembles an unfurled traditional Chinese calligraphy scroll. The expo opens on Sunday. YANG GUANG / XINHUA

Industry: Stock dip reflects automakers' concerns

From page 1

The Trump administration has calculated the duty rate imposed on US goods by these countries, coupled with any nontariff barriers, local sales taxes and alleged currency or subsidy manipulation. The US has then imposed half that calculated amount as the new US tariff amount. Hence, in the case of China, the applicable US tariff rate is 34 percent, but when coupled with the existing 20 percent rate — which has already been imposed on China this year — and the threat of another 50 percent levy, the duty rate becomes of staggering proportion.

The US imported approximately 8 million cars last year, with Mexico being the biggest source of imports, followed by South Korea, Japan, Canada and Germany. Car parts will also be subject to increased tariffs once US customs work out the relevant commodity codes applicable to car parts and how to monitor them.

Many US car manufacturers have factories in both Mexico and Canada that have until now benefited from the respective free trade agreement. Share prices in certain US automotive groups have fallen, signaling their concern over developments.

Both the United Kingdom and the European Union currently charge a

10 percent tariff on vehicles of US origin when imported into their respective jurisdictions. Trump sees this as iniquitous. He views the vehicle position as another example of unbalanced and nonreciprocal trade. While the US imposes nonreciprocal tariffs in 141,000 cases, it bears higher tariffs in 467,000 cases. Additionally, Trump wants to rectify positions where certain countries have a sustainable trade surplus against the US or a large difference in average duty rates.

The impact of the new tariffs will be felt even more when coupled with the recent imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum and certain products manufactured from non-US origin steel and aluminum, as the car industry relies on these products. In response, many nations have threatened reciprocal tariffs while some automotive groups have committed to investing in manufacturing plants in the US — an outcome that fulfills one of President Trump's desires.

Hyundai, a South Korean multinational automotive manufacturer, has committed to building a steel manufacturing facility in the US. However, these types of capital projects take many years to come on line. Another South Korean car manufacturer Kia made a similar commitment a number of years ago — in a facility shared

with Hyundai — which has only recently begun to produce a sizable number of vehicles.

The US is the top sales destination for vehicles of UK origin, and the UK has not yet indicated whether it would respond with retaliatory tariffs. As the UK is no longer part of the EU, it could consider a radical alternative and reduce its own tariffs on US vehicles to 2.5 percent — a rate that applied before the hike to 25 percent — to match the US rates. This would signal a further break with the EU as the UK "ploughs its own economic furrow" and would not be received well in Brussels.

Once again this reapplies the previous trade dilemma for UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer — whether his country should seek better EU trade relations for the sake of agriculture and the food industry and its desire for reduced bureaucracy and not having to revisit the Northern Ireland trading position, or seek a more isolationist policy by protecting its position with the US.

It is still not clear whether the imposition of higher tariffs will affect the classic car market. Classic cars now can fall under a different tariff code as they are deemed collectibles or articles of historical interest.

Classic cars usually need to be vehicles of a certain age or be models no longer in production to quali-

fy for using this commodity code — which is often a nil rate of duty. This also applies to original parts imported to keep the classic car maintained. It may be difficult for US customs to enforce this blanket higher tariff on classic cars given the different commodity codes in use between "normal" and classic cars unless a different parameter could be used to identify the importation as a vehicle albeit a classic one.

These new tariffs on both cars and other goods take US tariff rates to highs not seen since the 1960s. The response of the major car-producing nations will be paramount in gauging the prospective retaliatory response and whether this, in true trade war fashion, prompts a further round of punitive tariffs. We may see a lot more US vehicles on our roads or a short-term oversupply of vehicles in the UK and EU markets. One thing is certain: In a world where car producers are in complex, integrated and extended supply chains, it means that — as happened in the 1930s — the world could be heading toward a global recession.

The author is customs & excise duty partner at the leading audit, tax and business advisory firm Blick Rothenberg in the UK. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Pets allowed on high-speed railway trains

Trial program lets passengers book space for cats, dogs on some routes

By LUO WANGSHU
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China's railway operator on Tuesday launched a pilot program allowing pets to travel on select high-speed trains along the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway, marking a first for the country's rail system.

The trial service, introduced by China Railway Express Co, enables passengers to book a spot for their cat or dog in a specially designed pet transport container aboard the same train. However, animals are housed separately in a designated logistics compartment, away from passenger seating areas.

The pilot service is being tested on 10 train services running between five major stations: Beijing South, Jinan West, Nanjing South, Shanghai Hongqiao and Hangzhou East. Travelers can make reservations through the 12306 system, the railway ticket and service booking network, at least two days in advance.

Each pet must be a domesticated cat or dog in good health, weighing no more than 15 kilograms and no taller than 40 centimeters at the shoulder. Required documents include a valid ID and a certificate of animal quarantine.

Pets are placed in high-speed rail-exclusive containers equipped with air circulation, oxygen and humidity sensors, noise reduction and odor control. The containers are monitored in real time by railway staff, who conduct inspections at intervals of no more than two hours. Water may be provided as needed, though feeding and mid-journey visits by owners are not permitted.

Passengers are advised to arrive at the station two to six hours before departure to complete the necessary check-in procedures. Pets can be collected within one hour after arrival, with pickup notifications sent via text message or phone call.

The service follows a "same departure, same arrival" policy, ensuring that pets and their owners travel on the same train.

Limited time offers

Pricing is based on travel distance and is currently offered at a 30 percent discount during the trial phase. For example, transporting a pet on a journey under 1,000 kilometers will cost 558 yuan (\$76) once the service is fully implemented, but for the trial period, it is discounted to 360 yuan.

For distances between 1,000 and 1,500 km — like the 1,300-km

route between Beijing and Shanghai — the standard rate will be 658 yuan, but currently costs 460 yuan.

A second-class seat on the same high-speed route typically costs between 550 and 670 yuan, making the pet transport service comparably priced to a passenger fare. Each booking includes insurance coverage of up to 2,000 yuan.

According to China Railway Express, the service is part of broader efforts to modernize the country's transportation infrastructure and meet the growing demand for pet-friendly travel options.

Before this initiative, pets were not permitted on China's high-speed trains. However, pet transport is allowed on certain routes in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom under specific conditions. In China, updated regulations issued in July 2022 prohibit the carriage of live animals such as chickens or ducks on passenger trains, with some exceptions for slower services in rural areas.

The idea for the new service emerged last year when the China Railway Customer Service Center launched a public survey to gauge interest in pet transportation. The campaign drew widespread attention on Chinese social media, generating millions of views and comments.

"In recent years, we have received numerous inquiries from passengers regarding the possibility of pet transportation on high-speed trains," the center said in a statement. "Based on feedback from the survey, we will further explore the feasibility of high-speed pet transportation. We welcome suggestions and opinions from the public."

Shen Peilan, a Shanghai native living in Beijing with two cats, welcomed the move but expressed concerns about animal welfare.

"It's a great start, but I'm still a bit concerned about the safety of the pets, especially cats, who can get very stressed when confined with other animals," Shen said. "I really hope that in the future, there could be a dedicated carriage where pets can stay with their owners."

Shen said she typically leaves her cats in Beijing during holidays and relies on friends, pet care services or boarding at pet stores while she visits family in Shanghai.

Other pet owners applauded the new service. Wei, a Beijing resident who has raised her cat Niuniu for over a decade, said the program would make her travels more enjoyable.



A vehicle transfers a helicopter from the icebreaker *Xuelong*, or *Snow Dragon*, at a dock in Shanghai on Tuesday. The polar research icebreaker *Xuelong's* return on that day marked the near completion of China's 41st Antarctic expedition. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

China's Antarctic research achieves several firsts in latest expedition

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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China's latest Antarctic expedition achieved multiple firsts, including launching active-source seismic exploration in the inland regions for the first time, which filled a gap in the country's high-precision seismic detection capabilities in the area.

The seismic detection technology reached an internationally advanced level, researchers said on Tuesday at a news briefing after the expedition, which was organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The icebreaker *Xuelong*, or *Snow Dragon*, has returned to Shanghai, marking the near completion of the mission.

The team also conducted a joint experiment using wideband hyperspectral microwave radiometers, providing critical data for research on polar ice cap melting, subglacial lakes and water systems, and sea level changes.

In another first, the team performed long piston coring for sediment samples in the Amundsen Sea, recovering an 8.67-meter sediment core. Scientists said the core will help unravel the ancient ocean and environmental evolution of the region.

Additionally, researchers optimized the design of subglacial buoys, improving their efficiency in recovery and deployment. As a result, a buoy deployed in the mission set a record for the longest observation period by a Chinese polar expedition, collecting data for 1,407 days.

"Through the innovation of technical methods and the large-

scale application of domestically developed equipment, our three-dimensional observation and monitoring capabilities from land, sea and air were comprehensively improved during this 41st Chinese Antarctic expedition," said Wang Jinhui, the expedition leader and chief scientist.

Wang added that the team's research into climate change's impact on the Antarctic ecosystem had yielded significant results.

The expedition also resulted in unexpected animal observations. Researchers collected a year's worth of penguin habitat data in Enderby Land and Amanda Bay for the first time, providing crucial information on penguin behavior and interannual habitat variations.

"Moreover, southern bottlenose whales were observed during such expeditions for the first time," Wang said. "Throughout the journey, a total of 560 whale groups were recorded, including 1,300 individuals across 14 species. Variations in whale habitats serve as an important indicator of global warming."

The expedition team also engaged in international cooperation, organizing a joint autumn cruise in the Ross Sea region. The United States, Australia, South Korea, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Malaysia and Thailand were among the participants.

Additionally, Chinese researchers collaborated with counterparts from Russia, Brazil, India, South Africa and other countries to conduct research on Antarctic biological ecology. Two Thai scientists were invited to study microplastics at China's Great Wall Station, one

of the country's five research bases in Antarctica.

"The expedition set records in operational time and regional coverage, providing experience for future large-scale, high-intensity, interdisciplinary polar investigations," said Long Wei, deputy director of the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration.

"These efforts provide strong support for China and the international community to conduct in-depth research on the rapid changes in Antarctica, its ecological response, global climate change and Antarctic governance," he added.

The mission included 516 members from 118 domestic and international institutions and marked the second time China has conducted a three-ship segmented expedition in Antarctica.

Xuelong departed from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Nov 1, traveling more than 27,000 nautical miles over 159 days. The *Yongsheng* vessel left Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province, on Nov 20, completing its mission on Jan 23 after a 65-day journey covering nearly 11,000 nautical miles.

Meanwhile, China's icebreaker *Xuelong 2*, or *Snow Dragon 2*, is conducting a joint expedition in the Ross Sea, the first time China has undertaken such a mission. Researchers said the expedition will provide scientific data to better understand sea-ice-air interaction, ecosystem processes, biological survival strategies and carbon burial in the region's autumn low-dark season.

Snow Dragon 2 is expected to return to Shanghai in June.

Splitting water with sunlight produces hydrogen

SHENYANG — French sci-fi author Jules Verne predicted about 150 years ago that water would become the fuel of the future. Today, scientists are striving to turn this fantasy into reality.

Chinese researchers recently achieved a breakthrough in "photocatalytic water splitting for hydrogen production". By performing "structural reshaping" and "element substitution" on a semiconductor material, they significantly enhanced the efficiency of converting water into clean hydrogen energy by using sunlight.

Current solar-driven hydrogen production primarily relies on two methods — one uses solar panels to generate electricity for water electrolysis, which requires complex and costly equipment, while the other employs semiconductor materials as catalysts to directly split water molecules under sunlight, according to Liu Gang, director of the Institute of Metal Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and leader of the research team.

The key to directly splitting water with sunlight lies in a material called titanium dioxide. When exposed to sunlight, it functions like a microscopic power plant, generating energized electron-hole pairs that break down water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen, Liu explained.

“We aim to further improve the technology to enable efficient utilization of visible light in sunlight.”

Liu Gang, director of the Institute of Metal Research

However, traditional titanium dioxide has a critical flaw — its internal structure resembles a maze, causing the activated electrons and holes to collide randomly and recombine and annihilate within a millionth of a second. Additionally, the high-temperature fabrication process of the material often leads to oxygen atom loss, creating positively charged "trap zones" that capture electrons.

Liu's team addressed these issues by introducing scandium, a rare-earth element neighboring titanium on the periodic table, to restructure the material.

Scandium ions fit perfectly into the titanium dioxide lattice without causing structural distortion. Their stable valence neutralizes the charge imbalance caused by oxygen vacancies, eliminating "trap zones". Moreover, scandium atoms reconstruct the crystal surface, creating specific facets that act like "electronic highways and overpasses", allowing electrons and holes to escape the maze efficiently.

Through precise control, the research team successfully developed a specialized titanium dioxide material with significantly enhanced performance — its use of ultraviolet light exceeded 30 percent, and its hydrogen production efficiency under simulated sunlight was 15 times higher than previously reported titanium dioxide materials, setting a new record, Liu stated.

"If used to create a 1-square-meter photocatalytic material panel, around 10 liters of hydrogen can be produced with one day of sunlight," Liu said.

The achievement was published in the latest issue of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*.

"We aim to further improve the technology to enable efficient utilization of visible light in sunlight," Liu revealed.

He also noted that China currently accounts for over 50 percent of global titanium dioxide production, supported by a robust industrial chain.

"With continued advancements in photocatalytic water-splitting efficiency, this technology holds promise for industrial application, and could drive the transformation of energy systems," Liu added.

XINHUA

Guideline calls for high-quality talent cultivation aligning with labor market

By ZHAO YIMENG
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China will prioritize optimizing its talent cultivation and supply system to support the high-quality employment of college graduates, according to a new guideline issued on Tuesday by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet.

The guideline aims to accelerate the development of an employment service system for college graduates, with a focus on aligning education with labor market needs and promoting full employment.

It sets a goal of establishing a nationwide employment services network that is inclusive, well-functioning and reliable within three to five years, laying a solid foundation for graduates to find jobs.

Since 2022, the number of college graduates in China has exceeded 10 million annually, making them the largest contributors to new urban employment, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Education's Department of College Students Affairs said in an official

statement on Tuesday.

Official data shows the number of college graduates in China is expected to reach 12.22 million this year, an increase of 430,000 from last year.

A problem-oriented approach is urgently needed to address key challenges such as mismatches between supply and demand and to upgrade employment services, the spokesperson said, adding that the measures will help tackle structural challenges in graduate employment.

The guideline proposes a systematic overhaul of graduate employment support, focusing on optimizing the talent supply system, upgrading traditional employment services and reinforcing institutional support.

Optimizing the talent cultivation and supply system has been positioned as the foundation of graduate employment reform. It calls for education that better aligns with evolving labor market needs.

Measures include establishing a national talent demand database, conducting regular workforce trend analyses and dynamically adjusting university programs and resources accord-

ingly. The guideline also emphasizes reforming enrollment plans and talent training models based on employment outcomes and industry feedback.

Meanwhile, the guideline aims to expand employment services for graduates, highlighting the role of campus recruitment in connecting students with job vacancies.

Universities are urged to strengthen career guidance and life planning support, while regional and sector-based employment markets will be developed to enhance job opportunities.

The guideline also supports entrepreneurship and encourages diverse career paths, including opportunities in new industries, small and medium-sized enterprises, and national strategic sectors.

To ensure effective implementation, the guideline calls for professional employment service institutions within universities and the adoption of digital tools to improve service efficiency. It also promotes better coordination of recruitment timelines across public-sector employers and emphasizes the importance of preserving time in academic schedules for job-seeking activities.

Celestial wonder



A solar halo appears in the sky over Sanmen county, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. The solar halo is primarily caused by the reflection and refraction of sunlight by high-altitude clouds, indicating abundant moisture in the atmosphere. PAN KANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

ICE AND SNOW RESOURCES HELP FUEL JILIN'S ECONOMIC RENEWAL

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Northeast province implements policies to attract foreign investment

As part of Jilin's drive to enhance opening-up and upgrade local industrial layout, the Northeast China province is ramping up efforts to attract foreign investment while expanding the reach of policies that facilitate the business of foreign-funded enterprises.

According to the provincial government's recently-issued Several Measures to Further Promote High-Level Opening-Up Development, the policies cover 35 measures, including providing incentives, preferential treatment and support to foreign-funded enterprises, involving foreign investment projects, reinvestment by foreign businesses and foreign-funded research and development centers. The most representative measures include encouraging new projects by foreign investment and expanding the scope of foreign-funded investment.

As for foreign investment projects on the list issued by the central government, Jilin officials said there will be a 2 percent reward for enterprises whose actual foreign investment amount exceeds \$5 million in the current year. Projects listed can also enjoy preferential policies such as the duty-free import of self-use equipment.

Additionally, Jilin will implement national treatment methods for foreign-funded enterprises, ensuring they participate equally in government procurement and standard-setting in accordance with laws and regulations. Furthermore, the province will continue to promote customs clearance facilitation and simplify customs procedures to provide a convenient business environment.

Sound industrial layout

Known as the "cradle of China's automotive industry", Jilin witnessed the establishment of New China's first automobile workshop back in 1953.

The first car in New China, the Jiefang brand, and the first sedan, the Dongfeng brand, were both produced by FAW, which is based in Changchun, Jilin. FAW is known for production of the Hongqi sedan, the brand used by Chinese national leaders during their official visits.

In the early 1990s, the province began cooperating with Germany in the automotive and parts sectors. FAW-Volkswagen, as a model of Sino-German automotive industry cooperation, is one of the representative vehicle production enterprises in China.

Audi FAW NEV kicked off its premium electric platform production base at the end of 2024 in Changchun, a witness to the evolution of Sino-German automotive cooperation and the rapid advancement of China's automotive industry.

A prototype of the CR bullet train, capable of running at a speed of 400 kilometers per hour, was unveiled in 2024 by CRRC Changchun Railway Vehicles, a critical player for the R&D, manufacturing and export of rail passenger cars.

In the same year, the company's first independently developed hydrogen-powered urban train completed a test at a speed of 160 km/h, a breakthrough in the application of hydrogen energy in China's rail transit.

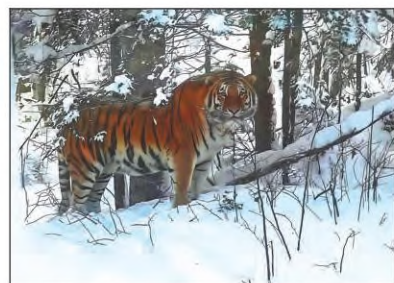
Chang Guang Satellite Technology, the country's first commercial remote sensing satellite company, was included into the Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2024. The Jilin-1 satellite constellation developed by the company, featuring more than 117 satellites, can provide frequent images of any location.

Jilin is located at the geometric center of Northeast Asia, with 1,452 kilometers of borders, 18 ports and four China-Europe freight train routes. As a key gateway for China's opening-up, it has established economic and trade relations with 196 countries and regions worldwide. The province has 12 national-level development zones, two comprehensive bonded zones and four cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zones, showcasing a mature layout for opening-up.

The Changchun Automobile Economic and Technological Development Zone is China's only national-level economic and technological development zone named after automobiles. It houses six major automotive manufacturers and seven renowned automotive brands, with a



LIU YANG / CHINA DAILY



From left: A wild tiger at the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park in Jilin province. Some Goguryeo ruins and tombs in the province are designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The CR450 bullet train has a test speed of up to 450 kilometers per hour.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

total production value reaching 109.19 billion yuan (\$14.94 billion) in 2024.

Jilin's industrial system is comprehensive, with a solid manufacturing base covering 40 out of 41 industrial categories and encompassing 31 major manufacturing industry categories.

The booming media industry in the province, driven by digital tools, is becoming a new factor to boost the local economy. Jishi Media is building up the Northeast Tiger and Leopard Culture International Communication Center. Based on large artificial intelligence models such as DeepSeek and Tongyi Qian-

wen, the company is turning itself into a key platform to popularize local resources and cultural heritage. Jilin Northeast Asia Publishing and Media Group has four major business segments of books, newspapers, printing, and distribution. Integrating the entire industry chain of editing and publishing, the company is distributing products all over the country.

Sustainable development

Since the winter of 2023, the cultural and tourism market in Northeast China has been heating up, and the hosting of the 9th Asian Winter Games drew attention to the region

from all over the world. The influx of tourists has accelerated development of related industries such as catering, accommodation and entertainment. And new consumer demands continuously give rise to new industrial forms, promoting the optimization of local industries.

Tourists can taste Korean ethnic cuisine in Yanji, explore the forests of Changbai Mountain, and wander through the vast grasslands. They can also learn about movie history in the Former Site Museum of Changchun Film Studio. A comprehensive experience of natural landscapes, ethnic customs and varied cultures is accessible by

traveling in the province.

During the 2024-25 winter season, Jilin received 170 million visits from domestic tourists, with their spending totaling 295 billion yuan, increasing 35 percent and 21 percent year-on-year respectively.

Leveraging the Goguryeo UNESCO World Heritage Site, the province is creating the G331 cultural heritage protection and utilization exhibition corridor, with visitor numbers at related scenic spots during the Spring Festival holiday increasing by 143 percent year-on-year.

Changchun Film Studio is regarded as a cradle of China's film industry, with 80 years of history. The Former

Site Museum of Changchun Film Studio, combining patriotic education with film art, has become a popular destination to learn about the history of the film industry in China.

Its visitor numbers and total revenue increased by 66 percent and 69 percent respectively in 2024. Meanwhile, Chagan Lake ice fishing, a national-level intangible cultural heritage project offering winter fishing and hunting experiences, has become a prominent attraction for winter tourism.

The Northeast China region is a cradle for folk customs. The distinctive folk cultures of the Korean ethnic group, represented by the *nongnye* dance, and the Mongolian ethnic group, represented by Nadam celebrations, are highlights. To make contact with the "mysterious Oroqen ethnic group" has become another distinctive item in the ice and snow journey. Tourists from all over the country can experience ethnic customs and deepen their belonging in the Chinese nation.

In recent years, Jilin has promoted its attractions to global visitors by organizing diverse international sports, tourism, cultural, economic and trade activities centered on ice and snow. The China Changchun Jingyuetan Vasaloppet International Ski Festival, a world-renowned cross-country skiing event, has been held for 23 sessions. Also, the second FIS Snowboard Cross World Cup of the 2024-25 season was held in Beidahu of Jilin city. In 2024, cross-border tourism in the province increased by 161 percent year-on-year.

The cultural and tourism industry has had an immediate effect on the development of the economy and society. It is a barometer and indicator of economic development. Entering this new era, the all-around revitalization of Northeast China has continued to make progress. The trend of being more resilient, more dynamic and more positive has become obvious, officials said.

Colorful offerings

Covering an area of 187,400 square kilometers, Jilin is known for its precious and fertile black soil and is often referred to as "the nation's food basket" and "golden corn and rice-planting belt" due to its high productivity levels of its land.

Jilin's rice, fresh corn, miscellaneous grains and beans, beef and other high-quality foods have their fans all over the country. In 2024, Jilin's total grain output reached 42.66 billion kilograms, setting a new record. The province was the first in China to introduce regulations for the protection of black soil, with more than 2.73 million hectares of cultivation areas under protection.

Changbai Mountain, one of China's top 10 famous mountains, serves as the "water tower" of Northeast China, as it is the source of the Songhua, Tumen and Yalu rivers. The place nurtures the representative "three treasures" of ginseng, mineral water and Songhua inkstones. The mountain area has a long winter season with abundant high-quality snow. It belongs to the world's Golden Snow Belt along with the Alps in Europe and the Rocky Mountains in North America.

Jilin also boasts a forest coverage rate of 45.27 percent, according to the official data. In its eastern region, there are rolling mountains where tigers and leopards live. In the western part, there are grasslands and wetlands where cranes are often seen. In the central region, there are vast fertile fields with grains.

With forests along the borders and close to the sea, Jilin's Hunchun Port is bustling with imports and exports, witnessing a significant rise in cross-border e-commerce. More than 70 percent of emperor crabs on dining tables across the country come from Hunchun. Currently, the area is deepening cooperation across Northeast Asia, striving to become a key gateway for the Belt and Road Initiative.

Additionally, Jilin is a land with a revolutionary history, where countless martyrs sacrificed their lives to build the New China. Efforts are being made to curate modern and contemporary history exhibitions, protect and enhance the historical and cultural significance of Changchun's Ximin Avenue, and construct a number of high-quality museums and exhibition halls.

ADVERTORIAL

WORLD

EU ministers cautious over hike in tariffs

Bloc members focused on negotiation while preparing for countermeasures

By JONATHAN POWELL in London and CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels

European Union trade ministers struck a cautious tone after their meeting in Luxembourg on Monday, resisting immediate retaliation against the United States' "reciprocal tariffs" and warning that "there are no winners" in a trade war.

The 27-nation bloc faces extensive US tariffs, including 25 percent duties on steel, aluminum and cars, plus 20 percent "reciprocal tariffs" on most other goods starting on Wednesday, though officials stressed they remain focused on negotiating a solution rather than matching all US measures.

Speaking at a news briefing after the meeting, EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic said the EU and the US are "in the early stages of discussions" that are complicated "because the US view tariffs not as a tactical step, but as a corrective measure".

He said the two sides agree that the EU-US trade relationship "could benefit from a fresh look and a boost in strategic areas", noting that both "face similar challenges". Sefcovic added that the focus has been on finalizing steel and aluminum countermeasures, though the announcement of the new "so-called reciprocal tariffs ... forces us to look at additional steps".

"After carefully reviewing all of it, we have worked to table a robust list of countermeasures, while balancing the burden across all member states," he said. A member-state vote is set for Wednesday, with the final list set to be adopted on April 15, he added. "Duties on products will kick in on that day for the first set of measures, and on May 15 for the remaining ones."

As the EU trade ministers arrived for the crucial talks, they offered differing perspectives to reporters, highlighting the complex challenge of forming a unified response.

Robert Habeck, Germany's economy minister, emphasized that the EU could maintain a strong stance against the US, provided the member states present a unified front.

"The stock markets are already collapsing and the damage could become even greater. It is therefore important ... to act clearly and decisively and prudently, which means realizing that we are in a strong position," Habeck said.

Laurent Saint-Martin, the French minister for foreign trade, advocated for potentially "extremely aggressive" countermeasures to the sweeping tariffs. "We must not exclude any option on goods, on services ... and open the European toolbox, which is very comprehensive," he said, referring to the EU's anti-coercion instrument.

Reinette Klever, the Dutch minister for foreign trade and development, called for a measured approach, saying, "We need to get

ourselves at the table with the Americans and see how we can lower these tariffs."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen reiterated that US tariffs would only harm US consumers and emphasized that "Europe is always ready for a good deal". She said the bloc stands prepared to implement countermeasures and strengthen its single market, if necessary.

Von der Leyen also offered a deal on Monday to remove tariffs on all industrial goods as part of the trade talks. "We stand ready to negotiate with the US. Indeed, we have offered zero-for-zero tariffs for industrial goods as we have successfully done with many other trading partners," she said.

'Not enough'

Asked by a reporter whether the zero tariff offer was enough for him to back down, US President Donald Trump said, "No, it's not."

He suggested that the EU should commit to buying \$350 billion of US energy to get a reprieve from his sweeping tariffs. "We have a deficit with the European Union of \$350 billion and it's gonna disappear fast," Trump said.

Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive and chief economist at the European Policy Center, said on Monday: "It's difficult to know how to respond (to the US tariffs) because it is unprecedented. What we've seen is the cancellation of decades-long principles that have guided international trade by the biggest economy, by the main proponent of that system."

"But it is going to be a question over weeks, over months, also with always the possibility of an escalation if the EU responds. So it's going to be a difficult process," he said.

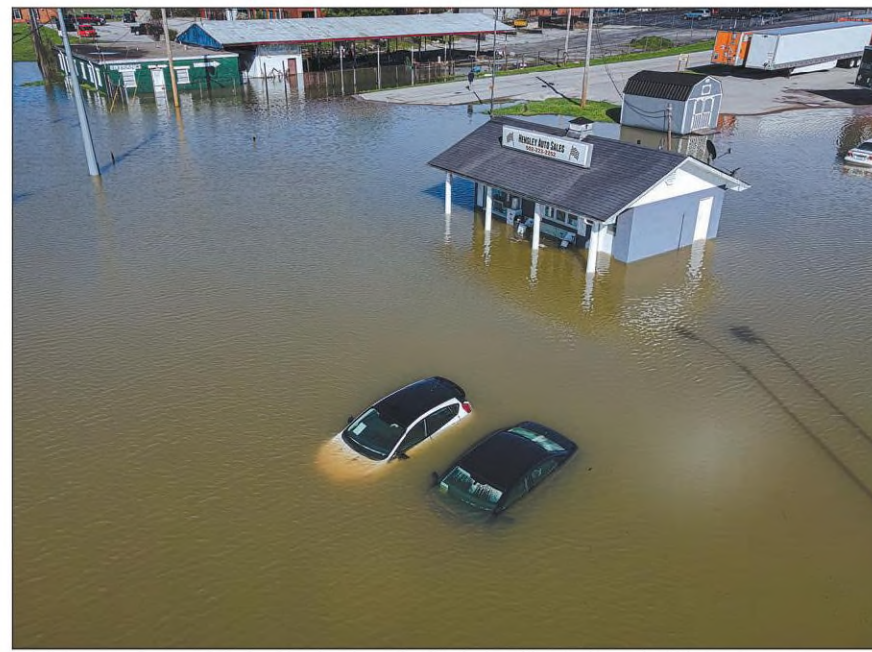
Moreno Bertoldi, a senior associate research fellow at the Geoeconomics Center of the Italian Institute for International Political Studies, and Marco Buti of the European University Institute and a former European Commission official wrote in a joint article that "the claim that a trade war with the US is best avoided is valid. But Trump has already started the war."

"The real question then is whether Europe should surrender without a fight, hoping for the unlikely benevolence of the victor, and validating its disdain for a weak and divided EU, or whether it should fight back, while remaining open to negotiation, in order to truly seek a solution to the trade war," they said in the article, published on the Bruegel think tank's website.

"Bending the knee to the tyrant will most likely encourage the tyrant to ask for more. Therefore, if the aim is to end an economically devastating conflict as quickly as possible, the EU must risk responding in kind to US tariff aggression," they added.

Contact the writers at jonathan@mail.chinadailyuk.com

Sinking feeling



Vehicles are submerged in floodwaters from the Kentucky River in Frankfort, Kentucky, on Monday. Flooding worsened across the US South and Midwest, threatening communities already struggling with days of heavy rain and storms that killed at least 23 people. JON CHERRY / AP

ASEAN unity seen as key against levies

By PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong prime@chinadailyapac.com

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations must harness its "collective bargaining power" to counter the potentially harsh impact brought by the higher United States tariffs, analysts said, as was urged by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

Southeast Asian economies, which have long thrived on export growth and free trade, are expected to be hard hit by the so-called reciprocal tariffs that US President Donald Trump unveiled on April 2. Malaysia, as this year's rotating chair of ASEAN, responded quickly. In a social media address, Anwar said he will "continue to coordinate efforts to present a united regional front, maintain open and resilient supply chains, and ensure that ASEAN's collective voice is heard clearly and firmly on the international stage".

Malaysia is hosting an ASEAN economic ministers' meeting on Thursday and Anwar said he is "constantly in touch" with other ASEAN leaders to "have a common position" on US tariffs.

Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto made a one-day state visit to Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, where he and Anwar discussed the tariff issue.

Anwar has also had similar discussions over the phone with the leaders of Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam.

"ASEAN, by design, is a consensus-based organization, not a negotiating bloc with bite," said Wan Suhaimie Wan Mohd Saidie, head of economic research at Malaysia's Kenanga Investment Bank.

But he added, "The era of polite diplomacy may be over."

'Seismic change'

Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong on Friday warned that the US tariff move was a "seismic change in the global order" that ends the era of rules-based globalization and free trade.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan received a phone call from US Secretary of State



Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim delivers a speech during the ASEAN Investment Conference 2025 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday. ARIF KARTONO / AFP

Marco Rubio on Friday, with both parties agreeing to continue trade negotiations, according to local media reports.

Some individual ASEAN countries have initiated high-level discussions with Trump and his administration.

To Lam, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, held a phone conversation with Trump on Friday. On the call, he proposed that Vietnam would reduce its import tariffs on US goods to zero in exchange for a similar tax rate by the US on products imported from Vietnam.

Wan Suhaimie from Kenanga Investment Bank said individual ASEAN countries do not have the leverage to negotiate with the US.

He noted that ASEAN is a \$3.6 trillion economy with over 650 million people, so negotiating as a bloc "can command more attention".

"Now is the time to shift from fragmented bilateral deals to collective bargaining power," he said.

Chin Yew Sin, president of the Asia-Pacific Strategy Research Center, a Kuala Lumpur-based think tank, said negotiating as a trade bloc will also help less-developed ASEAN economies. Chin noted the examples of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar — which do not have much bargaining power and "are basically at the mercy of the US".

"Their economies will be badly hit by these tariffs," he added.

James Chin, a professor of Asian studies at the University of Tasmania in Australia, said one of the challenges of negotiating as a bloc is that different ASEAN countries have been slapped with different rates.

The US is imposing a 10 percent "minimum baseline tariff" on all imports and higher rates against other trading partners.

In ASEAN, a 10 percent tariff was imposed on Singapore, but other countries face higher rates: Cambodia (49 percent), Laos (48 percent), Vietnam (46 percent), Myanmar (44 percent), Thailand (36 percent), Indonesia (32 percent), Brunei (24 percent), Malaysia (24 percent), and the Philippines (17 percent).

The varied rates also mean that the tariff hike will have a different impact on individual ASEAN economies. Japanese investment bank Nomura said in its April 3 report that it has cut 2025 GDP growth forecasts by 0.1 to 0.6 percentage points across the region.

Nomura said it is "most cautious" about the impact of reciprocal tariffs on Thailand and Indonesia, where the tariff rates "were much higher than expected".

Yang Han and Vivien Xu in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

Researchers plan to move out as Trump tightens grip

WASHINGTON — In the halls of US universities and research labs, one question has become increasingly common as President Donald Trump tightens his grip on science and education: whether to move abroad.

"Everybody is talking about it," JP Flores, a doctoral student in genetics at the University of North Carolina, told Agence France-Presse.

The discussion was thrust into the spotlight after Yale philosophy professor Jason Stanley, a specialist in fascism, announced he was taking a post in Canada due to the Trump administration's "authoritarian" bent.

"I made the decision when Columbia folded," he told CBS News. "I made it in a split second."

Columbia University, which the Trump administration has threatened with major funding cuts, said it agreed to take steps to rein in pro-Palestinian protests, among other actions.

"It is not the time to cower and fear," said Stanley.

With similar threats lodged against other universities, many researchers are worried about the future of academic freedom in the United States.

Coupled with the administration's broad cuts to federal funding, some fear the country's research field, once viewed as the envy of the world, maybe losing its luster.

More than 75 percent of scientists are now considering departing the country over Trump's policies, according to a survey of over 1,600 people published in late March by the journal Nature.

"The trend was particularly pronounced among early-career researchers," the journal said.

"People are just so scared," Daniela Fodera, a Columbia PhD student whose research grant was canceled, told AFP.

Amid the uncertainty, several academic institutions in recent weeks have announced a hiring freeze and a reduction in the number of graduate student positions.

"That's definitely messing up the academic pipeline," said Fodera, a biomechanics student.

Karen Sfanos, head of a research lab at Johns Hopkins University, said, "It's kind of a surreal time for scientists because we just don't know what's going to happen with funding."

Fodera, who studies uterine fibroids — benign tumors affecting many women — said she has begun to "actively look at positions in Europe and abroad for continuing my postdoctoral training".

With mounting concerns among US researchers, several European and Canadian universities have launched initiatives to attract some of the talent, though they may not need to try too hard.

"I know researchers already that have dual citizenship, or who have family in Canada, in France, in Germany, are saying, 'I think I'm going to go live in Germany for the next, you know, five years and do research there,'" said Gwen Nichols.

The physician, a senior leader at a blood cancer research group, warned the possible exodus could make the United States "lose our dominance as the biopharmaceutical innovation leader of the world".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Workers walk outside of a Stellantis assembly plant in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, on Thursday. Stellantis said on Thursday that it was pausing production at some plants in Canada and Mexico, the first disruptions to hit the sector since US tariffs on foreign-made vehicles came into force. EFF KOWALSKI / AFP

Canada targets US auto imports amid trade tensions

By YANG GAO in Toronto gaoyang@chinadailyusa.com

Canada has escalated its trade conflict with the United States by slapping a 25 percent tariff on US-made vehicles, a defensive move that one expert says could hurt both economies.

Ottawa's response to a 25 percent US tariff on imported vehicles could trigger a fresh round of trade tensions between the countries, according to Julian Karagunesian, an economics professor at McGill University, who said Canada had to react to avoid being "just be an easy target".

Karagunesian, who served as a special adviser on international trade

and finance to the Canadian Ministry of Finance, said there's a political argument for retaliation, but it comes with risks. "Canada's economy is highly integrated with the US, and an extended trade war would damage both," he told China Daily.

On Thursday, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced that the country would impose a 25 percent tariff on US vehicle imports that do not meet the standards of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA. "We must respond with both purpose and force," he said.

Canada has requested World Trade Organization dispute consultations with the US concerning Washington imposing a 25 percent duty on automobiles and auto parts from Cana-

da, the WTO said on Monday.

Karagunesian said that while Canada legally has the capacity to protest such tariffs under free trade deals such as the USMCA or through the WTO, the effectiveness of those measures is uncertain.

"The problem is that trade law and trade politics don't always align," he said. "The US might not care about legal arguments if it sees a strategic benefit in imposing tariffs."

Karagunesian also said that Canada has leverage in certain sectors, such as aluminum, which he said makes up 60 percent of US imports and largely comes from Quebec.

However, he proposed avoiding dollar-for-dollar tariffs and argued that Canada should direct procure-

ment spending as much as possible away from US companies and toward domestic ones.

He said Trump's tariffs aim to reverse US deindustrialization, but his approach risks escalating tensions rather than rebuilding manufacturing. "It's a zero-sum mindset that ignores shared North American interests," he said.

Automaker Stellantis announced a two-week production pause starting Monday at its facility in Windsor, Ontario, citing trade-related uncertainty. The plant employs more than 3,500 workers.

The counter-tariffs are expected to raise about C\$8 billion (\$5.64 billion), which Carney said will be used to assist Canadian workers.

WORLD

Teheran sees opportunity and test in nuclear talks

By MIKE GU in Hong Kong
mikegu@chinadailyhk.com

Iran's confirmation of indirect talks with the United States on the nuclear issue in Oman on Saturday, following contrasting claims of "direct talks" by the White House, is being seen by Teheran as both an "opportunity" as well as a "test," after threats of bombings by Washington.

"Iran and the United States will meet in Oman on Saturday for indirect high-level talks," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X early on Tuesday. "It is as much an opportunity as it is a test. The ball is in America's court," he said.

On Monday, US President Donald Trump, during a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, made a surprise announcement: "We're having direct talks with Iran," indicating a "very big meeting" to involve "very high-level" officials.

The moves came after Iran sent a reply to Trump on his proposal for negotiations via Oman on March 27, rejecting direct talks with the US under heavy pressure and threats, but keeping the door open for indirect contacts. Trump announced on March 7 that he sent a letter to the Iranian leadership calling for nuclear negotiations, but threatened to bomb Iran if no agreement is reached.

"We believe in negotiation, but not in humiliation," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian stressed on Monday when commenting on nuclear talks with the US, Iran's MEHR News Agency reported.

"We are not seeking war, ten-

sions or nuclear weapons; we are seeking negotiations. However, the Americans must also prove that they are genuinely pursuing negotiations," said Pezeshkian during a meeting with representatives of political parties and associations.

At a news conference on Tuesday, Iranian government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said Iran has always believed in dialogue, and as long as the other side speaks with the language of respect, Teheran is ready to engage in talks.

Rational mindset

"As a negotiating party, we approach these talks with an equal footing and a rational mindset, aiming for a process that protects our national interests and improves the situation of our people."

Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with six major countries — the United Kingdom, China, France, Germany, Russia, and the US — in July 2015, accepting restrictions on its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief. However, in May 2018, during Trump's first term, the US withdrew from the deal and reinstated sanctions.

On Monday, Esmail Baqaei, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of Iran, told a news conference that a tripartite meeting is to be held in Moscow, where China, Russia, and Iran will discuss various aspects related to the nuclear issue.

Moscow welcomed nuclear talks between the United States and Iran, the Kremlin said on Tuesday, after Washington and Teheran made the announcement of high-level discussions.



US President Donald Trump meets Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington on Monday. KEVIN MOHATT / REUTERS

New Gaza hostage deal in the works: Israeli PM

Trump meets Netanyahu, repeats his controversial displacement proposal

WASHINGTON/GAZA — US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that new negotiations aimed at getting more hostages released from Hamas captivity in Gaza were in the works.

"We're working now on another deal that we hope will succeed, and we're committed to getting all the hostages out," Netanyahu told reporters in the Oval Office. Trump, for his part, said, "We are trying very hard to get the hostages out. We're looking at another ceasefire, we'll see what happens."

Netanyahu added that "the hostages are in agony, and we want to get them all out."

The Israeli leader, seated next to Trump, highlighted an earlier hostage release agreement negotiated in part by Trump's regional envoy Steve Witkoff that "got 25 out".

Netanyahu's visit follows the collapse of Israel's six-week truce with Hamas, whose militants launched an unprecedented attack on Israel on Oct 7, 2023, that triggered the Israeli fighting in Gaza.

The fragile ceasefire ended with Israel's resumption of airstrikes on Gaza on March 18.

The recent truce had allowed the return of 33 Israeli hostages, eight of whom were dead, in exchange for the release of some 1,800 Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

The Israeli prime minister and his government maintain, against the advice of most hostage families, that increased military pressure is the only way to force Hamas to return the remaining hostages, dead or alive.

Of the 251 hostages abducted during Hamas's Oct 7 attack, 58 remain in captivity in Gaza, including 34 who the Israeli military says are dead.

After staying silent of late on his much-criticized idea of the United States taking over Gaza and displacing its people, Trump plugged it again on Monday.

Trump has repeatedly spoken of Gaza, which the Palestinians want as part of a future state of their own, as a business opportunity for the US, saying the Gaza Strip could be transformed into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

Countries around the world and in particular Arab nations have rejected this proposal vehemently, including Egypt and Jordan — where Trump has suggested the Palestinians of Gaza be sent to live.

"Having a peace force like the United States there, controlling and owning the Gaza Strip would be a good thing," Trump said.

Sticking points

Regarding the post-war governance in Gaza, the leaders of France, Egypt and Jordan on Monday said the Palestinian Authority must head the Gaza Strip.

The question of who will rule the Palestinian territory has been one of the main sticking points in efforts to prolong a ceasefire in Gaza that collapsed last month.

On a visit to Cairo where he met his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah El-Sisi as well as Jordan's King Abdullah II, French President Emmanuel Macron said Hamas should have no role in governing the

Gaza Strip once its fighting with Israel is over.

Also on Monday, the heads of six United Nations agencies issued a joint statement, calling on the international community to take urgent and decisive action to restore a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, ensure unrestricted humanitarian access, and protect civilian lives.

It warned that for more than a month, no commercial or humanitarian supplies have entered Gaza, where more than 2.1 million people remain trapped under ongoing bombardment and severe shortages. Meanwhile, critical aid — including food, medicine, fuel, and shelter materials — continues to accumulate at border crossings, unable to reach those in need.

The calls and talks on the diplomatic front, however, did not stop the fighting in the enclave. Gaza's civil defense agency said on Tuesday that Israeli strikes overnight killed at least 19 people across the Palestinian territory, where Israel has resumed its offensive against Hamas.

The agency's spokesperson told AFP that "19 civilians including several children were martyred" and dozens more wounded in the latest Israeli raids.

Separately, a media outlet affiliated with the Islamic Jihad movement, a Hamas ally, announced the death on Monday of an employee in an Israeli strike on a tent used by journalists in the Khan Younis area.

The Hamas government media office had on Monday reported the death of journalist Hilmi Al-Faqawi, who worked for a local news agency, in the same strike.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

Food aid cuts put millions in danger, sources say

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump's administration is ending most, if not all, remaining US aid for Afghanistan and Yemen, sources said on Monday, in what the UN World Food Programme said could be "a death sentence" for millions.

The cuts were among numerous aid programs terminated for more than a dozen countries, including Somalia and Syria, over the weekend by the State Department and US Agency for International Development, according to Sarah Charles, a former head of USAID's humanitarian affairs bureau, and nine sources, including six current US officials involved in humanitarian aid who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The total amount of aid cut was more than \$1.3 billion, according to figures provided by Stand Up For Aid, a grassroots advocacy group. That includes \$562 million for Afghanistan, \$107 million for Yemen, \$170 million for Somalia, \$237 million for Syria and \$12 million for Gaza.

The UN World Food Programme warned that the termination of US funding for emergency food assistance "could amount to a death sentence for millions of people facing extreme hunger and starvation", and said it was in contact with the Trump administration for more information.

In a Post on X, WFP chief Cindy McCain said funding cuts "will deepen hunger, fuel instability, and make the world far less safe."

A State Department spokesperson referred Reuters to the White House when asked about the program terminations. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the UN was trying to get details on the canceled contracts.

The cuts are the latest piece of the Trump administration's drive to dismantle USAID, the main US humanitarian aid agency. His administration has canceled billions of dollars in lifesaving programs since the president began his second term on Jan 20.

Many of the terminated programs had been granted waivers by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio from cuts to foreign aid programs carried out by billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency since February, three of the sources said.

The US has been the largest aid donor to Afghanistan, and Yemen, most of which is controlled by the Houthi movement. Both countries have suffered years of devastating conflict.

"Every remaining USAID award for Afghanistan was terminated," said one source. The officials said the canceled funds included assistance for a UN agency that helps women and girls, the WFP and at least six non-governmental organizations.

Assistance to Afghans provided by the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration also was terminated, five sources said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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Childbirth deaths alarm Sub-Saharan Africa: UN

By CHINA DAILY

As the world observed World Health Day on Monday, a joint report by the United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization and the United Nations drew attention to a growing maternal health crisis in sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite global progress in reducing maternal deaths, the region continues to face disproportionately high maternal mortality rates. Nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa are particularly affected, with some reporting more than 500 deaths per 100,000 live births.

The findings highlight significant inequalities in maternal health access, with many countries still struggling to provide basic healthcare services that could save the lives of mothers and children.

The report, Trend in Maternal Mortality Rates 2000 to 2023, was released on Monday and reveals that nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa were classified as having a "very high" maternal mortality ratio in 2023. Nigeria is at the heart of this crisis, accounting for nearly 29 percent of global maternal deaths, with an estimated 75,000 fatalities.

Nigeria's maternal mortality ratio stands at 993. Along with India, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan, the country accounts for nearly half of all maternal deaths worldwide.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the

hardest-hit region, with countries like Chad and the Central African Republic showing particularly high risks. A 15-year-old girl in these countries has a one-in-24 chance of dying from maternal causes during her lifetime.

South Sudan, which has a maternal mortality ratio of 692, and Liberia are also among the countries with alarmingly high maternal death rates.

These statistics underscore the stark contrast between countries with robust healthcare systems and those struggling to provide even basic maternal care.

Henrietta Fore, UNICEF's executive director, emphasized the gravity of the situation on Monday, saying, "The statistics we are seeing are unacceptable. No child should face the terrifying prospect of dying during childbirth. Yet, in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, young girls are facing these risks due to lack of access to healthcare, skilled birth attendants and life-saving services."

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of WHO, posted on social media, "No woman should have to risk her life simply by becoming pregnant."

The report's findings serve as a call for increased international cooperation and financial commitments to maternal health programs, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Sharon Nakola in Nairobi
contributed to this story.

Fire alert

Smoke rises over the Parisian skyline as fire erupts at a waste disposal center at Boulevard de Douaumont, according to the fire department, in Paris on Monday. The building was completely gutted and destroyed, but all staff members inside were safely evacuated, it said. VIA REUTERS



US gives Nippon Steel bid a second look

WASHINGTON/TOKYO — US President Donald Trump on Monday directed a US national security panel to take a fresh look at Nippon Steel's bid for US Steel — to help determine if "further action" is appropriate, raising hopes that the deal could gain the elusive green light.

"I direct the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States ... to conduct a review of the acquisition of US Steel by (Nippon Steel) to assist me in determining whether further action in this matter may be appropriate," the memo reads.

Shares in US Steel shot up nearly 14 percent as investors felt it meant the administration was considering

approving the merger, which former president Joe Biden blocked in January on national security grounds.

Nippon Steel shares jumped almost 10 percent in Tokyo morning trade on Tuesday.

Nippon Steel said it was pleased by the news. "We have been confident from the outset that an objective, fact-based review of our proposed partnership with US Steel will show that it strengthens American economic and national security," it said.

A spokesperson for US Steel said the company looks forward "to continuing to work closely with President Trump and his administration to finalize this significant

and important investment."

Muto Yoji, Japan's industry minister, declined to comment on Tuesday whether Nippon Steel's bid was discussed during Monday's call between Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, who is seeking to reverse US tariffs on Japanese goods.

"We believe that the relevant parties will continue to consider and coordinate this investment plan, and the government will endeavor to promote communication between the relevant parties as necessary," Muto told reporters.

After Biden's decision, the two companies sued CFIUS, which scru-

tinized foreign investments for national security risks, alleging that Biden had prejudiced the committee's decision and violated the companies' right to a fair review.

They argued Biden did so in 2024 by expressing opposition to the deal when he was running for reelection — to win support from the United Steelworkers union in the swing state of Pennsylvania, where US Steel is headquartered. The Biden administration had defended the review as essential to protecting security, infrastructure and supply chains.

Last month, the Trump administration filed a motion to extend two deadlines in the lawsuit to give the government more time to wrap up merger talks with the firms.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD

Zelensky says troops active inside Russia

Presence confirmed for 1st time in Belgorod as border battles intensify

KYIV — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed for the first time on Monday that his country's troops have been active in Russia's Belgorod region, as they seek to protect Ukrainian towns near the border.

Ukrainian troops remain in parts of the neighboring Russian region of Kursk eight months after a cross-border incursion, though Russian forces have recaptured much of the lost territory.

In his nightly video address, Zelensky said Ukraine's top commander, Oleksandr Syrskyi, had presented a report "on the front line, our presence in the Kursk region and our presence in the Belgorod region."

"We continue active operations in the enemy's border areas and this is absolutely justified. The war must return to where it came from," he said. "Our main objective remains the same: to protect our land and our communities in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions from Russian occupiers."

It is the first time in the more than three years since the conflict broke out that Zelensky has explicitly mentioned a Ukrainian presence in Belgorod, a region with a population of about 1.5 million people.

The Russian military acknowledged facing Ukrainian land attacks in the region last month, at a time when Ukrainian forces were under pressure in Kursk.

Zelensky repeated Kyiv's long-held contention that despite Russia's recapturing of areas in Kursk in recent weeks, the operation was successful in that it drew Russian forces away from the conflict's main front line in the eastern Donetsk region.

"Due to the entire Kursk operation, we have managed to reduce

pressure on other front-line sectors, particularly in the Donetsk region," he said.

According to the DeepState military blog, which is considered close to Ukraine's army, troops have occupied a 13-square-kilometer area in the Russian region, near the border village of Demidovka.

Russian military bloggers had reported battles in Belgorod region between Russian and Ukrainian troops.

Meanwhile, the Ukraine air force said on Tuesday that Russia launched 46 drones and an Iskander-M ballistic missile during an overnight attack.

The air force shot down nine drones, with another 31 drones not reaching their targets, likely because of electronic warfare countermeasures, it said on Telegram. It did not say what happened to the remaining six drones or the missile.

In another development, the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih held vigils on Monday to begin three days of mourning for 11 adults and nine children allegedly killed by a Russian missile last week.

Friday evening's strike on Zelensky's home city sprayed shrapnel across a dense residential area, including a playground.

Russia said the strike had targeted a meeting of Ukrainian service members and foreign trainers and killed up to 85 of them, a claim rejected by Kyiv as disinformation.

"No strikes are carried out on social facilities and social infrastructure," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a briefing on Monday when asked about Friday's attack.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Next stop: space



From left: NASA astronaut Jonny Kim and Russian cosmonauts Alexey Zubritsky and Sergey Ryzhikov wave from inside a bus ahead of the launch of the Soyuz MS-27 spacecraft, at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Tuesday. The crew reached the International Space Station just over three hours later. ALEXEI FILIPPOV / TASS

Warmest March raises climate concern

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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The world is "very firmly in the grip of human-caused climate change," an environmental scientist has said, after data from Europe's climate monitor revealed that the continent had recorded its warmest March, extending a sustained period of record temperatures.

Friederike Otto, from the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial College London, said it was "remarkable" that figures showed that March was 1.6 degrees warmer than before the Industrial Revolution, keeping up a near-unbroken run of record-breaking readings dating back to July 2023.

This March was the warmest on record by a significant margin, 0.26 degrees above the previous monthly record set in 2014, which in addition to causing heat-related issues has led to erratic rainfall patterns.

Samantha Burgess, strategic lead for climate at the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service, or CCCS, said some areas of Europe had recorded their

driest March on record, whereas others had experienced their wettest in nearly half a century.

The figures for March back up an alarming pattern noted by CCCS at the start of the year, when it reported that 2024 was the warmest year on record globally, and the first calendar year where average global temperatures had passed the symbolic milestone of being 1.5 degrees higher than pre-industrial levels.

"All of the internationally produced global temperature datasets show that 2024 was the hottest year since records began in 1850," CCCS Director Carlo Buontempo said at the time.

Own destiny

"Humanity is in charge of its own destiny, but how we respond to the climate challenge should be based on evidence. The future is in our hands — swift and decisive action can still alter the trajectory of our future climate," he said.

Mauro Facchini, head of earth observation at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Defense Industry and Space, called

the EU's environmental and climate targets "ambitious," but added that "with science, innovation and flagship programs in earth observation such as CCCS, we can make informed decisions to mitigate and adapt to climate change."

In addition to the direct effects of climate change through higher temperatures, there are other consequences, compounding the impact and leading to other environmental problems.

Besides the impact in Europe, CCCS scientists said that climate change was a contributory factor to an extreme heat wave affecting Central Asia in March, and affected rainfall in South America, leading to the deaths of 16 people in Argentina.

Last week, Australia's Bureau of Meteorology said that the country's hottest 12-month period on record had ended with its highest March temperature.

"I am sure everyone is now getting fatigued that these records keep falling," said Australian National University climate scientist Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick. "It's now incredibly predictable."

Briefly

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Warning shots as DPRK soldiers cross border

The Republic of Korea's military said on Tuesday it fired warning shots when about 10 soldiers of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea briefly crossed the demarcation line. The military "conducted a warning broadcast and fired warning shots", and the DPRK soldiers moved north, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. "Our military is closely monitoring the movements of the DPRK soldiers and taking necessary measures," it said. Some of the DPRK soldiers were armed, according to the ROK military.

UNITED STATES

Boeing settles to avoid civil trial over 2019 crash

Boeing has reached a last-minute settlement to avoid a civil trial that was due to start on Monday over the fatal 2019 crash of an Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max plane, the plaintiffs' lawyers said. The Chicago trial was to feature two plaintiffs who lost family members in the calamity, but both cases were settled on Sunday evening, the Clifford law firm told AFP. The Boeing plane crashed on March 10, 2019, just six minutes after takeoff from Addis Ababa on its way to Kenya, killing all 157 people on board. Relatives of 155 of the victims had sued Boeing between April 2019 and March 2021 for wrongful death, negligence and other charges.

Court allows DOGE's data access for now

A divided federal appeals court on Monday put on hold an injunction that blocked Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency from accessing US citizens' private data at the treasury and education departments and the Office of Personnel Management. In a 2-1 vote, the 4th United States Circuit Court of Appeals stayed the March 24 preliminary injunction issued by US District Judge Deborah Boardman in Greenbelt, Maryland, while the government pursues its appeal. The Richmond, Virginia-based appeals court separately voted 8-7 against taking up the matter "en banc", meaning all active judges would decide.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Tiny arms, big protection



A health worker collects a blood sample from a child for a malaria diagnostic test in Apac district, Uganda, on Monday, as part of a malaria vaccine rollout program that aims to immunize 1.1 million children under the age of 2. HAJARAH NALWADDA VIA GETTY IMAGES

Rescue efforts wind down in Myanmar, recovery in focus

BANGKOK — Long-shot efforts to find survivors from Myanmar's devastating March 28 earthquake were winding down on Monday, as rescue efforts were supplanted by increasing relief and recovery activity. The death toll surpassed 3,600 and was still climbing.

A situation report issued on Monday by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said more than 17.2 million people are living in the affected areas, and urgently need food, drinking water, healthcare, cash assistance and emergency shelter.

In the capital Nay Pyi Daw, people cleared debris and collected wood from their damaged houses under

drizzling rain, and soldiers removed wreckage at some Buddhist monasteries.

Myanmar Fire Services Department said on Monday that rescue teams had recovered 10 bodies from the rubble of a collapsed building in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-biggest city.

It said international rescuers from Singapore, Malaysia and India had returned to their countries after their work to find survivors was considered completed. The number of rescue teams operating in the residential areas of Nay Pyi Daw has been steadily decreasing.

The magnitude 7.9 quake hit a wide swath of the country, causing

significant damage to six regions and states. The earthquake left many areas without power, telephone or cell connections and damaged roads and bridges, making the full extent of the devastation hard to assess.

Zaw Min Tun, a spokesman for the State Administration Council, said on Monday that the quake's death toll has reached 3,600, with 5,017 injured and 160 missing. Search and rescue operations involved 1,738 personnel from 20 countries, and had helped find and extract 653 survivors, he said.

The quake has been officially named the Big Mandalay Earthquake to ensure consistency in future documentation and referencing, he

added. Previous significant earthquakes also received official names.

The UN report said: "Entire communities have been upended, forcing people to seek shelter in makeshift conditions, disrupting markets, worsening psychosocial distress and bringing essential services — including running water, sanitation and health — to the verge of collapse."

"People left homeless by the earthquakes are exposed to extreme heat during the country's hottest and driest month of the year, and rains have already started in Mandalay — posing an additional threat to those sheltering in the open."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Tariff fallout continues as opposition voiced

By BELINDA ROBINSON

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US President Donald Trump on Tuesday raised the total tariff on Chinese imports to more than 120 percent, which will have a widespread impact on trade between the world's two largest economies, according to experts and politicians.

"There is tremendous uncertainty about the future of US-China trade," said Z. John Zhang, professor of marketing at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, to China Daily.

"In public, I can imagine that governments may say one thing, but hopefully in private they will find a way to negotiate and accommodate each other. But at this point, that uncertainty is at its highest."

The United States has significantly escalated tariffs on Chinese goods in recent years. From an average of 19-20 percent in 2018 and 2019, the rate increased by 20 percent earlier

this year, followed by an additional 34 percent in April, bringing the current cumulative total to approximately 74 percent. With the latest 50 percent hike, the total burden could reach 124 percent.

The additional 50 percent levy on Tuesday, confirmed by White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, was on top of a 34 percent reciprocal tariff that Trump imposed on China on April 2. There also were two previous tariff increases of 10 percent each. The latest levies will take effect at 12:01 am ET Wednesday.

The 50 percent tariff was in response to Beijing's 34 percent reciprocal levies on US goods. Trump had issued an ultimatum to China to halt its new tariff on US goods or face new levies.

But China did not back down, and its own tariffs will begin April 10.

China's Commerce Ministry said on Tuesday that it firmly opposed the 50 percent tariff, describing it as a "mistake on a mistake." China vowed to raise its tariffs on US goods

further.

"If the United States insists on having its way, China will fight to the end," the Commerce Ministry said.

Zhang explained that Trump likely crafted his reciprocal tariff policy based on the trade deficit between the countries going back decades.

Many other nations will see the start of their tariffs from the April 2 "Liberation Day" on Wednesday. Despite tense trade relations, the US-China relationship proved vital for both countries last year, as it generated valuable two-way trade.

In 2024, China was the third largest trading partner of the US behind Mexico and Canada. Imports from China to the US were \$439 billion last year. The US exported around \$144 billion worth of goods to China, data shows.

The proposed changes will likely hurt American consumers, according to an economist.

Justin Wolfers, a professor of economics and public policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at

the University of Michigan, wrote on X: "I don't see how ... tariffs on China will help Americans, and I see lots of ways they'll hurt."

A handful of Republicans, including US Senator Susan Collins of Maine and US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, have expressed concern over the tariffs.

US Senator Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, has been the most vocal. He said that he has received support from several Republican colleagues who admit in private that they are unhappy over the tariffs.

"They whisper in my ear, 'Free trade is good,'" he told CNBC. "Keep going. Keep going. But they do not want to say it because of the politics of it all."

"The whole debate is so fundamentally backwards and upside down," Paul said. "It's based on a fallacy. And the fallacy is that somehow in a trade, someone must lose. That somehow, when you trade with someone, there's a loser, and someone's taking advantage of you, and

China's ripping you off, or Japan's ripping you off?"

US markets swung widely Tuesday upon news of the added tariffs on China in another chaotic day on Wall Street.

Stocks had rallied briefly in the morning. At the start of trading, the S&P 500 posted a big gain, rising 4 percent, but the index slumped in late trading, ending 1.6 percent lower. The Nasdaq Composite closed more than 2 percent down.

Markets around the world have been unsettled since Trump announced reciprocal tariffs last week.

In one of the first visible public signs of a fracture among Trump's key team of advisers, Elon Musk, the world's richest man, who heads DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency, made a series of social media posts over the weekend criticizing White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, an architect of the tariff policy.

"A PhD in Econ from Harvard is a bad thing, not a good thing," Musk posted on X, in reference to Navarro. Navarro hit back, calling Musk a "car assembler" rather than a

manufacturer "in many cases", referring to the electric vehicle company Tesla, where Musk is CEO.

Musk responded Tuesday: "Navarro is truly a moron," adding that he was "dumber than a sack of bricks" while defending Tesla.

"Navarro should ask the fake expert he invented, Ron Vara," Musk added. It was in reference to Navarro's fictional economics expert whose name was from an anagram of his last name, in books he has written that champion tariffs.

Musk does not appear to back Trump's tariffs. He had reportedly appealed directly to the president to let up on the levies, but to no avail, sources told The Washington Post.

Musk's brother Kimbal Musk criticized the president's tariff policy on April 7, writing on X: "Who would have thought that Trump was actually the most high tax American President in generations. Through his tariff strategy, Trump has implemented a structural, permanent tax on the American consumer."

He added: "China is run by very smart people. This is not a game that should be played by C-minus students like Peter Navarro."

BUSINESS

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Additional levies attract policy gaze

Free-trade setback forcing Chinese firms to get more creative, innovate

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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China's top economic regulator has pledged efforts to tackle issues faced by enterprises and support the development of the private sector, as it seeks to buffer the impact of the latest round of sweeping new tariffs from the United States.

Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, hosted a meeting on Tuesday morning with a group of private businesspeople from Trina Solar, China-Base Ningbo Group Co Ltd, Guangdong Lingyi ITECH Manufacturing Co Ltd, Didi Chuxing and Goertek Inc. It listened to feedback on the implementation of macroeconomic policies at the micro level, discussed companies' responses to newly imposed US tariffs, and gathered opinions on strengthening foreign trade and employment.



China's efforts to boost domestic demand can offset the impact of the US tariff hikes."

Sun Xuegong, director-general of the department of policy study and consultation at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research

The meeting comes as Beijing grapples with renewed trade headwinds, including Washington's latest round of tariff hikes on Chinese goods, while also seeking to stabilize the overall economy amid a sluggish global recovery and mounting uncertainties.

Looking ahead, the next step will be accelerating the implementation of already-announced supportive measures, strengthening research on policy reserves, and launching them in a timely and effective manner, the National Development and Reform Commission said in a statement posted on its official website on Tuesday.

During the meeting, business leaders said they are well prepared for the new US tariffs and are actively adopting countermeasures. At the same time, they acknowledged the stable domestic development environment and vast market potential, stating their confidence in overcoming difficulties and achieving breakthroughs.

On Tuesday, Trina Solar said in a reply to an investor request that, as of now, the company has sufficient inventory of solar modules stored in the US, and the cost of these modules is not expected to be impacted by the tariff hikes.

Meanwhile, as some products are currently in transit and about to clear Customs, the company is confident it can meet customer demand in the US market for the remainder of the year, according to market information provider Wind Info.

In the face of external uncertainties, Zheng said China should focus on doing its own work well. He reiterated China's unwavering commitment to reform and opening-up, the importance of firing up dual circulation — in which domestic and international circulation coexist, with domestic circulation playing the primary role — and the need to respond to external uncertainties with domestic certainty.

The NDRC also pledged to improve regular communication mechanisms between the government and private enterprises, actively address real difficulties faced by companies, and promote the healthy, high-quality development of the private sector.

"China's efforts to boost domestic demand can offset the impact of the US tariff hikes," said Sun Xuegong, director-general of the department of policy study and consultation at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, a think tank under the NDRC.

"I think Chinese enterprises are also prepared for that. They can expand the market outside the US and they can also make their products more competitive. I don't think the US tariff hikes can destroy Chinese exports. There's some impact, but Chinese exports also have strong resilience," Sun said.

Citing the rise of leading Chinese firms such as DeepSeek, he added, "China can find its way and move forward," adding that private firms play a key role in supporting the country's economic development.

It is widely acknowledged that the private sector boosted China's high growth in recent decades. Private firms in China contribute more than 60 percent of GDP, 70 percent of technological innovation and 80 percent of urban employment, official data showed.

"In China's transition to the innovation-driven economy, the private sector could play a crucial role," Sun added. "I expect more favorable policy to support the private economy to develop in China."

While China still faces near-term economic headwinds, Ben Simpfordorfer, a partner at consultancy Oliver Wyman, said he believes China's long-term prospects remain strong.

"China needs to double down on its pursuit of innovation — less focused on the potential short-term impact of US tariff hikes, and more focused on what the long-term benefits are of continuing to invest in more advanced sectors," Simpfordorfer said.



A shopper buys vegetables at a supermarket in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province. JIA MINJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Call for fixing consumption imbalance

By WANG KEJU
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As China pushes ahead with a shift away from its investment and export-driven growth model to one centered on innovation and consumption, addressing the structural imbalances in consumption patterns has emerged as a critical challenge, although it presents a significant opportunity as well, senior economists said.

"The consumption deficiency in China is not primarily a problem of the average consumption level, but rather a structural imbalance," said Liu Shijin, former deputy director of the Development Research Center of the State Council.

The root causes of this issue include "the uneven distribution of essential public services, the slow progress of urbanization, and the disparities in income distribution," Liu added.

Policies, including consumption vouchers and trade-in programs, can indeed deliver immediate benefits in shoring up consumer willingness to spend, said Liu Yuanchun, president of the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.

"Improving income distribution and strengthening the social security net are crucial in empowering the broad population, particularly lower-income groups, to play a bigger

role in driving consumption-led growth. This is a priority that will lay the foundation for stable and sustainable economic development," said Liu Yuanchun.

There is a lot of work to be done in this regard, experts said, stressing that one key task is to raise the level of basic public services for the low-income population, with a focus on migrant workers, as this will drive up their spending.

Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley, said that policymakers could deliver deeper social security reforms, such as easier access to public housing and healthcare for migrant workers, which will reduce people's precautionary saving habits and unleash huge consumption potential.

"It's probably the central government's turn to try to fill the gap by either channeling dividends from State-owned capital to the social security system, or gradually shifting China's policy focus from supporting infrastructure to spending more on social welfare," Xing said.

The country's basic old-age insurance program for rural and non-working urban residents, which covers over 550 million people, or more than half of the total pension insurance participants, currently provides an average monthly pension of around 220 yuan (\$30) to its

170 million elderly people, said Liu Shijin.

Last month, China announced plans to "raise the minimum basic old-age benefits for rural and non-working urban residents by 20 yuan" in the Government Work Report.

"If we can dedicate 500 billion yuan from the fiscal funds toward this pension system, we can double the monthly pension payouts, from the current 220 yuan to over 400 yuan," Liu Shijin said. "This will have a more immediate and effective impact on boosting consumption."

Rural residents represent the lowest income group in China, and they have a relatively high propensity to consume. If government can increase their pension spending by 1 trillion yuan, it would translate into around 1.2 trillion yuan in GDP growth — contributing nearly one percentage point to annual economic expansion and playing a pivotal role in stabilizing growth, according to Liu Shijin.

"While structural imbalances in consumption present major challenges, resolving them could unlock growth potential comparable to what was once provided by the real estate sector. This transformation will establish a foundation for sustained medium-speed economic growth, ensuring stability for China's economy in the years ahead," Liu Shijin said.

Tariffs may encourage more yuan use

By ZHOU LANXU
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By disrupting global trade and triggering recession risks, the United States' new tariff push may have an unintended result of giving rise to alternative international currencies, including the Chinese renminbi, also known as the yuan, experts said.

"To supply global dollar liquidity, the US must run trade deficits," said Guan Tao, global chief economist at investment bank BOCI China.

"As Washington seeks to reduce deficits through 'reciprocal tariffs', the global dollar liquidity will tighten, weakening the dollar's international standing," said Guan.

Guan said that confidence in the greenback has been eroding as the latest additional tariffs — expected to take effect on Wednesday and include a 10 percent "minimum baseline tariff" and higher rates on certain trading partners — damage the international economic governance order.

"Last year, both gold and the dollar rose, but this year, gold continued to climb while the dollar weakened. That suggests some US allies may now be voting with their feet."

The US dollar index, which gauges the greenback's value relative to a basket of currencies, was trading at 103.12 as of Tuesday afternoon,

down 4.94 percent since the beginning of the year, according to market tracker Wind Info.

"The international reserve status of the US dollar may be undermined by the US administration's retrogressive actions," said Zhang Ming, deputy director of the Institute of Finance and Banking, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

In this context, China can intensify efforts to promote the internationalization of the renminbi on three fronts, Zhang said, including increasing the proportion of the yuan as a global commodity pricing and settlement currency, and stepping up efforts to provide high-quality yuan-denominated assets, such as Chinese government bonds, to foreign investors.

Zhang highlighted the importance of accelerating the development of the Cross-border Interbank Payment System, which specializes in renminbi cross-border payments and clearing, and the Project mBridge, a cross-border platform for experimenting with central bank digital currencies — including the digital yuan — for international trade.

In the near term, dollar volatility remains high, Guan added. So far, financial markets have been pricing in recession fears as anticipation of a US economic slowdown and

potential rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve weakened the dollar. The greenback could, however, bounce back if markets shift focus to US inflationary pressure and expect less rate cuts by the Fed.

"The US move to broadly raise tariffs is expected to push US inflation higher in the short term. Over the longer run, as the US tariff policy may trigger a global trade war, global economic growth could slow down. US inflation may then retreat sharply following a temporary rebound, with economic growth slowing further. In that scenario, we cannot rule out a repeat of the 1930s Great Depression," Guan said.

He drew parallels to the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which drastically raised tariffs in the US. The legislation triggered retaliatory tariffs from major US trading partners, causing global trade to collapse and exacerbating the Great Depression.

On the renminbi, Guan said the yuan has remained generally steady against the dollar, despite weakening following the new tariff announcement.

"Future yuan performance will hinge on China's macroeconomic policy responses and its central bank's foreign exchange policy. So far, markets view the central bank as sending a strong signal of maintaining yuan stability."

Computing industry hungry for power

By ZHENG XIN
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China's rapidly expanding computing infrastructure is emerging as a significant new source of power demand, challenging the nation's grid and accelerating the need for flexible energy regulation capabilities, industry experts say.

While China pushes forward with its ambitious renewable energy build-out, the surge in demand from data centers, artificial intelligence and other computing-intensive sectors is creating a challenge for grid operators, requiring solutions beyond traditional power sources, said Zhao Yong, president of Energy Research Institute under the China Huaneng Group Co Ltd.

The escalating power need of the computing sector is becoming a major factor in China's overall energy picture. Currently ranked ninth among high energy-consuming industries, computing's share of national electricity demand is projected to rise sharply, Zhao said during a BloombergNEF summit held in Beijing recently.

"Electricity demand from computing power is expected to continue soaring all through 2035. This figure represents a substantial portion of China's overall electricity consumption," he said. "The need to reconcile the growth of energy-intensive computing with China's green energy transition is becoming increasingly pressing."

Zhao emphasized the importance of coordinated development between computing power and electricity supply, with energy storage playing a vital role in ensuring grid stability and enabling the deeper integration of renewable energy to meet this burgeoning demand.

The rapid growth and widespread adoption of new infrastructure technologies like 5G, big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and the industrial internet have led to a substantial surge in electricity consumption within these industries, according to the China Electricity Council.

According to consultancy McKinsey & Company, the growth of data centers and the adoption of AI rely heavily on the availability of electric power. As a result, opportunities for investors in power infrastructure and adjacent sectors are quickly emerging.

According to Zhao, one key technology gaining prominence is new-type energy storage, including compressed air energy storage. These advanced storage solutions are seen as crucial for providing the flexible grid regulation needed to balance the increasing variability of renewable energy sources and surging demand from the digital economy.

Energy storage has grown exponentially during China's 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), he said.

Chinese authorities unveiled several measures in February to promote the new-type energy storage manufacturing sector, as part of efforts to accelerate the development of emerging industries and the country's modern industrial system.

According to an action plan jointly issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and seven other government bodies, by 2027, the sector is expected to demonstrate international competitive advantages across the entire manufacturing chain, with a greater number of leading enterprises, marked improvements in industrial innovation capabilities and overall competitiveness.

China will launch initiatives to boost technology innovation in the new-type energy storage sector, including measures to speed up the upgrading of mature technologies such as lithium batteries and support disruptive technological innovations, it said.

Powering tea farms



As a new season of spring tea picking and processing begins, staff members from State Grid Changzhou Power Supply Co visit New Concept Tea Farm in Tianmu Lake township in Jiangsu province to check the electricity connections that will ensure the farm receives a sufficient and stable power supply during this busy period. XU YUYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 58 pips to 7.2038 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the

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

BYD forecasts record Q1 net profit

Chinese electric vehicle company BYD expects to see record profits in the first quarter of the year, accord-

ing to preliminary results published on Tuesday, as booming sales saw it ship more than a million vehicles. The company expects net profit to hit between 8.5 billion yuan (\$1.2 billion) and 10 billion yuan, up from 4.6 billion yuan in the same period last year.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Nation's efforts in AI seen bearing fruit

BCG: China to sustain innovation in breakthrough fields, promote adoption

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese enterprises have demonstrated unique competitiveness in the use of artificial intelligence, while the open-source ecosystem and exploration of AI application scenarios are reconstructing the path of tech evolution, said Wu Chun, managing partner of Boston Consulting Group Greater China.

China is one of the front-runners in generative AI development in the Asia-Pacific region, and is actively utilizing such cutting-edge technology to modernize various sectors and cultivate talent, Wu told China Daily during the recently concluded China Development Forum 2025.

"By leveraging its diverse and complete industrial system, world-leading infrastructure, large-scale reserve of scientific and technological talent, and cluster-based innovation ecosystem, China will definitely sustain innovation in breakthrough technologies and continue to promote achievements in fields such as AI adoption," Wu said.

According to BCG research, the global AI adoption landscape presents a significant imbalance. Notably, only five economies are categorized as AI pioneers, and the Chinese mainland is among them. As an AI pioneer, the Chinese mainland has gained a competitive advantage in skills, research and development, ecosystems, and investment, and is taking the lead in patents and AI academic papers.

Wu added that industrial transformation and upgrading, coupled with continuous breakthroughs in innovative technologies, have created more development space and cooperation opportunities for foreign enterprises, allowing them to share long-term results and benefits through collaborative innovation.

"We have seen China's technological innovation rise rapidly over the past few decades, bringing breakthrough innovations in multiple fields," she said.

Market potential and innovation vitality will be stimulated in areas like AI Plus and inclusive innovation, she added.

As for accelerated efforts to expand their presence in overseas markets amid increasing uncertainties and an evolving international landscape, Wu said Chinese enterprises have gradually shifted their strategic focus in their globalization processes.

"They are not only expanding

their presence abroad but also integrating into local economies, establishing refined local operational capabilities and building sustainable businesses that align well with the dynamics of local markets," she noted.

It is estimated that Chinese enterprises will participate in the global value chain at a higher level in the future, and there definitely will be both opportunities and challenges ahead.

According to BCG's research results, one-third of Chinese enterprises regard the challenges of the evolving international landscape as the primary obstacle to their overseas strategies. They are confronted with multiple challenges due to uncertainties arising from geopolitical tensions and rising trade protectionism.

"With the rapid development of emerging technologies such as AI, technology companies may encounter technical and innovation barriers as well as regulatory and compliance challenges in the process of overseas expansion," Wu said.

"Despite these uncertainties and challenges, the dynamic market environment and consumer demand have also created new development opportunities."

The rapid growth of emerging markets, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, India and Africa, brings new opportunities for Chinese enterprises in overseas expansion, she added.

Chinese enterprises have accumulated years of advantages in production and supply chains, education and innovation capabilities, as well as world-leading expertise in digital technology and its applications. "These core advantages can enable Chinese enterprises to seize emerging opportunities under the new development landscape."

Moreover, Wu said they should establish a risk assessment mechanism and enhance their resilience through diversification strategies, localized operations and flexible adjustments of business models, while stressing the need to construct production bases and supply chain networks across multiple regions, build local teams and cooperate with local enterprises.

He Zhiyi, chief expert from the Institute for Global Industry at Tsinghua University, said, against the backdrop of a restructuring of global supply chains, it is essential to "build world-class enterprises" through self-reliant innovation and optimize the layout in industrial chains globally to "form a more balanced and stable development pattern in both developed and developing countries."



Architects hold discussions at the China Pavilion of Expo 2025 Osaka in Japan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China Pavilion shines with tech prowess

By ZHUANG QIANG
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The China Pavilion, arguably one of the most anticipated national pavilions at Expo 2025 Osaka, will present a groundbreaking showcase of Chinese technological prowess in green solutions and ecological vision, in order to redefine global audiences' understanding of China through immersive storytelling, cutting-edge innovation and cross-cultural dialogue, said the pavilion's chief exhibit architect.

Opening on Sunday through Oct 13, Expo 2025 Osaka will see countries and organizations from around the world gather in the major Japanese city under the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives."

Spanning 3,500 square meters with high-tech companies such as iFlytek and Hytera delivering innovative experiences, the expo venue is built with renewable and recyclable components such as modular bamboo-wood panels developed through proprietary 3D and building information modeling (BIM) technologies.

"Each panel is prefabricated, numbered and assembled like a puzzle on-site. After the Expo, they can be disassembled and rebuilt in China," said

Li Huaisheng, chief exhibit architect of the China Pavilion project for Expo 2025.

The pavilion also embraces a zero-waste construction principle. Instead of making physical pre-exhibition setups, the design team leverages augmented reality throughout the building procedure, while allowing designers and visitors to virtually tour a 1:1 scale digital version.

"Most of the materials are fixed in factories, not on-site. This slashed costs by 90 percent and eliminated material waste," said Li, who is also an architectural doctoral candidate at Tsinghua University.

"Visitors will have a better understanding by touring the pavilion's preset journeys — past, present and future — which transforms ancient Chinese traditions into interactive experiences supported by cutting-edge technologies," he added.

For example, as "the shared cultural resonance of solar terms bridges Chinese and Japanese audiences", visitors can learn about 24 solar terms with augmented reality (AR) glasses in the China Pavilion, where they can "catch" swallows midair in spring or snowflakes in winter, the chief architect said.

Also, visitors will find a 10-meter

calligraphy "waterfall" display telling stories over the past 3,000 years of Chinese writing evolution — thanks to Chinese engineers who solved optical challenges to ensure crisp displays through perforated bamboo screens. In addition, nearby touchscreens will allow users to explore oracle bone inscriptions and Tang Dynasty (618-907) poetry — many of which are familiar to Japanese visitors.

The China Pavilion broke ground last February. Designers and builders of the expo venue have overcome various challenges, making it the only foreign self-built pavilion to have successfully passed all required approvals and inspections.

Through these special designs, the China Pavilion aims to create an immediate visual impression of Chinese culture while embodying the concept of sustainability. The construction process itself reflects China's commitment to green and sustainable development, said Wu Shengrong, director general of the Department of Exhibition Management at China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, at a recent news conference in Beijing.

Wen Jie contributed to this story.



Wu Chun

LHG launches Ying'nFlo on Chinese mainland

By HE QI in Shanghai
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Great Eagle Group, which owns Langham Hospitality Group (LHG), is bullish on the business prospects in China and is ramping up efforts for growth with the planned debut of its Ying'nFlo hotel brand on the Chinese mainland, a senior executive of the company has said.

"We are a Hong Kong-based group aiming to serve as a 'super connector' between the Chinese mainland and the rest of the world," said Lo Ka-shui, chairman of Great Eagle Group and executive chairman of LHG, during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

LHG operates various other hotel and resort brands such as Langham, Cordis and Eaton.

With plans to open five Ying'nFlo hotels in China in 2025, starting with Hangzhou, the brand aims to



Lo Ka-shui

tap the mid-scale hotel market on the Chinese mainland.

"We aim to provide a unique experience for those of the millennial generation and Gen Z," Lo said.

The group's confidence in the Chinese mainland market is evident in its three-year investment plan of at least 1.5 billion yuan (\$205 million) for Ying'nFlo's development in the market.

"As the Chinese economy recovers, the tourism market will naturally expand more rapidly due to the huge potential in consumption on the Chinese mainland. We are very optimistic about the spending power and consumption habits of young people," Lo said, adding that the

Chinese market is "the most crucial one for the company's hotel brands".

"I envision growing Ying'nFlo to become the largest among our four hotel brands, because I believe the scale of the Chinese mainland tourism market is poised to become the world's largest," he said.

Lo highlighted the growing number of inbound tourists visiting China from around the world due to supportive policies for the tourism sector.

"We believe that inbound and outbound travel to and from China will continue to increase, becoming a major driver of global tourism," Lo said.

The group chairman also said he was impressed with how Chinese hotel players utilize technology and artificial intelligence to enhance hotel management. "Their costs are significantly lower than what we experience elsewhere in the world," he said.

High expectations for rising low-altitude biz

By LI JIAYING
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As top-level planning and policy moves toward concrete industrial implementation, building an ecosystem of low-altitude applications and advancing airspace governance have become key priorities, said industry experts.

Wu Yirong, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said the country's low-altitude economy is evolving beyond simply connecting devices or vehicles. It is now entering a new stage focused on achieving "smart airspace control" through technological integration and ecosystem development.

"Low-altitude airspace is not an empty void, but instead a strategic space in the digital age. China's low-altitude economy is shifting from technological trials to ecosystem construction," Wu said.

Driving this transformation is the integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as low-altitude cloud computing, 6G networks and satellite internet, to create the world's

first integrated air-space-ground intelligent network, the academician added.

The view underscores a broader consensus among experts — infrastructure development is fundamental to unlocking the potential of the low-altitude economy.

"Infrastructure comes first for development, whether on the ground or in the sky," said Hu Minghua, a professor at the civil aviation college of Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. "To enable safe, efficient and convenient low-altitude flights, we must establish a robust air traffic management system that can provide systematic solutions for both manned and unmanned aircraft operations."

In this regard, industry players are accelerating efforts to turn smart low-altitude networks from concept into reality. For instance, the newly unveiled low-altitude smart flight application platform of Chinese geospatial tech company Geovis Technology Co Ltd leverages its cloud-based supercomputing and airspace management

capabilities to offer a comprehensive solution for scheduling, control, applications and operations in low-altitude airspace.

Beyond operational management, the platform also enables standardized services — such as aerial data collection, intelligent inspections and logistics delivery — catering to a wide range of low-altitude scenarios from natural resource monitoring to urban governance.

"By building a digital infrastructure for low-altitude operations, integrating aircraft data resources, enhancing airspace management services and fostering innovative application scenarios, we aim to establish a full industry-chain layout for the low-altitude economy," said Chen Wei, chairman of Geovis Low-altitude Cloud Co.

This push aligns with national policy priorities. This year's Government Work Report highlighted the launch of large-scale application projects for new technologies, products and scenarios — with an emphasis on promoting the safe and healthy development of emerging



The Geovis booth is seen during a high-tech expo in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

sectors such as commercial aerospace and the low-altitude economy.

"Efficient airspace management will be critical to unlocking the economic potential of low-altitude infrastructure," said Li Jiaxiang, former head of the Civil Aviation Administration of China, adding that the low-altitude economy is poised to become a new engine of growth for China's economy, but maximizing the use and management of airspace resources is essential.

Looking ahead, Hu said that developing support industries for aerospace governance — including refined planning, collaborative management and risk sensing — will further accelerate the growth of low-altitude flight activities and the overall sector's ecosystem. In turn, this surging demand is expected to spur expansion across manufacturing, services, and the broader low-altitude industrial chain and inject new momentum into China's economic transformation.

Firms, universities team up for R&D

By LIU KUN in Wuhan
and ZHAO RUINAN

In a concerted effort to bridge the gap between academic research and market application, a growing number of Chinese universities and enterprises are establishing joint laboratories.

These partnerships leverage academic strengths to accelerate the industrialization of technological innovations, with recent collaborations spanning robotics, integrated circuits and next-generation wireless communication technologies.

On March 20, a collaborative event was held in Chongqing University, involving State-owned and private enterprises along with various universities.

The purpose of the event was to facilitate direct engagement with research teams and to explore the formation of collaborative models between educational institutions and businesses.

Many enterprises are eagerly exploring the field of robots and their related components. Among the achievements highlighted by the university is a newly developed linear electric drive joint product that is being utilized in humanoid robot joints by institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Xiaomi and UBTECH.

A week earlier, Nanjing University and Shanghai Anlogic Infotech Co Ltd, a leading Chinese integrated circuit design company, established a joint laboratory, highlighting their collaboration in the development of high-quality teaching resources.

Additionally, at the end of February, the nation's first joint university-enterprise laboratory focused on HarmonyOS and StarFlash technologies was established in Wuhan, Hubei province.

Central China Normal University and Wuhan Pansheng Dingcheng Technology Co Ltd, a custom computer company based in Huangpi district, Wuhan, jointly founded the Hongxing Future Technology Laboratory.

The laboratory aims to conduct cutting-edge research on HarmonyOS applications and innovations in StarFlash wireless communication technology.

Wang Enke, head of the lab and former president of South China Normal University, said that the laboratory will address the shortcomings in China's industrial chain related to operating systems and short-distance wireless communication.

"The laboratory is specifically dedicated to promoting the ecological development of HarmonyOS mobile systems. It also aims to tackle issues such as high latency and low reliability commonly associated with traditional Bluetooth and Wi-Fi technologies through the research and promotion of StarFlash technology," Wang said.

StarFlash technology, also known as NearLink, is a cutting-edge wireless communication technology designed for short-distance data transmission.

It enhances traditional formats like Bluetooth and Wi-Fi and incorporates elements of 5G, improving data rates, latency, distance, security and reliability.

The laboratory will establish a focused curriculum and practical projects, allowing students to gain essential skills and participate in enterprise project development, Wang said.

Zhang Jin, government chief of Huangpi district in Wuhan, said that this model, which integrates resources from universities, enterprises and local governments, has effectively combined technological innovation, the transformation of achievements and talent cultivation.

"This approach holds significant demonstrative and promotional value. On a national level, such models can serve as references for other regions, fostering technological innovation and industrial upgrading across diverse sectors," Zhang said.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Tariff coercion won't work against China which will fight US bullying to the end

“America First” is essentially nothing more than the United States trying to make the “World Coerced.” As such, it is “America Cursed.” A country cursed by its own megalomania and cursed by other countries for its callous malice.

And having made itself a curse to all the other nations on Earth with its calculated tariff extortion, the US can hardly bleat about a country not doing what is expected when cursed in return. Yet that is what the White House has done by slapping an additional 50 percent tariff on China for having the gall to stand up to his administration's intended tariff torture.

China's countermeasures are not a confrontational response, but a necessary response to the US' despotic trade policy. The US has repeatedly sought to cower China into submission with its tariff blows. But China has stood firm, responding equally forcefully while calling for restraint and talks.

Behind this calm and composed approach lies China's firm understanding of its own path to modernization. No matter how much pressure the US applies, whether it be punitive 54 percent tariffs or 104 percent, or more, China will give as good as it gets, while remaining steadfast in pursuing its own development and leaving the door open for talks.

In doing so, China is standing up to the intimidation of the US and upholding fairness and justice in global affairs. Its desire to realize a community with a shared future for mankind is not an idle imagining but a practical pursuit that is in the interests of the world. Just as no one can turn back the rising tide, no one can stop China's development, or the collective rise of the Global South.

The US' latest tariff threat against China is further proof that the latter's prompt, justified and resolute retaliatory measures against his so-called reciprocal tariffs have caught his trade policymaking circle by surprise. But bullies never expect their intended victims to stand up to them.

To some extent the latest threats toward China are part of his tactics to divert domestic attention and ease the domestic pressure on his administration, as he has largely kept silent on the dramatic market volatility and nationwide protests.

US President Donald Trump has said that “negotiations with other countries, which have also requested meetings, will begin taking place”, while claiming to have turned his back on China. A country that has done nothing wrong, as it has only sought to protect its own legitimate rights and interests by giving the US a taste of its own “medicine”.

China has repeatedly stressed that pressure or threats are not the right way to resolve trade disputes. As the Commerce Ministry said on Tuesday, trade wars only aggravate them. If the US side is really willing to act in good faith to settle what it sees as an “unfair” trade imbalance with China, it should engage in talks and consultations with China on an equal footing and with mutual respect.

If not, China will continue to take resolute countermeasures to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and development interests. It is anticipated that Beijing will announce countermeasures if the US goes ahead with its latest additional 50 percent tariff threat — including, according to some in the know, substantial tariffs on US agricultural products such as soybeans and sorghum; a ban on US poultry exports to China because of the serious bird flu epidemic in the US; and suspending its fentanyl cooperation with the US, as the latter has completely discounted the assistance China has provided. Other mooted measures include restricting US companies from participating in procurement and restricting business cooperation such as legal consulting, where the US has a long-term trade surplus in services with China; banning the import of US films; and investigating the benefits gained by US companies from intellectual property rights in China, as related US companies have obtained huge monopoly benefits in the Chinese market.

These should leave the US administration no room for doubt that China will stand firm in countering the US' extortionist tariff attacks. Just as the Commerce Ministry said, “If the US insists on having its way, China will fight to the end.”

China does not provoke trouble, but nor is it daunted by it. It has emerged stronger from many a storm.

Global unity can triumph over trade tyranny

European Union trade ministers meeting in Luxembourg on Monday struggled to reach an agreement on how to respond firmly and effectively to the so-called reciprocal tariffs of the United States that will hit a significant part of their exports.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic have tried to cut a deal with the US administration by offering zero-for-zero tariffs between the EU and the US for cars and industrial goods. But that offer was rejected outright by the US president, who insisted that the EU should buy \$350 billion in US energy to close the trade deficit.

The EU has been preparing countermeasures. But the trade ministers seem to have only agreed on imposing tariffs of up to 25 percent on a broad range of US exports in response to the US levies on steel and aluminum, with EU states to vote on the plan on Wednesday.

However, due to the different interests of member states, there have been no agreements on how to respond to the US tariffs on EU cars and the blanket tariffs on the bloc. And while the US tariffs have been described in the EU as “unjustified”, “bullying” and “coercive”, there is little appetite among member states to apply the Anti-Coercion Instrument that was drawn up to respond to the coercive US trade policy.

Given the gloomy economic prospects facing the bloc, it is perhaps understandable that there is a fear of making things worse. The latest Conference Board Economic Forecast for the Eurozone is just 0.9 percent growth in 2025 and 1.2 percent in 2026. But the EU and its member states should remember that they have a much bigger stake in defending free trade, the global trading system, and the authority and rules of the World Trade Organization, all of which are being decimated by the US.

The US administration justifies its protectionist policies and tariff attacks by alleging unfair trade practices by its trading partners, claiming the aim of the tariffs is to address trade imbalances, protect domestic industries, and gain negotiating leverage. However, these measures are primarily intended to maintain the US' privileged position amid the rise of the Global South, rather than promoting fair trade practices. Apart from trade, the US has withdrawn from the World Health Organization and Paris Climate Agreement and other international organizations and treaties, all in pursuit of self-gain. The EU and the rest of the world bear the responsibility to sustain and improve the global system that the US seems intent on destroying.

It's good that Sefcovic mentioned that the US accounts for just 13 percent of the global goods trade and the EU's priority, along with the rest of the WTO members, is to protect the remaining 87 percent and make sure that the global trade system prevails for the rest of the world. He described his recent trip to China as “aimed at fostering cooperation to rebalance our trade and investment relationship with tangible results”.

The fact that China is a major trade partner for more than 140 countries and regions and is the world's second-largest economy that contributes to 30 percent of global growth means that the EU, and other economies, should work together with it to uphold free trade and multilateralism, and fight against the US trade bullying and economic coercion.

China promotes mutually beneficial economic relations and has urged the US administration to abandon its unilateral and protectionist tactics. But in light of the US leader doubling down on his tariff extortion, China is calling for a coordinated response to counteract the economic coercion.

It is already working with countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea to deepen economic cooperation to safeguard regional stability and counterbalance the US' trade pressure.

China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations can also take concrete measures to enhance their economic ties and strengthen regional trade agreements. By diversifying supply chains, promoting intra-ASEAN trade, and exploring alternative markets, they can reduce their reliance on the US market and buffer against industry chain disruptions.

The EU too can strengthen its cooperation with China using their yet to be ratified Comprehensive Agreement on Investment as the foundation. A coordinated global effort grounded in cooperation, multilateralism, and fairness is the most effective way to counter the trade war initiated by a power-crazed US administration fixated on world domination, damn the consequences.

By fostering open, inclusive, and balanced economic globalization, nations can work together to promote equitable development and shared prosperity for all, which is the ultimate aim of building a global community with a shared future.

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Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Ignorant, disrespectful rhetoric shows cause of difficult relations

It is highly unlikely that US Vice-President JD Vance, who himself hails from a working-class background in the United States' rust belt, was unaware that the term “peasants”, which he used to describe Chinese people on a Fox News Show, has derogatory connotations. As someone on a social networking site pointed out, it comes from “someone who has used his ‘American peasant’ roots to craft his political image”.

Anyone who has read his book *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* will know how Vance faced poverty and hardships in life but rose to the top by virtue of his grit and determination. A famous quote from his book, “What separates the successful from the unsuccessful are the expectations that they had for their own lives”, still resonates with many US citizens.

If Vance intended to belittle Chinese people by calling them “peasants”, then he was simultaneously belittling himself, his supporters, and his own humble beginnings. In fact, Vance seems to have a limited understanding of the Chinese people. He told Fox News Show: “We borrow money from Chinese peasants to buy the things those Chinese peasants manufacture.” The notion is definitely not rooted in serious academic research or verified statistics, but

borrowed from an online discourse.

Looking at the entire program, one can say that Vance's prejudiced perception of China is shaped by these populist social media narratives. Or, it could even be a deliberate strategy to appeal to his most loyal supporters.

According to Mallie Prytherch, a researcher at the Centre on Contemporary China and the World at the University of Hong Kong, during his time in the Senate, Vance has authored only one bill related to China, to restrict the Chinese government's access to US capital markets and stock exchanges “if it fails to comply with international laws in areas such as finance, trade, and commerce”.

Prytherch also found that while Vance has cosponsored a few more bills concerning China, most of those were just symbolic in nature, garnered minimal support, were unlikely to pass, and serve more as political gestures than serious legislative initiatives. Furthermore, nearly all of these bills are limited to economic issues.

One wonders how a vice-president with such a shallow understanding of China, and whose only participation in US-China affairs has been economic in scope, could possibly help shape a realistic or effective China policy.

In today's world of complex international relations, allowing a political

leader with limited knowledge of China to speak casually or even shape policy toward it, without question, both unwise and dangerous.

Since World War II, US-China ties have improved whenever individuals with a deep understanding of China have held a position of influence in Washington. As the 56th US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger helped orchestrate the historic thawing of relations between the US and China — an event that significantly altered the course of global geopolitics. His knowledge of China was such that he later authored a book, *On China*, a comprehensive analysis of the country's history, culture, and politics.

Of course, it would be unrealistic to expect every senior US official to be an expert on China. However, that should not stop them from consulting the best minds in the country before issuing public statements or crafting policies on China. Otherwise, a single misguided comment or ill-informed policy could spark a controversy or jeopardize bilateral ties, damaging the interests of both countries.

No wonder the Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said of Vance's “peasant” rhetoric: “It was surprising and sad to hear such ignorant and disrespectful remarks from the US vice-president”.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Callous funding cuts will create new crises

The United Nations World Food Programme, the world's largest provider of food aid, has appealed to the United States to reverse its decision to end its funding. The latest contract cancellations target some of the last remaining humanitarian programs run by the US Agency for International Development were unexpected, as Washington had pledged to spare emergency food programs and other life-and-death aid from deep cuts to US foreign assistance.

“This could amount to a death sentence for millions of people facing extreme hunger and starvation,” the WFP warned on Monday, adding that it was in contact with the US administration “to urge for continued support” for the programs that keep millions alive in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and 11 other impoverished countries.

This is not an alarmist comment, as the abrupt end to the WFP programs threatens some of the world's most vulnerable populations, many of which depend on such food aid, according to humanitarian groups. The US has traditionally been the major funder of the WFP, providing \$4.5 billion of the \$9.8 billion in donations to the food agency last year.

WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain said in a post on social media that the cuts will “deepen hunger, fuel instability, and make the world far less safe”. She urged world leaders to “weigh the consequences”.

Reportedly, the US administration's freeze on all foreign assistance through USAID and the State Department led to a brief shutdown of services at the Al-Hol camp in the northeast of Syria, where tens of thousands of alleged Islamic State fighters and their families are kept under guard, which raised fears of an uprising or breakout at the camp.

The US spent \$824.3 billion on defense last year, more than 183 times its donation to WFP, and the US president recently pledged to raise the Pentagon budget to \$1 trillion next year. But the US administration should realize its funding to the WFP is well worth it. As some observers point out, the US has long seen efforts to ease humanitarian crises as being in its strategic interest by stemming mass migration, conflicts and extremism.

If the US administration is truly committed to controlling illegal migration, fighting terrorism and working for peace, as it claims, it should reconsider its funding cut to the WFP, as it actually contradicts all these endeavors.

Not to mention that it is responsible for causing the humanitarian crises in the countries on the WFP's assistance list.

Apart from the conflicts caused by its power plays, climate change, displacement, economic shocks and inequality have also caused food shortage. According to the WFP, about 343 million people are acutely

hungry and famine looms for 1.9 million in the world today.

The WFP says that its funding requirement for 2025 is \$16.9 billion to reach 123 million people, and a total 93.5 percent of all government contributions go directly to supporting life-saving and life-changing operations.

As a self-proclaimed champion of human rights, the US should reconsider the moral cost of it cutting funding to the WFP.

The uncertainties, risks and chaos in the world caused by the “America First” administration of the US are dramatically increasing the demands for the input of the UN food program this year. So funding the WFP is also a global responsibility the US is obliged to fulfill as arguably the sole superpower of the modern world.

Although the US administration aims to streamline the government system and save costs with its DOGE reform at home, including the end of USAID, it needs to take into account the move's possible impact on some causes of common good to the world, which should also include the fight against global warming.

Any responsible government of such a major country as the US should bear the bigger picture of the world in mind while implementing domestic policies. That is requisite for the country to assume its international responsibility in world affairs.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Chin-Yoong Wong

Make RCEP stronger against tariffs

With US President Donald Trump imposing nonsensically high rates of tariffs on goods from almost all countries, the entire world is lamenting that this is the end of globalization as we know it. Although the tariff rates are expected to be as low as zero on goods with at least "20 percent US content", the US' punitive tariffs are likely to skyrocket to a level not seen since 1930. In fact, Trump has threatened to impose 50 percent more tariffs on Chinese goods after China responded in kind to the US' slapping of an additional 34 percent of Chinese imports.

The world benefited from the US-led global trade order for 90 years. When imperialism ruled the roost and national sovereignty was not respected, former US president Woodrow Wilson's "14 points" in 1918 set the tone for countries' self-determination irrespective of their size. The Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act passed in 1934 gave then US president Franklin Roosevelt the authority to cut tariffs on a reciprocal basis, and the Atlantic Charter co-signed by Roosevelt and then British prime minister Winston Churchill in 1941 declared that they support international trade liberalization and the right of all countries to self-governance.

These laws and treaties laid the foundation for the creation of postwar multilateral trade organizations, rules and system that spurred development and helped build a relatively peaceful global environment. Access to the US market,

technologies, knowledge and capital has facilitated the miraculous growth of most Asian economies including Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the ASEAN tiger, Singapore. It did the same for China.

But those days are over. With the US falling back on the pre-war global trade order — marked by zero-sum games, unilateralism and disrespect for rules — the questions that arise are: What's next? What will the US-led new global trade order look like? And what kind of role will the US play in it?

What we know for certain is that the benefits of open trade are too big to be abandoned, especially for small open economies like ASEAN countries that rely on trade to create jobs, earn foreign exchange, and facilitate technological transfer. It is no less important for China to tap global markets to maintain its economic scale and development scope.

This means free trade won't be passé for the rest of the world, certainly not for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership member states. Even though cross-border trade and foreign direct investment flows are likely to decline after the tariff shock, a surge in trade under the RCEP framework is likely to offset the US tariffs' impact, because countries will try to diversify their trade to make their supply chains more resilient.

With the US building tariff walls, the RCEP should tear down tariff and non-tariff barriers for member states as an insurance against the calamitous impact of US tariffs and distance themselves from the US' policies.

But the path is going to be bumpy, because the US consumer market is too big to be substituted by major markets

now. Success can be achieved, however, because China's trade with its other top four trading partners — the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union, the Republic of Korea and Japan — last year reached \$2.4 trillion, over three times more than that with the US. And for ASEAN, its trade with the same group of economies was nearly three times that with the US.

However, the US tariff shock has highlighted two critical factors — internationalism rests on the domestic political situation, and choke points in trade are in both technology and consumption — which should be eliminated by the RCEP to make its supply chains more resilient in the future.

It is not trade but the economic decline of traditional manufacturing in the US' Rust Belt that has fueled populism in the country and prompted it to retreat from globalization.

The US' hegemony in global value chains is rooted in the country's technological capabilities that dominate upstream chains, and consumption power that controls end-user chains. Both are choke points that allow the US to control global value chains. The latter is particularly important because it is the end-user chain that shapes the entire production process.

China has been making greater efforts to clear the supply-side bottlenecks and achieve self-determination in technology. Besides, ASEAN often positions itself as an integrated production hub, and rarely as a unified market for consumer goods — and intra-regional trade accounts for merely one-fifth of its total trade, indicating that ASEAN is far from the end-user chain.

A diversification of supply chains under the RCEP framework, however reshuffled, won't be enough to prevent the US from extortion if its market remains the single-largest destination for end products from RCEP member states. Given this fact, collaboration between China and ASEAN in deepening trade ties under the RCEP framework should not rule out domestic maneuvers. Cross-border trade must be embedded in local supply chains in order to ensure more local jobs are created, not destroyed.

China's recent initiatives to expand consumption and help boost people's spending power have gone beyond economic stimulus to make the Chinese market the ultimate destination for RCEP products. This will not only ease RCEP member states' worries over China potentially dominating the regional market but also enable China to get a grip on another choke point.

It is equally important for ASEAN, as the major driver of the RCEP and on track to become the world's fourth-largest economy, to take consumer market integration seriously, and harmonize product standards and the regulatory framework. A large and integrated consumer market is the bedrock of inclusive trade and economic self-determination. A US-less global trade order is a long-term game, and the RCEP is where it begins.

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Zhou Shuchun

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Digital black hole cries out for multi-pronged, effective treatment

What began as yet another clash between fans of celebrities has evolved into a potential watershed for cybersecurity reform. The recent increase in "doxing" or "box-opening", the malicious practice of cyber-enabled privacy invasion, has reached a critical inflection point, compelling society to transform fleeting public outrage into concrete systemic safeguards against this digital-era epidemic.

Like similar incidents in the past, the recent viral doxing (short for drop the documents) case stemmed from disputes among celebrities' fans, where the victim's privacy is inadvertently exposed. What sets this case apart is its dramatic twist: the underage child of a tech giant executive engaged in the online controversy, while the perpetrators or box-openers themselves fell prey to retaliatory exposure, creating a boomerang effect that turned public discussion into a high-profile social debate.

As a malignant tumor of the information age, the dangers of such acts are self-evident. In today's digital society, personal data are increasingly accumulating in cyberspace. When invasion of privacy runs rampant and cyber-violence spreads unchecked, digital footprints leave individuals exposed to potential dangers, fostering an online climate of pervasive insecurity.

Virtual defamation and insults can spill into real-world harassment. The case of an internet-famous illustrator enduring over a year of stalking after failing to mediate fandom disputes exemplifies how cyber-bullying bleeds into physical endangerment.

Public scrutiny now focuses on the alarming accessibility of the practice. Superficially, fan culture is blamed as a hotbed. Adolescent idol worship, in some cases, morphs into exclusionary tribalism, where trivial disagreements, subtle criticism of idols for one thing, are magnified into irreconcilable "us vs. them" battles, weaponizing privacy leaks for coordinated attacks.

As an emerging global pandemic, however, the new public hazard demands sustained, sophisticated treatment beyond episodic crackdowns.

The deeper malignancy lies in an insidious data black market. When privacy becomes a dark currency, it fuels a growing digital black hole that voraciously devours personal information. Reports indicate the recent case involved data purchased from one of the overseas social engineering databases, which operate in cyberspace's shadowy recesses as covert hubs for illegally collecting and selling private information, enabling cyber assaults based on details of personal profiles.

Combative measures didn't start today. In 2023, for instance, Chinese cyberspace authorities initiated "operation clean network" targeting malicious behaviors, from doxing to factional incitement. Last year saw more than 7,000 personal data breach prosecutions involving stolen logistics and education records.

As an emerging global pandemic, however, the new public hazard demands sustained, sophisticated treatment beyond episodic crackdowns.

First and foremost, tech platforms must take primary responsibility for the issue. Experts suggest strengthening content monitoring through AI-driven algorithms and data screening to swiftly detect and remove illegal leaks, while optimizing reporting mechanisms. Also, platforms must adhere to the principle of minimal necessity or privacy by design in user data collection, encrypt sensitive information, and establish accountability for third-party sharing with timely retroactive investigations into breaches.

With minors being the prime targets, schools and families must collaborate on comprehensive cyber-ethics curricula. Initiatives should be aimed at demystifying technology's dual-edged nature while addressing the root causes such as toxic para-social relationships in fan ecosystems.

Most crucially, legal frameworks must evolve from deterrent fences into fortified moats. In fact, China has been tightening its data privacy laws and regulations. Under current laws, illegally collecting and disseminating personal data can lead to imprisonment from three to seven years. However, vague standards for "serious circumstances" hinder enforcement. Making clear the thresholds via judicial interpretations is essential to turn the balance of cost for violation and the protection of rights.

Given the transnational nature of data trafficking, as evidenced in recent cases where data servers operate in legal gray zones abroad, dismantling the illegal supply chain requires cross-border collaboration. And international accords are important for reconciling jurisdictional conflicts and bridging the gaps in data protection laws.

This moment of public awakening must catalyze a comprehensive upgrade of digital civilization rules, forging a united front to build an impregnable cybersecurity defense. Only through relentless, multi-dimensional governance can we check the digital abyss and restore trust in the connected world.

Temily Baker and Sanjay Srivastava

Mandalay quake exposes hidden seismic risks

On March 28, a 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck near Mandalay in Myanmar, exposing more than 37.2 million people to violent tremors. Its shockwaves reverberated far beyond Myanmar's borders, extending over 1,000 kilometers to Bangkok.

The disaster revealed a stark truth: seismic risks transcend visible fault lines. There is a need therefore to address three key concerns: the transboundary nature of seismic hazards, the limits of early warning systems and the urgent need for resilient infrastructure.

Why was the Mandalay quake felt in Bangkok? The earthquake along the Sagaing Fault exemplifies the concept of transboundary seismic risk, where geological teleconnections amplify distant events. Bangkok sits atop a deep basin of soft marine clay. Unlike hard rock, which absorbs part of the seismic impact and reduces tremors, soft soil acts like a natural amplifier of seismic waves, making even far-off earthquakes feel intense.

This phenomenon isn't unique to Bangkok. Cities such as Mexico City, built on ancient lakebeds, and Jakarta, with its alluvial plains, are similarly vulnerable to such natural phenomena. Other large Asian cities such as Dhaka, New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Kolkata and Singapore are also within reach of active faults with potential to generate quakes powerful enough to produce amplified transboundary tremors.

Globally, earthquakes rank among the deadliest natural hazards, which have claimed more than 727,000 lives in Asia and the Pacific between 1970 and 2024 — equivalent to one life lost every 39 minutes (EM-DAT). As cities expand, often haphazardly, exposure to such risks only grows.

Why is there no early warning for quakes? Unlike floods or cyclones, earthquakes strike without warning due to their sudden, unpredictable nature. Current science cannot forecast when or where they'll occur, leaving us reliant on real-time detection systems. Cutting-edge earthquake early warning systems (EWS) provide alerts just seconds before the shaking begins. Since the collapse of buildings cause 70-90 percent of quake deaths, even a brief alert can mean the difference between life and death.

In a complex tectonic landscape such as Myanmar's, a dense network of appropriately located ground observa-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY



Continuing to strengthen the observation networks, improve communications infrastructure and build public awareness requires national and regional investment.

tion stations is critical. The transboundary nature of this risk highlights the need for global cooperation, and seismic data need to flow freely across borders in commonly shared formats.

In 2009, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, through the Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness, invested in the Sittwe Ground station as the first step to make visible the unobserved fault lines across Myanmar. The national seismic observation network has since been strengthened with the support of neighboring countries, integrated into international data platforms, and operationalized by the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard

Early Warning System.

The effectiveness of an earthquake early warning system also relies on the ability to communicate and act on the alerts. Advances like cell broadcasting, which Thailand has vowed to implement in 2025, make such systems feasible when coupled with inclusive community preparedness awareness initiatives.

Continuing to strengthen the observation networks, improve communications infrastructure and build public awareness requires national and regional investment. In addition to providing catalytic funding to bridge the regional early warning gaps, the ESCAP offers an intergovernmental platform to advance efforts to boost transboundary resilience to earthquakes, areas where national resource disparities hinder progress.

But can we rely on our public infrastructure? The Mandalay earthquake has exposed the troubling truth about the vulnerability of our public infrastructure. According to GIRI, the average annual loss by earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand is \$179 million and \$137 million, respectively, and as critical infrastructure facilities including universities, hospitals, religious buildings and historic sites collapse, the cost of socioeconomic loss could defy calculations.

Public infrastructure facilities are a public good; they protect the vulnerable — children, the elderly and people with disability — and help post-disaster recovery.

Japan's adherence to rigorous codes and retrofitting programs is an example of best practice. Notwithstanding the constraints faced by lower income countries, there is a need for a prioritization of investments in designing and retrofitting hospitals to withstand earthquakes, schools to shelter students and bridges to keep supply lines open. This is a social and economic imperative.

The Mandalay quake demands our concerted action: to strengthen global seismic data-sharing, fund warning systems, educate communities and (re)build more resilient cities.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

MWANGI WACHIRA

Begun in earnest

China's respectful engagement with Africa holds hope for a future of transformative relations

Since the end of colonial rule in 1963, Kenya has adjusted its development path to become a modest regional business and financial hub. Kenya has attracted investments from some Global North countries such as the United States, and Global



South countries such as China. During these years, Kenya-China ties have set a good example for South-South cooperation.

Hence in May 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping and then-Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta elevated the China-Kenya relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation, signaling high expectations and a bright future for bilateral ties and cooperation. For its part, Kenya expanded its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, continued the implementation of Belt and Road projects, and enhanced Kenya-China partnership in a comprehensive and strategic way.

Will this strong China-Kenya relationship change because of the ongoing global competition? There are good reasons for believing that global competition will have minimal impact on the China-Kenya cooperation.

During his first term as US president, Donald Trump expressed interest in a free trade agreement with Kenya. Later, in 2018, the US invited Kenya to enter a strategic partnership covering economic advancement, trade and investment, as well as regional issues. In 2022, then president Joe Biden carried this idea further and signed the

US-Kenya Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership. The agreement was presented as the new model for future agreements with the US in Africa and elsewhere. The agreement's explicit linking of economic and security concerns is consistent with President Trump's stated primary objective: to make the US more safe, secure and prosperous.

It is therefore reasonable to expect that under the second Trump administration, the US will only encourage more US enterprises in technology, consumer goods, banking and finance or healthcare to set up operations in Kenya, building on Kenya's role as a regional hub.

If this strategy brings more US enterprises into Kenya and, by extension, Eastern Africa, they will almost certainly be faced with the reality that in recent years, China and Kenya have fostered productive cooperation to achieve mutually beneficial results.

In 2023, China exported \$7.88 billion worth of goods to Kenya, mostly consumer electronics, machinery, plastics, hot-rolled steel products and rubber footwear, which meet the needs of Kenyans. The fact is that Kenya's small but growing middle class thrives on consumer products imported from China amid signs that there is movement to produce some of the goods locally under joint ventures. These trends have made China Kenya's largest trading partner and its primary source of imports. And many bilateral economic and trade agreements have been signed. The Kenya China Economic and Trade Association has reported that Chinese companies in Kenya employed over

60,000 Kenyans in 2022 to 2023, achieving a localization ratio exceeding 90 percent.

At the same time, the product lines that Kenya and Africa can sell to China are expanding under the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. The only conditions are phytosanitary rules. This, and the growing production of consumer goods by Chinese entities in African countries including Kenya, set the stage for a much more expansive trade and investment engagement for China.

Ties with China benefit Kenya's sustainable development and improve living standards. On this basis, there are reasons to believe

that China and Kenya will further their cooperation against the backdrop of Trump's "America First" policy that disregards the interests of Kenyans. In any case, Kenyan policymakers are unlikely to enter into agreements that do not advance Kenya's agenda.

China's posture enhances its comparative advantage. For years Kenyan policymakers sought help in overcoming the obvious shortfall in infrastructure, an obstacle to modernization for a long time. Requests for help were unsuccessful because, fundamentally, Western partners did not share the vision of an industrialized Kenya.

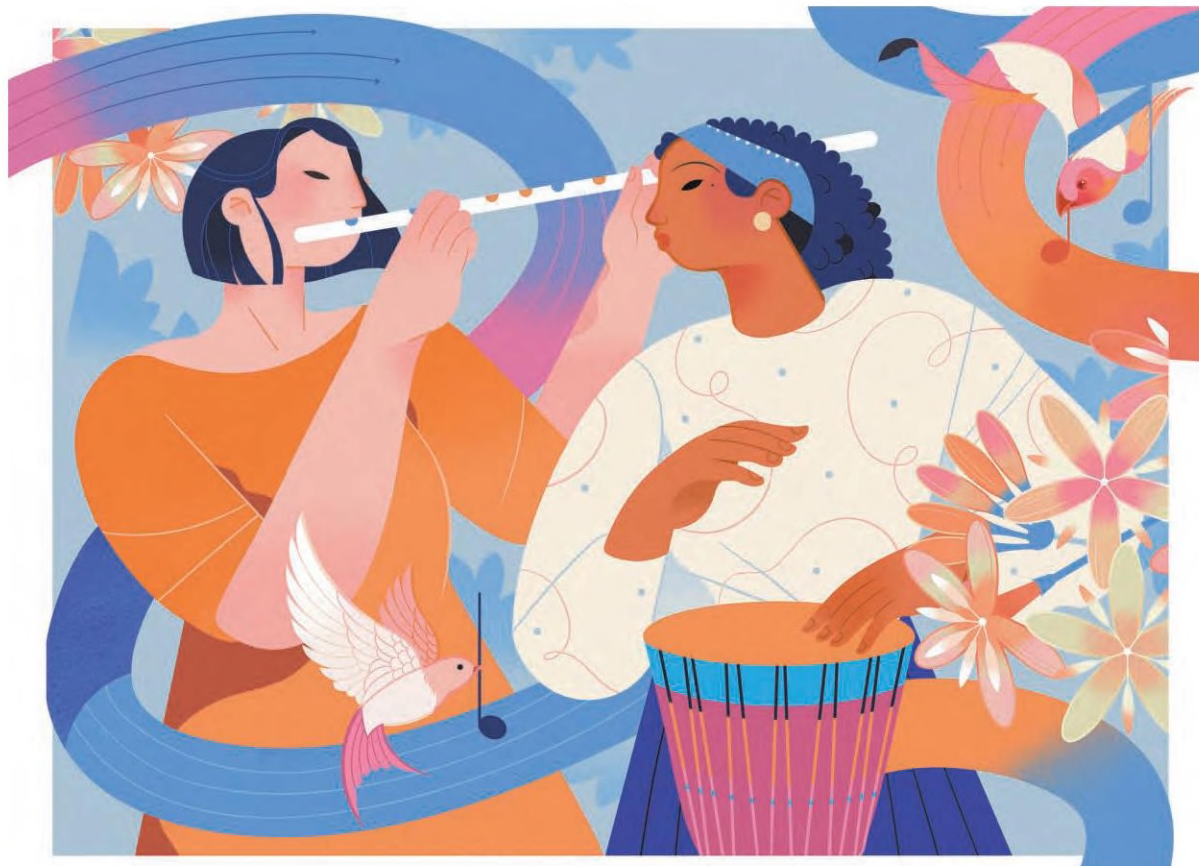
Driven by a posture which

accepts the vision of an industrialized Kenya and more broadly, Africa, China entered the scene with what eventually became the BRI. In Kenya, this has led to the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway which promises to pave the way for the emergence of local industries and a break from extraction model of development. Current discussions focus on the next phase: upgrading rural roads to foster small value chains for industrialization. There are many similar examples across the continent in which China is helping Africans to attain long-held goals alongside China's pursuit of its own objectives.

Finally, the ability and willing-

ness to help promote Kenya's modernization without any interference in its internal affairs are seen by many Kenyans as one of China's most favorable qualities. It is a formula for long-term cooperation. This respectful engagement, in addition to a posture which gives credence to Kenya's vision of itself, promises a future of transformative relations.

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STEPHEN NDEGWA

Strengthening ties through the BRI

The Global South's emergence as a coherent political and economic bloc is not merely a consequence of shifting power dynamics, but an outcome of China's sustained engagement

The Belt and Road Initiative has become a defining pillar of China's foreign policy, fostering an "unprecedented era" of political and diplomatic realignment between China and the Global South. What began as an ambitious infrastructure and trade network has evolved into a trans-



formative platform for South-South cooperation, challenging traditional geopolitical hierarchies and amplifying the influence

of developing nations in global affairs.

The BRI has not only facilitated physical connectivity through roads, railways and ports but also cultivated a new political and diplomatic architecture where mutual respect and shared prosperity define the contours of engagement. This shift has allowed developing nations to reposition themselves as equal partners in global politics, forging stronger political alliances and asserting their influence in multilateral platforms.

At the heart of this geopolitical transformation is China's commitment to the principles of mutual respect and non-interference. China's approach through the BRI has been largely framed around respect for national sovereignty and domestic political structures. Developing nations, long subjected to the paternalistic tendencies of Western-dominated financial institutions, have found in China a partner willing to engage without imposing ideological conformity.

One of the most visible successes of the BRI in fostering political cooperation is in Africa. The construction of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, a some \$4 billion-project financed and built by Chinese companies, has not only boosted trade between Ethiopia



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and Djibouti but also reinforced political cooperation between the two nations. This project is part of a broader strategy where infrastructure development serves as a catalyst for diplomatic engagement.

The African Union's endorsement of the BRI as a strategic development partner underscores the growing alignment between China and African states on key issues such as trade, security and governance. In Kenya, the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway — financed through Chinese loans and constructed by Chinese companies — has similarly deepened political ties. Kenya's government

has maintained strong diplomatic engagement with China, recognizing the railway as a critical link in its long-term development strategy.

In Latin America, the political dividends of the BRI are equally profound. Venezuela, facing economic sanctions and political isolation from Western powers, has found in China a reliable partner for both economic and political support. China's extensive investments in Venezuela's oil industry, coupled with financial aid and infrastructure development, have allowed the Venezuelan government to maintain political stability despite external pressures. Brazil

has also deepened its diplomatic engagement with China, with the two nations coordinating on key global issues such as climate change and trade policy.

Developing nations have increasingly coordinated their positions on key issues such as trade disputes, climate change and global security. China's consistent advocacy for a multipolar world order, where no single power dictates the terms of engagement, has resonated deeply among developing nations seeking to escape the legacy of colonial dependency and economic exploitation.

China's support for political

cohesion within the Global South has also extended to security and defense cooperation. In 2017, China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti, strategically positioned near key maritime trade routes. While this move was initially viewed with skepticism, it has since facilitated enhanced security cooperation between China and African states, including joint naval exercises and intelligence sharing.

China's involvement in peacekeeping missions under the United Nations framework, particularly in conflict-prone areas such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, has further solidified its role as a strategic security partner for African nations. The provision of Chinese military aid and training to African countries has reinforced political ties, ensuring that China remains a pivotal player in Africa's security architecture.

The political realignment facilitated by the BRI is also reflected in the growing diplomatic assertiveness of the Global South. China's backing of African and Asian countries' demands for fairer terms in global trade agreements has amplified the bargaining power of these nations. The establishment of the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement, a financial safety net designed to provide liquidity support to member states in times of crisis, is a direct outcome of this strategic alignment. It reflects a broader shift where developing nations are no longer passive recipients of global policy but active participants in shaping its direction.

Furthermore, China's non-interference policy has allowed political regimes in the Global South to pursue domestic priorities without external pressure. In Zimbabwe, for instance, China has maintained strong diplomatic ties with both the late Robert Mugabe and the incumbent Emmerson Mnangagwa administrations despite Western

sanctions and political turmoil. This consistency in engagement has provided Zimbabwe with an alternative source of economic and political support, reducing its vulnerability to Western political pressures. In Southeast Asia, China, through the BRI, has provided critical infrastructure funding and support to Cambodia, aiding its socioeconomic development.

The BRI's success in fostering political and diplomatic cohesion among developing nations lies in its ability to balance strategic interests with mutual respect. China's approach has been pragmatic, emphasizing shared economic and political gains. The trust forged through this engagement has provided a diplomatic buffer against external pressures, allowing countries in the Global South to assert their political sovereignty with greater confidence. As the BRI continues to expand, the political and diplomatic dividends for the Global South are poised to deepen, cementing a new era of cooperation where developing nations hold greater sway in the global order.

In an increasingly fragmented world, the BRI stands out as a testament to the power of strategic cooperation. The rise of the Global South as a coherent political and economic bloc is not merely a consequence of shifting power dynamics but an outcome of China's sustained engagement through the BRI. In fostering infrastructure, trade and political alignment, the BRI has not only connected continents but also recalibrated the balance of global power.

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Social Media Digest

Promise of Zhangjiajie

On March 28, the hit South Korean drama *When Life Gives You Tangerines* aired its final episode. In this emotional conclusion, the female lead, Oh Ae-sun, tells her critically ill lover, Yang Gwan-sik, "Next year, let's go to Zhangjiajie to see the falling leaves."

This moment left viewers in tears and once again brought Zhangjiajie, the iconic tourist destination in Central China's Hunan province, into the spotlight.

The drama intricately weaves together the stories of three generations of women, exploring themes of love, family, and personal growth over the span of more than 50 years. With a remarkable 9.5 out of 10 rating on Douban, China's leading review platform, the series has become one of the highest-rated Korean dramas in China in recent years.

Following the airing of the final episode, the Zhangjiajie municipal bureau of culture, tourism, television, and sports extended an official invitation to the show's cast to visit the city.

"The heartfelt promise has created a cross-border connection through Zhangjiajie's breathtaking scenery," the invitation read.

"Zhangjiajie has long been a popular destination among senior citizens from South Korea," said Zhang Mingtao, a staff member of the Zhangjiajie municipal publicity department, in an interview with Jiupai News.

The department also reported that a growing number of South Koreans are now choosing to take their parents on trips to Zhangjiajie. In 2024 alone, 400,000 South Korean tourists visited Zhangjiajie National Forest Park — accounting for more than half of its international tourist market.



Zhangjiajie in Hunan province is famous for its breathtaking natural scenery. vcc

Wild foraging

What's the hottest social trend this spring? For many young people in China, it's heading outdoors with friends to forage for wild vegetables.

Foraging has become a fun and refreshing way for young people to reconnect with nature. They've even dubbed the activity "jungle", borrowing the term from the gaming world of *League of Legends* and giving a modern, playful twist to the age-old tradition of spring outings.

On the lifestyle-sharing platform Xiaohongshu (RedNote), the hashtag "digging wild vegetables" has racked up 200 million views, with over 890,000 users sharing their own "wild vegetable maps".

The trend has also sparked regional discussions, with netizens in cities like Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Beijing posting local foraging guides and teaming up for group adventures.

Tips and strategies for identifying edible wild vegetables are spreading rapidly online — partly because some eager foragers have accidentally wandered into private plots or suffered food poisoning after eating unfamiliar plants.

"Foraging for wild vegetables certainly comes with risks," said Shi Jun, a plant biology expert at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in an interview with Beijing Traffic Radio. "But for many, the real value of the activity lies in the joy it brings and the deeper connection with nature."

MENG WENJIE



Foraging for wild vegetables has become a popular spring activity among young people in China. TUCHONG

Reimagining final farewells

Young professionals in the funeral industry are blending tradition with innovation, offering personalized and meaningful services that honor life and reshape societal views on death.



By MENG WENJIE and LIU KUN in Wuhan

At just 28 years old, Wan Changyou has already worked in the funeral industry for six years.

After earning a degree in modern funeral management in 2019, Wan began his career at a funeral home in Shandong before joining B-D-R, a Shanghai-based funeral service company, in 2022.

As a funeral ritualist, Wan has assisted over 500 families. His work includes preparing symbolic daily necessities for the deceased's afterlife and conducting the funeral rites.

While Wan's career path may seem straightforward, given his academic background, his colleague Shen Jiaying took a more unexpected route into the industry.

Also 28, Shen has a degree in animation and previously worked in the ACGN (animation, comics, games, and novels) sector. However, after attending a relative's funeral that felt "hollow" and "lacked genuine meaning", she decided to switch careers.

"That experience inspired me to explore the industry myself," she said.

Shen joined B-D-R in 2021 and now works in the new media department, where she helps introduce the funeral industry to the public through videos and articles on social media.

In recent years, more young people like Wan and Shen have been entering the field.

Li Qi, head of the teaching and research sector of modern funeral management program at Wuhan Social Work Polytechnic (WSWP) in Hubei province, said the program receives 300 to 400 applicants annually, despite offering only 150 spots.

"Last year, the employment rate for these graduates was over 95 percent," she said.

Chen Gang, a 29-year-old funeral planner from Chongqing, has also observed that while older professionals often emphasize tradition, his generation is more focused on personalizing services to reflect the deceased's personality, preferences, and life story — while still respecting traditional rituals and family wishes.

For example, Chen once arranged a birthday cake and decorations for a funeral that coincided with the deceased's birthday.

"Young people are often distanced from the concept of death, which makes them more open to discussing and imagining it — leading to innovation within the industry," Shen said.

Behind the stereotypes

Despite growing interest, the funeral industry is still often misunderstood. A



Top: A funeral backdrop decorated with flowers by Chen Gang and his team. **Above:** Faculty and students at Wuhan Social Work Polytechnic conduct a class in the embalming and cosmetology workshop. **Right:** Wan Changyou offers guidance to grieving relatives.

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Honoring with innovation

Zhu Xinye, an 18-year-old freshman at WSWP, developed an interest in modern funeral management after watching videos on Douyin.

"Respect for life is the core value of this industry," she said.

Zhu hopes that modern technology can bring a more human touch to funeral services.

"If AI could recreate the appearance and voice of the deceased, allowing them to say goodbye to their family, it could be a great comfort," she explained.

This vision is already taking shape. Shen shared that they used AI to simulate the voice of a 16-year-old boy, enabling him to "say" goodbye to his family at his funeral.

Shen also recalled a special memorial for a civilian hero — an elderly man who had suffered severe burns while rescuing others from a fire in his youth. Although he had recovered, his appearance was permanently altered.

For his memorial, Shen's team created a life-size hologram of the man as he had looked in his youth — handsome and whole.

"The man's daughter stood before the hologram, reaching out to touch her father's image," Shen remembered. "Even a small innovation like this holds great significance."

Beyond death's end

In addition to its funeral services, B-D-R has opened Shanghai's first "life cafe", designed as a comforting space for the families it serves.

Many families visit the cafe to remember their lost loved ones and share stories, extending the course of life through these memories.

The cafe has also attracted a diverse range of visitors. Shen mentioned that guests include children as young as 8, who come with their parents to learn about death, as well as a 70-year-old woman who traveled from Changsha in Hunan province just to engage in conversation.

"With the consent of families and guests, we created a card game inspired by their real-life stories," Shen said.

The game simulates real-life scenarios, where players draw random events and make choices that lead to different life paths. This year, the cafe is working on a youth version of the game in collaboration with universities and schools to incorporate it into death education programs.

"I once thought death would erase all meaning, but every time I witness the tears, regrets, and emotions of the deceased's family, I feel the true weight of life," Shen said.

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Z WEEKLY

In the footsteps of heroes

A special Tomb-Sweeping Day tradition pushes young students to their limits — and honors the legacy of fallen heroes.

By **HU DONGMEI**
in Guyuan, Ningxia
and **ZHANG LI**

On the morning of April 3, the day before Qingming Festival (Tomb-Sweeping Day), 1,600 middle and high school students set off on a grueling 15-hour, 54-kilometer round-trip hike to honor martyrs in Guyuan city, Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region.

Now in its 30th year, this annual tradition has earned national recognition for its powerful combination of physical endurance and patriotic education.

At 4:50 am, students from No 2 Middle School of Guyuan and Hongwen Middle School began their 27-kilometer trek to the Renshanhe Martyrs Cemetery to pay tribute to the fallen heroes buried there.

Located in Renhe village, Pengyang county, the cemetery was established for soldiers who died in the 1949 Renshanhe Battle — the first major confrontation during the liberation of Ningxia.

The entire route — much of it along winding mountain paths — passed through locations where the fierce battle was fought and martyrs fell.

Students struggled with leg pain, fatigue, and blisters, but despite these physical challenges, which could have easily discouraged them, nearly all persevered until the very end.

For Ma Xinrui, a seventh-grader at Hongwen Middle School, the hike was both nerve-racking and exciting — and a meaningful lesson in history. "We were walking in the martyrs' footsteps," she said.

Hai Tianlin, also a seventh-grader, echoed her resolve. "My goal is to complete the journey, clean the tombstones for the martyrs, and return to school with stronger willpower," he said.

Students undergo rigorous training in preparation, which includes daily runs and morning exercises.

"Our teachers told us that if the martyrs could endure such hardships, we can too," said Hai Yiming, a seventh grader.

As a representative of the PE class, he took it upon



himself to help his classmates up steep slopes, carrying two heavy backpacks to set an example of responsibility.

A legacy of resilience

The tradition began in 1995, when Han Hong, then principal of No 2 Middle School of Guyuan, initiated the march to instill discipline and build physical endurance among students.

"Healthy bodies are the foundation of education," he once said.

In its first year, 372 students completed the demanding route, and it has since become a cornerstone of the school's ethos.

Liu Yinjuan, now an English teacher at Hongwen Middle School, has participated in the hike six times — starting as a student in 1995.

Reflecting on her first experience, she said, "We wore cloth shoes, shared dry buns, and shed tears of both pain and pride."

Today, she watched a new generation of students taking on roles like "safety officers" and "medics," making sure no one is left behind. "This experience shapes their character for life," she said.

Below left: Students from No 2 Middle School of Guyuan and Hongwen Middle School embark on a 54-kilometer round-trip hike to the Renshanhe Martyrs Cemetery in Guyuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, on April 3.

Bottom: Students gather at the cemetery to pay tribute to the martyrs. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

wreaths. "This isn't just a walk — it's a spiritual journey," said Ma Boluo, a teacher at No 2 Middle School of Guyuan. "They need to understand that our country was built on sacrifice and bloodshed."

The event's impact has reached far beyond the classroom. Renshanhe Martyrs Cemetery, once rarely visited, now welcomes more than 50,000 visitors each year — many inspired by the students' actions.

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Reporter's log: a journey of endurance and inspiration

I had the honor of joining this year's 54-kilometer hike — a journey that went far beyond physical endurance.

Setting out at 4 am, I arrived at Hongwen Middle School as children, brimming with excitement, gathered swiftly on the playground. Their energy was infectious.



Hu Dongmei

The path began gently, but around the 10-kilometer mark, fatigue set in. My legs ached, sweat blurred my vision, and doubt crept in.

Just as I considered giving up, I looked around — children, drenched in sweat, pressed on with determination. Not one chose to quit. They encouraged each other, showing incredible resolve.

Their spirit revived me. As Renshanhe Martyrs Cemetery came into view, our pace quickened.

In the solemn atmosphere, students placed wreaths and tended graves with reverence. In their eyes, I saw both gratitude and a deep sense of responsibility.

As a reporter and a mother, I was profoundly touched. These children, raised in comfort, showed they were anything but fragile. Their strength gave me hope — for their futures and for the stories they will write with their own unwavering courage.

Initially met with parental concerns over safety, the event now enjoys strong community support. "The students' perseverance changed our minds," said Ren Hao, principal of Hongwen Middle School. "This is education at its best."

Social media users have praised the students' determination, with many drawing comparisons to the Long March of the Red Army from 1934 to 1936.

Yang Yonghong, who has filmed the event for 12 years, observed the students up close.

In 2021, Guyuan was hit by a sleet storm. The mountain road — now newly paved — was still just a muddy dirt path. As students hiked through the thick sludge, one child didn't realize his shoe had gotten sucked off until he had walked several steps ahead. He had to go back to retrieve it.

"I was filming at the time, and I was so moved by the children's resilience that I actually shed tears. My own son was among them that year, hiking with the group," Yang said. "They learned about teamwork and perseverance. Even in a snowstorm, they kept going."

A beacon of remembrance

At the cemetery, students stood solemnly, wiping down tombstones and laying



Z WEEKLY

Rural revitalization through global eyes

Once overlooked, a province blessed with stunning natural beauty is rediscovered by a group of international university students in China.

By GUI QIAN
and LI YINGQING in Kunming

Between the majestic mountains of the Nujiang Grand Canyon in Yunnan province, the river flows swiftly and the green hills stretch endlessly. A group of young people — diverse in languages and cultural backgrounds — traverse this landscape, not only captivated by its beauty but also deeply engaging with the local community.

These international students from Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) come from Canada, Russia, Belarus, France, Mongolia, South Korea, Cameroon, and the Republic of the Congo.

From March 31 to April 1, they traveled to the Nujiang Lisu autonomous prefecture to participate in a national educational practice program, where they learned about China's path to rural revitalization and witnessed vivid examples of targeted poverty alleviation.

Located on Yunnan's border with Myanmar, the area is known for its ethnic diversity and ecological richness. It is home to dozens of ethnic groups, including the Dulong and Lisu, who have lived here for generations.

The students visited villages of the Lisu, Nu, and Dulong peoples, immersing themselves in traditional handicrafts, ethnic dances, and folk ceremonies, while gaining an appreciation for local cultural preservation efforts.

"The beauty of Nujiang is breathtaking — its endless mountains and rushing waters far exceeded my imagination," said Gao Rita, 20, from Canada, who has lived in China for six years. "I thought rural China would be more isolated, but the development and vitality here really opened my eyes."

Beyond economics

Nujiang prefecture was once one of the toughest challenges in China's battle against poverty, with 98 percent of its land consisting of mountainous canyons.

Zhu Jun, an associate professor at the Graduate School of Education of BFSU and one of the organizers of the activity, explained that Nujiang was chosen as the destination because of its "historic leap from deep poverty."

"Selecting Nujiang for this social practice allows young people from various countries to experience the reality of ethnic unity here in everyday exchanges and understand how China has achieved social stability in a multicultural environment," he said.

Gao felt this deeply. In an art class at Lushui Ethnic Middle School, she noticed children drawing on the backs of their notebooks.

"When I praised a girl's drawing, her eyes welled up with tears as she told me no one had ever praised her like that before," Gao recalled. "It made me realize how a simple word of affirmation can mean the world to a child."

What moved her even more was that, despite limited resources, the children maintained a strong thirst for knowledge, which made her cherish her own learning opportunities all the more.

Mohamed Dair Mouchili, 25, from Cameroon, a major in international Chinese education, found connections between his time in Nujiang and the challenges faced in his own country. "Cameroon also struggles with transportation and energy issues, and Nujiang's development proves that infrastructure improvement can stimulate the economy," he said.



From March 30 to April 1, international students from Beijing Foreign Studies University visited the Nujiang Lisu autonomous prefecture, Yunnan, where they explored the Nujiang Grand Canyon, enjoyed traditional folk instruments, and visited the Harmonious Community in Lushui.

WANG YICHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

He particularly remembered his visit to Yangpo village in Lushui, where newly built government homes stand atop the mountains. While residents live in these modern buildings, they continue to practice traditional activities such as weaving and brewing, "seamlessly blending the ancient with the modern," he said.

Mouchili came to see Nujiang's development not just as a Chinese success story, but as a model for global poverty reduction.

"There are still many impoverished people worldwide, and the problem cannot be solved by one country alone. International cooperation is needed," he said. "China's Belt and Road Initiative has supported many underdeveloped countries and regions. China's poverty alleviation efforts are significant not only economically but also in terms of social equity and the fate of humanity."

For 19-year-old Russian student Romanovskaia Anzhelika, it was Nujiang's diversity that stood out. In county and town centers, she noted, residents have access to supermarkets and hospitals — yet just an hour's drive away, remote mountain villages remain untouched by urban lifestyles.

She was especially struck by the sight of cattle and sheep strolling along the roads — "as if they are also the owners of this place," she said.

"This harmony between humans and nature is something I'd only seen online but never in real life," she said. "This coexistence of convenience and pristine nature gave me a new understanding of rural China. Poverty alleviation here isn't just about economic assistance but also focuses on sustainable development, which is worth learning for many countries."

Telling China's story

To Zhu, the two-day trip was a great opportunity for young participants to gain a deeper understanding of China's modernization.

"They saw firsthand how rural border areas are upgrading their infrastructure and transitioning from traditional farming to smart agriculture. They also observed the contrast between urban and rural development, realizing that modernization in China isn't limited to big cities — it's reaching far into the countryside," he said.

The international students also took on the role of "folk cultural ambassadors," helping to tell China's story to a global audience.

Throughout the trip, they actively documented their experiences and reflections in their native languages, posting videos on platforms like TikTok and Xiaohongshu (Red-Note), a popular Chinese lifestyle app.

"By sharing their time in China on social media, they not only improve their cross-cultural communication skills but also become bridges for international exchange," said Kai Lin, a teacher at the Overseas Students Affairs Office of BFSU and a leader of the program.

In the future, BFSU plans to expand the initiative to more rural areas across Yunnan, with the goal of covering all eight border prefectures — Nujiang, Baoshan, Dehong, Lincang, Pu'er, Honghe, Wenshan, and Xishuangbanna — in the next three to five years.

Wang Yichen contributed to this story.

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Overseas Report



Deng Fuxin poses in front of the Taj Mahal wearing a traditional Indian sari on Nov 16, 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Build bridges between China and India

By GUI QIAN

Deng Fuxin, from Mianyang, Sichuan province, studied Hindi for three years at the Communication University of China. Yet, when she first arrived in India last October, she was still amazed by the unexpected warmth and connection she experienced there.

Upon her arrival, the 20-year-old and her companions were cautious, sticking together when going out due to their unfamiliarity with the area. However, the kindness of the locals quickly eased their worries.

"An elderly tuk-tuk driver couldn't find the hotel we were looking for, so he drove us around asking for directions. In the end, he only charged us a small fare," she recalled.

The convenience of life in India also far exceeded her expectations. "The competition among delivery and takeaway apps is so fierce here that food can arrive just 8 or 9 minutes after ordering," Deng said.

To her, Chinese and Indian cultures share a delightful resonance. She noticed that India's "chai culture" is quite like Sichuan's teahouse culture.

"Elderly men sell chai (a tea-like beverage with a mix of spices) on the streets for 10 rupees (\$0.12) a cup, roughly 0.8 yuan. It's almost like a national addiction — everyone here drinks several cups a day," Deng explained. "The difference is that Indians drink chai anytime, anywhere, while people in Sichuan prefer to gather in teahouses."

The culinary similarities surprised her even more. Indian momos are almost identical to Chinese dumplings, and a popular meat curry in India tastes very similar to China's braised dishes.

"Many of my Indian friends are very interested in Chinese cuisine and love foods like Chinese buns and fried noodles. I also noticed that Indian dishes appeal to many Chinese people as well," she said.

Both countries also share a deep appreciation for tradition. Deng observed that Indian girls typically wear saris on special occasions, and many from the older generation wear them regularly. There is also a growing curiosity about *han-fu* (traditional Chinese attire).

"Some Indian girls at our school even transformed their saris into *mamiqun* (horse-face skirts) to perform at the school's Chinese New Year gala," Deng recalled.

Creating connections

What impressed Deng the most was the deep understanding that Indian young people have of China.

"Many of my Indian classmates can accurately name several of China's major cities and top universities. They even have Weibo accounts where they discuss trending topics. They also follow Chinese films, animations, and games," she explained.

For example, one Indian student's master's thesis focused on the popular Chinese game *Black Myth: Wukong*. With China's hit animated film *Ne Zha 2* set to release in India on April 25, she and several Indian schoolmates have already made plans to watch it together.

In Deng's view, the openness of the younger generation in both countries is key to breaking down barriers.

"The lives they share on social media are not so different from ours — we both enjoy dressing up, taking photos, and playing games," she said. "Many young people in India have a very friendly attitude toward China and even hope to study in China in the future."

According to Deng, while misunderstandings may have existed in the past, today's youth prefer to replace prejudice with curiosity.

During an interview with her Indian classmates, she asked them to respond to common stereotypes that Chinese people have about India. Initially worried it might be offensive, she was relieved when everyone spoke openly, "just like friends chatting naturally," she said.

"Friendship among youth is truly pure. The young people I've met from both countries all have positive attitudes toward one another. We are breaking down information barriers, which shows the limitless possibilities of people-to-people exchanges," she added.



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